THE IDENTIFICATION OF CRITERIA FOR THE OPTIMAL USE OF FACEBOOK PAGES FOR MARKETING PURPOSES IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

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APRIL 2015
DECLARATION

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SM Barnard
17 April 2015
ABSTRACT

The development of non-traditional communication channels in recent years has progressively created a world more digital, networked and interlaced by a myriad of communication tools than ever before. With Facebook being the most prevalent social network, this study aims to guide local organisations to use Facebook optimally to communicate with their customers. The study strives to incorporate the latest ideas about social media marketing in the relevant literature with the opinions of local social media marketing experts. The generally ineffective use of Facebook as a communication channel by small, inexperienced organisations is seen as a justification for identifying a set of criteria to guide organisations in using Facebook pages as a driver of communication. The empirical phase of the research produced a list of seven guidelines on the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes, which might assist South African companies in developing their marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS

Facebook, pages, social media, integrated marketing communications, marketing activities, communication channels, card-sorting exercise, cluster analysis.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly I would like to thank God for the wonderful opportunity that He gave me in allowing me to obtain a Master of Commerce Degree. I am so blessed and thankful for the strength and perseverance to keep focus until the very end.

I take this opportunity to thank my wonderful husband, Wikus, my dear parents, Herman, Anita, Danie and Nola, and all my loving family and friends who kept motivating me, even though I am sure that they are just as surprised as I am that I finally finished my thesis! Thank you for believing in me and offering constant support when I was ready to give up so many times.

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Lastly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Drienie Barnard, who has always been an inspiration like no other. Thank you for the incredible example you set.
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As a new media form, Facebook utilises many newly developed terms that will most likely be recognised by regular Facebook users. These are defined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Facebook glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profile (individual)</td>
<td>Each individual user has a landing page that contains personal information and displays interactions with friends. Each registered user is allowed only one profile as an individual person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page (organisational)</td>
<td>A page can be defined as a profile for a brand. Only official representatives of brands, artists, celebrities, organisations or causes can create pages to share information and interact with other Facebook users. To be able to create a page, the administrator (typically an employee of the company) must also have an individual profile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>As a noun, friend refers to a personal connection with another Facebook user, which occurs when one user invites another to be publicly listed as his or her friend on the social network. As a verb it refers to the action of adding a person as a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>This is a feature that appears as a link next to all the content available on Facebook, including status updates, comments, photos, videos, articles, etc. Users can click on the link to indicate that they appreciate or support the specific content. Users can also like Facebook pages created by brands to indicate that they are fans of the brand. This allows brands to communicate with individuals for relationship-building purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fans</td>
<td>Fans are people who joined a page by indicating that they like what the page represents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>The timeline (previously known as the wall) is a section of a profile where the user and his or her friends can post messages or other content for everybody to see. Actions are also posted here, for example when a user likes a page or becomes friends with someone. It represents a virtual timeline of the person’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News feed</strong></td>
<td>An aggregation of the interactions of each user’s friends is published on the homepage in the form of a news feed, allowing users to keep track of their friends’ actions on Facebook. Actions by the organisational pages that an individual likes are also displayed on the news feed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applications</strong></td>
<td>Applications include games, polls, contests and other interactive programs on Facebook that allow users to share content in interesting ways. Millions of applications have been created by Facebook and other external developers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tag</strong></td>
<td>Tagging refers to when a person identifies him/herself by adding a label to a photo on Facebook. The label contains a link to the person’s individual profile to enable other Facebook users to follow the link and find out more about the person in the photo. Tagging also appears in the news feed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Earles, 2009.*
CHAPTER 1

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A variety of factors contribute to successful marketing. One such factor is effective interactive communication with customers, which is aimed at encouraging the buy-in of customers into the organisation, its brand and its products (Cant, Van Heerden & Ngambi, 2010:326). The selection of the most appropriate channels to support communication with customers is thus an important decision for any organisation to make, and contributes significantly to the successful marketing of the brand (Ume-Amen, 2011:2). Marketers have access to a wide range of channels, both traditional (e.g. television, radio and print) and non-traditional (e.g. electronic and online), to enable communication with customers.

The social media provide an increasingly popular channel of choice for organisations to use to support their communications with customers (Owyang, 2010:4). Perhaps the main benefit of social media as a communication channel is its interactive, customer-driven nature (Li, Li, He, Ward & Davies, 2011:10606). Customers using social media can easily initiate communication with, or instantly respond to communication from the organisation. At the same time organisations find it difficult to comprehend and manage the new-found power in the hands of customers to direct communications with and about the organisation. Organisations may find this transformation challenging as they have become used to traditional one-way communication channels, such as television, radio and print, where the marketer generally initiates and takes control of the communication that occurs (Parent, Plangger & Bal, 2011:220).

A comparison between the social media channels that are available today indicated that the social network called Facebook is the largest and perhaps the most well-established of all (Ostrow, 2010). It is also one of the oldest social media channels and by October 2012, only eight years after its introduction, it had accumulated an audience of one billion active
users (Facebook Newsroom, 2012). This statistic has since grown to 1.42 billion active users monthly (Statista, 2015). Facebook facilitates user-driven communications between its hundreds of millions of users, enabling them to share their thoughts with a network of family, friends and colleagues on their personal profiles (Myers, 2011). Because of its wide reach and customer-centred nature, many organisations have adopted Facebook as an additional or alternative channel for communicating with their customers. In implementing Facebook as a marketing communication channel, organisations either strive to become part of the conversations being initiated by users, or initiate conversations of their own in the hope that their customers will participate (Fournier & Avery, 2011:194).

Facebook is still a relatively new communication channel for many companies that are either considering its implementation or have recently adopted it (Mayo, 2010). Several researchers maintain that very few organisations have yet fully mastered the effective use of Facebook as a marketing communication channel (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1; Fournier & Avery, 2011:2; Owyang, 2010:4; Ramos, 2010:3). This is also true of South African organisations that are still coming to terms with Facebook as a marketing tool (Levitt, 2010).

Owyang (2010) undertook research to measure the effectiveness of organisational efforts to leverage good marketing from Facebook pages in order to determine the critical criteria for the optimal use of a Facebook page. This study culminated in the design of a scorecard that could be used to measure the effectiveness of Facebook pages. The proposed study builds on this research by Owyang (2010) with the aim of developing a ‘home- grown’ set of criteria based on South African circumstances.

On order to guide local organisations to use Facebook optimally to communicate with their customers, the study will strive to incorporate the latest ideas about social media marketing in the relevant literature with the opinions of local social media marketing experts. This study thus serves as corroboration of the earlier research by Owyang (2010), while incorporating the latest thinking on the matter and adapting it for use in the South African context1. The generally ineffective use of Facebook as a communication channel

1 Note that the empirical phase of the current study was undertaken in 2012.
by smaller, more inexperienced organisations is seen as a justification for identifying a set of criteria to guide organisations in using Facebook pages as a driver of communication. The main contribution of this study will therefore be the formulation of a set of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes in South Africa.

In this chapter, the researcher commences by arguing in favour of the use of the most appropriate marketing communication channels in order to support the building of strong customer relationships. The study then introduces social media, Facebook in particular, as a new, non-traditional communication channel, highlighting the opportunities and challenges faced by organisations in using Facebook to successfully drive communications with customers.

1.2 MARKETING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association as ‘… the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large’ (American Marketing Association, 2013). However, it is not enough to merely provide offerings that meet the needs of customers, as suggested in the above definition; organisations also need to be able to communicate these offerings to customers as communication is the core fundamental instrument for the success of any organisation. The lack of communication, or the use of unsuitable communication channels, can result in an uninformed market that is oblivious to the products and services offered by the organisation (Koekemoer, 2011:1).

The term ‘communication’ suggests corresponding thinking between two entities as information is passed back and forth from one to the other in an interactive process (Koekemoer, 2011:24). Improving the interactive communication between the stakeholders of an organisation, especially between the organisation and its customers, should result in improved overall business success (Doorley & Garcia, 2010:28). Meaningful interactive communication between the organisation and its customers can improve customer
acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty and customer profitability, thereby building long-term customer relationships.

The achievement of this type of meaningful communication with customers is dependent on the use of the most effective communication channels available to the organisation in order to reach prospective and current customers. These communication channels can be divided into traditional and non-traditional communication channels, as depicted in figure 1.1 below.

**Figure 1.1: Marketing communication channels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available marketing communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television, radio, print, banner advertising, direct mail, events, public relations, sales promotion and word-of-mouth marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Wide Web, e-mail, social media, SMS, MMS, tablet computers, smart phones, fax-on-demand and interactive kiosks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Adapted from Cone Inc., 2010:2.

As seen in figure 1.1, the traditional communication channels available to organisations include primarily television, radio, print, banner advertising, direct mail, events, public relations, sales promotion and word-of-mouth communication. Non-traditional communication channels\(^2\) (also referred to in the literature as new media or digital channels) encompass mostly technology-based and online channels, such as the World Wide Web, email, social media, short messaging services (SMSs), multimedia messaging

\(^2\) The literature is replete with terms used to describe non-traditional communication channels. These terms include ‘new media’, ‘digital’ channels, ‘online’ channels, ‘technology-based’ channels, contemporary media and many more. In this study, the term non-traditional communication channels is used and it is taken to refer to all technology-based and online channels.
services (MMSs), tablet computers, smart phones, fax-on-demand and interactive kiosks (Cone Inc, 2010:2). Each of these categories of communication channels, traditional and non-traditional, holds various advantages and disadvantages for organisations, depending on their specific marketing objectives (Cant, et al., 2010:332-334).

Perhaps the biggest disadvantage of using traditional communication channels is that they generally facilitate mostly one-way communication from the marketer or sender to the customer or receiver (Mayo, 2010). One-way communication is not in line with the spirit of marketing, which is to build customer relationships and therefore implies two-way or interactive communication. Owing to their interactive nature, non-traditional communication channels are particularly effective in facilitating two-way communication between the organisation and its customers. In some instances, as in the case of the social media, they even facilitate multi-way communications, for example between different customers. These non-traditional communication channels tend to be referred to as ‘pull’ channels, because they enable customers to direct or ‘pull’ the communication to them, whereas traditional communication channels are often classified as ‘push’ channels as they tend to force or ‘push’ the communication to customers (McDonough, 2010:1).

The ability of marketing communications to enable customers to take the initiative and pull communications from organisations is facilitated by the interactive and personal (‘in-the-hand’ or ‘on-the-screen’) nature of non-traditional communication channels such as the Web, email, SMS and social media, which allow customers to respond instantly to a digital advertisement or communication sent out by the organisation. Furthermore, it is possible to develop these channels in such a way that they serve as a ‘launch pad’ for the customer to initiate a conversation with the organisation when needed (for example, the ‘request a call-back’ form on a website). This is contrasts strongly with traditional push communications, for instance through television, radio or print advertisements placed by the organisation, which simply push information to customers. Except for going out to buy the advertised product, customers can do little to respond directly or immediately to the communication pushed to them (McDonough, 2010:1).

While one should be cautious about classifying all non-traditional channels as pull channels, their interactive, customer-directed potential underscores their power to facilitate
user-centric and user-directed communication, which is the cornerstone of building long-term customer relationships and epitomises good marketing. It should be emphasised at this point that customer-centric communication suggests good ‘listening’ on the part of the organisation. An organisation that is not geared towards responding to the communications of their customers is unlikely to succeed, regardless of how well they facilitate two-way communications with customers (Perrigot, Basset & Cliquet, 2010:439).

As already indicated, non-traditional communication channels, unlike traditional communication channels, facilitate two-way communication with ease by offering various new forms of interaction and information exchange. The following six ‘I’ s summarise the resulting benefits of non-traditional communication channels (Cant et al., 2010:374-377):

- **Interactivity** – The customer initiates contact while the marketer focuses on individual needs of each customer.
- **Intelligence** – The marketer can collect relevant and specific marketing information at a relatively low cost.
- **Individualisation** – Each customer can be targeted and addressed personally on the basis of the marketing information gathered by the organisation.
- **Integration** – Non-traditional communication strategies can be combined with traditional communication campaigns to support and complement them.
- **Industry restructuring** – Disintermediation can condense the supply chain by removing the intermediary and completing transactions with the targeted customer.
- **Independence of location** – The reach of the organisation can be rapidly increased to establish a global market.

The numerous non-traditional communication channels that are currently available, and of which several have already been mentioned, enable organisations to benefit from interactive communication. One of the newest and fastest-growing of these channels is social media (Cant et al., 2010:396). In the section that follows, social media will be introduced as a potential communication channel and its benefits in facilitating customer-centric communications will be highlighted.
1.3 SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

The development of non-traditional communication channels in recent years has progressively created a world more digital, networked and interlaced by a myriad of communication tools than ever before (Grainger, 2010:1). This vast array of non-traditional communication channels is increasingly facilitating discussion, interaction and sharing between individuals, leading to the term ‘social media’ being applied to this form of communication channel.

Perhaps because it is still relatively new, or perhaps because so many different social media tools and applications are available to users, a commonly accepted definition of social media has not yet been formulated. Becker, Naaman and Gravano (2010:1) define social media as a widely accepted circulation channel allowing users to share substantial amounts of user-contributed materials concerning personal experiences and interests through the Web, while Weber (2009:5) describes it as a place where people with a common interest or concern come together virtually to meet others with similar interests, to express themselves and vent. According to Gunelius (2011), social media comprises those online publishing and communication tools, sites and destinations of Web 2.0 that are rooted in conversations, engagement and participation.

Despite the variety of definitions leading to a still developing concept of social media, it seems that the implementation thereof typically involves three basic activities, namely: creating a personal profile to represent one’s self virtually; accessing a virtual world where the profiles of other users can be viewed (to a certain extent, depending on privacy settings); and the opportunity to befriend other users and thereby grant them access to your profile (Petersen, 2010). Social media thus gives the customer a voice and lifts customer involvement in the interactive communication process to an unprecedented level.

3 Web 2.0 can be defined as a collection of distributed technologies (i.e. VoIP, Digital Media, XML, RSS, Google Maps, etc.) that integrate distributed, collaborative and cumulative creation by their users and utilise the power of connections that are always on and functioning at high speed to turn mass participation into valuable emergent outcomes (Dawson, 2007).
The success of social media is reflected in the statistics associated with this channel. With an estimated 1.972 billion social media users around the world (Kemp, 2014), it seems as if the wider online community have embraced this new form of communication. The average number of social media accounts per internet user is estimated at 5.54 (Mander, 2015) and the already considerable number of social networks available is constantly increasing. The more than 2,000 social networks that are currently available are divided into approximately 145 general categories (AppAppeal, 2011). As the popularity of social media grew amongst individuals, organisations began to take note. The reach of social media and its user-centric and interactive nature has encouraged organisations to adopt this non-traditional communication channel in addition to, or as an alternative to traditional channels. This adoption of social media by organisations has taken place despite the fact that it was not originally intended for business or commercial use (Fournier & Avery, 2011:2).

When retailers, for example, discovered that a large percentage of the population used social media to discuss their interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes, they soon realised the that social media could potentially be used to determine how the public truly perceived of them as retailers and service providers (Levitt, 2010). Even though the specific way in which businesses could implement social media were unclear, organisations realised that social media could be the key to generating more personal engagement with customers, improving customer experiences and building customer relationships – the very purpose behind interactive communications that was mentioned earlier in this study (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1).

This realisation has spurred a significant movement amongst organisations to embrace the new social media phenomenon (Ramos, 2010:3). Organisations are now beginning to move away from traditional communication channels and are substituting these with social media channels, or at the very least adding social media channels to their existing traditional communication channels (Grainger, 2010:4). For example, rather than including an individual’s name in a letter or email message, organisations are now targeting specific market segments with personalised messages at the time and via the channel that the customer prefers (Alterian, 2011:1). Social media is increasingly being seen as a panacea,
granting organisations the opportunity to cultivate customer relationships in the true meaning of the term (Fournier & Avery, 2011:2).

This study has alluded to the large number of social networks available to the organisation as communication channels, which makes the selecting of the best communication channel a difficult choice. Notwithstanding the large number of social media networks available to organisations, a few do stand out, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, which are well-established and exceptionally popular:

- Facebook has been in existence since 2004 and in October 2012 it had more than one billion active users every month. This number has since increased to 1.42 billion active users (Kiss, 2012; Statista, 2015);
- Twitter was launched in 2006 and has nearly 288 million active users who together post more than 100 million ‘tweets’ per day (Lunden, 2012; Statista, 2015);
- LinkedIn was launched in 2003 and has over 347 million users in more than 200 countries worldwide (Linkedin, 2013; Statista, 2015); and
- YouTube was launched in 2005 and currently registers more than 4 billion views per day by more than 1 billion users (Smith, 2013; YouTube, 2015).

The study at hand focuses on Facebook as a potential marketing channel, primarily because it is one of the most established and largest of the social media networks currently available. In the following section, Facebook is discussed in more detail.

1.4 FACEBOOK AS A MARKETING COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Facebook, one of the world’s leading social networks, provides an online environment where individuals can add friends, exchange messages with others and build up their profiles with information, photos and videos about themselves. Anyone can register as a user at no cost and create a profile where other users can view their photos and information that includes date of birth, hometown, religious views, political outlook, relationship status, etc. Once registered, users can search for friends and acquaintances on the database and invite them to be a Facebook friend (Myers, 2011).
Uploading photos onto Facebook is one of its most popular features. Photos can be uploaded from phones, cameras or hard drives and users can tag (a link to a person’s profile) themselves and their friends on the photo, allowing others to view the relevant person’s profile by clicking on the tag. The same applies to videos. Another feature is the creation of groups, where a group of people, for example a sports team or classmates, can share information, organise events and post pictures or videos. Applications created by the Facebook developers could take up hours of the users’ time and can include anything from games like Poker to family trees (Myers, 2011).

Facebook has grown considerably during the first eight years of its existence and on 21 July 2010 it was announced that there were officially 500 million active profiles on the social network (Ostrow, 2010; Zuckerberg, 2010). Only two years later the statistics had doubled when founder Mark Zuckerberg confirmed that Facebook had one billion active users each month (Kiss, 2012). Usage is still growing steadily, with over 1.42 billion users in 2015 (Statista, 2015). A timeline of the rapid growth of the social network is shown in figure 1.2 below:

Figure 1.2: Growth in number of Facebook users

![Number of active users (million) per year](source.png)

*Source: Adapted from Hepburn, 2010; Kiss, 2012; Statista, 2015.*
Facebook has been the most successful social network to date and organisations were quick to adopt it by creating profiles (originally intended for individual use) for their businesses and inviting customers and members of the public as friends, ignoring the fact that it was a violation of the social network’s terms of service (Fournier & Avery, 2011). At the end of 2007, organisational Facebook pages were introduced to enable any organisation to create a page for their brand while complying with the terms of service (O’Neill, 2009:2).

An organisational Facebook page can be seen as a profile for a brand, which implies that it allows an organisation to do everything that an individual user can do (Earles, 2009). A Facebook page enables organisations, actors, artists, musical groups and other similar entities to interact directly with existing and prospective customers. Other benefits include real-time access to the activities on the profile pages of individual users, providing organisations with valuable market insights, as well as with the opportunity to integrate various applications and thereby increase engagement with customers (O’Neill, 2009:2).

Once a page has been launched by an organisation, any individual user can like the page to indicate his/her support of the organisation or brand and become a fan. The organisation can then communicate personally with all its fans, building on the relationship in a more direct approach and allowing consumers direct access to the organisation (Earles, 2009). Organisations around the world are making use of Facebook to form customer communities, create word-of-mouth marketing and encourage integration with their own corporate website (Hepburn, 2010). In addition to the extraordinary growth in Facebook users, the following statistics (Smith, 2015) emphasise the popularity of this social network and the success of Facebook pages:

- an average of 890 million users log on to Facebook every day;
- there are more than 50 million active organisational pages on Facebook;
- each user likes an average of 40 pages;
- there are over 150 billion friend connections, suggesting an average of 254 friends per user;
- there have been over 1.13 trillion likes since the launch of Facebook, with an average of 2.1 billion per day;
• of the 250 billion photos that have been uploaded to Facebook, an average of 350 million is added each day; and
• the average user spends up to 21 minutes per day on the social network.

The statistics mentioned above are clear indicators that organisations would be unwise to ignore social media, especially Facebook, and that they could benefit greatly from incorporating Facebook in their current communication strategies. The next section of the study will focus on the optimal implementation of Facebook pages as a marketing communication channel.

1.4.1 Effective implementation of Facebook pages

Despite the seemingly endless opportunities presented by Facebook, social networks also impose a number of barriers, which makes involvement in this new communication channel a difficult decision for organisations. The Web was created to link people together in communal webs of communication, and not to provide organisations with a new channel for communication and commerce. When organisations choose to ignore this and nevertheless enter the virtual world, the outcome is not always positive and they could easily appear unauthentic and intrusive (Fournier & Avery, 2011:194).

Organisations need to understand what their main reason is for the implementation of a Facebook page as part of their social media marketing strategy. Their end goal may be to increase sales, but the initial objective of their social media campaign should be to build trust and develop authentic relationships with the consumers of an organisation (Weber, 2009:217). Kleiner (in Hall, 2011) stipulates the use of social media as follows: ‘People go to Facebook to engage with friends; they are only interested in brands if there's something in it for them, like discounting, vouchers or exclusives.’

The complicated nature of social media presents an interesting paradox: when using social media as a communication channel, organisations are simultaneously faced with everyone – and no one – as an audience. Bearing in mind the millions of Facebook users and all the pages that they like, no one is compelled to visit a page or become a fan of any brand.
Organisations can no longer control the reach of their messages, as can be done when using traditional media; consumers have the power to decide what they want to be exposed to and when (Fournier & Avery, 2011:194).

The way in which organisations are embedded in open conversations, giving consumers an equal – if not greater – power to air their opinions, is transforming branding into an open-source activity. The danger exists that everything about an organisation that can be exposed will be exposed, forcing brands to adapt a position of full disclosure (Fournier & Avery, 2011:203). Since any consumer – past, present or potential – can access an organisation’s Facebook page, it is essential for an organisation to plan and implement the social media marketing strategy thoroughly in order to protect its reputation (Weber, 2009:217). Several studies (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1; Owyang, 2010:4; Ramos, 2010:3) have been conducted in countries around the world have found that organisations are not generally equipped to use social networks to their full advantage. This will be discussed in the section that follows.

In 2010, the Altimeter Group conducted a study by accumulating input from 34 North American vendors, agencies and experts in order to determine the success criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages as a marketing communication channel (Owyang, 2010:4). After evaluating the implementation of Facebook marketing by 30 well-established brands according to specifically categorised success criteria, it was found that half of the brands fell short of taking full advantage of the benefits offered by Facebook. Even though 70% of brands indicated aspirations to increase spending on social media (including Facebook), the majority admitted that they lacked a pragmatic approach that would ensure the optimal implement this communication channel. Organisations found it especially challenging to set expectations for Facebook users, encourage peer-to-peer interactions, foster advocacy and provide calls to action (Owyang, 2010:9).

In 2009, Forrester surveyed 351 marketing professionals at global firms based in North America (Ramos, 2010:3). The research indicated that while the number of organisations that ventured into social media exceeded Forrester’s prediction, the marketing achievements were inconsistent and uninspiring at best, leaving organisations mystified in terms of the value of social media marketing. Organisations that implement social
marketing without a specific audience and objective in mind become distracted by the available tools and consequently fail to connect with customers (Levitt, 2010). More than half of the respondents implemented poorly planned ad hoc social media campaigns, which resulted in disputes between internal employees and incoherent customer experiences and fostered mistrust, uncertainty and ridicule. Forty per cent of respondents indicated that they were experimenting with social media, learning as they go along, while another 37% admitted that they were finding it difficult to measuring the impact of social activity (Ramos, 2010:4).

The annual Alterian survey collected the attitudes of nearly 1 500 marketers and agencies with the aim of determining how well brands engage with their customers and how prepared they are to carry on with social media marketing (Alterian, 2011:2). The study indicated that while some organisations were successful at social media marketing with their first attempt, the majority of organisations had very little understanding of the communication channel. Other findings included that 75% of respondents were planning to increase their social media marketing expenditure; nearly two thirds admitted to friction occurring between IT and marketers; 70% of the respondents felt their understanding of social media conversations was very limited; and the majority confessed that they had limited analytical competency. In fact, 6% had no analytical experience, 29% had only conducted basic analysis, and 27.5% found it difficult to tie analytics back to the campaign strategy. More than 75% of respondents felt that their brand was not as engaged as it should be when considering all the relevant factors. The study concluded that organisations could use more guidance, a thorough understanding of non-traditional communication channels and a clear, strategic plan, driven by customer intelligence, to adapt their current level of engagement with customers to the individual level they expect (Alterian, 2011:27).

The Aberdeen Research Group has been studying social media for years (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1). One of their recent studies indicated that many organisations are not reaping the full benefit of social media despite its universal growth and popularity. Eighty-five per cent of respondents are including social media in their marketing campaigns, but only 44% are capable of quantifying their efforts with useful results. Over 50% of organisations have only started experimenting with social media within the past three
years. The Aberdeen Research Group also found that numerous organisations are utilising social media without a plan in place: 26% are relying on intuition; 24% do not have any strategy in place; and 6% of do have a suitable social media strategy in place (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1).

Relatively few studies have been conducted on the implementation of social media and Facebook in South Africa so far, but one study in particular did provide some very interesting answers to questions in this regard (Patricios, 2008:103). A survey that included 290 South African respondents involved in advertising, media or public relations organisations was conducted with the aim of determining how South African organisations utilise social media as part of their marketing activities. The findings indicated that respondents have been slow to implement social media as a marketing tool because of a lack of knowledge, a lack of resources and a preference for traditional push communication channels. The majority of the respondents believed that their target markets use social media, and this communication channel could therefore be used to obtain customer feedback, launch new products or services, post advertisements and have conversations with customers. Finally, 62% of respondents indicated that they would utilise social media more if they understood it better (Patricios, 2008:100).

The above discussion leads to the question as to what the criteria for an effective Facebook page should be. Is there a specific set of success criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages as a marketing communication channel? This question leads to the research problem, as discussed in the following section.

1.5 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Organisations are increasingly including social media as part of their communication strategies (Grainger, 2010:3). However, it appears from research undertaken elsewhere (Alterian, 2011:27; Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1; Owyang, 2010:9; Patricios, 2008:100; Ramos, 2010:4) that organisations generally lack knowledge on how best to use social media and especially Facebook as an effective communication channel. It has been suggested by researchers such as Owyang (2010) that such organisations may need a set
of criteria to guide them through the process of using Facebook optimally. This shortcoming also appears to be true of South African organisations (Patricios, 2008:100). The research problem is thus that no scientific guidelines exist for the effective implementation of Facebook as a marketing communication channel in the South African context.

1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

Given the above research problem, i.e. the lack of clear guidelines for the effective implementation of a Facebook marketing strategy, the aim of this study is to identify the criteria and accompanying guidelines for the optimal implementation of a Facebook page for marketing purposes. A variety of sources will be used to draw up a list of possible criteria, which will then be sorted and condensed by social media experts from South African online marketing organisations. The final set of criteria could then be used by South African organisations with little experience in the social media industry to improve their social media marketing activities.

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study can be unpacked into a number of specific research objectives as follows:

**Primary objective:**
- to develop a set of criteria for the optimal implementation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes of South African organisations.

**Secondary objectives:**
- to identify possible guidelines for Facebook marketing by consulting the available literature; and
- to have the abovementioned guidelines categorised by industry experts by way of an online card-sorting exercise in order to compile a final set of criteria.
1.8 PROPOSED RESEARCH DESIGN

The proposed study will be exploratory in nature. This type of research is usually conducted when ambiguous situations need to be clarified or when a possibility of new business opportunities needs to be analysed, making it an appropriate research method (Burns, & Bush, 2010:56). The study will include a mixed method research approach.

1.8.1 Methodology

This study includes a literature review that analyses the current situation in social media marketing. The literature review will aim to determine the level of efficiency of optimal Facebook marketing by South African marketers with a view to compiling a list of possible guidelines that could be followed when using Facebook for marketing purposes. The findings from the literature review will be applied to gather data by using a quantitative method comprising of a card-sorting methodology. The data gathered will be analysed using cluster analysis. In the card-sorting methodology, the list of guidelines identified during the literature review will be presented to social media industry experts, who will be requested to sort the items into categories in order to reduce the list to a final set of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes in South Africa.

1.8.2 Sampling

The proposed study will implement non-probability sampling. Even though probability sampling has the benefit of reducing sampling bias, it may not always be the ideal sampling method. The proposed study has limited objectives, which makes non-probability sampling a suitable method.

The sample for this study will include a group of social media experts. To be deemed an expert, the respondents have to conform to specific criteria. Judgment sampling will therefore be implemented, during which the participants will be selected based on criteria of inclusivity and exclusivity.
The inclusivity criteria will require participants to be professionals in the field of social media marketing. Each participant should have personal experience with Facebook pages, in other words, he or she should already have created and managed at least one Facebook page for an organisation. The participants should also be willing and capable of contributing to the study. The exclusivity criteria would rule out those sample members who do not have enough time or the appropriate communication skills to participate in the study. Should a participant not have access to the facilities needed to communicate with the researcher, or should a participant be unable to provide feedback in a timely manner at any point of the research, he or she will also be excluded from the study.

As there is no conclusive definition for ‘social media marketing experts’, it is difficult to identify the exact population of the proposed study, which will be all the social media marketing experts in the country. A group of social media marketing experts will therefore be identified and contacted by consulting a business directory. The researcher will contact 200 social media marketing experts from a business directory and invite them to participate in the study. However, it is believed that 30 respondents will be sufficient for the purpose of the study (Tustin, Lighthelm, Martins & Van Wyk, 2005:360).

1.8.3 Limitations

There may be some aspects of the proposed study that could cause uncertainty regarding the reliability of the findings, or cause difficulties during the research process. The fact that the study is exploratory in nature implies that the intention of the study is not to provide conclusive evidence on a subject. Additional research on the topic may therefore be required in the future. In terms of methodology, non-probability sampling may appear inferior to probability sampling, where each member of the population has a known, non-zero probability of being selected; but as the aim of the proposed study is not to generalise the findings, non-probability sampling is deemed appropriate.

Complications could also arise with regard to the data collection as there is no guarantee that the selected industry experts will respond in an appropriate and timely manner. Certain organisations have policies that prevent employees from taking part in external
research studies. Other participants may not have the required experience or sufficient time to respond to the questionnaires. This should be considered by the researcher before selecting participants. As another precautionary step, the researcher will invite 200 industry experts to participate in the study, even though only 30 respondents are needed to validate the results. A positive response rate of 21% is therefore required.

1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

1.9.1 Chapter 1

The first chapter of the proposed study includes the introduction, a discussion of the background for the topic and explanations of all the methodological decisions made by the researcher.

1.9.2 Chapter 2

Chapter 2 will focus on a detailed discussion of the concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC). The importance of the integration of various communication channels will be discussed, focusing on the difference between traditional and non-traditional media and the benefits of each.

1.9.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 will commence with an introduction to social media, after which it will focus on Facebook as a social network. The history of its development will be discussed in detail, followed by the different uses of Facebook and specifically the marketing opportunities available through the use of this channel. A list of guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages, as identified in the literature review, will be explored together with examples of South African Facebook pages that are viewed as being successful.
1.9.4 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 will contain an extensive discussion of the methodology followed during the study and motivations for all the decisions made.

1.9.5 Chapter 5

The results and findings of the empirical research will be reported in Chapter 5. Complications encountered throughout the study will be discussed and solutions will be explained.

1.9.6 Chapter 6

The final chapter of the study will contain a discussion of the conclusions made, based on the research findings, and recommendations for possible future studies on the topic. The study will hereby be concluded.

1.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a background to the study is provided. The importance of social media is discussed, followed by an introduction to the various marketing communication channels available to marketers. Social media as a marketing communication channel is explained, with focus on Facebook as the largest social network available. The aim of the study is then discussed, followed by an outline of the research objectives. The proposed research design is summarised, including the methodology, sampling and limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter outline is provided, concluding the chapter.
CHAPTER 2

2 SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

While the first chapter introduced the study and highlighted the range of alternative communication channels made available by the advent of non-traditional media, Chapter 2 takes a step back and introduces integrated marketing communication (IMC) in the context of social media and communication.

The chapter begins by defining IMC and suggesting possible benefits of and barriers to the IMC approach. The evolution of IMC is discussed from its origin to its current state. The various aspects of the IMC approach are then further examined by outlining the marketing activities involved and the various communication channels available to contemporary marketers, and ultimately explaining how the approach is implemented. The study then shifts its focus from IMC to social networks as an alternative communication channel, emphasising their advantages, disadvantages and current use for marketing purposes. Finally, a few of the most widely used social networks will be compared in terms of usage to support the decision to focus the study on Facebook.

2.2 DEFINING INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

IMC has been defined in many different and often contradictory ways. During the early 1990s, IMC was curtly defined as ‘one sight; one sound; one voice’ or ‘the seamless marketing communication approach’ (Dickinson-Delaporte, Beverland & Lindgreen, 2009:1858). A more practical definition suggests that IMC combines various marketing activities and communication channels in such a way that the strengths of certain
communication channels compensate for the weaknesses of others (Luck & Moffatt, 2009:317).

Although semantically different, the various definitions all imply that an organisation should ideally coordinate its entire communication strategy across all consumer touch-points to form one consistent brand image (Smith, 2010:6). One seamless message must be communicated through each interaction with a consumer to foster a positive experience, build trust and expand the relationship (Christensen, Firat & Cornelissen, 2009:208).

From the various definitions and their wide implementation it can be deduced that an IMC approach could benefit organisations in many ways. However, it should be noted that while many academics encourage the implementation of IMC, there are certain barriers that could prevent the successful implementation of this approach. The most distinctive benefits and barriers of the strategy are discussed below.

2.2.1 Benefits of and barriers affecting Integrated Marketing Communication

The implementation of an IMC approach enables an organisation to combine all communications towards a coherent and synergistic strategy, instead of communicating weak and inconsistent messages at unsystematic times (Bærug & Harro-Loit, 2012:174). The integration and consistency of each message sent by an organisation and embodied in an IMC approach enables consumers to interpret and remember the message with less difficulty (Rehman & Ibrahim, 2011:188). IMC is also a cost-effective approach to build consumer relationships while ensuring a high return on investment (ROI) (Wang, Wu & Yuan, 2009:222). The implementation of an IMC approach can accentuate brands in a cluttered marketplace and highlight their advantages to current and prospective consumers. Through these benefits, IMC can result in greater brand awareness and sustained consumer loyalty (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011:1466).

Potential barriers to the effective implementation of IMC include, among others, the lack of commitment of all employees: the corporate and marketing objectives of the organisation should support each other and all employees, from tactical to senior level, should strive
towards the same organisational culture (Kerr & Drennan, 2009:8). Furthermore, the segmentation of markets may result in organisations outsourcing their marketing functions to various companies simultaneously, employing one agency for direct marketing, another for advertising, and yet another for public relations or other marketing aspects. It is likely that the cooperation between the various agencies could cause inconsistent communication (Torp, 2009:194). Organisations must find a way to successfully link various functions and departments to promote integration. The absence of open and positive communication between employees or departments could lead to conflict, and to counter this, the coordination of tasks and duties should be strategically planned (Einwiller & Boenigk, 2011:2).

When reviewing the definitions, benefits and barriers, it becomes clear that many organisations are likely to benefit from abandoning a strategy of focusing on single elements of the marketing communication mix and rather implementing an IMC approach, in spite of its negative aspects (Vantamay, 2011:1). The overall benefit of an IMC approach is greater than the convenience and simplicity of only using one marketing communication element per market segment. In the following section, the evolution of the IMC approach will be discussed.

### 2.2.2 The evolution of Integrated Marketing Communication

The origin of IMC can be traced back to the late twentieth century (Ármannsdóttir, 2010:15). It may have been implemented minimally at first, but individuals in the marketing field recognised the positive outcome of integration as early as in the 1930s and started to encourage cooperation between separate marketing activities (Kerr, Schultz, Patti & Kim, 2008:6). Even though marketers soon realised its significance, comprehensive research on the subject only appeared towards the end of the 1980s and the first book, titled *Integrated Marketing Communications*, was published in 1993 (Gurău, 2008:170).

The multiplication of media channels that arrived with the advent of the internet and social media in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries significantly influenced the need for more integration and coordination of communication channels, resulting in even more
emphasis on IMC (Okazaki, 2012:478). Marketers now have a wide, evolving range of old (traditional) and new (non-traditional) communication channels and technologies to choose from. However, this abundance of communication channels resulted in a more fundamental – and also a more difficult – requirement to portray a unique, consistent image to all stakeholder groups (Smith & Zook, 2011:4).

To elaborate on this point, it is essential, as more communication channels become available, to ensure that a common message is consistently carried over to customers. Since each channel is different from the rest, this is likely to be a challenging management task that will require understanding and guidance (Keller, 2009:823). The activities and media surrounding this challenging approach will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 THE INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH

As discussed above, the IMC approach entails the strategic coordination of multiple marketing activities through various communication channels to form one cohesive, consistent message about the organisation and its offerings (Hsu, Chiu & Tang, 2010:228).

Egan (2007:16) simplifies the IMC approach by making a distinction between marketing activities and the communication channels that convey marketing messages. Marketing activities are described as the actions marketers take or the processes through which they communicate with their target market, while communication channels are the specific media forms used to transmit the message (Hughes & Fill, 2007:45). Owing to their different characteristics and specific roles, marketing activities and communication channels should not be confused with one another.

When reviewing the literature available on this issue, it seems that there are still certain areas of disagreement in terms of how marketing activities should be categorised (Keller, 2009:141). Some authors prefer to identify only a few distinct activities, each including more functions and tasks, while others identify many activities that are all very specific. To address this issue, Table 2.1 was compiled to present a synopsis of the opinions of 10
different authors, numbered 1 to 10 (as seen in the table below), indicating the marketing activities acknowledged by each author.

Table 2.1: Categorisation of marketing activities

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<td>Merchandising</td>
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Sources:
1. Keller, 2009:141
2. Kotler & Keller, 2006:19
3. Rehman & Ibrahim, 2011:189
4. Ármannsdóttir, 2010:23
5. Vantamay, 2011:1
6. Frey & Rudloff, 2010:3
9. Mayo & Hausler, 2010

It can be derived from Table 2.1 that the marketing activities acknowledged by most authors include advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotions, direct marketing, non-traditional media and sponsorships. Since only two authors suggested word-of-mouth marketing and merchandising respectively, these will not be acknowledged as marketing activities in the present study.
When considering the table and the increasingly important role of the web in marketing, it would seem that aspects surrounding non-traditional media are frequently recognised as a separate marketing activity. Even though many marketers view it as a marketing activity, it can also be argued that non-traditional media should rather be categorised as a communication channel as it is in effect a channel through which marketers can communicate with their target market, and not necessarily a separate marketing activity (Egan, 2007:16). For the remainder of the study, non-traditional media will be categorised as a communication channel and the marketing activities adopted in the study will be deemed to include advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotions, direct marketing and sponsorships.

With regard to the means through which marketers reach their consumers, the literature suggests agreement concerning the communication channels available to marketers for the transmission of their messages. The options are normally categorised as print media, broadcast media, outdoor media and non-traditional media.

To provide an overview of the two aspects of the IMC approach discussed above – marketing activities and communication channels – the researcher proposes a diagram (figure 2.1) depicting a more holistic IMC approach. The IMC approach ultimately includes the strategic analysis, choice, implementation and control of any or all of the marketing activities (as listed on the left side of the diagram), communicated to the relevant target market through any or all of the communication channels available to marketers (as listed on the right side of the diagram) (Herstein, Mitki & Jaffe, 2008:361). Each activity and communication channel was numbered as they will be discussed in the specified sections that follow.
The challenge facing marketers lies in selecting the right mix of marketing activities and integrating these with the most suitable communication channels to form a marketing strategy that achieves its specific objectives within the budget limitation, thereby positively positioning the brand and leading to sales (Chitty, Barker, Valos & Shimp, 2011:12). The following sections will focus on the two aspects of the IMC approach, i.e. the marketing activities and marketers as numbered in figure 2.1 above, and the available communication channels.

### 2.3.1 Marketing activities of the IMC approach

In this section, each of the marketing activities available to the marketer in the IMC, process as listed in figure 2.1, is briefly defined, highlighting and showing its relationship with non-traditional media and especially social media, which is the main focus of the
study. As these activities do not form the main focus of the study, the discussion will be brief.

2.3.1.1 Advertising

Advertising, as part of the IMC approach (see figure 2.1), is generally defined as ‘... any paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor’ (Müller, Alt & Michelis, 2011:3). The function of advertising is to inform, persuade and remind consumers about an organisation to add value and to support the organisation’s other communication efforts (Ahmed, 2011:41). While advertising has in the past utilised all types of traditional media, including broadcast (television and radio), print (magazines, newspapers, etc.) and outdoor communication channels (Frey & Rudloff, 2010:4), the constantly growing success of non-traditional communication channels, such as the Web, mobile and social media, for advertising purposes has led to a decline in the use of traditional media channels for these purposes (Moody, 2010:5).

2.3.1.2 Public relations

Public relations (PR) refer to how an organisation builds and maintains positive relationships with stakeholders through the creation of favourable consumer perceptions, a good corporate image and timely responses to unfavourable rumours, stories or events that could damage its reputation (Du Plessis, Van Heerden & Cook, 2010:6). The interactive nature of non-traditional media opens new doors for PR practitioners as it provides easy access to consumers and the opportunity of a balanced, two-way dialogue with customers, which is something that was not easily achieved in the past (Grunig & Grunig, 2011:43). Social media influences the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders by changing the way they communicate to a faster, more convenient and in many cases more efficient method (DiStaso, McCorkindale & Wright, 2011:325). At the same time, social media heightens the risk of reputation damage as users are free to generate and distribute unverified information through social networks, which could negatively affect an organisation’s image (Aula, 2010:45). Refer to figure 2.1 for an illustration on how PR fits into the IMC approach.
2.3.1.3 Sales promotion

Sales promotion is defined as a marketing activity that makes it possible to reach specific target markets through price cuts, discounts, coupons or competitions in the hope of influencing their buying behaviour and also forms part of the marketing activities as portrayed in figure 2.1 (Joseph, 2008:823). Sales promotion is mostly implemented to increase short-term sales by persuading consumers to buy a product sooner rather than later because of the added value offered for a limited time (Ramanathan & Dhar, 2010:550). Social media is an ideal medium for sales promotion activities, since approximately 40% of consumers communicate with brands through social media with the intention of receiving special offers or discounts (Meltwater, 2015).

2.3.1.4 Direct marketing

Another marketing activity illustrated in figure 2.1 is direct marketing, which is defined as any direct communication to a consumer with the aim of achieving an immediate planned behavioural response while recording the interaction, analysing it and storing the findings on a database to be retrieved and used in the future (Guido, Prete, Miraglia & De Mare, 2011:992). Direct marketing includes several key elements that distinguish it from other marketing strategies: it is interactive in nature, implements a variety of communication channels, stimulates measurable behaviour and utilises a database (Koekemoer, 2011:160). While marketers initially made use of traditional mail, catalogues and the telephone for direct marketing, the recent increase in the number of online communication channels available enables them to make use of many more communication channels to target consumers (Battiato, Farinella, Giuffrida, Sismeiro & Tribulato, 2010:143). A study by the Direct Marketing Association suggests that 72% of marketers are expecting more innovation when using direct mail, for example in the form of response mechanisms that can be tracked (Direct Marketing Association, 2015).

2.3.1.5 Personal selling

Personal selling is defined as an interpersonal process during which the seller determines the needs of prospective buyers and aims to satisfy them by suggesting the appropriate
products or services and ultimately making a sale (Cant et al, 2010:349). It also forms part of the marketing activities depicted in figure 2.1. An organisation’s sales force is often the most important link with consumers and an incompetent sales force can cause a perfectly conceived and implemented marketing campaign to fail (Clow & Baack, 2007:338). The increasingly important role of the Web has a considerable influence on the process of personal selling; instead of the sales force being responsible for identifying prospective buyers, many consumers now find products and services they need online, after which the sales force should provide a supportive customer service to close the sale (Young, 2011). Information technology is evolving salespeople from the emotionless, hard-selling employees of the past to caring employees who will attempt to build a relationship with customers and determine their needs before forcing products on them with the only aim being to make a sale.

2.3.1.6 Sponsorships

A relatively modern promotional tactic known as sponsoring occurs when one party (the sponsor) builds a connotation with another party (the one being sponsored, or sponsee), enabling the sponsor to receive related promotional benefits and to be associated with the sponsee in the minds of the audience (O’Reilly, 2012). Please see figure 2.1 for an illustration. The sponsee could be an individual, in most cases a celebrity; an event including anything from a sport or some form of entertainment to art or exhibitions; or an organisation, for example a non-profit organisation (Madill & O’Reilly, 2010:133). Sponsorships have the potential to extend the impact of other marketing communication efforts and make key communications more relevant by providing a positive environment full of open and receptive consumers, for example at an event (Coppetti, Wentzel, Tomczak & Henkel, 2009:18). A relatively new area in sponsorship as a marketing activity is social media sponsorship. This emerging word-of-mouth strategy allows an organisation to sponsor a social media publisher, who would promote or review a product or service through social media channels (Quinn, Kivijarv, Ames, Kallay & Velez, 2010:8). A study conducted by Performance Research Experience indicated that consumers prefer online sponsorships to online advertising as it is ‘more trustworthy, credible and in tune with their interests’ (Laohoo, 2012).
As explained, these marketing activities (advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling and sponsorships) can be implemented through any one, or a combination of the available communication channels. In the next section, the second part of the IMC process is outlined, namely the communication channels available to the marketer, as shown in figure 2.1.

2.3.2 Communication channels in the IMC process

While implementing the various marketing activities discussed above, marketers make use of different media forms or communication channels (see figure 2.1). This study divides the communication channels into the traditional channels used for decades, including print, broadcast and outdoor media, and other non-traditional communication channels. In this study, non-traditional communication channels refer to any form of interactive media, including ‘new media’, ‘digital’, ‘online’, ‘technology-based’ channels, or ‘contemporary’ channels. In the following section, the various communication channels will be discussed and compared by briefly highlighting their main benefits.

2.3.2.1 Print media

Since their arrival in the late nineteenth century, and until the introduction of the broadcasting media, the most commonly used forms of print media, newspapers and magazines, have dominated the mass communication market and even today they still maintain their position as effective communication channels (Nyilasy, King, Reid & McDonald, 2011:167). While print media provide marketers with a variety of benefits – the most important of which is that they reach consumers through a combination of visual and verbal communication as they include both text and images – the Web and other new avatars of traditional print have had a noticeable effect on the popularity of print media (Jacob, 2011:56).

Print media may be viewed by consumers as a more credible source than non-traditional media, but a paper-based advertisement cannot be interactive and does not allow marketers to record the immediate response of consumers, as do most forms of non-
traditional media (Wakolbinger, Denk & Oberecker, 2009:361). It seems that print media is currently preferred by some consumers while others favour non-traditional media, depending on what it is used for. Marketers are therefore encouraged to use both print and social media in marketing campaigns to ensure an optimal effect (Halek, 2014). Print media, among other traditional communication channels, is depicted in figure 2.1 in the context of an IMC approach.

2.3.2.2 Broadcast media

Broadcast media includes television and radio, which can both be very effective as the visual and sound dimensions appeal to the senses – assuming that the audience is paying attention (Erhun & Erhun, 2002:18). With the increasing number of television channels and radio stations to choose from, the audience and listener numbers of each are consistently decreasing, which leads to a shift in media spending from broadcast media to other communication channels that focus more on the individual, for example social media (Fillbeck, Zhao, Tompkins & Chong, 2009:253). Motivated by economic realities, organisations are increasingly focusing marketing campaigns on less expensive and more targeted non-traditional communication channels instead of using broadcast media (Arnold, 2011:4).

The popularity and usage of the Web as a marketing tool is gaining on that of television and radio. A study conducted by Pew Research Center (2011) indicated that television viewership decreased from 82% in 2002 to 66% in 2010, and radio audiences decreased from 21% in 2002 to 16% in 2010 while Web audiences increased from 14% in 2002 to 41% in 2010. A more recent study suggests that television viewership is still declining, and that viewers are fewer than ever before due to a multitude of online viewing options (Luckerson, 2014). Radio audiences worldwide have decreased by an additional 13.3% since 2010 (Radio Research Consortium, 2013). Broadcast media, among other traditional communication channels, is depicted in figure 2.1 in the context of an IMC approach.
2.3.2.3 Outdoor media

Owing to the trend among consumers to spend more time outside their homes than inside, marketers need to improve on the traditional outdoor media campaigns by utilising, among other things, billboards, transit advertising, street-furniture advertising and banner advertising (Reid, 2007:1). While traditional outdoor media is still a cost effective communication channel for a brand to use to maintain a long-term presence, consumers are ready to interact and engage with brands, opening doors for digital outdoor media (Mawditt in Snoad, 2011:1).

The consistently evolving nature of outdoor media technology is allowing marketers to create sophisticated user experiences, guiding consumers to engage with the brand through this and other communication channels (Snoad, 2011:1). Technology is even eliminating one of the outdoor media’s most enduring criticisms – its ability to measure effectiveness – through eye-tracking devices that record consumers’ eye movements to determine how many views a campaign attracted (Ateknea Solutions Hungary Kft, 2015). Outdoor media and other traditional communication channels are depicted in figure 2.1 in the context of an IMC approach.

2.3.2.4 Non-traditional communication channels

It has been stated that the current decade has the potential of producing more technological developments than were produced in the entire past century (Constantinides, 2008:215). As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.2), no single general term or definition is yet available for this collection of new, interactive or technology-based media forms (Peters, 2009:15). For the purpose of this study, the term ‘non-traditional communication channel’ (as depicted in figure 2.1) will be used to refer to any recently developed form of technology-based media, including organisational websites, search-engine marketing, online advertisements, email marketing, blogs, podcasts, affiliate marketing, viral marketing, mobile marketing on cellular devices and social media marketing. Some of the most frequently used non-traditional communication channels are shown in figure 2.2.
The non-traditional communication channels shown in figure 2.2 above have become a major source of competition for traditional mass media with an increasing number of organisations including them in their marketing communication strategies (D’Agostino, 2011:307). The information era has introduced numerous new communication channels that allow interactive and immediate dialogue between an organisation and its consumers (Kirchhoff, 2009:9). Non-traditional media is more affordable than traditional media, it encourages interactivity, and it builds relationships between organisations and their consumers (Salman, Ibrahim, Abdullah, Mustaffa & Mahbob, 2011:4). It also provides marketers with the opportunity to reach target markets intensively and quickly at a fraction of the traditional advertising costs (Owen & Humphrey, 2009:4).

Source: Adapted from Crampton, Giesen and Stauffer, 2012:23; Cone Inc, 2010:2
After recognising the far-reaching impact of the Web and considering the large amount of opportunities that non-traditional communication channels have to offer, organisations have begun to realise the importance of an online presence (Zachry, 2009:11). The implementation of non-traditional communication channels resulted in websites being more dynamic and allowing two-way communication between consumers and organisations, an occurrence referred to as Web 2.0 (Banerjee, 2008:2). The increasing number of organisations incorporating non-traditional communication channels in their marketing strategies poses a competitive threat to those who are against their implementation (Bulearca & Bulearca, 2009:47). Organisations can therefore not afford to underestimate the influence that non-traditional media will have on their strategies, job policies, marketing communications and operations (Levitt, 2010). They will have to anticipate the changing role of the consumer in this era and find ways to make optimal use of the available communication channels (Luck, Beaton & Moffatt, 2010:2).

The unavoidable role of non-traditional communication channels in the lives of individuals and organisations motivated the researcher to focus this study on the marketing opportunities that they offer. According to the relevant literature, social media – and more specifically social networks – is playing a more remarkable role than any the other emerging non-traditional communication channels (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:59). For this reason, social networks will be discussed in detail in the next section. The advantages and disadvantages of social networks will be highlighted and their implementation in an organisational context will be considered.

2.4 SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Having explained the IMC process and contextualised social networks within the IMC process, this section focuses on social networks in more detail. In the traditional sense, ‘non-virtual’ social networks have been in existence for as long as humankind in the form of communities, tribes or small groups of people with similar interests, lifestyles or circumstances (Van Dijk, 2006:21). Many changes in civilisation, for example the popularity of television, families where both the parents work full time, and the constant race for success, have made it difficult for people to spend time with the members of these
non-virtual social networks to discuss their hobbies and interests. For this reason, people were anxious to form part of online social networks where they can – virtually – become part of a common-interest group, but ‘meet’ at a time and place that suits them, while still attending to their busy schedules in the meantime (Weber, 2009:195).

Modern-day, non-traditional social networks have not been around for long, but their growth has been exponential, especially in the past decade (Cha, 2009:77). The initial online communities originated during the late 1970’s and evolved quite significantly over the years (Gordon, 2009:113; Lake, 2009) as illustrated below:

1. Email, still one of the most commonly used communication forms, was developed in 1971.
2. Send an email to more than one address first became possible when universities and government institutions gained access to the internet in 1975 through MSGGROUP, and emailing became much more user-friendly with the introduction of LISTSERV in 1986.
3. Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), which was accessed through telephone lines and maintained by an operator, was established in 1978.
4. Commercial online services provided discussion boards and real-time chat in the 1980s: CompuServe’s CB Simulator was introduced in 1980, Internet Relay Chat in 1988 and America Online’s (AOL’s) chat rooms in 1989.
5. The introduction of the World Wide Web 1991 led to the development of thousands of websites and online communities.
6. The online communities of the twenty-first century include the ability to stream video and share photographs, numerous social networks, blogs, wikis, virtual games and much more that users may not even be aware of. The first social networks included SixDegrees.com (established in 1997) and Friendster (established in 2002), and currently individuals can create their own social networks through ‘build your own network’ services such as Ning.

Elaborating on the background of social networks as discussed above, the following section includes a definition of social networks, a discussion of their advantages and disadvantages, and examples of how they are currently implemented in the marketing field.
2.4.1 Defining social networks

The general aim of modern-day social networks is to enable users to create personal user-profiles from which they can build up virtual social or professional networks and share content with others on a particular network through online conversations (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009:92). Social networks differ, but in most cases a person's profile is a collection of information segments that identifies the person and includes, for example, the user's name – actual name or pseudonym – and background information such as his/her birthday, hometown, religion, ethnicity, education and occupation. Most social networks also allow users to upload photos or videos onto their profiles to create a more personal connection between users.

Individuals use social networks for various reasons, but mostly as a means to connect and communicate with family and friends (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010:46). The information they share often includes status updates regarding day-to-day activities, personal opinions, inspirational quotes, photos, videos, and/or website links (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2012:3). Individuals use social networks as a form of entertainment and are rarely aware of the disadvantages it may hold. The benefits and advantages of social network usage by individuals, as well as the associated dangers, are discussed below.

Over and above the benefits of having a portal available to communicate instantly with friends and family and being able to permanently save media (photographs and videos) on the Web, the use of social networks also offer many educational benefits. Communicating through social networks provides individuals with the opportunity to gain experience in the functioning of a community and develop their social skills as part of a peer group. It can be used to organise events and raise awareness for a cause, or to debate interesting topics on a local or international level. Individuals can develop skills that would be of high value in the workplace, including the management of an online presence and the ability to interact effectively and adapt to non-traditional technologies or environments. Social networks allow users to collaborate with others in group format, while teaching them about self-representation on the Web (Cosmato, 2015).
As with any other form of technology, there are risks involved with the use of social networks. The drawbacks of using social networks includes the following: Children are at risk of being exposed to illegal or anti-social behaviour in the form of inappropriate media posted online, or predatory adults using social networks to contact under-aged individuals for obscure reasons. Many individuals are unaware that the information, messages and media posted on social networks are not always private – it could be accessed by a wide audience, including a possible employer who could easily be put off by risqué pictures or inappropriate posts. If an individual is not careful, confidential personal information could be accessed by a person who poses a threat, which could have harmful results (Cosmato, 2015).

While individuals use social networks mainly to socialise online, organisations are finding ways to intrude into this virtual world and benefit from their consumers’ social activities. Social networks serve as new communication channels through which consumers can be reached, assuming that organisations anticipate and manage the challenges that go with it. The advantages and disadvantages of social networks faced by organisations will be highlighted in the following section.

2.4.2 Organisational advantages and disadvantages of social network usage

From an organisational viewpoint, it would be unwise to disregard the marketing opportunities arising with the ever-increasing amount of social networks available (Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2009:102). By creating an online presence and, more specifically, a presence on social networks, organisations are able to communicate with their consumers, allowing loyal consumers to form voluntary communities around their brand while engaging with both the brand and other consumers (Russell, 2010:47). While social media as such may not provide immediate, measurable opportunities for increasing revenues, it does provide organisations with many other advantages that outweigh the disadvantages associated with social media marketing, as discussed below (Barthelemy, Bethell, Christiansen, Jarsvall & Koinis, 2011:29).
The numerous advantages of social network usage for marketing purposes can differ, depending on the type of organisation, the marketing objectives, the duration of the campaign, the value of the social network in question and other similar factors. Literature suggests that social networks offer the following advantages (Bullas, 2011; Cant et al., 2010:400):

- Social networks provide authentic communication with consumers in the sense that the information conveyed by the marketer is not necessarily planned ahead of time. Except for a rough schedule of when to communicate and which main points to bring across, marketers must respond to communication from consumers spontaneously as necessary, making communications more trustworthy.

- Social networks offer transparency of a brand’s strategy, either through the social network itself or by leading the consumer to the organisation’s website. Increasing traffic is a crucial result of almost any marketing activity. The King III report requires South African organisations to disclose accurate information about their finances, ownership and business prospects, and social networks can be used for this purpose with the aim of building trust with consumers in an environment in which they are comfortable.

- The immediacy of social networks allows organisations to make any information available to consumers in a matter of seconds (or in ‘real time’), thus increasing awareness of the organisation and enabling organisations to respond speedily to problems and opportunities. The information available on an organisation’s social network profile can be kept relevant and current and organisations can even respond to the opinions of their consumers minutes after they were posted online.

- Participation makes social networks effective. Consumers can engage with each other or with organisations about their perceptions, wants and needs. Organisations that encourage participation indicate that they are humble and want to engage with their consumers, while at the same time gathering information and learning to understand their target market.

- Social networks allow unprecedented levels of data collection and analysis to an increased depth, breadth and scale, as most social network users are likely to share any strong emotions towards brands on their profiles. By understanding this data, organisations can stay informed about positive and negative opinions of the brand,
identify possible new opportunities, gain an understanding of consumer perceptions and develop marketing campaigns accordingly.

- Social networks connect consumers with organisations in such a way that through the right strategy, information can be transferred between the two instantaneously over vast areas. This can lead to a more favourable perception of the brand.

As with any other communication channel, social networks also hold a number of disadvantages to organisations when used as part of a marketing campaign (Balengo, 2010:5; Jones & Swain, 2012:30; Ramos, 2010:3). These are:

- It can be very challenging to encourage the target audience to participate and engage with a brand. Consumers visit social networks to interact with each other, but are usually only interested in communicating with a brand if they can benefit from the interaction.

- Social networking is not an activity to be taken lightly; constant observation of communications with consumers is required. Organisations may find it difficult to find the balance between communicating enough to indicate involvement, and communicating too much and becoming an irritation to consumers. As in the case of traditional media, the effectiveness of utilising social networks for business purposes will depend to a large extent on the time and effort spent on the initiative.

- Organisations may find it difficult to convert followers or fans into loyal, paying customers. Most social networks do not offer e-commerce opportunities as of yet, which leaves organisations with no choice but to convince consumers to purchase products through alternative channels.

- Senior management in various organisations may not realise the importance of social media and may not be willing to provide funds or other resources for social media marketing activities. Marketers could therefore find it difficult to implement effective social networking strategies from within their respective organisations.

- While social networks offer a portal to millions of (current and future) consumers, the typical profile of each social network user may differ dramatically. Since the specific target audience of an organisation may not even use social networks, it is important to gather enough information about the target audience on a social network before including it in a marketing campaign.
Even though marketers encourage consumers to interact on their Facebook page, there is a considerable risk involved in allowing any individual to express an opinion in a virtual space that represents the brand. The brand is exposed to the ‘voice of the consumer’, which may not always put the organisation in good light and could possibly cause much harm to the organisation’s reputation.

Over and above these disadvantages, literature indicates that the implementation of social media as part of a marketing campaign holds one very detrimental risk, namely a lack of experience and expertise (Slover-Linett & Stoner, 2010:8). Marketers have grown accustomed to more traditional forms of communication where a message could be developed at a convenient pace and broadcasted to the public without the anticipation of interactive communication and the added pressure of the speed at which information travels via the web (Paton, Bamidis, Eysenbach, Hansen & Cabrer, 2011:2). Even though so many organisations are implementing social media in their marketing communication strategies, it appears as if the majority may still be unsure about how to implement the medium effectively and how to measure the return on investments (Balegno, 2010:5). Further details, as well as examples of this situation, will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.3 Limitations in the implementation of social networks

This section provides an overview of how social networks are currently being used for marketing purposes in many situations. Various studies have been conducted on this matter – many with similar outcomes. The fact that social networks are still a new form of communication between organisations and their consumers results in several limitations for marketers, some of which will be discussed below.

In 2010, the Altimeter Group (Owyang, 2010:4) conducted research to gain insight into how effectively organisations are implementing social media, and specifically Facebook, for marketing purposes. The research revealed that half of the brands investigated did not implement social media optimally. Marketers could not fully leverage the communication channel to encourage word-of-mouth advertising, which is one of the main features of
social media. The Altimeter Group suggests that organisations do not have enough experience with non-traditional media and require a roadmap or a clear set of guidelines on how to make optimal use of this communication channel.

Research conducted by Forrester (Ramos, 2010:2) supported this outlook with a study aimed at determining whether the implementation of social media will hold value for marketers. The results indicated that very few marketers understand how to create a measurable impact through the implementation of social media. Several organisations are implementing impromptu campaigns without organisational structure, which leads to conflict between internal teams and an incoherent customer experience, and possibly creates more damage to their reputation than anything else.

Yet another study by Aberdeen (Belkin & Ramers, 2010:1) indicated that social media marketing has ample room for improvement. Research suggested that while 85% of retailers are implementing social media, only 44% have the ability to quantify their input and measure the return on their investments. More than half of the respondents are unfamiliar with social media, having implemented it for the first time during the past three to five years. A mere 6% of respondents have a premeditated strategy in place, which clearly indicates a need for guidelines for the effective implementation of a social media strategy.

The Alterian Group (Alterian, 2011:2) conducts an annual survey with regards to brand engagement through the use of social media. The results provided in 2011 indicated that social media usage is constantly expanding, with more than half of their respondents planning to increase their marketing budget and almost three quarters of the respondents anticipating an increase in social media expenditure. Regrettably, the majority of these respondents have very little knowledge of the topic, and especially of how to measure their social media investments. Marketers are also experiencing difficulties in creating an integrated marketing communication strategy and engaging through multiple channels. The overall findings suggest that while marketers realise that they are not making optimal use of social media, they are taking steps to correct this. The survey also revealed that a clear, strategic plan based on consumer intelligence is needed to assist marketers towards a situation of complete engagement with consumers at an individual level.
Research conducted on South African use of social media (Patricios, 2008:31) indicated that, for various reasons, marketers are sceptical about integrating this new communication channel into their marketing activities. Like other marketers around the world, they do not have an accurate understanding of social media and have not fully comprehended the significant impact that it has on consumers. Marketers may not have the monetary, human or technological resources that are required for an optimal social media campaign (McDonough, 2010). They find it challenging to engage and collaborate with users who prefer a ‘pull’ or ‘opt-in-strategy’, rather than the ‘push’ marketing that marketers are accustomed to.

In spite of the challenges outlined above, the respondents in the study undertaken by Patricios (2008:64) indicated agreement on the following views of social media:

- social media can be used for brand building;
- information obtained from social networks can support new product development;
- social media supports consumer relationship building;
- brands can be marketed globally via social media;
- vital information can be gathered from social media;
- word-of-mouth on social media should be monitored in order to prevent damage to a brand; and
- South African organisations will be more prominent on social networks in the future, especially though social collaboration on mobile phones.

When synthesising the available literature on social media and the implementation of social networks for marketing purposes, it is apparent that most marketers and organisations agree that numerous valuable opportunities are available to brands that utilise this recently introduced communication channel. The main drawback is that it cannot be successfully implemented without proper knowledge or experience, which most organisations do not possess.

Throughout this study, motivation for an integrated marketing communication approach that includes the implementation of social media in the campaign was provided. While numerous studies support this notion, it was also found that marketers are unsure of how
to implement such a campaign optimally because of inadequate knowledge of the communication channel. This prompted the researcher to further investigate the topic. With the vast number of social networks available, implementation of each may differ. It may be necessary to focus on a specific network in order to gain thorough insights. The most popular social networks will therefore be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

2.5 COMPARISON OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

When comparing social networks, one should bear in mind that the various social networks all have different purposes and uses, which could have an effect of the number of users. From the countless social networks available, the general categories include the following (White, 2012):

- Social connections: These networks are used to connect with friends, family members or other acquaintances and include Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and MySpace.
- Multimedia sharing: While multimedia content can be shared on social networks from the ‘social connections’ category, other social networks are created with the main aim of sharing and organising photos and videos online, for example YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Instagram and Picasa.
- Professional: Professional networks are created with the aim of providing individuals with a network of connections that can be used for career-related growth and include LinkedIn, Classroom 2.0, Nurse Connect and many others.
- Informational: These networks contain information that could answer everyday questions about general topics, for example Super Green Me or Do-It-Yourself Community.
- Educational: Educational networks allow students to collaborate on academic assignments, conduct research and connect with teachers or lecturers, and include The Student Room, The Math Forum and eLearners.
- Hobbies: Many social network users use these networks to learn more about their hobbies or interests and to connect with other enthusiasts online through, for example, Oh My Bloom, My Place at Scrapbook.com and Sport Shouting.
• Academic – researchers can use these networks to share their findings and review results obtained by other researchers, providing valuable feedback to one another. Examples include Academia.edu and Connotea Collaborative Research.

The use of social networks, some in particular, became an extremely popular activity among individuals as well as organisations from 2008 onwards, as can be seen in figure 2.3 below (Hubspot, 2011; Statista, 2015), which shows the percentage market share gained by some of the most successful social networks.

Figure 2.3: Growth in social networks

MySpace, established in 2003, was one of the first social networks and was seen as the leading social network up to 2008 (Hubspot, 2011). Its market share was in an increasing phase towards the end of 2008, but drastically declined as Facebook, which was launched in 2004, gained popularity. Facebook was initially made available to only a select group of
people, namely students and staff at Harvard University, with the hope of making it an exclusive website and thereby increasing popularity. Once more people were allowed to join Facebook, its popularity grew consistently, surpassing all other social networks. Other popular social networks include Twitter and LinkedIn. While these networks are popular and used by many, they are not nearly as popular as Facebook, as shown in the graph (Statista, 2015).

When analysing data gained from a social network, it is important to remember that there may be users who create a profile on a social network and visit the site once or twice, but then lose interest and never use it again; therefore the number of active users will be smaller than the total user number. A study conducted in June 2011 (ComScore, 2011) indicated that over 734 million individual (active) users logged on to Facebook during that month, while only 144 million used Twitter. LinkedIn was used by 84 million and MySpace by 71 million individual users during the same month.

It has become general knowledge that the public is spending a lot of time on the Web and social networks, but it is surprising to see exactly how much time this actually is when one looks at the average time spent on each website per month (Hubspot, 2011). According to Hubspot (2011), consumers spend approximately 5 428 hours per month on the professional social network, LinkedIn; 9 419 hours per month on the micro-blog, Twitter; 10 392 hours per month on another micro-blog called Tumblr; and 12 063 hours per month on a blogging website, Blogger. This may seem like large numbers, but is actually minuscule when compared to the 890 954 hours per month spent on Facebook.

The statistics discussed above clearly differentiate Facebook from all other social networks. For this reason, the researcher has decided to focus on Facebook for the purposes of this study. The following chapter will provide an in-depth focus on Facebook and its usage.
2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the IMC process was discussed in order to indicate how the social network Facebook fits into the process. The discussion focused its evolution, definition and benefits, and barriers connected with its implementation. Thereafter the IMC process was examined and all the marketing activities that can be used in the process were explained, as well as the communication channels through which the marketing activities are implemented. Next, the study focused specifically on non-traditional marketing and more intensively on social media and social networks as communication channels. A definition was provided, followed by a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of including a social network as part of a marketing strategy, and statistics and findings on how social networks are currently implemented for marketing purposes. Lastly, the researcher compared various popular social networks in order to indicate why Facebook was chosen as a focal point of the study.

The next chapter will focus specifically on Facebook. It will include an introduction to Facebook, the history of how it was founded and the evolution of Facebook into a marketing tool through the use of organisational pages. The researcher will then explain how a page is created and how organisations are implementing it in their marketing campaigns. Various suggestions on how to use Facebook pages to their full advantage will then be discussed together with examples from the social network to conclude the literature review of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 3

3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FACEBOOK AS A MARKETING TOOL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the literature review, the previous chapter focused mainly on the IMC process, highlighting the valuable role that social media can play as a communication channel in a business. The widely known social network Facebook was briefly introduced, together with a motivation for why organisations might use this social network for marketing purposes. Facebook was argued to be an important and increasingly popular communication channel through which over 1.42 billion users worldwide can be reached – a clear indication that the opportunities provided by this social network are not to be disregarded by marketers (Waters et al, 2009:102).

Chapter 2 (section 2.5) also revealed that Facebook provides marketers with a platform to engage with consumers through a medium that the majority of the consuming public already uses daily (Ismail, 2010:11). In spite of this, it was argued that the opportunities to be gained through the use of such a communication channel could easily be to no avail if businesses take on social network activities with an incorrect approach (Llewellyn & Black, 2011:1). The reality is that a social network like Facebook is very likely to underperform in the hands of inexperienced users (Beagle Research Group, 2010:1).

While there may still be uncertainties regarding the proper use of this relatively new communication channel, it was suggested in the previous chapter that organisations can benefit considerably from including social media – especially Facebook – in their marketing efforts. Even more so when Facebook is used to support other communication channels as part of an integrated marketing communication approach. For this reason, Chapter 3 will provide an in-depth discussion of Facebook and its use for marketing purposes.
The current chapter commences with a definition of Facebook and a concise outline of its history. Thereafter the evolution of Facebook is discussed, followed by a proposed list of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes, drawn from the literature available on the topic. This will conclude the literature review.

### 3.2 DEFINING FACEBOOK

The social network Facebook is defined as a virtual online community where people can connect with those around them, share content and build up their profiles with information, photos and videos about themselves (Cant *et al.*, 2010:405). Facebook is primarily an individual-focused social networking service and any individual over the age of 13 can register as a user at no cost by creating a profile and adding content about themselves over a period of time.

The content of a personal Facebook profile could include any or all of the following: name, date of birth, hometown, education, employment information, gender, sexual preferences, relationship status, political views, religious orientation, favourite books, music, films, etc., contact information like email address, cell phone number or home address, as well as a photo of the user (Hubspot, 2011:6). Users can communicate with each other through Facebook in various ways, as will be discussed at a later stage. The Facebook terms mostly used by individuals and marketers are listed in Table 3.1 below (Earles, 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1: Facebook Terminology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Profile (individual)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page (organisational)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friend</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Like</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fans</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
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<td><strong>News feed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Applications</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tag</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Hubspot, 2011:6; Earles, 2009

### 3.3 THE HISTORY OF FACEBOOK

The founders of Facebook, mainly Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes (Ryun, 2013:4), developed the social network while enrolled as students at Harvard University. Harvard University, like many other universities in the United States,
annually distributes a booklet to students that contains a photo and basic details of all the new first-year students. This is known as a ‘face book’ (Carlson, 2010). The purpose of this booklet is to make it easier for students to get to know fellow students through their courses, social organisations or residences. This booklet inspired 19-year-old Harvard student, Mark Zuckerberg, to develop an online community of students with the ability to connect with those around them instantly and effortlessly (Geller, 2010). Zuckerberg wanted to improve communication between students and spontaneously created an interactive, online version of ‘the face book’ in 2004 (O’Brien, 2010:2).

The website used for this purpose was initially called ‘thefacebook.com’ and only students or staff members from Harvard University had access to the website, as a Harvard email address was required for registration (Carlson, 2010:1). The novelty and exclusivity of the social network enticed students and it became so popular that the founders soon expanded the network to include students from other prestigious universities (Petersen, 2010). The number of Facebook users increased consistently until it became illogical to maintain the exclusivity of the website. From September 2005 onwards Facebook allowed high school students and professionals in corporate networks to sign up, and eventually all Web users were invited to join the social network (Ryun, 2013:4).

Facebook is currently the leading social network in almost every country around the world, allowing consumers to ‘connect and share with the people in their lives’, as intended by Mark Zuckerberg (Tan, 2011). The following section explains the uses of Facebook by individuals, paving the way for it to be used as a marketing tool.

3.4 THE USE OF FACEBOOK BY INDIVIDUALS

Facebook was created with the aim of making the world more social, open and transparent by improving communication between individuals (Facebook, 2012). Individuals utilise the social network for various reasons (Joinson, 2008:1028):

- to communicate with friends through private or public messages;
- to acquire information about friends or acquaintances, described as ‘social searching’;
to reconnect with friends with whom they had lost contact;
to maintain contact with old friends;
to establish contact with somebody online with the intention of meeting offline at a later stage, described as ‘social browsing’;
to keep informed of the actions, beliefs and interests of social groups, described as ‘surveillance’;
to share photographs or videos with friends;
to organise events online; and

to recreate or enhance their identity by posting photos, videos or information of personal preferences, activities or history on an individual profile.

The social network Facebook therefore enables individuals to participate in the socialisation process and to form an online identity of how they would like to be perceived by others. Facebook can be seen as a virtual infrastructure documenting the continuously changing information and activities of millions of users, and as such is an invaluable resource for any marketer (Collier & Magid, 2012:2). The development of the social network into a marketing tool for organisations is discussed below.

3.5 DEVELOPMENT OF FACEBOOK AS A MARKETING TOOL

The trend among users to daily spend time on Facebook, combined with the growing number of users, enticed organisations to find ways to benefit from Facebook and it did not take long before marketers realised the value of the social network. To begin with, the number of users referred to (over 1.42 billion) was very attractive to organisations. Secondly, organisations realised that many Facebook users are already their customers. Thirdly, while the ‘conversations’ on Facebook are mainly social in nature, they often refer to a specific organisation, sharing positive or negative emotions about an experience at the organisation, thus providing valuable market insights for organisations to draw on (Stelzner, 2012:15). These developments quickly encouraged organisations to utilise Facebook for marketing purposes.
Many organisations are currently considering, evaluating and implementing Facebook in various ways to support their marketing activities (Levitt, 2010). The easiest way to create a presence on Facebook would be to create an organisational page, as discussed in detail below. Secondly, Facebook enables organisations to integrate their websites or web applications with Facebook’s login system, allowing users to register on the website using their Facebook login details. A third way of creating a presence on Facebook is through advertisements. Facebook advertisements (similar to banner ads on other websites) are displayed on the right-hand side of the screen and can be used to target very specific users, encourage word-of-mouth and reach entirely new audiences. Another generally used method of connecting with Facebook users is by creating applications. Facebook applications can be created to enhance the user’s experience on a specific Facebook page and increase the number of customer interactions with the brand, providing an exciting way to keep a customer engaged (Shih, 2011:193).

The Facebook tool most frequently used by organisations is pages, which is similar to the profile used by individuals. The need for profiles for organisations, now known as Facebook pages, was recognised by Facebook as marketers started to take advantage of the potential of this large network of people sharing their personal opinions and experiences on a daily basis. The opportunities presented by this network of Facebook users were seized upon and organisations started creating profiles for their respective brands – profiles that were in reality only meant for use by individuals (Lewis, 2010:8). This was initially in violation of the terms of service for Facebook, but it led the developers of Facebook to realising the benefit that profiles for brands could hold. Brands were soon accommodated by Facebook and allowed to create their own brand profiles with the introduction of Facebook pages at the end of 2007 (O’Neill, 2009:2).

A Facebook page is the logical first step when an organisation wants to create a presence on Facebook (or the internet for that matter) and allows marketers to interact with both current and potential consumers, enhance relationships with consumers, and provide users with entertainment in the form of games and applications (Zhang, Sung & Lee, 2010:54). As clarified earlier in the terminology (section 3.2), organisations are not allowed to create individual profiles for their brands. However, the administrator of an organisational page does need an individual profile in order to create a Facebook page.
The fundamental difference between individuals and organisations is therefore that the former use profiles, while the latter use pages (Fernandez, 2009:10).

The characteristics and features of organisational pages offer marketers a more attractive communication channel than an individual profile created for their brand. In contrast to individual profiles, an organisation can designate more than one administrator to a page, thus enabling the organisation to divide the responsibilities of managing the page (Chapman, 2011). Pages are open to the public and will appear in the search results on Facebook and other search engines, allowing internet users to view the page, regardless of whether a user is subscribed to Facebook or not. Relevant search results can be obtained effortlessly as pages are divided into various categories, such as businesses, brands, musicians, etc. (Cosman, 2011:1). Users with individual profiles must invite one another and mutually accept each other as friends, whereas any current or potential consumer can become a fan of a page without the delay caused by having to be approved by the administrator (Hubspot, 2011:9). Finally, individual profiles are limited to having 5 000 friends, while pages can have an unlimited number of fans (Titlow, 2010).

While it is fairly easy to create a Facebook page, the maintenance thereof has proved to be problematic for organisations (Hussain, 2011). The next section will commence with a discussion of the steps in the process of creating a page, after which suggested guidelines for its optimal use will be proposed.

### 3.5.1 Creating a Facebook page

An organisation can create a Facebook page at virtually no cost, but generally a lot of time and dedication is required to build it up to full functionality and to maintain it successfully over the long term. To create a page, one of the administrators – who should be personally registered on Facebook – must log into Facebook on his or her individual profile and visit www.facebook.com/pages/create.php, where the process will be explained in easy steps, as discussed in the next section (Drell, 2011).
The first step in creating a Facebook page is to select a category applicable to the organisation. Categorising the page into one of the options provided will make it easier for consumers to find as well as being easier to index by search engines (Hussain, 2011). The available categories into which pages can be divided include (Payton, 2009):

- local business or place;
- company, organisation or institution;
- brand or product;
- artist, band or public figure;
- entertainment; and
- cause or community.

The second step in creating a Facebook page is to select a name and category for the page. Local businesses are required to display information about their location on the page. After indicating agreement to the terms and conditions and clicking on the ‘Get Started’ button, the page can be tailored to fit the brand (Woodbridge, 2011). A photo or brand logo can be uploaded, basic information can be saved on the page and the administrators can encourage friends to like the page (Dye, 2010). Administrators have the opportunity to take advantage of several business features to engage with consumers (Ostroff, 2011).

After creating a presence on Facebook, it is imperative for any organisation to steer clear of the traditional one-way communication approach used for many decades in print and broadcast media, and even in more contemporary communication channels like websites (Blue, 2011:1). Since Facebook is primarily a social network of individuals, organisations can easily be perceived as intruders in a virtual world initially created for social interaction between friends, family and colleagues. Facebook is not intended for organisations to inconvenience users by posting advertisements, which makes the effective use of Facebook for marketing purposes very challenging for organisations (Fournier & Avery, 2011:193).

Numerous studies have been conducted with the aim of discovering the most effective method of implementing Facebook and its various features, namely pages, advertisements
and applications. The study at hand analysed these studies and compiled a list of suggested guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes. These suggestions, with reference to the studies in question, will be discussed in the following section.

### 3.6 GUIDELINES FOR THE OPTIMAL USE OF FACEBOOK PAGES

As discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.8.1), the aim of the literature review is ultimately to gather enough information on Facebook and the effective use thereof in order to be able to compile a tentative list of guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes. The accuracy of the tentative list will be evaluated based on the needs of the South African market during the empirical component of the study in order to determine the relevancy of the various guidelines.

To formulate the tentative list of guidelines from the literature, the researcher investigated a number of different studies (Belosic, 2012; Bullas, 2011; Constine, 2011; Elliot, 2011; Ewing, 2011; Folkens, 2011; Monhollon, 2011; Owyang, 2010) to gain information on the effective use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.5), the literature lacks scientific research on this contemporary and very specific topic. For this reason, various other sources were relied on, including academic journal articles, reports by research institutions and blogs focusing on social media or Facebook. Many of the suggestions for the effective use of Facebook pages in the literature were found to be similar, which underlines their relevance. The list of guidelines is discussed in table 3.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set community expectations (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>It should be clear to the fan – current and prospective – exactly what the aim of the page is. The administrator should articulate specifically what a fan can expect from a page, for example some pages offer information only and others offer competitions, special offers, tips and product support. The marketer should also clearly communicate what is expected from the fan, stipulating what would be seen as appropriate and inappropriate use of the page. This will ensure optimal interaction between organisations and consumers and hopefully prevent abuse of the page.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide consistent branding (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>The Facebook page should present an experience reflecting the brand. This will create the familiar experience that fans are expecting, while differentiating the brand from others. Custom applications or tabs similar to the theme of the page should be created to enhance the experience for fans, allowing marketers to utilise Facebook optimally over and above its limited default features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be up to date (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>The brand should consistently interact with fans by keeping pages current and adding fresh content. Existing fans should continuously be intrigued in order to keep them interested in the brand. The page should be so original and exciting that it continues to attract prospective fans. Marketers must consider the usage patterns of their fans to determine how often to communicate through Facebook. It is important that the content of the page maintain a balance between promotional and conversational messages. Ideally, 80% of the content on a page should be informational, educational or entertaining, while only 20% should be about the brand’s products or services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide live authenticity (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>In this context, authenticity refers to the ability of ‘real’ interaction from one person to another, allowing an organisation to have a personality. Facebook is one of the few social networks that require the use of real names, providing authentic people-to-people connections. Brands should take advantage of this feature and connect fans to the people behind the brand by interacting in a conversational manner. Photos and information about the administrators of the page should be displayed to prove to fans that the organisation’s employees are involved and care about their consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particpate in dialogue (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>Each time a fan comments on a brand’s Facebook page, an average of 130 friends is exposed to the conversation, therefore it is very beneficial to foster two-way dialogue and acknowledge comments from fans as well as other interactions with the page. Posts on a Facebook page should be written in a conversational tone, building on the relationship between the brand and the fan. It is very important that organisations monitor conversations and respond when necessary, for example when a fan complains about the organisation on Facebook, the organisation should explain the reason for the fan’s disappointment and attempt to solve the problem or compensate him/her for the inconvenience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable peer-to-peer interactions (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>Fans are constantly communicating with each other. Marketers should take advantage of this habit by creating an environment that encourages peer-to-peer interactions regarding the brand and requesting that fans respond to their friends’ comments. The discussion will be able to support itself once a proper question-and-answer application is available. Benefits aside, peer-to-peer communication requires a community policy and needs to be monitored in real time in order to result in a positive experience and prevent negative responses from fans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster advocacy (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>Advocacy, in this context, refers to when members of the public support an organisation or recommend it to others. Promoting advocacy among Facebook users is essential as consumers are more likely to trust each other than to trust brands. This provides marketers with an opportunity to gain valuable exposure at a low cost. Advocacy is encouraged by asking existing fans to recommend the page to others, like wall posts on the page, vote for something or make use of any other creative applications on a page. Unfortunately advocacy is a very difficult marketing objective as the brand will never be able to control the fans and what is posted. A brand should therefore ensure that the fans can benefit from the page by providing them with value and motivating them to share their experiences with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solicit a call-to-action (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>After applying the above success criteria and gaining the trust of the consumer, the brand should deliver simple call-to-actions that lead fans from engagement to purchase. Fans should be encouraged to sign up for emails or newsletters, browse products, view exclusive deals and even make transactions through the page. The endeavour expected from the fan should not be pushed or forced on anyone and online activities or information should rather be made easily accessible (Owyang, 2010:5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set clear objectives (Elliot, 2011)</td>
<td>Not knowing what the aim of using a Facebook page is, presents the risk of not achieving anything at all. Is the aim to drive brand impact or sales? Generate word-of-mouth, increase loyalty, or provide customer service? Deciding on a few clear objectives for the Facebook campaign will answer most of the other questions — like who should fund the programs, or how to measure success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide value for your fans (Elliot, 2011)</td>
<td>While Facebook can drive value for the company, make sure it is driving value for the fans as well. Otherwise, why would anyone bother to like the page? According to Carolyn Everson, VP of global marketing solutions for Facebook, the brands that succeed on Facebook are ‘the ones that give people a reason to be fans’. This does not have to mean discounts and coupons — exclusive content and information work just as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use the full Facebook tool kit (Elliot, 2011)</td>
<td>For many marketers, using Facebook means simply building a page, but getting people to the page might mean buying Facebook ads, making the page useful might mean using events or apps. Retailers, for example, could benefit greatly from using Facebook's location-based tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrate Facebook into your marketing mix (Elliot, 2011)</td>
<td>Facebook may be a unique tool, but that does not mean it should stand alone as part of the marketing strategy. To get full value from a Facebook campaign, weave Facebook efforts into the overall marketing ecosystem, and make sure it interacts with the website and carries through the messages people see in paid media programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep your posts short (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>The news feed of a Facebook page typically contains a lot of information, therefore having a good headline for a post and keeping the post length to less than 250 characters generates more interaction and engagement. According to Facebook, posts of this length generate 60% more likes, comments and shares than posts containing more than 250 characters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post photos, videos and quotes (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>Research shows that 'posts including a photo album, a picture or a video respectively generate about 180%, 120%, and 100% more engagement than the average post'. What should also be kept in mind is that simple text in the form of a quote can drive high interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post consistently (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>The question of how often to communicate through Facebook is not an exact science, but once a month is not going to be enough. Some brands can post several times a day, but once a day is normally a good place to start. Educational or entertaining content will not be seen as oversharing. A good rule of thumb is to have one marketing message for every nine to ten informational posts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask for your fans' opinions (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>If the company is considering launching several new products, asking for the fans' responses will allow marketers to quickly crowd-source opinions that may determine which products are actually manufactured or produced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask questions using the Facebook questions app (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>Facebook has a native questions app that is very easy to use. You can find out what is important to people by asking customers questions and encouraging suggestions about how the business can be improved. The interaction and vote process can be as simple as one click.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Try posting ‘Fill in the blank’ posts (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>A very simple way to engage with fans is to ask them to finish a sentence. A fashion brand, for example, could ask people to complete a simple statement about why they like certain clothing items or how they use it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give fans access to exclusive information (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>Providing fans with exclusive information could be done by either breaking the news first on Facebook or providing special content, such as a video or an article, when they ‘like’ the page.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reward your fans with deals and perks (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>Marketers can use a Facebook page to promote coupons or promotions and also to distribute coupons or links to promotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be timely (Bullas, 2011)</td>
<td>Breaking news on Facebook that is relevant to the audience can drive more interaction and engagement. Facebook reported that ‘posts mentioning Independence Day on July 4th generated about 90% more engagement than all other posts published on that day’.</td>
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<td>Localise your posts if they are relevant to a specific audience</td>
<td>Some posts might only be relevant to a subset of fans. For example, if a company is producing certain products in specific countries only, they might want to promote those products to people in those countries only. Using the status button when post to the News feed will allow the administrator to send a post to only one country. Use the geo-targeting feature to make sure that only the people who would find the post valuable, will see it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post fan-centred status updates (Belosic, 2012)</td>
<td>The goal with status updates should be to get comments. To get more comments, tailor status updates to ask fans for their opinions, stories and even advice. The comments will float the specific post to the top of the fans’ news feeds, giving more fans an opportunity to interact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start conversations with relevant content (Belosic, 2012)</td>
<td>Facebook users want – and will respond to – relevant content. A car company that posts nothing but advertisements in their status updates will not get nearly the response they would if they posted information about tire recalls, car seat safety test results and tips to improve gas mileage. Give fans a reason to join in the conversation by creating status updates that discuss issues they care about.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enable sharing and get traffic to your custom content (Belosic, 2012)</td>
<td>Facebook page administrators too often create highly functional tabs, but fail to include a call to action. It is not just status updates that are important; every bit of content on the page is important and needs to get spread around on Facebook. That is why all communications must be sharable. All content can include a share button that encourages fans to post that content to their walls. In the case of a sweepstake, provide fans with a share prompt upon entry submission so that they can let their friends know that they have entered the contest. It is a good thing if one person watches a video or enters a contest, but if that fan tells his/her 200-plus friends about content, it results in more clicks, more traffic and potentially more business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create action-based incentives (Belosic, 2012)</td>
<td>Custom Facebook tabs can be used for a newsletter or customer relationship management sign-up form. If the number of sign-ups is less than expected, incentivise it. Remind fans of what is sent to subscribers (like coupons). It is a great way to both populate a list and get fans excited about a product or service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harness the power of simple but effective fan-gates (Belosic, 2012)</td>
<td>In order to increase fan count and engagement, create a custom tab with a fan-gated contest. Serve non-fans a message that tells them about the prize, but inform them that they have to like the page to be eligible to enter. Once the non-fan clicks on ‘Like’, present an entry submission form that collects your targeted user data, e.g. an email address or a phone number. It is important to note that if the contest is on a welcome tab, not to gate the whole page. While non-fans do not have to be eligible for contests and promos, it is unwise to hide all of the content on the page from them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan-centric content (Belosic, 2012)</td>
<td>While the creation of fan-centric content looks different from brand to brand, the first step in successfully creating a call to action is to put yourself in your fans’ shoes. So ask yourself: Why do they like my brand? My page? What do they all have in common? What interests do they share? Answering these questions will help marketers to find their starting point.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upload and tag photos (Monhollon, 2011)</td>
<td>With the new page layout prominently featuring images, marketers should consistently upload new images of the business, team and work, so that fresh and interesting content is front-and-centre. Adding interesting images that bring the business to life will increase the chance that people who visit the page for the first time will like and engage with it. Marketers should make sure to tag people who appear in photos – like employees and other people to whom the personal Facebook profile is connected, because tagged photos will appear on the Facebook profile wall of those tagged, which promotes the page in other places on the site, boosts brand awareness and helps to accumulate likes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimise your avatar image (Monhollon, 2011)</td>
<td>Make sure that the business logo is sharp, not pixilated or fuzzy, and create space on the image below the logo for a short snippet of helpful information about the page and why fans should like it. Optimising the page’s avatar image is important as the new page design no longer includes a business information box beneath the logo. Instead, tabs are moving to this space – which means that it is also important to have a page avatar image that is not too long, because tabs will be pushed down the page according to the length of that picture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set a custom tab as a landing page (Monhollon, 2011)</td>
<td>The new Facebook rollout will move tabs below the avatar image, which means that people will no longer see them at the top of the page when they visit. Some marketers create special tabs to help build fans and likes. This can be set as a default landing tab. That way fans who have not yet liked the page will be directed to the custom tab that requests them to do so, rather than defaulting them to the wall, which can create a better experience and increase the number of ‘likes’ for the page.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment as your personal profile on your page (Monhollon, 2011)</td>
<td>The new Facebook pages are changing the way administrators can interact with the page. Now administrators will be able to switch back and forth between using Facebook as their personal profile and using Facebook as the page. This will introduce the page’s brand to people like friends, family, colleagues and peers who are likely to interact and respond with similar content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interact with other pages (Monhollon, 2011)</td>
<td>With the new Facebook pages, marketers will also be able to use their page to visit any other public pages or profiles. This feature enables companies to like and interact with other pages in their local community such as news organisations, non-profit organisations and complementing businesses. Marketers should also take advantage of the ‘Use Facebook as page’ feature to view a custom news feed that features the activity of the pages their page has liked and comment on their content. This will ensure that the brand is showing up in important local conversations and will help boost visibility for the page.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create two-way conversations (Folkens, 2011)</td>
<td>Rather than using Facebook to simply push out news at the audience, spend time understanding the challenges potential customers face. Search online using keywords and monitor other social tools like Twitter to find out more about the current concerns of a target audience. Be a resource to potential customers by providing content and insight that will help them alleviate the problems they might face. After establishing a relationship with fans, encourage them to provide input on the content being shared. Ask questions and use your followers’ responses to create content that will keep them connected to the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect a community (Folkens, 2011)</td>
<td>Create opportunities for fans to come together and share positive experiences with each other. Oracle, for example, has built a page providing valuable professional content and news, and fans discuss or share directly on the page. The best advocates are happy customers already engaged with a B2B company’s product or services. Highlight success stories on the page and let followers see the value provided to similar companies. Should there be a negative comment, which scares many B2B companies, address it with understanding and sincerity. In most cases, transparency and listening go a long way towards countering negative feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build relationships (Folkens, 2011)</td>
<td>B2B often involves a greater commitment than simple retail transactions. Sales cycles can be long and, as the old saying goes, you are more likely to do business with someone you know. Facebook is a place that allows your brand personality to shine – let them see who you are. According to research (Folkens, 2011), customers are more likely to buy from companies they track via social media. By putting a face to a brand it is possible to position your brand as a resource that will be the first call for that follower when the time comes to make a purchase decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross promote content (Folkens, 2011)</td>
<td>Use Facebook as an outlet to share interesting content that was created elsewhere. B2B companies should consider re-purposing photos and video from promotional materials or industry events. SAP utilises photos well and has a large number submitted by other users. Brands need to understand that not all contacts are fully engaged with every promotional effort. Do not assume that a message that has been shared in one channel needs to be retired. Connecting a blog feed to Facebook will increase the likelihood that content will reach prospects through another social channel. By connecting and cross-promoting, a B2B blog will reach the walls of current fans and potentially new contacts if that information is shared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make it shareable (Folkens, 2011)</td>
<td>Content that is interesting or fun will be shared more widely than a bland corporate statement. This applies to companies of any size or customer focus. Providing a list of copy-heavy pages is not going to help reach new targets because nobody finds it exciting to share boring content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Be interactive  
(Ewing, 2011) | Starbucks has a well-established market share and name recognition, but they are also renowned for their open management style and the speed with which they implement new ideas. At first glance, it would seem impossible to sell coffee online, but Starbucks did not ignore the prospect of a Facebook store. Instead, they developed eGift cards, which allow users to designate an amount and event (birthday, holiday, etc.) and easily send the notice to a Facebook friend. It is easy and quick to give and it is virtually guaranteed (pun intended) to bring customers into the store. |
| --- | --- |
| Offer incentives  
(Ewing, 2011) | The first thing you see on the Best Buy Facebook Store page is a large banner for Weekly Specials. These offers are exclusive to Facebook friends and therefore serve as great incentives for users to add the page as a friend and to closely follow the weekly ads. With so many electronics stores available online, it is crucial for Best Buy to regularly engage with their customers. If they lose one sale to another site, they run the risk of that customer becoming a regular patron of the opposing site. |
| Understand trends  
(Ewing, 2011) | Although Old Spice sells primarily body-cleansing products, this did not stop them from pouncing on the opportunity to engage their Facebook audience with T-shirts. Old Spice understood that they had struck gold with commercials that have become viral and they were flexible enough to produce T-shirts with popular quotes like 'I'm on a horse', which appeals to the exact demographic that follows them on Facebook. When the commercials are no longer trendy, the company will surely remove the shirts and begin to look for the best way to optimise their next opportunity. |
| Optimise your layout  
(Ewing, 2011) | Even though Liverpool is not the most famous soccer team in England, their Facebook store outpaces the pages of popular teams like Manchester United, Chelsea and Manchester City, in part because of its layout. The store is set up very cleanly, with three distinct categories that allow the user to manoeuver directly to the product they are looking to purchase. The layout effectively eliminates ‘noise’ and gives the user direct access to the product, which decreases bounce rates and increases conversion rates. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keep things enticing (Ewing, 2011)</th>
<th>When visiting Lady Gaga’s store page, it is noticeable that she does not upload products as often as expected. She displays only 12 products at a time, compared to Justin Bieber, who displays more than 20 products but still sells less than her. This is partly because Lady Gaga builds anticipation by releasing new products sporadically. Marketers can do something similar like using the fan page to build the hype around a new product and then, once the anticipation has been created, release the product and direct users to the store page at the optimal time.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporate personal analysis in posts (Constine, 2011)</td>
<td>Facebook released the results of a study it conducted to determine which types of posts posted by journalists on their Facebook pages performed the best. Among the highlights: Incorporating personal analysis in posts increased referral clicks by 20%, and including a thumbnail image when posting a link boosted likes by 65% and comments by 50%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn off your auto-publisher (Constine, 2011)</td>
<td>Research indicates that posts saw 20% more referral clicks when personal analysis was added to a post’s description, as opposed to just publishing a headline, blurb and thumbnail. The ability to include a long description of what is behind a link is one of the fundamental differences between Facebook and Twitter. While journalists and other content publishers may prefer not to spend the extra time crafting Facebook posts, the benefits in traffic driven, as shown by this study, should convince them that the effort is worthwhile. Pages that automatically cross-post Twitter updates or that auto-post when an article is published to their website should consider switching to manual publishing. Having a human writing copy specifically to accompany a Facebook post makes the news feed story seem more organic and personal, and therefore more compelling and clickable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When a link is pasted into Facebook’s publisher, it is formatted into a rich feed story that includes a thumbnail image when possible. Facebook’s study shows that posts that display a thumbnail image receive 65% more likes and 50% more comments. It is believed that by getting more feedback on their posts, pages improve their EdgeRank – the algorithm that determines how prominent a post is in a user’s news feed. By courting feedback, pages can increase the number of users that see their posts past the somewhat disheartening average of 7.49 news feed post impressions per day per 100 fans. Therefore, page administrators should not manually strip out the thumbnail unless it is absolutely necessary. If the publisher cannot find an image behind the link to thumbnail, administrators should consider adding an image to the web page, or marking up their site with Facebook’s Open Graph tags so that a site logo is pulled in as the thumbnail.

For posts by journalists, Facebook found that four-line posts received 30% more than average feedback, and five-line posts received 60% more. This means that pages looking to court feedback should generally publish long posts, though these may have lower click-through rates as some users will skim past a dense block of text. Engagement with one-line posts fluctuated greatly, but displayed the highest maximum feedback received on posts of any length, with some receiving 15 times the average. Therefore, when appropriate for the content, one-line posts can be the most engaging, possibly because they require so little effort on the reader’s part to consume.

In terms of timing, Facebook’s study showed that posts on Thursday through Sunday had higher engagement rates. Posts on Saturday received 85% more than the average number of clicks, and those published on Wednesday had 37% more. However, these figures may be less generalisable because of the cultural norm of reading news on weekends. Buddy Media’s report on engagement by day showed significant fluctuation by industry, so pages outside of journalism will need to track their analytics to determine the best days to post. Facebook’s reports of engagement spikes at 7 am and 5 pm match Buddy Media’s data.

These guidelines are used in the empirical phase of the study, as discussed in the following chapter.
3.7 CONCLUSION

As supported by the literature, guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages could assist small or recently established organisations with little experience and guidelines from parent companies to get their Facebook pages up to standard. The guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages, as identified during the literature review of studies from around the world, will be confirmed in the next research phase by conducting empirical research. During the empirical phase of the study, local social media experts will be contacted and invited to provide their expertise as respondents in the study. The respondents will be expected to consider the guidelines already identified from the literature and sort them into logical groupings, creating a conclusive set of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes.

The methodology applied to achieve this will be explained in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 4

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

When considering the relevant theory presented in the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3, it appears that many organisations may not have the necessary experience in social media to utilise such channels, especially Facebook, successfully. As explained in previous chapters, this study ultimately aims to address this problem by identifying criteria that marketers can use when implementing Facebook pages as part of their marketing strategies. Subsequent to the discussion in previous chapters of the literature available on the topic, this chapter provides an explanation of the methodology implemented in the study in order to achieve the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1 (section 1.7).

The chapter commences with a discussion on the process used when conducting research. Each step in the research process is discussed on its own and applied to the present study, motivating the methodological decisions made by the researcher. A summary of the implementation of the methodology concludes the chapter.

4.2 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The American Marketing Association (McDaniel & Gates, 2010:5) describes research as a function that identifies and defines problems or opportunities, specifies what information is needed to address these issues, designs the methodology for collecting the necessary information, manages and implements the data gathering process, analyses the results, and communicates the findings. In short, the definition suggests the process of systematically identifying, collecting, analysing and reporting on information with the aim of making improved decisions (Van Hamersveld & De Bont, 2007:60).
Even though the literature does not provide one universally agreed-upon description and layout for a research process, the different perspectives available on the topic are very similar in that they provide the researcher with chronological procedures on what must be done to complete a study effectively (Gill & Johnson, 2010:8). The sequence is usually not binding; certain steps can be omitted, implemented out of sequence or simultaneously with others (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:80). The research process enables researchers to gain a thorough knowledge of how to plan the research for the study, why they are conducting it in a certain way, and the implications of the actions they plan to take (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009:10). The research process used in this study is depicted in figure 4.1. The process contains ten steps, each of which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.
Each of the steps depicted in figure 4.1 is described in detail below, with reference to the study.

4.2.1  Step 1: Formulate the research problem

As indicated in figure 4.1, the first step of the research process requires the researcher to formulate the research problem. A research project can only be properly designed and conducted once the research problem has been defined – a task that is not only one of the most important of all the steps in the research process, but also one of the most
challenging (Malhotra, 2010:66). It often occurs that the research problem is poorly defined and only partially understood by the researcher and, occasionally, possible decision alternatives that need to be analysed are omitted. Instigating a study when there is a lack of specific information requirements, unambiguous boundaries and pure motives, is sure to result in unusable findings (Aaker, Kumar, Day & Leone, 2011:50).

In the introduction and background to the study (Chapter 1), the research problem was stated as follows: In the literature that is available on the topic, no scientific guidelines exist for the effective implementation of Facebook as a marketing communication channel in the South African context. This implies that the aim of the study is essentially to identify such an academically verified set of criteria, which inexperienced marketers can use in order to implement Facebook pages in the most optimal way possible. The following research question was therefore proposed: ‘Which guidelines can marketers use to assist them in utilising Facebook pages effectively as a marketing communication channel?’

The research question and problem statement led to the development of specific research objectives. As suggested in the research process in figure 4.1, the discussion of research objectives will follow in the next section.

4.2.2 Step 2: Determine the research objectives and design

The second step in the research process illustrated in figure 4.1 state that the marketer should clearly define the research objectives of the relevant study. A research objective is a precise statement of the exact information needed in order to satisfy the issue addressed in the research problem, explaining what it is that needs to be achieved (Aaker et al, 2011:55). A research objective generally starts with a verb, for example identify, define, describe or explore, and should provide specific, tangible and achievable goals (McQuarrie, 2012:21). The research objectives will form the basis for evaluating whether or not the study was successful and should be kept in mind throughout the completion of the research project (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:654).
Distilled from the problem statement in section 4.2.1, the study presents the following primary and secondary research objectives:

**Primary objective:**
- to develop a set of criteria for the optimal implementation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes of South African organisations.

**Secondary objectives:**
- to identify possible guidelines for Facebook marketing by consulting the available literature; and
- to have the abovementioned guidelines categorised by industry experts by way of an online card-sorting exercise in order to compile a final set of criteria.

The literature review conducted in Chapters 2 and 3 served to identify an initial list of guidelines for optimal Facebook marketing, adhering to the first of the secondary objectives above. The remaining secondary objective was addressed in the empirical phase of the study and reported on afterwards. In the following section the collection of secondary data is discussed, as suggested in the research process depicted in figure 4.1.

### 4.2.3 Step 3: Conduct secondary research

The third step in the research process depicted in figure 4.1 is to address the collection of secondary data. While primary data refers to information gathered with the aim of achieving the objectives of a specific study, secondary data represents all the information available in the literature, previously collected by other researchers for the purposes of their own studies (Burns & Bush, 2010:174). Reviewing secondary data before designing the primary research method could assist the researcher in the following ways (Tustin et al, 2005:144):
- by solving the research problem;
- by refining the research objectives;
- by assisting the design process of a primary research method and the sampling method to be used; and
• by supplying information needed in the development of data collection instruments (Bradley, 2010:72).

For the purposes of this study, secondary data was analysed by means of a literature review that was undertaken before designing the primary research method, thus fulfilling various purposes. The literature review provided the researcher with a better understanding of what social media entails and how it fits into the integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach, as described in Chapter 2 (section 2.3). The literature review also provided a clear overview of what Facebook is and how it is used. Furthermore, the list of guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages was identified from the literature review, as discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.6), achieving one of the secondary objectives as stated in section 4.2.2.

It is customary for the researcher to carry on with the research process, as illustrated in figure 4.1, should the secondary data not achieve all of the research objectives. Since the literature review for this study solved only one of the secondary research objectives, the researcher proceeded with the selection of a primary research method, as per Step 4 of the research process depicted in figure 4.1.

4.2.4 Step 4: Select a primary research method

In the research industry, it regularly occurs that the information needed by a researcher is not discovered in the available literature due to the dynamic nature of the market and its consumers. In such a case, researchers continue with the research process and gather primary data, as suggested in figure 4.1 (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:31). Primary data is specific to the research problem of a study and is collected with the aim of achieving the research objectives of the specific study. The collection of primary data requires a high level of involvement from the researcher, as it is a time-consuming and expensive process (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:42).
The three broad categories of primary research methods are highlighted in the following section. As illustrated in figure 4.2, these primary research methods consist of surveys, experiments and observation methods (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:59).

Figure 4.2: Primary research methods

![Diagram of primary research methods]

**Source:** Adapted from Zikmund & Babin, 2010:59

The first primary research method, as depicted in figure 4.2, refers to experiments. An experiment conducted in the field is based on a natural situation, while experiments occurring in a laboratory take place in an artificial situation created by the researcher especially for the study (McQuarrie, 2012:169). The purpose of an experiment is to determine whether a change in one independent variable will lead to a change in another dependent variable, and it is therefore used to study causal links (Saunders *et al*, 2009:142). As stipulated in the research objectives in section 4.2.2, the aim of this study is not to analyse causal links, but rather to explore the social networking phenomenon Facebook, and to provide guidelines on how to use it effectively. As an experiment would not provide the required data, this method was not used.

The second primary research method illustrated in figure 4.2 refers to observation. Observation can assist a researcher in identifying the minute intricacies of the behaviour of participants and is conducted using one of two techniques: either participant or non-participant observation (Kapoor & Kulshrestha, 2010:68). Observation methods are more likely to be used in studies that are aimed at identifying problems than in those undertaken to solve problems identified earlier on. As the current study aimed to solve certain
problems, as listed in the research objectives in section 4.2.2, observation was not used in this study.

The final primary research method illustrated in figure 4.2, namely surveys, is used to conduct research in cases where communication is needed to analyse the opinions, preferences or intentions of respondents. Surveys are effective as they enable researchers to collect significant amounts of data at a relatively low cost (Burns & Bush, 2010:267). Research indicates that surveys can be useful for exploring a situation or validating information collected at an earlier stage, but may not be effective when the participants are vulnerable, especially if the topic is sensitive (Belk, 2006:233). Surveys can be categorised as either qualitative or quantitative; qualitative surveys include mainly in-depth and focus-group interviews, while quantitative surveys can be conducted by way of intercept, telephone, mail and online methods (Tustin et al, 2005:144). The main differences between quantitative and qualitative surveys are discussed below.

A quantitative survey generally utilises a questionnaire: a structured list of questions distributed to a sample of a population with the aim of eliciting specific information from each participant. The survey can be conducted verbally, in writing or online via a computer, with the responses being captured in any of these forms (Malhotra, 2010:211). Certain researchers prefer to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, taking advantage of the benefits of each approach. This tactic is known as a mixed-method approach, which is used to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data for the purpose of achieving the research objectives of a single study (Stentz, Clark & Matkin, 2012:1173).

Qualitative surveys can be in the form of an in-depth interview or a focus group, as mentioned above. An in-depth interview takes place between an administrator and typically 5 to 50 respondents who are interviewed individually. The interview can be either informal and casual, or highly structured, and usually lasts between 30 and 60 minutes (Grover & Vriens, 2006:58). Focus groups, on the other hand, usually consist of a group of 8 to 10 people, invited based on predetermined characteristics, who engage in a moderated discussion for 90 to 120 minutes, or until all the relevant topics have been discussed (Tustin et al, 2005:107).
Since the topic concerns Facebook from a business perspective, it is not seen as a sensitive topic, making a survey the sensible choice. When a researcher has gathered a list of items, as in the literature review of this study, and wishes to reduce it to a smaller set of variables, a card-sorting approach can be implemented to identify homogeneous subgroups or clusters from such items (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:545). Appropriately, an online card-sorting exercise was used to collect quantitative data. The findings based on the results of the card-sorting exercise were confirmed through an in-depth interview with an industry expert, which provided qualitative data and completed the collection of primary data. Since both quantitative and qualitative data was used in order to achieve the research objectives of this study, as set out in section 4.2.2, the research approach can be seen as a mixed-method approach.

As the primary research methods have been identified and motivated above, the study proceeds to discuss the design of the research instrument.

### 4.2.5 Step 5: Design the research instrument

According to the research process depicted in figure 4.1, the research instrument should be designed according to the primary research method selected in Step 4. The research instrument is the medium through which the researcher presents the respondents with questions in order to gather the data needed to achieve research objectives and can directly influence the quality of the data collected (Aaker, Kumar, Day & Leone, 2011:42). In order to design the research instruments needed to achieve the stipulated objectives, the researcher should consider the various question formats available, keeping in mind the specific characteristics of the study (Burns & Bush, 2010:330).

After identifying a preliminary list of guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes from the available literature, the researcher created an online card-sorting exercise to be utilised in the data-gathering phase of the study. The card-sorting exercise is similar to an online survey as it instructs the respondent to sort the data into meaningful categories (Righi et al., 2013:56). The researcher utilised software provided by Websort to facilitate the card-sorting exercise (Websort.net, 2015). When accessing the
survey, each respondent is presented with a set of instructions on how to complete the survey. The 48 guidelines are displayed on the left side on the screen, with a blank area to the right where the clusters could be formed. An example of the survey is available in Annexure A. The next step in the research process is to determine the scope of the research.

4.2.6 Step 6: Determine the scope of the research

Once the research instrument has been designed, the scope of the research should be determined by referring to Step 6 in the research process (figure 4.1). Determining the scope of the research consists of two main sections, namely selecting a sampling method and determining a sample size, as discussed in detail below (Bradley, 2010:154).

4.2.6.1 Sampling method

It rarely occurs that a researcher is able to collect primary data from every possible case or element in a population, as is the case with a census. It is generally not possible to include the entire census due to time limitations, budget constraints and difficulty in gaining access to participants (Saunders et al, 2009:210). In such cases the researcher can include a small selection of elements from a population in the study and draw conclusions that can be generalised to the whole population, based on the data collected from the sample (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:364). While the population refers to an entire group whose members all share a similar set of characteristics, a sample is defined as a subset of the population of interest (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:412).

When selecting a sample, the researcher can use either probability or non-probability procedures. Probability sampling, including simple random sampling, systematic sampling, cluster sampling and stratified sampling, provides each population element with a known, non-zero probability of being included in the sample (Van Hamersveld & De Bont, 2007:82). Non-probability sampling occurs when the probability of selecting population elements and including them in the sample is unknown, and the methods for such
sampling include snowball sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling and judgement or purposive sampling (Burns & Bush, 2010:368).

Snowball sampling requires each respondent selected by the researcher to suggest another respondent of a similar demographic who could be asked to take part in the study, while convenience sampling allows the researcher to select respondents based on accessibility, for example through intercept interviews (Malhotra, 2010:377). Quota sampling is similar to judgement sampling, requiring the sample to include a minimum number of sample members from each specified subgroup of the population. When using judgement or purposive sampling, the identification of the sample is dependent on the personal judgement of the researcher or another knowledgeable source. Certain members of the population will have a smaller chance of selection than others, as the researcher selects sample members who will serve the research purpose subjectively and conveniently (Burns & Bush, 2010:383).

After considering the sampling methods available, non-probability sampling, in the form of judgement (purposive) sampling, was deemed the most suitable strategy for achieving the objectives of the study. The study is exploratory in nature and thus the findings do not need to be generalised to the population as a whole. To solve the research problem and achieve the research objectives, the researcher had to obtain in-depth information about a very specific sample of the population, namely social media experts. Judgement sampling allows this through the use of inclusivity and exclusivity criteria, as discussed below. These factors, in combination with the limited resources available to the researcher, dictated non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2009:233).

Judgement sampling was implemented in this study as the respondents had to conform to specific criteria in order to achieve the research objectives. Judgement sampling requires that the respondents included in the study be selected on the basis of predetermined inclusivity and exclusivity criteria (Tustin et al., 2005:113). The inclusivity criteria of this study required participants to be professionals in the field of social media marketing. Each participant had to have personal experience of the management of Facebook pages, while being willing and capable of contributing to the study. The exclusivity criteria ruled out those sample members with the least experience in the field and participants who did not
have enough time or the appropriate communication skills to take part in the study. Participants who did not have facilities to communicate with the researcher, for example internet access, or who were unable to provide feedback in a timely manner at any point of the research, were also excluded from the study. The process of determining the sample size is discussed below.

4.2.6.2 Sample size

The number of elements or respondents that ultimately take part in the study represents the sample size (Malhotra, 2010:374). Careful attention must be paid when determining the sample size, as a sample that is larger than necessary could waste time and resources, while a sample that is too small could cause the results to be inaccurate (Kapoor & Kulshrestha, 2010:145). Since the sample size of a non-probability study is not required to be calculated statistically, as is the case with probability sampling, the researcher is allowed to follow a less rigid approach (Tustin et al, 2005:361).

This study utilised an online card-sorting exercise as a data-collection instrument. This was followed by one in-depth interview to confirm the data previously gathered. The online card-sorting exercise was presented to a number of social media experts, according to the judgement criteria specified above. The researcher identified participants by referring to an online directory of digital media organisations in South Africa, namely BizCommunity (BizCommunity.com, 2012). BizCommunity was selected as it is one of South Africa’s leading online portals for business drivers and opinion makers in the advertising, marketing and media industries in the country (Marsland & Manson, 2012). At the time of data collection, over 200 organisations across the country were listed in the Digital Media section of the directory, and they were all contacted and invited to participate in the online card-sorting exercise.

Tustin et al, (2005:360) suggest that, when conducting quantitative research, a minimum of 30 respondents are required in order to provide sufficient data for statistically accurate findings. After completion of the card-sorting exercise, an independent, objective social media expert was invited to take part in the qualitative section of the data collection process by assessing the validity of the data through an in-depth interview. The next step
in the research process required the researcher to gather the data needed for the purposes of the study and is discussed below.

4.2.7 Step 7: Gather the data

According to the research process depicted in figure 4.1, the data can be gathered at this stage of the research process. In the data-gathering phase of the study, the researcher converted a list of guidelines for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes obtained from the literature review into an online card-sorting exercise. Participants were expected to categorise the items into relevant categories and name the categories logically. After analysing the data collected by way of the card-sorting exercise, an in-depth interview with an objective social media expert confirmed the accuracy and relevancy of the data.

When conducting survey research (as opposed to experimental or observation research), non-sampling errors, which can be attributed to factors other than the sampling methodology, may occur (Aaker et al, 2011:91).

These errors could include:

- administering errors, which occur due to inaccurate administration or faulty behaviour by the fieldworker;
- design errors, which occur due to errors in the research design, for example selection errors or sampling frame errors;
- response errors, which occur due to false or inaccurate answers provided by the respondents, whether intentionally or unintentionally; and
- non-response errors, which occur due to exclusion of certain sample elements from the study, or when certain sample elements fail to complete the survey.

Various control mechanisms can be implemented in order to prevent or minimise non-sampling errors (Burns & Bush, 2010:437). Compared to a survey including fieldworkers as facilitators, the use of an online card-sorting exercise should result in a more consistent and objective experience for respondents. During data collection, respondents were
assured that their personal details would be kept confidential, which should have minimised response and non-response errors. The study is business oriented, which should also put respondents at ease about their privacy and ensure honest responses.

The data collection phase of the current study took place over a two-week period, from 15 to 31 October 2012. The researcher contacted each member of the sample telephonically to extend an invitation to participate in the study. After several individuals had indicated their willingness to participate, the researcher gathered demographic information about each willing participant telephonically. The questions asked during this conversation are available in Annexure B and provide more in-depth information about each participant. Following the telephonic conversation, the researcher sent an email to each participant to provide more information on the study, as well as a hyperlink to the online card-sorting exercise. The content of this email is available in Annexure C. By clicking on the hyperlink, each respondent was directed to a website where the card-sorting exercise was explained. The respondent could complete the exercise on this platform. An example of the online exercise is available in Annexure A.

During the empirical research conducted for the purpose of this study, the following inconsequential errors occurred: two respondents indicated design and response errors as they were unable to complete the study as instructed. Their responses were particularly vague, which suggested that they found the card-sorting exercise difficult to understand and challenging to complete. Their responses were omitted from the study. Non-response errors also occurred to a certain extent. When inviting possible respondents to take part, the researcher discovered that some of the targeted social media experts were not available to take part in the study during the data-collection period. Other possible respondents indicated that they would be willing to take part, but then never responded to the online card-sorting exercise. These factors led to non-response errors, as a result of which certain sample elements had to be disregarded. Administering errors were not an issue as the card-sorting exercise was in the form of an online self-completion survey.

According to figure 4.1, once the data has been gathered, data analysis and interpretation should be performed, as discussed in the following section.
4.2.8 Step 8: Interpret and analyse the data

This section will include a discussion of the interpretation and analysis of the collected data, as per the research process depicted in figure 4.1. The purpose of the data-interpretation and analysis phase is to obtain meaning from the data gathered during the empirical study (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:350). In order to avoid errors during this important phase of the research process, the researcher relied on the functionality of the card-sorting software used for data collection, namely Websort.net, combined with the expertise of a statistician at the Bureau of Marketing Research at Unisa and the SPSS data-analysis software for data-analysis purposes. Cluster analysis and specific decisions made in the data analysis process, displayed graphically in figure 4.3, are discussed in detail in the next section.

Figure 4.3: Cluster analysis

![Cluster analysis diagram](attachment:cluster_analysis_diagram.jpg)

Cluster validity

- Root Mean Square Standard Deviation (RMSSTD) Index
- Dunn’s Index
- Davies-Bouldin’s (DB’s) Index
- Pseudo F Index
- Pseudo T-square Index
- cubic clustering

Source: Adapted from Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011:240
4.2.8.1 Cluster analysis

The aim of cluster analysis is to identify homogenous clusters from a list of items (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011:238). This is done by considering the similarities between items: in a multidimensional space, items very similar to one another will be separated by small distances. This suggests a minimal distance between each item in a specific cluster, and a maximum distance between one cluster and the next. It is important to take note that an abundance of approaches is available for conducting cluster analysis, as well as a wide variety of options in which a specific group of items can be clustered. This is demonstrated in figure 4.4 below:

**Figure 4.4:** Different approaches to cluster analysis

Original points representing the original items to be clustered in the study

The original items divided into two clusters

The original items divided into four clusters

The original items divided into six clusters

**Source:** Adapted from Tan, Steinbach & Kumar, 2006:491

The main cluster analysis styles include hierarchical clustering, k-means clustering and two-step clustering. Hierarchical clustering is one of the most widely used methods and is ideal for relatively small data sets where the researcher may want to consider various cluster sizes (Berndt, & Petzer. 2011). K-means clustering (non-hierarchical) is more suitable for moderately sized data sets where the researcher requires a specific number of clusters. Two-step clustering (non-hierarchical) is suitable for large data files with up to
1 000 and more items, or for a mixture of continuous and categorical variables (Afifi, Clark & May, 2004).

The purpose of hierarchical clustering is to build a hierarchy of clusters, as can be illustrated in the form of a tree diagram or a dendrogram. By contrast, non-hierarchical clustering results in a flat partition, rather than a hierarchical ordering of clusters. Hierarchical clustering produces more informative, structured results than the unstructured set of clusters provided by flat clustering. Non-hierarchical clustering algorithms require the researcher to specify the number of clusters required prior to data analysis, while hierarchical clustering allows the researcher to determine the number of clusters according to the natural structure revealed by the findings (Adnan, 2011:179). For these reasons, hierarchical clustering, rather than non-hierarchical clustering methods, will be implemented in this study. More information on this method is provided below.

4.2.8.2 Hierarchical clustering

The two main methods of hierarchical clustering include divisive and agglomerative algorithms. Divisive algorithms consider all items to be together in one cluster, recursively clustering dissimilar items into separate clusters until each item is clustered individually. By contrast, agglomerative algorithms commence with each item seen as an individual cluster, merging the similar items cluster by cluster iteratively variables (Afifi et al, 2004). This is done pairwise until one cluster that contains all the items is formed. Therefore, in a dataset of N initial items, the first clustering will result in N-1 clusters, and N-2 will be the next result, followed by N-3, until only one cluster that contains all the original items remains, organised in such a way that the items most similar to one another will be clustered together (Fasulo, 1999). This approach is used most often by researchers, as also in this study. The similarity between a pair of items is determined by the linkage method implemented.

4.2.8.3 Linkage method

The clustering together of items, as discussed above, is dependent on the selection of a linkage method or clustering technique that can be used to calculate the pairwise similarity
between items. Of the many methods available, the most popular include single linkage, average linkage, complete linkage or Ward's method (Ritz & Skovgaard, 2005:11). When implementing the average linkage method, also known as unweighted pair-group mean average (UPGMA), an arithmetic average of the dissimilarity between a new cluster and the remaining items is calculated as soon as two objects with the highest similarity fuse together. This method, which is referred to as an unweighted method as it allocates equal weights to the items within the clusters when the average between items and clusters are calculated (Singh, 2008:12), has been prominent in various fields of research for some decades and was used in this study. Together with a linkage method, the researcher needs to select a distance measure to indicate the similarity between items.

4.2.8.4 Distance measure

After selecting a linkage method, a dissimilarity or distance measure needs to be selected to quantify the similarity between two items. The similarity depends on the distance between items in a multidimensional space where a small distance suggests a high similarity. As in the case of the linkage method, various distance measures are available and it is up to the researcher to choose a preferred measure. Some of the options include the Euclidean, Gamma, Jaccard, Minkowski and Chi-square distance measures (Wilkinson, Engelman, Corter & Coward, 2009:85). For the purposes of this study, the Euclidean distance measure was selected.

The Euclidean distance, also known as the straight-line distance, is a very commonly used type of distance measure. When using ordinal data in hierarchical cluster analysis, as in this study, the researcher needs to express the distances mathematically variables (Afifi et al, 2004). The Euclidean distance is the square root of the sum of the squared differences in the values of the variables and can be calculated by using a formula between two items, for example item B and item C (generally referred to as d(B,C)) with regard to the two variables x and y, can be calculated by using the formula below (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011: 245):

\[
d_{Euclidean}(B; C) = \sqrt{(x_B - x_C)^2 + (y_B - y_C)^2}
\]
The Euclidean distance is used to continually calculate the distance between each pair of items used in the study. These distances are displayed in a distance matrix, also known as a similarity matrix, which can be provided by the software used for data analysis, as discussed below.

4.2.8.5 Similarity matrix

According to the Euclidean distances calculated for each pair of items, the similarity matrix displays the frequency in which specific items are grouped together, thus indicating the level of similarity between them. The items with high similarity should be placed within the same cluster. As pairs of items are clustered together on a continuous basis, the similarity matrix will be adapted until it contains all the original items in one remaining cluster. An example of a similarity matrix is depicted in figure 4.5 below (Righi, James, Beasley, Day, Fox, Gieber, Howe & Ruby, 2013:73). When considering the first two items, ‘Ordering and Delivery info’ and ‘Secure Orders’, these two items should be clustered together. The items ‘Ordering and Delivery info’ and ‘Freshness Guarantee’ are quite unlikely to be clustered together, and it is even less likely that ‘Ordering and Delivery info’ and ‘Fair Trade’ will be clustered together.
As the original items are clustered together pairwise based on their similarity, the findings are depicted in a dendrogram, as discussed below.

### 4.2.8.6 Dendrogram

When implementing hierarchical agglomerative clustering, the outcome of the findings is displayed in the form of a dendrogram. A dendrogram is an illustration of the pairwise relationships between the items in the card-sorting exercise as categorised by the respondents, as illustrated in figure 4.6. At the same time that the original items are clustered together pairwise according to their similarity (refer to section 4.2.8.5 above), a dendrogram is formed alongside it.

Often referred to as a tree diagram because of its tree-like structure, the dendrogram includes large branches (the square brackets on the right-hand side of the figure) that are subdivided into smaller branches, as depicted towards the left of the figure. The result is a
horizontal hierarchy of clusters, clearly indicating the clusters of items most similar to one another (Righi et al., 2013:74).

Hierarchical clustering allows the researcher to divide the original items into any number of clusters between 1 and N. Drawing a line through a dendrogram, or ‘cutting the tree’, at specific heights will – somewhat subjectively – suggest a particular number of clusters. Considering the red line through the dendrogram in figure 4.6, the findings suggest that the items should be divided into five clusters, as the line cuts through the groupings at five different places. This line can be moved from one point on the dendrogram to another, as the researcher sees fit. While this method is convenient to gain a general idea of the distribution of items between clusters, it contains an element of subjective judgment. In order to ensure that the optimal number of clusters is selected, the researcher should make use of cluster validity indices instead.

![Example of a dendrogram](https://example.com/dendrogram.png)

**Source:** Adapted from Ritz & Skovgaard, 2005:12

Allowing the researcher to decide on the final number of clusters, as described in the previous section, remains subjective. Cluster validity allows the researcher to statistically determine the most natural number of clusters to be used according to the data findings.

4.2.8.7 Cluster validity

Cluster validity allows the researcher to confirm the quality of the chosen clustering algorithms and to determine whether the output is meaningful, while revealing the optimal
structure of the data set, in other words, the ideal number of clusters (Wilkinson et al., 2009:75). Various indices are suitable for determining cluster validity for hierarchical clustering, including the Root Mean Square Standard Deviation (RMSSTD) Index, Dunn’s Index, Davies-Bouldin’s (DB’s) Index, the cubic clustering criterion (CCC), Pseudo $F$ statistic and Pseudo $t^2$ statistic. According to a study comparing thirty methods for determining the most natural number of clusters in hierarchical clustering (Cooper & Milligan, 1988:322), the three most accurate cluster validity indices include a cubic clustering criterion (CCC), a Pseudo $F$ statistic and a Pseudo $t^2$ statistic, used in conjunction with one another.

When considering the statistical diagrams provided by the analysis software, consensus should be reached at a certain point between the three statistics, where the CCC and the pseudo $F$ display local peaks and the pseudo $t^2$ statistic simultaneously indicates a fall between two clusters (Olbrich, Quaas & Baumgartner, 2012:17). An example of such a consensus, suggesting seven clusters, is depicted in figure 4.7.
While it is important to determine the optimal number of clusters in a statistical method, as suggested above, the final step of data analysis requires the researcher to analyse the content of each cluster and confirm that the clusters are logical with regard to the content of each. This was addressed in the qualitative section of the study, as discussed below.

4.2.8.8 Qualitative data analysis

During the final step of data analysis, an independent social media marketing expert qualitatively analysed the clusters that had been provided statistically in order to determine whether the content of each cluster is logical. At the same time, each cluster was labelled according to its content. The data analysis software is useful for providing the clusters statistically, but it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the clusters are also
interpretable and meaningful. Each cluster should be concise enough to be manageable, while being substantial enough to demand strategic attention (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011:255).

Once interpretation and analysis have been concluded, the research findings of a study is usually reported on, which is the next step in the research process, as depicted in figure 4.1 and discussed below.

4.2.9 Step 9: Report the research findings

The purpose of market research is to assess the need for information, provide the required information and assist decision-makers in their task (Van Hamersveld & De Bont, 2007:60). After completion of the study, a research report should be compiled to present the findings, as suggested in the research process depicted in figure 4.1. Such a report typically includes the research problem and objectives, the results obtained from the empirical research, an interpretation of the results, a conclusion and sometimes recommendations based on the findings (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:80). The research report can be in written or verbal form and its format should be determined by the researcher, based on the needs of the decision-maker. It is important to report the research findings as the report represents the tangible product of the study (Malhotra, 2010:760).

The research report of the current study is available in Chapter 5. The final step of the research process is discussed below.

4.2.10 Step 10: Follow-up

Once the research report has been completed, the researcher may add a section on follow-up research. This section will summarise the conclusions arrived at in the previous section and explain their implications. Suggestions can be made for future research to be conducted in order to follow up on the study, for example to confirm the theory, develop or test a model, or gain more specific insights on the topic (Saunders et al, 2009:538). With
regards to the current study, future research opportunities are presented in Chapter 6 (section 6.7). This concludes the research process.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research methodology used to complete the study was discussed in detail, as were the reasons for various decisions made. The research process used by marketers in general was explained, followed by a discussion of each step in the research process. The chapter was concluded with a summary of how the methodology was implemented.

The following chapter will provide the results and findings of the researcher. The results will be stated and the implications thereof will be discussed. The chapter should be able to confirm or deny the expectations set out by the researcher.
CHAPTER 5

5 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 2 and 3 dealt with the insight gained from the relevant literature on a relatively new trend in the marketing field, namely the introduction of social media. Research suggested that an increasing number of organisations are gradually building a presence on social media, in particular Facebook (Grainger, 2010:3). According to the literature it seems that many organisations may not yet have a strategic plan in place in order to gain optimal benefit from their respective social media marketing efforts (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1). The literature available on the topic also suggests that various organisations may be reluctant to include social media in their marketing strategies and are unable to do so effectively due to a lack of experience in the field (Alterian, 2011:27). It was argued earlier that these organisations may be in need of guidelines to assist them in utilising Facebook pages optimally for marketing purposes (Owyang, 2010:9). The aim of this study was, therefore, to provide marketers with a set of criteria for the optimal utilisation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes.

Chapter 4 outlined the empirical research methodology implemented in the study to identify the criteria that marketers should adhere to in order to ensure their optimal utilisation of Facebook pages. The study commenced with a list of 48 guidelines (also referred to as items) for the optimal utilisation of Facebook pages that were developed by marketing experts, as drawn from the literature. The respondents were required to group the items that were most similar to one another together to form clusters by using an online card-sorting exercise. Each cluster formed during the exercise would represent a criterion for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes. This constituted the quantitative section of the study, while the qualitative section included the confirmation of the validity of the clusters according to the content of each, as well as the labelling of
each cluster. In Chapter 5, the data analysis process is reported on and the findings based on the empirical phase of the research are presented.

This chapter commences by revisiting the research problem statement and objectives, as outlined in Chapter 1 (section 1.5 and 1.7). A sample overview of the respondents is provided and compared to the required sample, as stipulated in the methodology of the study. Feedback on the data analysis process is presented, including explanations of the statistics provided by the data-analysis software. Finally, the set of guidelines for the optimal utilisation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes in South Africa, distilled from the cluster-analysis exercise, is introduced and an overview of the implications of each is provided. This set of guidelines will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis, in which the researcher’s conclusion will be presented.

5.2 REVISITING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In this section, the problem statement, research objectives and sampling methods discussed in Chapter 1 are revisited in order to clarify the aim of the study, to ensure that the objectives have been met, and to ensure that the sample used in the study adheres to the requirements set out in Chapter 1 (section 1.5 – 1.8).

In the introduction to the study it was suggested that there may be a need among marketers for guidelines on how to utilise Facebook pages in a way that will ensure that the organisation gains as much exposure as possible from the utilisation of this marketing communication channel (Owyang, 2010:4). The problem statement of the study was thus articulated as follows: In the literature available on the topic, no academic research exists to distil guidelines that can be used for the optimal utilisation of Facebook pages as a marketing communication channel in a South African context. In Chapter 1 (section 1.7), the researcher set a primary objective and two secondary objectives with the aim of solving the abovementioned problem. These objectives are discussed in the following section.
The researcher attempted to solve the research problem by developing a set of criteria for the optimal implementation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes by South African organisations, which was the primary research objective. The study then outlined two secondary objectives that had to be achieved in order to achieve the primary objective, namely:

- to identify possible guidelines for Facebook marketing by consulting the available literature; and
- to have the abovementioned guidelines categorised by industry experts by way of an online card-sorting exercise in order to compile a final set of criteria.

Various steps were followed in order to achieve these objectives, as reported in the sections below. The objectives of the study were dependent on certain requirements with regard to the sample of respondents used to gather data. First, a minimum number of respondents were required to take part in the study in order to obtain reliable results. Second, the respondents had to have a certain level of experience in the specific field in order to qualify as social media experts.

As explained in the methodology section of this study (Chapter 4, section 4.2.6.2), more than 200 social media marketing agencies were identified as the sample population for the study. Following a qualifying telephone interview, 143 social media experts were sampled and invited to participate in the study within a specified time period. Two weeks after commencement of the data collection process, 36 social media experts had already completed the online card-sorting exercise, which indicated a successful response rate of 25.2%. Once the data collection had been completed, it was found that the majority of the responses provided (34) was usable as per the instructions. The remaining two (1.4% of the total) respondents had clearly misunderstood the study and were excluded from the data analysis according to the exclusivity criteria discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.6.1), leaving 34 responses (23.8% of the data) valid and usable. Table 5.1 summarises the statistics on the data-collection response rate.
Table 5.1  Response rate on data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of useful responses</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of unusable responses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of non-responses</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>74.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stipulated in the methodology section of the study in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.6.2), a sample of at least 30 respondents were required to produce reliable findings (Tustin *et al.*, 2005:360). The table above therefore suggests that as the response rate was adequate, the findings can be considered to be usable.

Another factor that needed to be considered when respondents were invited to take part in the study was the experience of each respondent. According to the exclusivity criteria discussed in the methodology section of this study (Chapter 4, section 4.2.6.1), all the respondents were required to be social media experts with experience in the management of a Facebook page. As discussed in the introduction and background to the study (Chapter 1, section 1.8.2), a social media expert is defined as a professional in the field of social media marketing who has personal experience in using a Facebook page for marketing purposes. It was therefore important to consider the length of time for which each respondent had been an active social media expert.

While social media is still a relatively new concept in the marketing field, it was found that many of the respondents who provided feedback were quite experienced, with an average of more than three years’ practical social media involvement. Only two of the respondents had less than a year’s experience in social media, while 29 indicated 1 to 12 years’ relevant experience. Based on these findings, the respondents’ level of experience was deemed appropriate for the purposes of the study. The respondents’ experience in terms of years spent as active social media marketers is listed in Table 5.2.
Table 5.2: Experience in the field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time spent as a social media expert</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 6 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 12 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in the table above, the sample of respondents used in the study is in line with what was stipulated as being adequate in the research methodology in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.6.2). This suggests that the results of the study should be valid and reliable. In the next section, the results of the research findings of the study will be discussed in more detail.

5.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Since the data-collection method used was a mixed method consisting of both a quantitative and a qualitative section, and is discussed as such in the following section, the research findings of the study will be presented in two parts. The quantitative section of the data includes the clustering of the original items based on their similarity to one another by means of agglomerative hierarchical clustering, whereas the qualitative section includes an in-depth interview conducted with an objective third-party social media expert in order to validate that the clustering suggested in the quantitative phase of the study is in line with the content included in each cluster. To conclude the qualitative section of the study, each cluster was labelled appropriately during the interview. Both the quantitative and the qualitative research findings are discussed in more detail below.

5.3.1 Quantitative research findings

The quantitative data collected from the respondents during the empirical phase of the research was analysed with the assistance of a statistician from the Bureau of Marketing Research at the University of South Africa. SPSS data-analysis software was used to analyse the data by way of a hierarchical agglomerative clustering approach. As explained
in detail in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.8), when applying hierarchical agglomerative clustering, the three indicators that have to be considered are:

- a similarity matrix, indicating the level of similarity between the original items;
- a visual display of the similarity matrix in the form of a dendrogram, indicating the level of similarity between clusters; and
- cluster validity indices (in the form of graphs) suggesting the most natural distributions of clusters.

The assumptions made from these three aspects are illustrated and described below.

### 5.3.1.1 Assumptions based on the similarity matrix

The first indicator of research findings applicable to this study is the similarity matrix, as introduced in the methodology section in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.8.5). As stipulated in that section, hierarchical agglomerative clustering considers the original items identified during the literature review on a pairwise basis and merges the two items that are most similar to one another into one cluster. This process is repeated on an iterative basis until all the items are clustered according to their similarity. The similarity of each pair of items clustered in this study is illustrated by way of a similarity matrix. Due to the size of the matrix, only an extract is shown in figure 5.1. The complete matrix can be seen in Annexure D.
In the similarity matrix (extract) in figure 5.1, the 48 original items are listed vertically and horizontally on the left-hand side and at the top of the diagram. According to the hierarchical clustering method used, items indicating high scores in the similarity matrix are regarded as being more likely to be clustered together. The lower the score between two items in the similarity matrix, the smaller the likelihood that these two items will be clustered together. Assumptions regarding their similarity and the likelihood that they will be clustered together can therefore be made for each pair of items in the matrix.

To illustrate these assumptions, refer to the extract provided in figure 5.1. The items circled above, for example ‘Set clear objectives’ and ‘Understand trends’, are scored 47 in
the similarity matrix, which suggests a rather high likelihood that the two items should be grouped together. The highest visible score in the extract is a score of 78, awarded to the items ‘Optimise your layout’ and ‘Optimise your avatar image’, which suggests that these two items should positively be clustered together. For another set of circled items, ‘Give fans access to exclusive information’ and ‘Interact with other pages’, the low score of 8 that appears in the similarity matrix indicates that those items are unlikely to be clustered together. The accuracy of the assumptions based on the similarity matrix above can be seen in a dendrogram, which is a visual representation of the clusters formed based on the similarity of items and therefore provides an overview of the results of the study, as discussed in the following section.

5.3.1.2 Assumptions based on the dendrogram

As discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.8.6), a dendrogram is a visual illustration of the pairwise relationships between the original items according to the research findings (Ritz & Skovgaard, 2005:12). It therefore suggests the various possible clusters in which the original items can be divided according to their similarity, as illustrated by means of hierarchical branches between items. This illustration is based on the findings presented in the similarity matrix. The dendrogram provided by the data analysis software is shown depicted in figure 5.2.
Figure 5.2: Dendrogram depicting possible clusters

Line A

- Understand trends (Ewing, 2011)
- Set clear objectives (Elliot, 2011)
- Integrate Facebook into your m... (E...)
- Use the full Facebook tool kit (E...)
- Set a custom tab as a landing P... (E...)
- Provide Consistent Branding (O...)
- Optimize your avatar image (M...)
- Optimize your layout (Ewing, 2010)
- Cross promote content (Folkens...)
- Comment as your personal Prof... (O...)
- Interact with other Pages (Month...)
- Set Community Expectations (O...)
- Provide Live Authenticity (Owya...)
- Build relationships (Folkens, 20...)
- Foster Advocacy (Owya, 2010)
- Localize your Posts if they are R... (O...)
- Harness the power of simple b... (O...)
- Provide value for your fans (Ell...)
- Solicit a Call-to-action (Owya...)
- Give Fans Access to Exclusive In... (O...)
- Reward your Fans with Deals a... (O...)
- Offer incentives (Ewing, 2011)
- Create action-based incentives ... (O...)
- Incorporate personal analysis in... (O...)
- Turn off your auto-publish tool ... (O...)
- Keep things exciting (Ewing, 20...)
- Be Up To Date (Owya, 2010)
- Keep Your Posts Short (Bullas, ...)
- Post length: 5 lines (Condron, 2...)
- Posts: Consistently (Bullas, 20...)
- Be Timely (Bullas, 2012)
- Post timing: fluctuates per indu... (O...)
- Enable sharing and get traffi... (O...)
- Make it shareable (Folkens, 20...)
- Upload and tag photos (Mandel...)
- Post Photos, Videos, and Quotes... (O...)
- Photos draw feedback (Condron...)
- Connect a community (Folkens,...)
- Try Posting "Fill in the Blank" Po... (O...)
- Ask for your Fans’ Opinions (Bull...)
- Ask Questions using the Facebook... (O...)
- Post fan-centered status update... (O...)
- Start conversation with relevant... (O...)
- Fan-centric content (Bullas, 20...)
- Enable Peer-to-peer Interactio... (O...)
- Be interactive (Ewing, 2011)
- Participate in Dialogue (Owya...)
- Create two-way conversation (O...)

Line B

Source: Provided by card-sorting software

A vertical line can be drawn through any point on the dendrogram, for example line A or line B in figure 5.2, to indicate the number of clusters into which the original items could possibly be divided (Righi et al., 2013:74). Should the vertical line be placed, for example, in the position of Line A in figure 5.2, the items would be divided into 28 clusters as the line cuts through the dendrogram at 28 different hierarchical branches. Line B in figure 5.2 suggests that the data would be divided into four clusters. The line can be moved...
subjectively across the dendrogram as the researcher sees fit, depending on the specifications of the study. This approach may be suitable for obtaining an overview of the possible division of clusters, but since it contains an element of subjective judgment, the researcher relied on cluster validity indices to determine the accurate number of clusters to be used, as explained in the next section.

5.3.1.3 Assumptions based on cluster validity indices

As explained in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.8.7), cluster validity indices are used to confirm the quality of the various clustering algorithms implemented in the study to indicate whether the results are meaningful, and to suggest the most natural number of clusters for a statistical representation of the findings (Wilkinson et al., 2009:75). For this reason, the researcher relied on cluster validity indices to confirm the accuracy of the findings.

From the various cluster validity indices available, as discussed in the methodology section of the study (Chapter 4, section 4.2.8.7), the researcher selected to rely on the cubic clustering criterion (CCC), pseudo $F$ statistic and pseudo $t^2$ statistic simultaneously to indicate cluster validity. This method entails the comparison of the three diagrams provided by data analysis software and the identification of a point of consensus between the diagrams, namely where the CCC and pseudo $F$ peak, while the pseudo $t^2$ descends (Cooper & Milligan, 1988:322). This point will indicate the ideal number of clusters into which the original items should be divided (Olbrich, Quaas & Baumgartner, 2012:17).

The data analysis software provides the results of the cluster validity indices in diagrams, as can be seen in figure 5.3. The conclusions based on these diagrams can be validated by examining the statistics provided in Annexure E, as discussed in the next section. The following conclusions have been made:

- the cubic clustering criterion score peaks at -6.3, at the point suggesting the ideal number of 7 clusters, as confirmed in Annexure E;
- the pseudo $F$ statistic peaks at 2.8, also at the point suggesting the ideal number of 7 clusters, as confirmed in Annexure E; and
- the pseudo $I^2$ statistic descends at various points on the diagram. However, in this scenario the norm RMS distance closest to 1 would indicate the ideal point. This occurs at the point suggesting seven clusters, as confirmed in Annexure F.

**Figure 5.3: Cluster validity indices**

![Cluster validity indices chart](image)

*Source: Provided by statistician*

The assumptions based on the cluster validity indices can now be traced back to the dendrogram to identify the statistically correct number of clusters. When revisiting the dendrogram, the vertical line can be moved across the dendrogram until the number of clusters indicated by the cluster validity indices can be identified, as illustrated in figure 5.4. The seven clusters suggested by the data findings can be interpreted to represent seven guidelines for the optimal utilisation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes, as per the objectives of the study.
When implementing cluster analysis, it is important to keep in mind that while clusters are formed statistically, it is still advisable to consider the content of each cluster subjectively after analysis has been completed to ensure that the final distribution of items into clusters is rational and logical (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011:255). In this study, an objective social media expert was invited to validate the accuracy of the research findings (and therefore the placement of the line on the dendrogram) and to label each guideline according to its content during a qualitative interview. The qualitative research findings of this interview are discussed in the following section.
5.3.2 Qualitative research findings

As discussed in the previous chapter, an independent, objective social media expert was invited to take part in the qualitative phase of the study. The qualitative research included an in-depth interview with said expert to confirm that the clustering suggested by statistical analysis, as discussed in the previous section, was in line with the content of each individual cluster. The interview also included the task of labelling each guideline according to the content included in each cluster.

During the interview, the objective social media expert indicated agreement with the way the data had been sorted according to similarity between the items, as set forth in the dendrogram in figure 5.4. It was confirmed that the original items in the dendrogram had been sorted logically according to the expert’s knowledge and experience in the field. With regard to the specific items contained in each cluster, the objective social media expert advised that the clusters be slightly adjusted to ensure logical content in each cluster, as often occurs when implementing cluster analysis (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011:255). When this occurs during data analysis, it is suggested that the clusters should be subdivided according to the content of each, while keeping the order of similarity between items intact (Righi et al., 2013:74). Allowing one group to be excessively large could cause an imbalance in the results and dilute the strong association between the items in each cluster.

The objective social media expert suggested that Cluster 4 (as indicated in figure 5.2) might not be substantial enough to be clustered separately, and should therefore be clustered together with other items in Clusters 3 and 5, as suggested in figure 5.5. It was also pointed out that Cluster 7 (as indicated in figure 5.2) contains too many items that do not necessarily fall into the same category, according to their meanings. It was recommended that this cluster be subdivided into two separate clusters to provide a more accurate representation of the content of each cluster, as illustrated in figure 5.5. These suggestions resulted in seven clusters, as suggested by the cluster validity indices, containing items most similar to one another, as suggested by the dendrogram and the similarity matrix, with logical content within each cluster, as suggested by the qualitative phase of the study.
As can be seen in the illustration above, the order of similarity of all the original items remains the same, as suggested by the quantitative data findings. After logically finalising
the items to be included in each cluster, the independent social media expert, together with the researcher, labelled the clusters according to the items included in each cluster and on the basis of the relevant theory, as discussed in the literature review. The general issues identified from the items included in each cluster allowed the researcher, assisted by the objective social media expert, to label each cluster accordingly.

5.3.2.1 Cluster 1

Figure 5.64: Cluster 1

| Understand trends (Swing, 2011) |  
| Set clear objectives (Elliot, 2011) |  
| Integrate Facebook into your m... |

Considering the original context in which these items were written, this cluster can be summarised as follows: social media are dynamic, requiring marketers to plan ahead by setting clear objectives for the Facebook marketing strategy. Constant monitoring of the public’s reaction, picking up trends followed by Facebook users and responding to them consistently will make it easier to plan ahead in a subsequent campaign. By determining the social media strategy ahead of time, marketers will be able to incorporate the social media strategy with other communication channels or marketing campaigns. This cluster was labelled ‘Proactive planning’.

5.3.2.2 Cluster 2

Figure 5.7: Cluster 2

| Use the full Facebook tool kit (Ell... |  
| Set a custom tab as a landing P... |  
| Provide Consistent Branding (Ell... |  
| Optimize your avatar image (Ell... |  
| Optimize your layout (Elliot, 201... |

Considering the original context in which these items were written, this cluster can be summarised as follows: Many pages are designed inefficiently, while the user longs for a user-friendly experience on Facebook. This causes users to leave the page, while the marketer ideally wants the public to spend as much time as possible on it in order to build
a relationship with the brand. This cluster was labelled ‘Retaining customer attention and loyalty’.

5.3.2.3 Cluster 3

Considering the original context in which these items were written, this cluster can be summarised as follows: The public prefers to use Facebook for social interaction with other people and not for marketing by corporate companies. Organisations use Facebook to ensure brand exposure, to build relationships on Facebook and to increase profits. There is a negative connotation to companies communicating through Facebook. This cluster was labelled as ‘Building personal relationships’.

5.3.2.4 Cluster 4

Considering the original context in which these items were written, this cluster can be summarised as follows: Even though it is important that fans see your communications on Facebook, it will be to no avail if the content is not shared with other Facebook users. This cluster was labelled: ‘Enabling and reward sharing’.

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5.3.2.5 Cluster 5

Considering the original context in which these items were written, this cluster can be summarised as follows: Setting up a Facebook marketing plan ahead of time and using an auto-publisher to communicate with your fans may be a less time-consuming option, but will not necessarily lead to reaction from fans. Fans should be able to pick up that there is a personality behind the communications posted on Facebook. This cluster was labelled ‘Communicate accurately and consistently’.

5.3.2.6 Cluster 6

Considering the original context in which these items were written, this cluster can be summarised as follows: The aim of using Facebook pages is, above all, to increase word-of-mouth marketing and get people talking about your brand. The objective is to post communications and have as many people as possible share the information with all their friends, thus multiplying the reach of the campaign. This cluster was labelled ‘Increase reach using multimedia’.
### 5.3.2.7 Cluster 7

Figure 5.12: Cluster 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Cluster 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Try Posting “Fill in the Blank” Posts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for your Fans’ Opinions (Builder)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask Questions using the Facebook Wall</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Post fan-centered status updates</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Start conversations with relevant fans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan-centric content (Belovic, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable Peer-to-peer Interaction (Xwing, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in Dialogue (Owyoung)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create two-way conversations (Owyoung)</td>
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Considering the original context in which these items were written, this cluster can be summarised as follows: Inexperienced marketers may be unsure about the content that should be posted on Facebook. Unless they experiment on the page, it could be difficult to determine which types of posts will result in the most brand exposure. The label chosen for this cluster is ‘Creating captivating content’.

Regarding the discussions of the seven clusters mentioned above, it is important to keep in mind that the guidelines provided are general recommendations. Each cluster should be tested within each different company and should be adjusted according to specific brands, products and situations.

As discussed previously, the objectives of the study were firstly to consult the available literature on the topic in order to identify a list of guidelines for the optimal utilisation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes, and secondly to have the abovementioned list of guidelines categorised by industry experts by way of an online card-sorting exercise in order to compile the final set of criteria. As demonstrated in the section above, the final objective has been achieved. The implications of the findings will be discussed in the final chapter of this study.
5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter started out by revisiting the research problem statement and objectives as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.7). Feedback was provided on the sample of respondents who participated in the study, after which the research findings were presented for both the quantitative and the qualitative sections of the study. In the final section each of the criteria that should be adhered to when implementing a Facebook marketing strategy was discussed, as required by the research objectives.

In Chapter 6, which will conclude this study, the implications of the research findings will be discussed and recommendations will be made regarding topics for possible related research in the future.
6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the final chapter of this study, the information gained from the literature review and the card-sorting exercise (as discussed in Chapter 5) will be used to draw conclusions based on the research findings. Arising from these conclusions, recommendations will be made regarding the implementation of those findings in practice. The contribution made by this study to the social media and Facebook marketing industry and ways in which social media marketers might benefit from the findings will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study will be dealt with, followed by suggestions for future related research.

6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study, as defined in Chapter 1 (section 1.7), were based on the growing trend among organisations to use social media in their overall marketing strategies. An increasing number of organisations are including social media in their marketing efforts, many without proper knowledge of how they can be used effectively (Belkin & Ramers, 2011:1). According to the relevant literature, many organisations could benefit from a set of guidelines to help them to implement a social media marketing strategy in a way that will ensure optimal results (Owyang, 2010:4). Although there are many different social networks, this research focused on Facebook, which currently has the largest user base.

Keeping the research problem in mind, namely the lack of clear guidelines for the effective implementation of a Facebook marketing strategy, the research question was formulated as follows: Which guidelines can marketers use to assist them in utilising Facebook pages effectively as a marketing communication channel? In an attempt to answer the research question, certain objectives were formulated, as listed in the following section:
Primary objective:
- to develop a set of criteria for the optimal implementation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes of South African organisations.

Secondary objectives:
- to identify possible guidelines for Facebook marketing by consulting the available literature; and
- to have the abovementioned guidelines categorised by industry experts by way of an online card-sorting exercise in order to compile a final set of criteria.

The findings of this research were discussed in Chapter 5 and in this chapter the conclusions and recommendations are presented.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In order to make specific recommendations the conclusions based on the research findings must first be highlighted. The conclusions that are based on findings of the research undertaken for the purpose of this study and correspond with the above-mentioned objectives are discussed below.

6.3.1 Conclusion 1

The first secondary objective, namely to identify possible guidelines for Facebook marketing by consulting the relevant literature, required the researcher to gather information on the topic by consulting said literature. Various articles in academic journals, reports by research institutions, blogs and white papers focusing on social media or Facebook were consulted. The literature review (see Chapters 2 and 3) revealed that organisations generally lack knowledge of how best to use social media, and specifically Facebook, as an effective channel for marketing communication. Various recommendations, best practices and how-to guides on Facebook marketing were uncovered in the literature, which enabled the researcher to assemble a list of 48 guidelines, as required by the first objective. These guidelines are listed in section 3.6.
6.3.2 Conclusion 2

The 48 guidelines that were identified by way of the literature review were used as a starting point for the empirical phase of the study in order to address the second objective. As part of the research methodology for addressing the last secondary objective, the identified guidelines were categorised by a sample of industry experts who agreed to take part in an online card-sorting exercise in order to compile a final set of criteria.

During the empirical phase of the research methodology, a sample of 200 industry experts was invited to take part in a card-sorting exercise with the aim of achieving the second objective, of which 143 was reached successfully. This card-sorting exercise allowed the participants to group the guidelines that had been identified during the literature review according to their similarities, thereby forming a final set of criteria for Facebook marketing purposes. The seven criteria identified by the sample of participants represented their combined knowledge of the matter, which was supported by the cluster analysis exercise, as discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.2). The seven criteria are summarised below.

6.3.2.1 Proactive planning

The first criterion that a Facebook page must adhere to relates to proactive planning. The research clearly showed that planning is an important part of a social media strategy and needs to be treated as such. To follow an ad hoc strategy when implementing a Facebook page is not at all ideal – a specifically planned approach is required.

6.3.2.2 Retaining customer attention and loyalty

The second criterion suggests that a Facebook page should be used to retain customer attention and loyalty. The literature describes Facebook as a platform for continuous interaction between the customers and the company at a personal level. The Facebook marketing strategy would serve no purpose if it cannot succeed in retaining the attention of customers, thereby building loyalty.
6.3.2.3 Building personal relationships

The next criterion requires the marketer to use the Facebook page to build personal relationships. Facebook allows companies to build more personal relationships with customers than is possible through the use of other marketing communication channels, with the result that fans can begin to view a company as a friend, rather than as a business. Companies should be careful not to communicate in a strictly corporate manner on Facebook as this may create a cold image and discourage fans from interacting with them.

6.3.2.4 Enabling and rewarding sharing

The fourth criterion implies that a marketer should not only enable fans to share content, but should also reward them for doing so. Facebook pages offer a platform where fans can be encouraged to share content and in essence promote word-of-mouth marketing. By making it easy for fans to share content and rewarding them for it, they become more motivated and word-of-mouth marketing is promoted even further.

6.3.2.5 Communicating accurately and consistently

In order to adhere to the next criterion, all communication on a Facebook page needs to be accurate and consistent. Fans should be able to trust the content placed on the Facebook page and look forward to receiving regular communications from the company. Posting content that is unreliable may cause damage to the company’s image.

6.3.2.6 Increasing reach through multimedia

This criterion requires the marketer to reach a wider audience by using various forms of multimedia, such as photos, videos, graphics and sound clips. The literature suggests that fans are more eager to share multimedia than normal text. It would therefore be unwise for companies not to communicate by using a variety of multimedia as this would result in their missing out on a wider reach.
6.3.2.7 Creating captivating content

Captivating content is the final criterion with which a Facebook page must comply. Since it is important to create content that will capture the attention of the targeted Facebook users, content should be interesting and creative, and difficult for fans to ignore.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from the study at hand is that these seven criteria are regarded as being key to an optimal Facebook marketing strategy. In the following section, the meanings of the various criteria in practical terms, what they entail and how they might be implemented, are discussed in the form of recommendations to provide a more practical roadmap for use by a social media marketer.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the above-mentioned conclusions based on this research, it is recommended that when marketers who have little experience in social media marketing, or have no concrete, effective social media marketing strategy in place, decide to draw up a social media marketing strategy, they should consider and be guided by the criteria identified in this study. These criteria can be used to determine what to focus on when communicating with fans through Facebook pages. While incorporating the criteria into a social media marketing strategy, marketers should keep in mind that various companies could differ on many levels: two seemingly similar companies could offer competing products or services, or have contradictory objectives, unrelated target markets and overall contrasting strategies. For this reason, it is important to carefully consider and experiment with all the criteria, and then to implement only those that are relevant in a way that suits the specific company. The correct way to procedurally implement the criteria is discussed below.

6.4.1 Criterion 1: Proactive planning

When a marketer decides to include Facebook in the overall marketing campaign, there should be a strategic plan behind the approach. Instead of simply using intuition to
communicate to fans via this platform, marketers should consider the current trends in the market, set clear objectives for the Facebook campaign and make sure that Facebook is included in the overall marketing strategy.

Firstly, social media are vibrant, dynamic and ever-changing. Trends in the market should be followed and consistently acted upon. By getting to know their target markets, especially with regard to their behaviour towards changing trends, companies can benefit from implementing creative reactions to trends.

Secondly, the objectives of a Facebook marketing campaign (or for that matter any successful marketing campaign) form a central driver for the results that can be obtained. It is important to clarify the aim of the campaign and to stipulate specific and achievable objectives before implementing marketing strategies.

Finally, the fact that Facebook may differ from the communication channels that most marketers are used to, should not cause marketers to approach it as a stand-alone marketing platform. Facebook can and should be included in the overall marketing environment, and can be used to draw fans to the various other platforms where the company is promoted (Elliot, 2011).

6.4.2 Criterion 2: Retaining customer attention and loyalty

When undertaking the layout of a Facebook page, marketers should take advantage of the many ways in which the page can be designed and use them optimally. The various tools offered by Facebook, which include, for example, the creation of various applications or tabs on the page, should be implemented by customising the page and providing consistent branding with which consumers are familiar. It is important to create a user-friendly environment and to maximise exposure for the company by selecting an ideal avatar image (the image or ‘profile picture’ that represents the brand and is visible next to each communication) and effective branding, and to optimise the overall layout of the page.
Consistent branding throughout all marketing campaigns will create a familiar, welcoming feeling in the minds of customers. This positive effect can be replicated on the Facebook platform by consistently repeating similar branding aspects as in other marketing campaigns, thereby differentiating the company from others while comforting fans with a familiar experience (Owyang, 2010).

The layout of the Facebook page should be carefully planned to ensure that fans can easily find the information they are looking for on the page. Clutter must be avoided and the links provided for fans to access various aspects of the page must be optimised. Clearly indicate the functionality or purpose of the page, for example whether it is intended for gathering information, entering competitions and purchasing products (Ewing, 2011).

A Facebook page can be visited by users who officially indicated that they like the page (by clicking on the ‘Like’ button and becoming fans), and also by people who chose not to do so. Facebook is an ideal portal for communicating exclusive information and building a relationship with fans. A custom landing page can be created where visitors can find basic information and a motivation to like the page. It is only by becoming a fan of a page that users are able to gain optimal benefit from it.

The avatar image or profile picture on a company’s Facebook page refers to the company logo or the image chosen to represent the company and is similar to an individual user’s profile picture. Since this image appears on the Facebook page next to each communication posted by the company, it should be suitable and highly recognisable. It should not be pixelated or unclear and should represent what the company offers to fans (Monhollon, 2011).

Facebook offers marketers a variety of very effective tools. After creating a Facebook page, fans must be enticed to interact with the company through the page. As previously discussed, some of the features of Facebook include banner advertisements, the creation of events, groups or applications, and even location-based tools that enable fans to use the location service on their phones to post an update on Facebook to indicate that they are visiting a specific place. Making use of many or all of these features can help marketers to retain current fans and attract prospective fans to the page (Elliot, 2011).
6.4.3Criterion 3: Building personal relationships

Marketers can use Facebook pages to create relationships with fans through constant communication and by reaching out to fans with the aim of getting to know them while at the same time revealing the personality of the company to them. The marketer must try to communicate the same message through more than one channel while adding a personal touch to each message. It is important to make sure that fans know what to expect of the page and to build relationships by providing what is expected.

Facebook is an ideal platform for demonstrating the personality of the company to fans. South African Airlines, for example, demonstrates a professional personality by focusing on service excellence, while Kulula prefers to create a vibrant, fun atmosphere in marketing campaigns. Even if a particular fan is initially not a consumer of the company’s products, a relationship can be built over time through strategic communication via Facebook. When the fan finally needs the product that the company provides, the positive image of the company developed over time through Facebook might lead to a purchase (Folkens, 2011).

Promoting advocacy among Facebook fans is essential as customers are more likely to trust each other than to trust a company. Advocacy is encouraged by asking existing fans to recommend the page to others, to like communications on the page, vote for something, or make use of any other creative applications on a page. This provides companies with an opportunity to gain valuable low-cost exposure (Owyang, 2010).

Facebook also allows administrators to communicate on their companies’ Facebook pages as either company representatives or in their personal capacities, which will result in actual faces being connected to the company, indicating to fans that there are people behind the company who want to build relationships with them. This feature also exposes all an administrator’s Facebook friends to the communication, even though they might not yet be fans of the company (Monhollon, 2011).
Facebook is one of the few social networks that requires the use of real names and thus provides authentic people-to-people connections. Marketers should take advantage of this feature and connect fans to the people that run the company by interacting in a conversational manner. Photos and information about the page administrators should be displayed to prove to fans that the organisation’s employees are involved and care about their fans (Owyang, 2010).

Facebook also allows pages to connect with other pages by posting comments or becoming fans. More exposure can be gained and more relationships can be built by becoming a fan and interacting with another page. A corporate company could, for example, like a non-profit organisation, or companies that complement each other could like and promote each other during a campaign (Monhollon, 2011).

When attempting to build a relationship with fans, marketers should keep in mind that not all fans are fully engaged with every communication channel utilised by the company. Facebook can be used to share exciting new content created for distribution through a different communication channel, for example by posting videos intended for television commercials on Facebook, linking blogging activities to the Facebook page, or repeating images or slogans from other traditional advertisements on the Facebook page. The connection and cross-promotion of communication channels could also lead to greater exposure to new fans (Folkens, 2011).

A good relationship requires clear communication. It is recommended that marketers clearly inform both current and prospective fans about exactly what they can expect from the page by explaining the aim thereof. Some pages may only provide consumers with useful information and updates, while others include games, competitions, special offers, product support, etc. To ensure optimal interaction between the company and the fans, the marketer should clearly stipulate what is regarded as appropriate behaviour and what is not allowed on the page (Owyang, 2010).
6.4.4 Criterion 4: Enabling and rewarding sharing

Interaction with the company’s Facebook page should be rewarded. Marketers should offer incentives to Facebook users and make it worth their while to connect with the company by offering them benefits that they would not receive otherwise. Communications should be targeted at specific customers and should also provide fans with opportunities to react, which will add value to their experiences.

One way to measure the success of a Facebook page is to keep track of the number of fans. An increase in the number of fans indicates that the Facebook page is enjoying greater exposure. It is therefore important to reward fans and make it worth their while to like the Facebook page (Elliot, 2011).

It is recommended that companies provide fans with incentives in the form of discounts or coupons, or even exclusive content or valuable information (Bullas, 2011). Facebook allows marketers to create fan-gates. While any Facebook user can access the general Facebook page, only fans have access to certain tabs or fan-gates. The company could offer a sought-after incentive to fans and promote it on the general Facebook page, with an instruction to users to like the page in order to gain access to its ‘fan-gated’ section (Belosic, 2012). Fan-gates can be used to launch competitions or for communicating exclusive information to fans, for example information about special sales promotions (Ewing, 2011).

In some instances fans will not benefit from geographically specific information, for example when a product is advertised worldwide but is available only in certain geographic areas. When necessary, Facebook does allow marketers to communicate to certain geographic areas only. This will benefit fans as they will only receive relevant information and information overload will be avoided (Bullas, 2011).

While it is important to provide fans with incentives, the marketer should also find ways to lead fans from engagement to purchase (Belosic, 2012). Provide calls-to-action by encouraging fans to sign up for newsletters, browse products on Facebook, click through to the website to view special offers, request quotes or even conduct transactions via the

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Facebook page. Be careful not to push fans to engage, but make sure that all the possible activities and information sources are readily available and easily accessible to them (Owyang, 2010).

6.4.5 Criterion 5: Communicating accurately and consistently

Marketers should determine how they can communicate optimally with their fans. This can be done by investigating when to communicate, what type of messages to send, the ideal length of messages and how personal they can be. The marketer must create a pattern of communication based on how fans react.

The company should interact consistently with its fans by keeping pages current and adding fresh content. Existing fans should be continuously intrigued in order to keep them interested in the company. The page should be so original and exciting that it continues to attract new fans. Marketers must consider the usage patterns of their fans to determine how often they ought to communicate through Facebook. It is important that the content of the page maintain a balance between promotional and conversational messages. Ideally, 80% of the content on a page should be informational, educational or entertaining, while only 20% should be about the company’s products or services (Owyang, 2010).

A company should post messages regularly (Bullas, 2011). The exact times may vary in different industries – some companies may post messages daily or even more than once a day, while others may benefit more from communicating via Facebook once or twice a week. The day of the week and the time of day could also influence the response received from Facebook fans. Fans may be more active on the social media over weekends than during the week, or at certain times of the day. Marketers should try different approaches to determine the best times to communicate with their Facebook fans (Constine, 2011).

While selecting the optimal time to communicate via a Facebook page, it is also important to be relevant and bear in mind what is happening outside of Facebook. Information on breaking news and messages regarding public holidays, for example, draw more attention than general messages.
It is recommended that marketers should enable fans to easily find relevant information on the page’s timeline by adding headings to posts. In some cases, it seems that posts of four or five lines result in more interaction by fans, while other pages gain the most engagement by posting one-line posts. The reason for this may be that fans would rather read less time-consuming posts than large blocks of text. Marketers should experiment with the length of posts and determine what the perfect length is to maximise engagement with their fans (Bullas, 2011).

While it is important to reward fans and provide incentives, this should be done in a manner that keeps attracting fans to the page. Instead of disclosing information about many new products simultaneously on the Facebook page, the channel could be used to build up excitement about products over a period of time, finally disclosing the information after gaining maximum exposure (Ewing, 2011).

Facebook collaborates with other social networks and websites to allow marketers to auto-post updates from other online channels, for example by automatically copying Twitter posts onto Facebook, or auto-posting a link to each new article on the company’s website or blog on the Facebook page. While this could save time, it is not necessarily effective. It has been found that Facebook communications that incorporate personal aspects draw more interaction, for example when a page administrator adds his or her name or photo to the communication (Constine, 2011).

6.4.6 Criterion 6: Increasing reach through multimedia

Marketers should post captivating media files on their pages and encourage fans to promote the company by sharing those files with their friends. They are also advised to take advantage of the social aspect of Facebook and encourage fans to share the company’s message. Different types of multimedia could be included to draw the attention of potential fans to the page.

Facebook allows marketers to post communications and invite fans to share this information on their own individual profile pages, which means that each communication is
then shared with all the individual fans’ friends as well, thus maximising exposure for the company (Belosic, 2012). For this reason all posts should be interesting enough to convince individuals to share them, and should include a share button to make it easy for fans to promote the company (Folkens, 2011).

The addition of photos, video clips or sound clips to a Facebook page can generate up to 100% more reaction from fans than posts containing only text. When uploading photos or videos on to a Facebook page, it is important to tag the photos to identify the persons in the pictures and to gain more exposure from those individuals’ friends (Monhollon, 2011). Attract the attention of the entire community by adding images or videos of actual occurrences in the area. Share success stories on the Facebook page and add pictures where possible (Folkens, 2011).

Fans can even be invited to add photos of themselves supporting the company on their Facebook page. This increases engagement and maximises awareness (Bullas, 2011). When a link is posted on a company’s Facebook page, the addition of a relevant image to the link could result in an increase of up to 65% in the response by fans (Constine, 2011).

6.4.7 Criterion 7: Creating captivating content

Companies should make it easy for fans to interact with them and also encourage peer-to-peer interaction to gain company exposure. They are advised to post enticing messages that encourage interaction with and about the company. It is also crucial to respond to all communications received from fans, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

Fans are constantly communicating with each other. Marketers should take advantage of this practice by creating an environment that encourages peer-to-peer interactions about the company and should request that fans respond to their friends’ comments. Such discussions will be able to support themselves once a proper question and answer application has become available (Owyang, 2010). Benefits aside, peer-to-peer communication requires a community policy and needs to be monitored in real time in
order to result in a positive experience and prevent negative responses from fans (Ewing, 2011).

It is important to keep the fans in mind when posting communications on Facebook. The communications that receive the most responses from Facebook fans will appear more often in the news feed of Facebook fans. Marketers should therefore find ways to encourage interaction with fans by, for example, asking them to share their opinions, stories or advice, asking open-ended questions, or using ‘fill-the-blank’ statements (Bullas, 2011).

Interaction from fans could also be encouraged by offering products or gift vouchers for purchase via Facebook. Instead of focusing on company information, marketers should aim to post updates that are relevant and useful to consumers, such as useful information regarding the company or the product being promoted. Positive interaction will follow if the needs of the fans are considered and conversations are constructed around topics that interest them (Belosic, 2012).

While it is important to draw interaction from Facebook users, it is equally important to participate in dialogue. It is very beneficial to foster two-way dialogue and acknowledge comments from fans and other interactions with the Facebook page (Folkens, 2011). Posts on a Facebook page must be written in a conversational tone, building on the relationship between the company and the fan. It is very important that marketers monitor conversations and respond when necessary. When, for example, a fan complains about the company on Facebook, the company should explain the reason for the fan’s disappointment and attempt to solve the problem or compensate him/her for the inconvenience. This will make it quite clear to consumers that the company is actively involved in the conversation (Owyang, 2010).

The criteria discussed above clearly show that, compared to other traditional communication channels, Facebook allows companies to connect with customers at a much more personal level. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that companies take advantage of this opportunity by applying this set of criteria when developing a Facebook page. It is important to bear in mind that the criteria discussed
above are general recommendations. Each criterion can be tested by the marketer and should be adjusted to suit the specific company, product and situation. As an area for further research, in conjunction with the set of criteria, a procedural model can be developed to allow marketers to follow a step-by-step process when implementing the criteria, as will be discussed below.

6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to provide a set of criteria that inexperienced marketers or companies trying to incorporate social media – specifically Facebook pages – into their overall marketing strategies, should adhere to. Facebook is still a relatively new communication channel to which relatively few marketers have been exposed. Since most marketers are still experimenting with Facebook, clear criteria on how it should be implemented in order to obtain optimal results could benefit marketers.

As per the objectives set out in this study, the researcher provided a set of criteria that can be used by marketers when they create or improve a social media strategy. Seven criteria were identified for consideration by any marketer who is developing and using a Facebook page for marketing purposes. While the criteria are applicable to any company or industry, they should be applied in accordance with the specific attributes of the company’s target market and within the context of the company and industry concerned.

The criteria could be used by new companies trying to gain awareness through Facebook, by existing companies hoping to expand their marketing reach by entering the social media domain, and even by established companies with a need to protect their share of the market.

The study suggests that, by consistently implementing the identified criteria in a strategic and structured manner, companies may be able to grow a significant fan base on Facebook. If the fan base is kept interested and satisfied, the company can be assured of an on-going source of word-of-mouth marketing. Once the Facebook strategy has been
successfully implemented, the criteria provided in this study could be imitated in other social media channels to reach even more clients.

While the study has highlighted many benefits of the use of multimedia, certain limitations of the research conducted have also come to light. These are discussed in the following section.

**6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

During the execution of this study, certain limitations occurred. Even though these limitations did not prevent the researcher from achieving the study objectives, more conclusive results may have been achieved had they not occurred.

The criteria that were identified through the study are broadly recommended to any company in any industry, but different industries may require different marketing approaches. This implies that the criteria identified in the study may not be applicable to all industries in the same way. The researcher suggests that marketers who implement the criteria suggested in this study should consider the nature of their specific industries and adapt them where necessary. Further research on this topic may be required.

Since the study at hand was exploratory in nature, the aim was not to present completely representative findings or conclusive evidence on the subject and further research on the topic may be useful, as discussed in the section on future research opportunities below.

**6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

As pointed out above, certain limitations occurred throughout the research process. Further research on the topic of how Facebook pages could be optimally used for marketing purposes could expand the results already obtained and confirm their reliability.

More reliable results may be achieved by including a larger sample of respondents in the data-collection process. By combining the opinions of the majority of social media experts
in South Africa it should be possible to create an accurate perception of how Facebook pages should be used to effectively reach the market. Further research on this topic could possibly include all the social media organisations in the country.

While the online exercise enabled the researcher to easily reach a large sample of geographically diverse respondents, personal interviews may have provided more comprehensive results. An opportunity to discuss the objectives of the study and the process of completing the card-sorting exercise with each respondent could have resulted in more complete and in-depth responses from the respondents. Future studies on the subject could possibly be conducted in person by way of interviews, or could perhaps focus groups, which would enable respondents to react to the opinions of their peers.

The diverse nature of various industries may impact the results obtained in this study. While it is believed that the criteria identified may be applicable to most industries, further industry-specific research could prove otherwise. Research involving major industries may lead to different results for different industries, and could even indicate which industries are likely to benefit most from marketing through Facebook pages.

When considering the set of criteria provided in this study, it may be beneficial to develop a procedural model in conjunction with a set of criteria compiled in a subsequent study. This will allow inexperienced marketers to create a new Facebook page step by step, or to improve an existing page to ensure that it complies with the criteria identified in the study.

Even though further research may be required in order to provide a more conclusive answer to the research question stated earlier on, the objectives of this study were satisfactorily achieved.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The final chapter of this study includes a summary of the research question and the objectives that were discussed in the previous chapters. The conclusions that were arrived at were discussed in section 6.3, according to the specific objectives set for the study. It
was concluded that there are seven criteria that can be regarded as being key to an optimal Facebook marketing strategy, and recommendations were made regarding the application of these criteria by marketers who plan to include Facebook pages in their marketing strategies. In South Africa, the implementation of these criteria could lead to the optimal use of a company’s Facebook page for marketing purposes.

The contribution of the study in the marketing field was discussed and it was suggested that organisations of different types and sizes could benefit from the findings. A number of limitations were highlighted and discussed. Finally, suggestions were made on how the study might be extended as future research could support the current findings and also provide more conclusive findings.


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ANNEXURE A

– Card-Sorting Exercise –
Instructions:
The aim of this exploratory study is to contribute knowledge to the South African marketing industry by identifying a list of success criteria for the optimal implementation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes. On the left of the screen, you will be presented with a list of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages, as obtained from the literature available on the topic. You will need to select each item by clicking on it, and drag it to the white area in the middle of the screen where your categories can be formed. You will be able to move items from one category to another as necessary and name each category according to the items it includes. There is no correct number of categories but make sure you think about how the items relate to each other. If you have a group with a large number of items, you may be able to split it up. When all the items have been placed into a category, and all the categories have been logically named, the exercise is complete.

Please contact Suné Barnard with any queries.
ANNEXURE B

- Example of Telephonic Interview –
TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW

Possible conversation with company secretary:
Good day,
I am a master’s student at Unisa and would like to know if you could refer me to an employee responsible for Facebook marketing in your organisation. It could be any person responsible for creating and managing Facebook pages who would be willing and able to participate in an online survey. Could I please have the contact details of this person?

Possible conversation with relevant participant:
Good day,
I am a master’s student at Unisa and am currently collecting my data. The aim of my study is to identify criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages for marketing purposes. Would you please be so kind as to agree to participate in the study?
YES – I only need to determine whether or not you adhere to the inclusivity criteria of my study, after which you will be expected to participate in an online card-sorting exercise. Would you be willing to answer a few questions and then complete the online exercise?
YES – Thank you for your co-operation.
Please indicate how long you have been working as a social media expert.
Do you mostly work with national or international clients?
Are the majority of your clients active on Facebook?
Thank you. I will now send you an email with instructions for the online card-sorting exercise, as well as a link to the website. All you need to do is to follow the link, enter your respondent number and start the exercise. On the left of the screen you will see a list of criteria. You need to select each item and drag it over to the white area in the middle of the screen. By doing this, categories will form which you can name appropriately. You can rename categories and move around items as you go along. Once you have categorised all the items and named all the categories, the exercise will be completed.
Please feel free to contact me about any questions or uncertainties.
NO – Would you please suggest a colleague who might be willing and able to participate in the study?
Repeat conversation.
ANNEXURE C

- Example of Email Communication with Respondents –
EMAIL COMMUNICATION WITH RESPONDENTS

Good day,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. As discussed telephonically, you have been selected to form part of an academic research study conducted by Suné Barnard towards the completion of an MCom Degree in Business Management with specialisation in Marketing Management.

The aim of this exploratory study is to contribute knowledge to the South African marketing industry by identifying a list of criteria for the optimal implementation of Facebook pages for marketing purposes.

Please note the following:

- This survey will be anonymous. None of your personal details will appear in the research findings and the answers you provide will be treated as strictly confidential. The researcher will be the only person with access to your name and the organisation you work for, but it will not be possible to identify you in person based on the answers you give in the online card-sorting exercise.
- Your participation in this study is very important to me. You may, however, choose not to participate or discontinue participating at any time during the study without any negative consequences. Please contact me at such an occasion.
- Please complete the online card-sorting exercise as thoroughly and honestly as possible, based on your knowledge and experience in the field.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of the findings on request.
- Please contact the researcher or promoter if you have any questions or comments regarding the study:
  o Researcher – Suné Barnard: 072 438 8181 or barnasm@unisa.ac.za
  o Promoter – Prof Michael Cant: 012 429 4456 or cantmc@unisa.ac.za
  o Promoter – Mr Neels Bothma: 082 880 8549 or bothmch@unisa.ac.za

By clicking on the link below, you agree to the following:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You agree to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.
To be able to participate, you will need access to the internet and should be able to complete the study in one sitting of approximately 25 to 30 minutes. Your input must be received not later than 31 October 2012. Please ensure that you finish the online card-sorting exercise before this date, or alternatively suggest a colleague who will be willing to complete it on your behalf.

To begin, please follow the link http://websort.net/s/2C37F5/ to the WebSort.net website, where you will find the online card-sorting exercise. After entering your respondent number – xxx – you will receive instructions to complete the exercise, which can be closed and recalled at any time. On the left of the screen, you will be presented with a list of criteria for the optimal use of Facebook pages, as obtained from the literature available on the topic. Select each item by clicking on it, and drag it to the white area on the screen where your categories can be formed. You will be able to move items from one category to another as necessary and name each category according to the items it contains. When all the items have been placed into a category and all the categories have been logically named, the exercise is completed.

Please feel free to contact me or either one of my promoters with any further questions.

Thank you again for your participation – it is greatly appreciated.

Kindest regards,
Suné Barnard
072 438 8181
ANNEXURE D

- Similarity matrix -
ANNEXURE E

- Cluster Validity Indices -
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of clusters</th>
<th>Clusters joined</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>Semipartial R-square</th>
<th>R-square</th>
<th>Approximate expected R-square</th>
<th>Cubic clustering criterion</th>
<th>Pseudo F statistic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Provide consistent branding (Owyang, 2010)</td>
<td>Set community expectations (Owyang, 2010)</td>
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<td>Foster advocacy (Owyang, 2010)</td>
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ANNEXURE F

- Cluster Validity Indices -
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