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Interpersonal Communication and Brand Interaction on Mobile Social Media—South African Adolescents' use of Mxit, Facebook and Twitter.

By

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Samantha Griffiths Date: 30/10/2012

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Abstract:

This paper explores the mobile social networking patterns of a sample of Black, White and Coloured adolescents attending three different schools in Cape Town, South Africa. The researcher utilises the Uses and Gratifications theory and qualitative research methodology in the form of focus groups and one-on-one semi-structured interviews to explore what gratifications this sample of students, aged 14-17 years, derive from three mobile social networking brands—MXit, Facebook and Twitter.

The researcher discovered that although each of these social networking brands are significantly different in structure and serve different purposes in the lives of these adolescents, there are two key attributes that bind them together—not only do they provide a platform for these South African adolescents to communicate with one another; they also provide a platform for them to interact with their favourite and least favourite brands. This brand interaction occurs in unique ways via each respective social media brand. MXit facilitates peer-to-peer marketing amongst the adolescents interviewed for this thesis through its interactive, narrative-based competitions. The adolescents interviewed for this thesis voice their dissatisfaction with brands via their Facebook statuses and via Facebook's brand communities (Pages). The adolescents interviewed for this thesis use Twitter to receive information from their favourite brands. Celebrity brands were discovered to be the most favoured brand choice amongst respondents. The findings of this thesis would be valuable to youth marketers, innovators and manufacturers.

Key words: MXit, Facebook, Twitter, Uses and Gratifications, branding

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University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile landscape in Africa

As the diffusion rate of mobile phones has exceeded those of personal computers and customary landline connections in many markets, researchers (Kim & Jun, 2008; Wilken & Sinclair, 2009) argue that mobile phones are leading the way as personal devices for communication. It is difficult to dispute this reasoning when one considers that mobile media, especially mobile phones, are now seen everywhere, functioning as a fundamental part of the daily lives and habits of billions of people across the globe (Wilken & Sinclair, 2009:427). Driving this wide diffusion has been a remarkable rate of adoption, particularly in developing countries, Africa on a macro level and South Africa on more of a micro level (Wilken & Sinclair, 2009; Bosch, 2008). In fact, no technology has ever undergone such a swift adoption rate as wireless communication devices (Castells, Qiu, & Fernandez-Ardevol, 2006). This section sets out to have a closer look at the former—Africa, and its rapid adoption rate of mobile telephony.

Within the last decade, Africa, which encompasses 53 countries with almost 1 billion people, has experienced a mobile telephone revolution (Schmid, 2009). In Africa, mobile phones are widely used in banking, socialising, crime prevention, political communication, tracking applications for identification documents, education and social networking—a topic which will be examined extensively further on in this research paper (Schmid, 2009; Bosch, 2008; Cottle, 2011; Rane & Salem, 2012). Attributions such as easy and affordable maintenance, simple audio and text interfaces and low-cost availability are some of the main factors contributing towards the continent's rapid adoption of mobile telephony (Ford, 2008).

Mobile phones have become so popular that they can actually be seen to be the most important networked knowledge exchange technology used in Africa today and they have helped to transform the economy in many African countries (Ford, 2008; Schmid, 2009). Currently, Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Kenya, and South Africa—the country of primary interest in this research paper, are the primary mobile markets, with average penetration rates of 33% (Schmid, 2009 citing Africa & Middle East Telecom Week, 2008).

Although mobile phones are beginning to improve the limitations imposed by low landline diffusion on the continent, there is no doubt that the digital divide—the topic concerning the unequal access to and usage of new technologies; within communities or across geographical borders—remains a pertinent issue for Africa (Fuchs & Horak, 2008). In fact, most African countries are excluded from participating in the online realm due to economic and structural impoverishment and are thus systematically excluded from the benefits it can create (Ford, 2008; Fuchs & Horak, 2008). If levels of Internet access are improved, it has the potential to reap phenomenal benefits for the development of democracy in many African countries (Fuchs & Horak, 2008). The Internet has the potential to benefit democracy as it grants participants the opportunity to engage in rational-critical debate on a global level (Benkler, 2006). It also grants participants the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights of Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression and grants them access to phenomenal amounts of information and ideas (Haider, 2009; South African Government Online, n.d.). South Africa—the country with the strongest economy on the continent; would certainly benefit from this (Amos, 2010).

Mobile landscape in South Africa

South Africa has a strong economy, a rich cultural diversity, including 11 official languages and a wealth of natural resources (Mubangizi & Mubangizi, 2005; Louw, 2011; Amos, 2010). However, it is also a relatively young democracy (since 1994) with immense economic disparities and a highly unequal allocation of income (Mubangizi & Mubangizi, 2005:277). The country's infrastructure is complex, from first world developed infrastructure in some areas, to poverty stricken informal urban settlements (Research ICT Africa, 2010). Some rural settlements lack even the most basic infrastructure (Research ICT Africa, 2010). Hence, in spite of its diversity, resources and vibrant economy, post-1994 South Africa still faces a colossal poverty problem, which is why it is still considered to be a developing country (Mubangizi & Mubangizi, 2005:277). This poverty issue has a dramatic effect on people's levels of Internet access¹.

¹ Only 13.9% of the population have access to the Internet.
<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>

Whilst the South African government has placed a strong emphasis on its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector development through the implementation of a national ICT strategy, which proactively addresses ICT penetration particularly for disadvantaged segments of the society, in the hope of building an inclusive information society and knowledge economy, fixed landlines and computer-based Internet access remain the preserve of a relatively small financially secure elite (Jiyane & Mostert, 2010 citing Zawada et al., 2007; Schmid, 2009; Research ICT Africa, 2010). In 2012, Research ICT Africa (2012) found only 29,1% of South Africans above the age of 15 to have access to an individual computer or laptop. In addition, access to basic computers and Internet at schools remains problematic as well (Koranteng, 2012). In spite of efforts to ensure universal access to computers, the findings of a study by Koranteng (2012) indicate that the status of ICT deployment and its integration into school curricula is far from favourable in underdeveloped schools in South Africa.

In the absence of landline phones and low computer penetration rates, mobile phones and their advanced multimedia capabilities are beginning to transform this situation for the better (Jiyane & Mostert, 2010). In fact, mobile phones have become the most commonly owned, accessible and utilised ICT tool in South Africa (Jiyane & Mostert, 2010). In South Africa, 90.16 people in every hundred use a mobile phone, a number far surpassing the number of landlines in the country (Walton, 2010:11). Mobile phone users in South Africa may acquire mobile phones through either contract or prepaid (pay as you go) plans (Chigona, Kamkwenda & Manjoo, 2008). Today, more than 85% of South African mobile customers use prepaid airtime (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). To qualify for a contract, a customer must have a good credit record and must provide proof of income above a minimum required amount (Chigona, Kamkwenda & Manjoo, 2008). South African consumers can also choose from a variety of mobile network operators, such as Vodacom, Mtn, Cell C, Virgin Mobile or 8ta (Chigona, Kamkwenda & Manjoo 2008).

The positivity in South Africa's high mobile penetration rate lies in the fact that in today's fast growing mobile communication environment, mobile phones are no longer just voice communication devices (Kim & Jun, 2008; Ford, 2008). Instead, they can be seen as a PC in the pocket—a factor that is transforming the communication landscape

in many developing countries (Kim & Jun, 2008; Ford, 2008). A natural limitation in this regard is that not all South Africans who own mobile phones own ones with advanced multimedia capabilities and Internet access. Nevertheless, statistics of this nature hold enormous potential. With regular new advancements in cellular technology, including cameras, colour screens, Internet, video as well as television, mobile phones are becoming increasingly powerful, personal mobile devices, with built-in advanced multimedia facilities (Bosch, 2008; Ford, 2008). With all of these additional multimedia features, phones are no longer purchased for their ability to facilitate convenient, mobile voice transmission (Goldstuck, 2010). In fact, this attribute is taken for granted in most cellular phones today (Goldstuck, 2010). There is an increasing demand for advanced mobile phones that go beyond what was originally imagined upon the mobile phone's initial diffusion in Western societies (Goldstuck, 2010; Westlund, 2008).

Historically, wireless technologies diffused rapidly throughout Europe, Asia and North America before the rapid adoption of mobile telephony reached Africa in the 1990s (Bosch, 2008). The United States led the whole world in mobile penetration during the 1980s (Kalba, 2008). This first generation of mobile phones primarily consisted of analog models (Westlund, 2008; Vaananen-Vainio-Mattila, & Ruuska, 1999; Kalba, 2008). During this first phase, the mobile phone was used in the same way landline phones were used, except the wireless aspect enabled personal voice communication on the move (Westlund, 2008:443). During this period, mobile telephony operated in several analog standards and bands, such as Advanced Mobile Phone Service (AMPS) in the United States, Total Access Communication System (JTACS) in Japan, Netz-C in Germany, Nordisk Mobil Telefon (NMT) in Nordic Europe and TACS in the United Kingdom (Kalba, 2008). The second phase of diffusion (2G) began in the year 2000, with the additional features of multimedia functionality and Internet connectivity (Westlund, 2008:443; Kalba, 2008). Over the past few years, the mobile phone and its advanced Internet connectivity capabilities (including both 3G and 4G technology) have begun to break technological boundaries in the field of communication (Westlund, 2008; Kalba, 2008). Goldstuck (2010) observes that it is almost forgotten amid all the cellular advancements today that in 2004, for the first time, green-screen mobile phones were no longer governing the mobile market and full colour cellular phones represented the greatest advancement in cellular technology since the SMS 12 years earlier. Now, the

next trend is well under way, as mobile phones with Internet access are starting to outnumber those without for the first time (Goldstuck, 2010).

Mobile Internet in South Africa

According to Lee et al. (2002) cultural differences among various countries may be one of the main causes for the different usage and adoption patterns of the mobile Internet. In a study conducted in the United Kingdom it was found that there was significant growth in the adoption of mobile Internet technology between 2010 and 2011, with an extra 6 million people using their mobile phone to access the Internet than reported in 2010 (Office for National Statistics, 2011). The rate of growth in the use of this technology was fastest among those aged 16 to 24, with Internet use over a mobile phone increasing from 44 per cent to 71 per cent over the previous 12 months (Office for National Statistics, 2011). However, there have been notable increases across all age groups (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Based on a report by Comscore in 2011, the mobile media user population in the United States (those who browse the mobile web, access applications, or download content) also grew 19 percent in the past year to more than 116 million people at the end of August 2011.

According to Opera (2010), South Africa consistently ranks as one of the top 10 countries in the world for mobile Internet use. The Mobility 2011 research project, conducted by World Wide Worx and backed by First National Bank confirms this as well; as it reveals that 39% of urban South Africans and 27% of rural users are now browsing the Internet on their phones (Goldstuck, 2011). This means that at least 6-million South Africans now have Internet access on their phones (Goldstuck, 2011). Although these statistics incorporate a variety of different age groups, adolescents are progressively showing increased levels of engagement with the Internet as a communication medium, particularly via their mobile phones (Basson, Makhasi & van Vuuren, 2010). Generally, adolescents are renowned for spending an extensive amount of time with various media platforms and are also known to experience an increase in media consumption at this period in their lives (Basson, Makhasi & van Vuuren, 2010).

Social networking patterns amongst South African adolescents

Today, the mobile phone (particularly those that grant a user Internet² access and access to social media) represent an essential tool and fashion accessory for adolescents in South Africa; who use these technologies to create instant communities of practice (Bosch, 2008 citing Castells, 2007). This does not only hold true in South Africa but forms a part of international opinion as well. Internationally, the most recent opinion on adolescents and new media is that they are the defining users of the Internet (Basson, Makhasi & van Vuuren, 2010). This is particularly evident in the United States where adolescents not only chat and spend more time online than adults, but also use online technologies, such as instant messaging and online gaming more often than adults (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005). This has increased significantly within the past 5 years (Pieters, 2010). In 2010, seven in ten 18-24 year olds in the United States owned a mobile phone or Smartphone (70%), with almost one in five owning a Smartphone (Pieters, 2010). Now, market research in the USA reveals that, for the three-month average period ending in May 2012, 234 million Americans aged 13 and older used mobile devices (Comscore, 2012). In South Africa, mobile phones have become ubiquitous with adolescence as well (Bosch, 2008). Research shows that approximately 56,1% of all South Africans above the age of 15 already own a mobile phone themselves (Research ICT Africa, 2012). This high adoption rate amongst the South African adolescents (most of whom remain in severe poverty) can primarily be attributed to the popularity of prepaid subscriptions, low-cost phones and the fact that these devices grant them access to the mobile web (Kreutzer, 2009).

Generally, the growth of mobile phone usage (particularly in South Africa) is truly remarkable, as a few years ago; cellular ownership was reserved for the wealthier members of society (Bosch, 2008:52). Although mobile phones have smaller screens, less convenient input and output facilities and lower multimedia processing capabilities than do desktop computers (Vatanparast & Qadim, 2009:15), this has not deterred South African adolescents from using them as their communication medium of choice.

Urban South African adolescents have long begun to use the mobile phones available to them to make use of the Internet, often defying environments with extremely scarce

² For the purpose of this study, Internet access via mobile phones includes any mobile phone that grants a user the simplest GPRS/WAP/EDGE access, or more advanced access like 3G and 4G.

computer-based Internet access (Kreutzer, 2009). According to several respondents interviewed in a study conducted by Kreutzer (2009), the sample of adolescents had only enabled their phones for Internet access to use the popular social networking site known as MXit, while usage of other resources on the Internet followed suit for many of them, especially with the intention of downloading videos and music.

Apart from MXit, Facebook and Twitter are the other two brands dominating the mobile Internet market in South Africa (Opera, 2010). Opera's 2010 'State of the Mobile Web' research report released in December 2010 argues that social media sites always feature in the top 10 listings of accessed sites with regard to mobile Internet use in South Africa (Opera, 2010). Opera's report states that in December 2010, facebook.com was South Africa's most accessed site, followed by mxit.com at number 3, youtube.com at number 4, and twitter.com at number 10 (Opera, 2010). Although MXit was rated as the third most accessed site in South Africa, the brand still holds first place in the race amongst the social networks in South Africa at 33 million users (Goldstuck, 2011).

MXit was also declared 'the most frequently-used platform in the social media site' and website category in the *Sunday Times* 2009 Generation Next surveys, conducted by HDI Youth Marketers in partnership with the *Sunday Times* and supported by Monash South Africa (du Plessis, 2010). The *Sunday Times* Generation Next Survey surveyed more than 5000 urbanites in the 8 to 18 year old age categories (du Plessis, 2010 citing Andrews 2008 & HDI Youth Marketers 2009). According to Goldstuck (2011) MXit enjoys the attention of 24% of mobile phone users aged 16 and above (29% of urban, 19% of rural users). Globally, between 45 000 and 50 000 new users register per day (Watson, 2011).

In contrast to MXit, the fastest growing age group on Facebook in South Africa is the demographic of 40-60 year-olds, says World Wide Worx's Mobile Consumer in SA 2011 report (Goldstuck, 2011). The peak age is 20 but there are more 51 year olds than 13 year olds using the service—a factor that this thesis aims to investigate in greater detail (Goldstuck, 2011). The report also states that while no one is sure of how many South African Facebook users there are, estimates put it over at 3.8 million (Goldstuck, 2011). Globally there are 900 million active accounts (Independent Online, 2012).

In addition, there are now 800 000 to 1 000 000 Twitter users in South Africa; 75% are in urban areas and 39% are female, says the Mobile Consumer in SA 2011 report (Goldstuck, 2011). Globally, the report also indicates that Twitter has 190 million accounts (Goldstuck, 2011).

Statement of purpose

Although researchers have quantitative results that examine which age groups in South Africa utilise particular kinds of social media applications; there is a severe lack of qualitative research concerning why young people in South Africa use the social media brands that they do. In comparison to Facebook's estimated 3.8 million users and Twitter's 1 million users in South Africa, MXit rises above the rest at 33 million (Goldstuck, 2011). This certainly deserves further investigation. Consequently, based on the popularity of these three social networking brands in South Africa, this study utilises the Uses and Gratifications theory and qualitative research methodology to examine the mobile social networking patterns amongst a sample of adolescents attending three different high schools in Cape Town, South Africa. According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.) and the United States Office of Population Affairs (n.d.) there is currently no standard scientific definition of 'adolescent'. The term adolescence is commonly used to describe the transition stage between childhood and adulthood and is also equated to both the terms "teenage years" and "puberty." Whilst chronological age is just one way of defining adolescence, there is no set age boundary. Adolescence can also be defined in numerous other ways, considering such factors as physical, social, and cognitive development. For the purposes of this study, adolescents are generally defined as any individual between the ages of 13 to 18 years. Although any age group within this margin would be appropriate for the current investigation, the researcher chose to interview adolescents between the ages of 14 to 17 years.

Research questions

This study seeks to answer four research questions deemed crucial to understanding the mobile social networking patterns amongst South African adolescents.

- Why do South African adolescents use mobile social networking platforms?
- What benefits do they obtain from mobile social networking?

- What motivates them in their choices of mobile social networking brands?
- Do South African adolescents engage with brands on mobile social networking platforms?

In order to answer these questions, the study used focus groups as the primary fieldwork method, triangulated by one-on-one interviews. The focus groups allowed the researcher to gain a perspective on the opinions of learners and the interactions between their peers, within the dynamics of the classroom environment (van der Linde, 2009). Finally, the semi-structured interviews further extrapolated the themes that emerged in the focus groups. This will be discussed in more detail within the chapter concerning research methodology. It should be noted that although MXit, Facebook and Twitter can be accessed on Personal Computers (PCs), this thesis only investigates their significance and potential as mobile applications.

Although MXit, Facebook and Twitter can all be categorised as social networking sites, they are all significantly different in structure. Thus, separate chapters and separate research questions will be dedicated to each of them. Dedicating separate chapters and separate research questions to each of these social networking brands provided the researcher with a more in-depth understanding of the mobile social networking patterns of South African adolescents.

With regard to MXit, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) Why do some adolescents not use MXit?
- 2) For what purposes do the sample of users attending Buren High School and Milnerton High School in Cape Town, South Africa use MXit?
- 3) What benefits do these users obtain from their use of MXit?

With regard to Facebook, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) Why do some adolescents not use Facebook?
- 2) For what purposes do the sample of users attending Buren High School, Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School in Cape Town, South Africa use Facebook?
- 3) What benefits do these users obtain from their use of Facebook?

With regard to Twitter, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) Why do some adolescents not use Twitter?
- 2) For what purposes do the sample of users attending Buren High School, Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School in Cape Town, South Africa use Twitter?
- 3) What gratifications do these users obtain from their use of Twitter?

Whilst it may seem peculiar to assess the negative (Why do some adolescents not use MXit, Facebook or Twitter?), Richards & Morse (2006) state that research questions may require the facilitator to seek out negative cases as they may provide new dimensions to the investigation. Whilst this thesis reviews the literature concerning MXit, Facebook and Twitter in each of their respective chapters, it would be useful for the reader to possess a brief understanding of the broader body of literature this investigation contributes towards at this point. Consequently, the next chapter of this research paper, chapter 2, commences by providing a background and definition of key concepts—mobile media, branding and marketing, as well as social media in South Africa. The relevance of the Uses and Gratifications theoretical approach to this research study is then examined in chapter 3. Chapter 4 begins by examining the research methodology underpinning this study, including the rationale for focusing on young people between the ages of 14 to 17 years. Chapter 5 discusses the available body of literature concerning MXit, how this study builds upon this existing body of literature, as well as the findings obtained within the focus groups and individual interviews. Chapter 6 moves on to discussing the available literature concerning Facebook, how this study contributes towards this existing body of literature, as well as the findings obtained within the focus groups and individual interviews. Chapter 7 discusses the available literature concerning Twitter, how this study contributes towards this existing body of literature, as well as the findings obtained within the focus groups and individual interviews. Finally, chapter 8 presents the final conclusions arising from the study, together with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Mobile media

This study contributes towards the existing body of literature concerning mobile media in developing countries. Currently, there is a shortage of academic literature that directly addresses mobile phones and more specifically, mobile social networking and its social impact in developing countries, particularly in South Africa, where mobile social networking use by the youth is very high (Bosch, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009).

Branding and marketing

This study also contributes towards the existing body of literature concerning branding and marketing by examining how Mxit, Facebook and Twitter have granted adolescent consumers a greater degree of power within the branding hierarchy (Meadows-Klue, 2008; Ito et al., 2008). Because of their importance and ubiquity, brands have dominated marketing literature for numerous years (Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006). World-renowned brands such as Coca Cola, Apple, Nike, Disney, Nokia, Nike and so forth are an ever-present part of our consumer society and infiltrate almost all spheres of our lives: economic, sporting, social, cultural, and even religion (Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006). A formal definition of a brand is a name, logo, design, term, sign, symbol, or any other feature (emotional or psychological) that identifies one seller's goods from another (Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006). Perhaps most importantly, brands are actual legal instruments, governed by legislation (Gartner & Konecnik, 2007:400; Collier-Reed & Lehmann, 2006). They are often referred to as trademarks in many legal instances (Collier-Reed & Lehmann, 2006). A trademark is a form of legal protection that falls under the broad term of intellectual property (Collier-Reed & Lehmann, 2006). It is defined as a mark that is used, or intended to be used, in trade, by an individual to classify and differentiate its goods and services from similar goods or services provided by any other individual (Collier-Reed & Lehmann, 2006:371). This is very similar to the definition of a brand that was just reviewed (Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006; Peterson, Smith & Zerrillo, 1999). Evidently, these two terms are virtually synonymous, as they both place a strong emphasis on elements of identity and differentiation (Peterson, Smith & Zerrillo,

1999:255). What marketers term brands, lawyers term trademarks (Peterson, Smith & Zerrillo, 1999:255). Whereas marketers are concerned with creating, maximising and maintaining the financial value of their brands; lawyers are concerned with obtaining and defending trademarks (Peterson, Smith & Zerrillo, 1999:255).

A brand and its trademark are in many ways the most valuable business assets owned by a company, as they allow a company to correspond consistently and professionally with the market and convey elements of trust and certitude to consumers (Aaker, 1996; Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006; Kapferer, 2004; Keller, 2001; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Because of their financial value, most publications aspire to provide practical and useful advice, as well as strategies for building strong brands that will thrive in the competitive, global economy (Aaker, 1996; Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006; de Chernatony & McDonald, 1992; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006; Nilson, 1949). Numerous researchers (Aaker, 1996; Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006; Farquhar & Herr, 1993; Esch et al., 2006) discuss the importance of building strong brands, for a strong brand is essentially what makes a particular product, service, person or place distinctive in the marketplace and enriches the value of an item beyond its functional attributes. Moreover, strong brands prove to create higher revenue streams, both short term and long term (Leone et al., 2006; Aaker, 1991).

On a global scale, many of our culture's best known and most powerful symbols are brands and socio-cultural pressures to consume excessively and to acquire these brands are ubiquitous and indeed impossible to avoid completely (Coombe, 1998:71; Klein, 2000). The brand owners of these big brands are hegemonic as they hold a particular kind of power in the global system of commerce (Klein, 2000). Moreover, they also exercise their hegemony by possessing a strong amount of influence over the lives of consumers (Isaksen & Roper, 2008; Klein, 2000). As a consuming population, we have developed strong emotional attachments to our favourite brands, which give these brand owners a particular kind of power over our lives (Isaksen & Roper, 2008; Klein, 2000). In fact, these brands exercise such an influence over our lives as a consuming population, to the degree that they now govern important aspects of our identity, particularly who we are and how we are perceived (Isaksen & Roper, 2008). This notion

that what we wear, eat, and surround ourselves with, as a means to attain happiness, provides insight into how we see ourselves and how we seek social acceptance (Fog et al., 2010; Sweeting, Hunt & Bhaskar, 2012). In addition, research also shows that this culture of consumerism and materialism not only places a significant level of pressure on adults, but has a dramatic and negative impact on the physical and psychological health of children and adolescents as well (Sweeting, Hunt & Bhaskar, 2012; Eckersley, 2006; Kramer, 2006; Eckersley, 2011). As adolescents are in the process of constructing their identities, there is growing concern over them becoming increasingly materialistic as a result of their increased exposure to and consumption of brands (Erikson, 1968; Isaksen & Roper, 2008). However, despite these concerns, younger consumers, as an emerging critical consumer segment in various brands, have been neglected in branding literature (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Isaksen & Roper, 2008; Eckersley, 2011). South African marketers and academics need to conduct more research into the emerging adolescent market in order to get a better understanding of how adolescents develop into both consumers and influencers (Veerasingam & Robertson, 2012). Consequently, this thesis aims to build upon the existing body of literature by investigating the brand preferences of South African adolescents.

Today's adolescents are growing up at the center of an exploding digital media culture and Calvert (2008) reveals that because of their enthusiastic use of new media and their increased spending power, adolescents have become the main targets of advertisers and marketers (Montgomery & Chester, 2009; Calvert, 2008). Since the early 1990s, adolescents have increasingly caught the attention of marketers as it has been established that besides being customers in their own right, they also have a very special relationship with new media platforms (Montgomery & Chester, 2009; Calvert, 2008). In fact, it has been suggested that social networking sites are particularly attuned to the adolescent experience (Montgomery & Chester, 2009). There are a growing number of advertising agencies, market research firms and trend analysis corporations (often with the help of child psychologists) in Western societies, that monitor how adolescents are incorporating new media platforms into their daily lives, and are developing highly effective marketing strategies tailored to their psychosocial needs (Montgomery & Chester, 2009; Isaksen & Roper, 2008). Similar marketing strategies are occurring in developing countries as well (Veerasingam & Robertson, 2012; Knott-Craig &

Silber, 2012). A potential impact of the various projects that aim to bridge the digital divide and boost the use of ICTs among these young people who reside in developing countries, is that they make the developing world (South Africa in particular) a more substantial target for marketing (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). The popularity of cellular phones has resulted in mobile-based brand advertising and promotions that specifically target adolescents in South Africa (du Plessis, 2010). Although South African adolescents may have different levels of spending power in comparison to American adolescents, they too spend an extensive amount of time on social media applications (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008). In addition, they too have some level of disposable income (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). According to a brand survey undertaken by Monash South Africa, today's tweens (10 to 14 year old age group) are a truly multicultural generation with a uniquely South African culture (Monash, 2005). The survey, in which some 3000 tweens participated, revealed that South Africa has entered a new era in marketing that is marked by the globalisation of products, services and technological development (Veerasingam & Robertson, 2012 citing Monash, 2005; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). More research needs to be conducted in this regard, to explore how older adolescents in South Africa are interacting with brands as well.

Social media

Since the advent of social media platforms, many marketers have also developed practical guides discussing how to build strong brands on social media—particularly how brands should aim to reinvent themselves and reconnect with their potential audiences via these social networking platforms.

Social networks are not a new phenomenon (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2008). In fact, they are a very old and rife mechanism for mediating interactions among people (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2008). It is the Internet that has revived and renewed the concept of social networking (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2008). Millions of people around the world, young and old, knowingly and willingly use social networking applications like Facebook, Twitter, Friendster, YouTube, MySpace, Match.com, LinkedIn, Mxit and hundreds of other sites to communicate, find friends, dates, and jobs (Acquisti & Gross, 2006:1). Ito et al. (2010:28) use the term social media, or social networking sites, to refer to the set of new media that enable social interaction between

participants, often through the sharing of media. Although all media are in some ways social, the term 'social media' came into common usage in 2005 as a term referencing a central component of what is frequently called Web 2.0 or the social web (Ito et al., 2010 citing O'Reilly, 2005). All these terms refer to the layering of social interaction and online content (Ito et al., 2010:28). Popular genres of social media include instant messaging, blogs, video-and photo-sharing sites, and what is of primary interest in this research paper, social network sites (Ito et al., 2010:28). As this thesis progresses, the researcher reviews how commercial enterprises try to exploit these social media platforms for marketing purposes, as they provide a convenient channel for distributing recommendations through people with similar interests (Adamic, Huberman & Leskovec, 2007).

Until now, there has been very little research regarding specific social media brands in Southern Africa and the manner in which the South African adolescents interact with them—primarily because social media is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa. Moreover, the research that has been conducted in Southern Africa thus far, by Bosch (2009), Bosch (2008), van der Linde (2009) and Walton (2009), examine these social networking applications as 'websites' and not as brands.

Building brand awareness via social media platforms

Being able to engage with brands on MXit, Facebook and Twitter possesses phenomenal potential to raise brand awareness, a topic that will be examined extensively within each social media platform's respective chapter. However, a definition will be useful at this point. Brand awareness is a well-documented marketing concept that measures consumers' knowledge of a brand's existence (Aaker, 1996:10). In other words, it refers to the strength of the brand node in memory, i.e. the likelihood that a brand name will come to mind and the ease with which it does (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). Brand awareness plays an integral role in efficient brand management, largely because the manner in which a company raises brand awareness can certainly contribute towards it having a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Aaker, 1996; Macdonald & Sharp, 2003).

A brand that has some level of brand awareness is far more likely to be considered, and consequently chosen, than brands which the consumer is unaware of (Macdonald & Sharp, 2003:2). In order to gain brand awareness, companies need to get their brand name and logo into the minds of consumers (Aaker, 1996:10). This works on two levels: Testing brand recall (what company does this logo belong to?) and testing brand recognition (Have you seen this logo before?) (Anderson & Cote, 1998:15). In addition, consumers' brand awareness is likely to be high when they perceive the quality of the brand to be high (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). Brand awareness has also been valued as an important building block in the building of brand equity (Aaker, 1991).

In general, brand equity and its impact on profitability is one of the primary measures of a branding strategy's success (Khan, 2009). Although there is no universally agreed upon definition of value or equity, 'brand equity' as defined by Aaker (1991) is, 'a set of brand assets and liabilities, linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to that firm's customers.' It has also been defined as the positive, or sometimes negative, differential effect that knowing the brand name has on customer response to the product (Khan, 2009). In monetary terms, this is the value that the brand is likely to create throughout the course of its life (Chau & Ho, 2008:197). According to Interbrand (2012), the top five global brands of 2012 were Coca Cola (valued at 77, 839 million US Dollars), Apple (76, 568 million US Dollars) IBM (75, 532 million US Dollars), Google (69, 726 million US Dollars) and Microsoft (57, 853 million US Dollars). These figures are important to investors, for it is only when a brand has value to its consumers does it have value to other stakeholders (Chau & Ho, 2008:197; Aaker, 1996). This is one of the reasons why brand equity development is receiving much attention from practitioners and researchers (Chau & Ho, 2008:197).

As word-of-mouth platforms grow and traditional marketing tools lose impact, the propensity of a customer base to recommend products and services to others (via word-of-mouth) will be regarded as a key measure of brand equity (Khan, 2009). Historically, word-of-mouth has been acknowledged as one of the most ancient mechanisms of human society (Dellarocas, 2003). It has also been praised as one of the most influential resources of information transmission (Bone, 1995). It is a phenomenon that will take

place regardless of the brand management plans to do so or not and involves consumers sharing attitudes, opinions, or reactions about businesses, products, or services with other people (Jansen et al., 2009; Nilson, 1949; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Brand managers can either hope for word-of-mouth to occur spontaneously, or they can attempt to incite word-of-mouth through a variety of marketing-related endeavours (Nilson, 1949; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Whilst building a brand through word-of-mouth is a challenging task, it has the potential to reap a variety of financial benefits for the brand in question (Brewer, 1998; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Consequently, brand managers must rethink the customer journey to purchase and allocate more resources for strengthening the peer connections and conversations along the way (Khan, 2009). Social networking sites are certainly facilitating this, as the viral nature of their technology and their potential to recommend information to others is a powerful means to facilitate brand-centred conversations (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). What is meant by viral in this context?

Viral marketing, also known as word-of-mouth (WOM) or 'buzz marketing' began as a process of encouraging consumers to share product information with one another over the Internet through e-mails and electronic mailing lists (Allen, O'Guinn & Semenik, 2006:578; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006:285; Miller & Lammas, 2010). It has evolved in numerous ways over the past few years. Fundamentally, viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, birthing the prospective for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence (Wilson, 2005). Thus, it manipulates social networks by infecting customers with an advertising message which passes from one customer to the next like a rampant flu virus, creating the potential of rapid multiplication to explode the message to millions of people (Palka, Pousttchi & Wiedemann, 2009; Adamic, Huberman & Leskovec, 2007; Wilson, 2005). Since an epidemic may be local or global, the 'viral' analogy may be used irrespective of the scale of diffusion that is achieved (Palka, Pousttchi & Wiedemann, 2009:172).

Similarly to viral marketing on the Internet, the rapid growth of mobile phone ownership in South Africa has created a novel and innovative platform for viral communication strategies—mobile viral marketing (Palka, Pousttchi & Wiedemann,

2009). However, mobile viral marketing can most certainly be valued as an improvement in the field, for it provides interaction and brand communication at any time and location (Wiedemann, Haunstetter & Pousttchi, 2008). The mobile phone's ability to connect to the Internet has made viral marketing even more effective. Similar to the definition of viral marketing we engaged with in the previous paragraph, mobile viral marketing encourages consumers to transmit mobile viral content via mobile communication techniques and mobile devices to other consumers in their social sphere (Wiedemann, Haunstetter & Pousttchi, 2008). It also encourages these contacts to transmit the content they receive, to their social networks as well (Palka, Pousttchi & Wiedemann, 2009:173).

Power to the consumer: social media's threat to brands

Although social media and its ability to facilitate viral marketing strategies can reap positive outcomes for brands, this thesis examines how it can reap negative effects as well. The rules of the marketing game have changed, with a significant shift with regard to who holds the power (Meadows-Klue, 2008; Ito et al., 2008). Consumers are no longer subject to the power of brand managers, rather, brand managers are now subject to the power of consumers (Meadows-Klue, 2008; Ito et al., 2008). Social media platforms like MXit, Facebook and Twitter have provided consumers with their own voice (Fog et al., 2010). They are no longer positioned as passive respondents, but as active members of brand communities who have the confidence to come into the brand's online 'space' (Fog et al., 2010). The three social media platforms under investigation in this thesis provide numerous avenues for adolescent consumers to share their views, preferences, or experiences with others (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009). In the new media universe of user-generated content, South African adolescents are given the opportunity to act as critical reviewers on MXit, Facebook and Twitter—to share their enthusiasm about their favourite brands or their dissatisfaction regarding their least favourite brands (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). In addition, due to the ever-increasing speed and transparency of the Internet, these young consumers have the ability to spread negative information (truthful or not) about particular brands quickly and easily (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012).

Moreover, these adolescent consumers no longer require their computer with a dial-up

or broadband Internet connection to access these platforms; through high-tech mobile phones, portable computers and portals such as Mxit, Facebook and Twitter; the exchange of real-time information has become an essential part of consumer behaviour, bypassing the limitations imposed by time and space (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). These mobile social networking sites have drastically altered information transmission and exchange and such improvement has propelled traditional word-of-mouth communications (Chan & Ngai, 2011). Consequently, brands need to ensure that consumers are content with their product and service offerings (Fog et al., 2010). This shift in power between consumers and brand managers is reviewed throughout the chapters of this thesis. Now that we have reviewed the broader body of literature this thesis contributes towards, we can move on to examining the theoretical framework employed in this study.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and Gratifications theory

Through adopting the Uses and Gratifications perspective as the theoretical foundation for this thesis, the researcher investigates South African adolescents' uses of, and the gratifications they derive from mobile social networking. Most of the reported reasons surrounding the application of the Uses and Gratifications theory to social networking sites actually assess and elaborate on the same underlying dimension—maintaining contact with friends (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley). Whilst this investigation obtained similar results, it uses the Uses and Gratifications paradigm to understand how mobile social media platforms gratify adolescent consumers by enabling them to engage in both interpersonal communication with their peers as well as communication with their brands of choice. Much of the research surrounding the Uses and Gratifications theory appears to have excluded how individuals, particularly adolescents, use these sites to engage in brand communication and how this communication gratifies their needs as consumers.

The merit of solely adopting the Uses and Gratifications theory as the main framework in this investigation lies in its facility to provide youth marketers, innovators and manufacturers with an insight into how adolescent consumers use and interact with such sites. Manufacturers generally produce mobile phones based on their perception of what the general user may desire (Chigona, Kamkwenda & Manjoo, 2008). By better understanding why this sample of South African adolescents use mobile social media brands, manufacturers will obtain a good idea of the factors that motivate young South African consumers in their purchase decisions (Chigona, Kamkwenda & Manjoo, 2008). As this theoretical paradigm provided the researcher with holistic insight into the mobile social media usage patterns of South African adolescents, it was not deemed as necessary to include any other theories within the current investigation. The Uses and Gratifications theory not only guided the research questions used in this investigation (please see appendix) but also assisted the researcher in making a novel contribution towards the existing body of literature concerning mobile media and branding in South Africa.

Fascination in the gratifications that media provide their audiences goes back to the commencement of mass communication research, which goes as far back as to the 1940s (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1975). The Uses and Gratifications theory can be viewed as a psychological communication perspective that aims to understand audience motivation and behaviour with regard to media consumption (Rubin, 1993). It argues that audiences use different kinds of media in different ways (through selection, interpretation and integration with other everyday activities) to please themselves, not necessarily as media producers intend it to be used (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007).

This psychological perspective of the media-society dynamic is significant as it constituted a shift from the traditional mechanistic approach, which suggests that individual media consumers are passive and brainwashed by media products (Urista, Dong & Day, 2008; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007; Rubin, 1993). Early theories of mass communication, like the direct-effects model, sometimes also referred to as the 'hypodermic model' or 'the magic bullet theory of communication,' suggests that the media transmits powerful messages to audience members, who absorb the message like a sponge, or as drugs are absorbed into the bloodstream (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). The direct-effects model of media assumes that media consumers accept the intended meaning encoded in media messages, fairly passively, and that the relationship between media producers and consumers is both asymmetrical and predictable (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007).

In contrast to this, it is the goal directedness of audience members that differentiates the Uses & Gratifications theory from these early communication theories (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). Instead of utilising the media effects paradigm—what the media does to individuals, the Uses and Gratifications theory values the audience as active participants, who make their own meanings through their use of the media (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). The focus of the theory is on what people do with the media rather than the influence or impact the media has on the individual (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). The quote below summarises it rather effectively. The Uses and Gratifications theory:

Attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for individuals, groups and society in general. There are three objectives in developing uses and gratifications theory: 1) To explain how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs.

“What do people do with the media?” 2) To discover underlying motives for individuals’ media use. 3) To identify the positive and negative consequences of individual media use. At the core of uses and gratifications theory lies the assumption that audience members actively seek out the mass media to satisfy individual needs (University of Twente, 2004 Online).

Although this theory has been applied to a variety of mass media and media content, with the selection of media type evolving to match the emerging media of the day, the technique has been proven to be suitable for studying new communication technologies as well (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010; Ruggiero, 2000). This is one of the greatest strengths of Uses and Gratifications theory—its flexibility (Chigona, Kamkwenda & Manjoo, 2008). Whilst it is a very old theory, it has the potential to be applied to a wide variety of media platforms (Ruggiero, 2000). In terms of examining traditional media, researchers have utilised this theory to understand usage patterns of radio (Surlin, 1986), television (Rubin, 1983) as well as avenues of print media, such as newspapers (Elliott & Rosenberg, 1987) and magazines (Payne, Severn & Dozier, 1988). In more recent years, researchers (Ruggiero, 2000; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008) have called for the application of the Uses and Gratifications theory in the context of so-called new media, such as the Internet.

As new technologies present people with more and more media choices, motivation and satisfaction become even more crucial components of audience analysis (Ruggiero, 2000). Not surprisingly, researchers have applied the Uses & Gratifications theory to a wide range of newly popularised social networking sites, such as MXit (van der Linde, 2009), Facebook (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008) and Twitter (Johnson and Yang, 2009). New media technologies like the Internet possess at least three attributes of data not commonly associated with traditional media: interactivity (the mutual exchange of information), demassification (the control of the individual over the medium), and asynchronicity (the concept that messages may be staggered in time) (Ruggiero, 2000). It is these three attributes of new media platforms that have revived the Uses and Gratifications theory from its dormancy (Ruggiero, 2000).

Critiques of the theory

The Uses and Gratifications theory has also attracted some criticism. One such issue relates to the methodological tools employed when researching Uses and Gratifications

theory and the perceived over-reliance on respondents using self-reporting to generate data (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010 citing Severin & Tankard, 1988). In a similar vein, by focusing on audience consumption, the theory has been argued as too individualistic (Ruggiero, 2000 citing Elliott, 1974). Thus, it makes it difficult to explain or predict beyond the people studied or to consider societal implications of media use (Ruggiero, 2000 citing Elliot, 1974). Additionally, the theory has also been criticised on the basis of an argument that it often does little more than generate lists of reasons as to why audiences engage with media (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010 citing O'Donohoe, 1994). This thesis tries to overcome this criticism by discussing and actively engaging with the findings obtained in the focus groups and individual interviews. A further criticism is that it presupposes an active audience who is according full attention to the media, which is not always the case (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010 citing Lometti et al., 1977).

Finally, the theory has also been criticised for its inherent ambiguity (Ruggiero, 2000). There still exists a lack of clarity among central concepts such as social and psychological backgrounds, needs, motives, behaviour, and consequences (Ruggiero, 2000). In addition, as language always carries some associations, connotations, or values with it, researchers also attach different meanings to concepts such as motives, uses, gratifications and functional alternatives, which also leads to a lack of clarity in the theory's application (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007; Ruggiero, 2000).

Now that we have examined the theoretical framework employed in this investigation, we can move on to examining the chapter that reviews the methodological tools that were used to obtain information.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As qualitative research is often concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with: why, how, and in what way, qualitative research was deemed to be the most appropriate methodological framework in answering the research questions for the current investigation (Hancock, 1998). According to Denzin & Lincoln (2003):

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

As witnessed within the above quotation, there is no single, accepted way of conducting qualitative research. There are a variety of qualitative methods available to assess a desired social phenomenon (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In this investigation, the researcher situated herself within 'the world' of South African adolescents through the means of focus groups and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. These research methods involved close contact between the researcher and the research participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). All focus groups and individual interviews occurred within the school environment itself; the everyday social space where adolescents socialise with their peers (boyd, 2010).

This qualitative method of inquiry was anchored by the Uses and Gratifications theory. During the focus groups and individual interviews, the researcher utilised the objectives of the Uses and Gratifications theory to help guide the discussions. The researcher aimed to investigate how these adolescents use mobile social networks to gratify their needs, the researcher aimed to discover the underlying motives for their media use and also aimed to identify the positive and negative consequences of their individual media use (University of Twente, 2004 Online).

Unit of Analysis

According to Patton (2002) the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to 'decide what it is you want to be able to say something

about at the end of the study.’ As the main purpose of this research was to increase knowledge regarding the nature of mobile social networking usage amongst a sample of South African adolescents (14-17 years), these adolescents act as the unit of analysis within the study.

Population

A population refers to a group to which an investigator would like the result to be generalised (Rivera & Rivera, 2007). Hence, it is a larger group about which a generalisation is made (Rivera & Rivera, 2007 citing Gay, 1976). In this investigation, the larger group about which a generalisation is being made is South African adolescents. More specifically, a generalisation is being made about South African adolescents and their avid use of mobile social mobile platforms.

Sampling

A sample is a small group taken from a larger population composed of members being studied, since it is seldom practical, efficient or ethical to study whole populations (Rivera & Rivera, 2007; Marshall, 1996). Thus, qualitative sampling techniques are concerned with seeking information from specific groups and subgroups in the population (Hancock, 1998). In this investigation, the researcher relied on systematic, non-probabilistic sampling (Mays & Pope, 1995). The purpose of this kind of sampling is not to establish a random or representative sample drawn from a population but rather to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied (Mays & Pope, 1995). Informants are identified because they enable exploration of a particular aspect of behaviour relevant to the research (Mays & Pope, 1995).

Before conducting the focus groups and individual interviews, the researcher introduced herself to a classroom of students at each respective school during the period usually assigned to Life Orientation. The researcher entered the classroom environment and informed the students of the nature of her investigation—that she was conducting research pertaining to mobile social networking platforms and how adolescents in South Africa use them. She informed the students that she would like to conduct a discussion with ten participants who use any social networking platforms

from their mobile phones. As the majority of the students in the classrooms at each respective school requested to participate in the study, the researcher had to select ten volunteers from each. With the intention of being more representative, the researcher selected a diverse group of participants comprised of Black, White and Coloured, male and female learners aged 14-17 years. Although post-1994 South Africa is no longer plagued by racially oppressive legislation, the former racial classifications established under the Apartheid regime of 'Black', 'White' and 'Coloured' continues to be used in matters of identification. The purpose of including a variety of races in this study was to ensure a variety of responses and also reduce any biases that may result. In total, 60% of the students interviewed within this study were male, while 40% were female. In addition, 30% of the sample was comprised of Black students, 30% were Coloured students and 40% were White students. It is important to note that these percentages are not representative of the South African population. As these students were all users of mobile social networking applications, the researcher deemed them to be the appropriate participants for the current investigation. This approach to sampling allowed the researcher to select key informants with access to important sources of knowledge (Mays & Pope, 1995).

The researcher chose to interview students attending three schools located in different positions of the city's socio-economic hierarchy. Whilst race is still used for the purpose of identification, class has become one of the defining categories of inequality in post-Apartheid South Africa (Seekings & Nattrass, 2002). In 1994, the African National Congress inherited a society where inequality could not be reduced to race alone (Seekings & Nattrass, 2002). Social and economic change has greatly eroded the correlation between race and class in South Africa (Seekings & Nattrass, 2002). Whilst racial differences in income remain large (due mainly to differences in education and the labour market), South African inequality is not simply or even primarily inter-racial (Seekings & Nattrass, 2002). It is for this reason that the researcher did not focus on quantifying or discussing the different responses from different racial groups across the sample. Instead, the researcher focussed on class/financial inequality as a means of illustrating the different usage patterns across the social media platforms.

Thus, in order to be more representative of the different classes and levels of inequality in post-Apartheid South Africa, the researcher chose to conduct the focus groups and interviews across a broad sample of respondents, attending schools located in different positions within the city's socio-economic hierarchy, believing that the schools themselves would roughly correlate with the economic wellbeing of the four areas in which the sample populations were located (van der Linde, 2009). The household economic indicators of the last South African Census held in 2001 indicated that the average annual incomes of households per suburb were as follows: In Brooklyn, the household income per annum for the majority of the population amounted to between R19 201-R76 800. In Milnerton central, the household income per annum for the majority of the population amounted to R76 801-R307 200. In Rondebosch, the household income per annum also amounted to between R76 801-R307 200. A natural limitation of this approach is that there is no guarantee that participants' households were based in the same areas in which their schools were located, nor that learners who attend these schools even come from the same socio-economic backgrounds as their peers (van der Linde, 2009). Thus, it should also be noted that in order to overcome the limitation imposed by solely considering the various household incomes of the areas the schools are located in, one should also be aware of the differing fee structures of the three schools under investigation as this also assists one in understanding the differing socio-economic positions of each school and its students respectively. Rondebosch Boys High School's (located in Rondebosch) fees for 2012 amounts to approximately R27 000 per annum (without accommodation), Milnerton High School's (located in Milnerton) fees for Grade 9 and above, amounts to approximately R12 000 per annum and Buren High School's (located in Brooklyn) fees amounts to approximately R4000 per annum. Although a South African census took place in 2011, these results were not available at the time of this investigation. Consequently, the 2001 results will be the source of information in this regard.

It should be noted that it was also previous research that motivated the researcher's sample in this study. Since research (Bosch, 2008; Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005) shows that the youth (specifically high school learners) are the primary users of mobile instant messaging applications and have a profound interest in social media applications in

general, high school learners would inevitably be the ideal candidates for the study concerning MXit. Other researchers (Kreutzer, 2009; van der Linde, 2009; Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009) conducting research about MXit have also used adolescents as their samples. The researcher chose to interview adolescents between the ages of 14-17 years. These researchers have conducted a great deal of research concerning how South African adolescents use MXit, what they use it for and with whom they communicate. Much of the research in this regard has been of a qualitative nature and has revealed more or less the same results. Summarily, it was found that South African adolescents use MXit for social networking, sexual experimentation, chatting and so forth (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; van der Linde, 2009). This study revealed similar results, which will be identified as the research paper progresses.

High school learners (14-17 years) will also be used as the sample for the study concerning the popularity or lack of popularity of Facebook. Generally, research concerning Facebook usage has also involved interviewing a younger demographic, yet the general trend in this area appears to involve the interviewing of university students—those between the ages of 18 to 25. For example: In South Africa, Bosch (2009) explored student use of Facebook at the University of Cape Town, as well as lecturer engagement with students via the new social media platform. In addition, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) recruited 116 students from an East Coast University in North America to use in their study concerning Facebook usage. This study aims to include a younger demographic in its investigation, with the aim of understanding what factors are motivating their usage of Facebook. Moreover, unlike other studies concerning the usage of Facebook, this study narrows its focus by solely examining the brand's popularity as a mobile media brand.

The motivation behind examining Twitter usage amongst high school learners (14-17 years) primarily lies in the fact that it is a severely under-researched topic and under-researched age group within the South African media studies arena. Consequently, this research paper aims to investigate how South African adolescents perceive the Twitter brand and their reasons behind adopting/not adopting it.

Data Collection

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the focus groups and individual interviews, ethical clearance was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department to ensure that all of the questions to be asked were appropriate for the adolescent respondents. Prior to the investigation, the researcher also consulted with the teachers and principals of the various schools (Buren High School, Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School) to ensure that they too comprehended the purpose of the study.

All individual interviews and focus groups were conducted using the full consent of participants. Respondents were notified and given the choice to not answer any question with which they felt uncomfortable. They were also informed that the interviews will be audio-recorded. A cover letter was also read and explained to the respondents to ensure that they fully comprehend the purpose of the study.

Privacy and confidentiality concerns were also given the deserved consideration. All respondents were ensured their anonymity in the investigation. The researcher was sensitive regarding how the information will be protected from unauthorised observation. If necessary, the participants were notified that they would be informed of any unforeseen findings from the research that they may have or may not have known. Conclusively, all interviews and focus groups were conducted in a private environment without external monitoring.

To ensure efficient data capturing, all the interviews (both semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions) were audio-recorded, transcribed and then analysed for themes (Ruane, 2005:161). The process of audio-recording and transcribing occurred within the setting of the classroom. According to Ruane (2005) audio-recording ensures efficient data capturing. Bosch (2008) and Chigona et al. (2009) also relied on audio-recording for this purpose. Interviewers who merely rely on note taking during the interview run the risk of falsifying information because of selective or incoherent memories and poor recording skills (Ruane, 2005:161). Moreover, by paying more attention to transcribing during the interview process, the interviewer runs the risk of listening ineffectually (Ruane, 2005:161). In light of these factors, the researcher

deemed audio-recording to be much more of a reliable strategy to use during the focus groups and interviews. Although the direct quotations gathered from respondents are not all grammatically correct, it was not necessary to redraft them into reported speech. All of the quotations gathered from respondents are still understandable.

Research Methods

Focus groups

As previously mentioned, focus groups were used as the initial stage of fieldwork, to raise and begin to explore relevant issues. These issues were then explored in more detail during the individual interviews. Whilst Goldstuck's (2011) research was used as the primary motivation in investigating the gratifications derived from these three social networking brands, the choice of which social networking platforms to focus on was also determined by the researcher's initial fieldwork. During the focus groups, these adolescents listed MXit, Facebook and Twitter as their mobile social networks of choice.

Focus groups are a form of group interview methodology (Kitzinger, 1994). As they are organised to explore a specific set of issues such as people's views and experiences, they appeared to be the ideal tool for this study's examination of mobile social networking patterns (Kitzinger, 1994; Kitzinger, 1995). Moreover, as they can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way; they were very useful within the current investigation (Kitzinger, 1995). As the researcher intended to investigate which mobile social networking brands these adolescents use and what motivates them in their purchase decisions, the focus groups provided insightful knowledge.

The group is 'focused' in the sense that it involves some kind of collective activity (Kitzinger, 1994). Crucially, focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by 'the explicit use of the group interaction' as research data (Kitzinger, 1995). Thus, instead of the interviewer asking each person to respond to a question in turn, participants were encouraged to talk to one another, through asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each others' experiences and points of view (Kitzinger, 1995).

Each focus group included 10 respondents. Participants were interviewed during the period usually assigned to Life Orientation. The group included both users and non-users of the various mobile social networking brands under investigation. Each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes.

The stimulating and talkative atmosphere provided by the focus groups assured the researcher that she had made the correct decision with regard to her chosen methodological tool. Initially, the researcher considered using questionnaires as the desired fieldwork method, as Ruane (2005:123) proposes that questionnaires and interviews are rather similar. Whilst the interview process is of a much more personal nature, a questionnaire lacks a personal touch (Ruane, 2005:123). A questionnaire is a self-contained, self-administered instrument for asking questions (Ruane, 2005:123). In many instances, questionnaires can be very efficient data collection tools, as they enable a researcher to collect data without requiring any personal contact with the respondent (Ruane, 2005:123). Consequently, transcending most barriers of space and time. (Ruane, 2005:123)

Although there is practically no limit regarding the kinds of information the researcher might obtain via questionnaires, it removes the avenue of interaction and discussion, which proved to be useful in the current investigation (Ruane, 2005). Group interaction was based on a list of topic questions pertaining to their usage of mobile social networking platforms. This list of questions has been attached within the appendix. Generally, the same guide was used in all three of the schools under investigation. However, as the students attending Rondebosch Boys High School stated that they no longer use MXit as a communicative platform, the researcher could not question their usage of it. The suggested topics did not run in sequential order. Nor were the questions explicitly asked as sometimes the interaction flowed naturally from one topic to another. This aspect of discussion played an important role in the current investigation and provided useful information that the researcher had not anticipated. If it were not for the students exchanging their various experiences with one another, the researcher would not have been able to retrieve the vast amount of information that she did. In addition, the researcher also helped stimulate discussion by frequently introducing open-ended questions into the groups (Kitzinger 1995). This too would not have been

possible had the researcher utilised a questionnaire. The researcher encouraged the learners to debate these questions, to produce responses that diverted from the original question (Kitzinger, 1994). The researcher's frequent interjections also encouraged new questions and new discussions to be created by the respondents themselves (Kitzinger, 1995). In this way, the research facilitator benefitted from one of the greatest strengths of focus groups—to capitalise on communication between research participants to generate data (Kitzinger, 1995).

One-on-one interviews

For the purpose of triangulation (validity), the focus groups were combined with a series of semi structured one-on-one interviews (Morgan, 1996; Lambert & Loiseau, 2008). Four of the participants from each focus group session were randomly selected to return for individual questioning. Once again, the interview sessions consisted of both users and non-users of the three social networking brands under investigation. Walsham (1995) argues that interviews should be viewed as the most essential sources of information in qualitative research, as it is through interviews that researchers can best access participants' views and interpretations of actions and events. Walsham's (1995) observation is indeed correct, as this complementary method of including one-on-one interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore specific opinions and experiences of the respondents in more depth and in a more intimate setting and also allowed participants to recall their assertions made in the previous meetings (Morgan, 1996). Individual questioning of the four participants was conducted through the means of semi-structured interviews, in the private vicinity of an empty classroom. This proved to be the ideal method interviewing, as the semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to create a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered (Horton, Macave & Struyven, 2004:340). This list of questions; often referred to as the interview guide (please see appendix), granted the interviewees a greater deal of leeway regarding how to reply (Horton, Macave & Struyven, 2004:340). This process granted the researcher a greater level of flexibility, as it is not imperative for the questions to follow on exactly the same way as outlined in the schedule (Horton, Macave & Struyven, 2004:340). Generally, all of the questions listed in the interview guide were asked and similar wording was used from interviewee to interviewee (Horton, Macave & Struyven, 2004:340). Similarly to the instance with the focus groups,

the individual interviews with the students from Rondebosch Boys High School differed slightly in discussion, as the focus group session revealed that these students no longer use Mxit as a communicative medium.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data in a research project often includes summarising the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most significant descriptions (Hancock, 1998). This study utilises what Silverman (1997) refers to as 'investigating interiors and exteriors' to analyse the data obtained from the focus group sessions and one-on-one interviews. In other words, themes were sought in the content of what was said by the respondents in the focus groups and individual interviews and the direct quotations were categorised accordingly (Silverman, 1997:131). As each of the social networking brands under investigation are significantly different in structure, each study established different themes. These themes emerged from the issues discussed during the focus groups and were also informed by the themes which surfaced in previous research relating to Uses and Gratifications theory (O'Donohoe, 1994) and social networking sites (boyd, 2007; van der Linde, 2009). Whilst a variety of themes emerged, each of the social networking brands were found to share two attributes—not only do they assist the South African adolescents in conversing with their network of associates, they also assist them in connecting with their favourite and least favourite brands. This will be discussed in more detail as this thesis progresses.

In contrast to qualitative research, quantitative research is more interested in generating statistical representations of data. However, as this was intended to be a qualitative investigation, concerned with descriptive accounts, the researcher was not concerned with quantifying or establishing a statistical correlation between users and non-users across the samples. As the aim of this thesis was to understand the behaviour of adolescents in their usage of social media brands and mobile phones *writ large*, quantitative research was not deemed to be an appropriate methodological tool.

Limitations of methodology

It should be noted that both of the methodological tools employed in this thesis (focus groups and one-one-one interviews) are not fool proof. Each methodological tool used within this study possesses a number of weaknesses, which deserve to be reviewed.

Sensitive information

As researchers are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences within the research process, it is important to acknowledge the limitations the researcher experienced within her study (Horn, 1997). Firstly, because group interaction requires mutual self-disclosure, it is undeniable that some topics will be regarded as unacceptable for discussion among some categories of research participants (Morgan, 1996). However, this study did not appear to experience this as a severe weakness. In fact, respondents were open and enthusiastic with regard to volunteering information that could be regarded as 'sensitive'. For example, respondents were open to discussing their sexual experimentation on their various social networking platforms.

Secondly, the role of the moderator/interviewer has also been argued to be an attribute that poses a variety of potential challenges in the research process (Morgan, 1996). For example: If the interviewer and interviewees do not share the same social category, or membership, it has been suggested that this may cause the interviewees to purposefully mislead the interviewer in their responses (Silverman, 1997:101). In the eyes of the adolescent respondents in this study, one can assume that the researcher's social category would most likely have caused her to be perceived as a young, white, educated female; who is a member of a minority racial grouping that still maintains a state of affluence in post-Apartheid South Africa (Standing, 2003). This perception, combined with differences concerning race, age, class and gender between the interviewer/moderator and the interviewees could have resulted in the interviewees not answering the questions as honestly as possible (Silverman, 1997:101). Although this issue of respondent honesty is difficult to assess and evaluate, it is a limitation that needs to be acknowledged (Ruane, 2005:125).

The only two noticeable limitations the researcher experienced with regard to her status as a moderator pertained to her gender and age. Fascinatingly, in all three

schools, respondents appeared to admire the fact that the researcher utilised all three of the social networking brands under investigation. Similarly to van der Linde (2009), this encouraged a heightened enthusiasm towards the researcher's questions, perhaps due to the shared membership of communicative platforms that the students viewed as popular platforms of communication. This observation is also reflective of the identification enabled by the 'insider knowledge' that Hollands (2003) shared with his young participants due to their mutual sensibilities in music.

In this case, having MXit, Facebook and Twitter accounts scoured the authority of the researcher in the current project to a limited degree—particularly amongst male respondents. Certain male respondents became particularly enthusiastic upon discovering the researcher's usage of the three social media platforms under investigation and requested if they could add the researcher 'as a friend on Facebook'. In addition, certain male respondents also requested if they could add the researcher 'as a contact on MXit.' Female researchers like Gurney (1985) who have worked in male dominated settings have written of their experiences in facing 'sexual advances from male setting members.' In this investigation, the researcher did experience flirtatious banter from certain male respondents. Similarly to Horn (1997) the researcher responded to the flirtatious banter with a laugh and a smile, rather than actively challenging it or actively entering into it. However, respondents were gently informed that no interpersonal relationship of any kind would be established during the course of the focus group or individual interview sessions.

As previously mentioned, the young age of the researcher also appeared to influence the interview process. Generally, adult researchers are advised to exercise caution in assuming an understanding of adolescent culture because they believe that they can relate to the adolescents in some way or another (Silverman, 1997:101). Adult researchers need to remember that adolescents are in the transitional period of developing their identities, and are becoming increasingly oriented to adult worlds, though with 'rough edges' (Silverman, 1997:101). This transitional phase may cause a social distance and lack of honesty between the interviewer and the interviewee (Silverman, 1997:101). Emond (2003) cautions about this as well:

The danger in undertaking research with young people is that researchers believe that they have a pre-existing level of understanding because they were young themselves once. Even more concerning is that researchers believe they are still young and have to therefore make little effort to be the 'stranger'. Social proximity can be as much of a hindrance as a help and is not necessarily a short cut to establishing research relationships (108).

Respondents also displayed heightened enthusiasm when the researcher informed them that they could refer to her by her first name, instead of referring to her by the title 'Ma'am,' which is the same respectful title these students give to their teachers (members of authority). Once again, operating on a first name basis positively eroded the authority of the researcher in the current project to a limited degree.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 5: EXPLORING ADOLESCENTS' USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF MXIT

Brand background

MXit is a free nation: anyone can visit, anyone can belong. But it is a nation of aspirations, too, of steps up a hierarchy of status that can take you to the stars. Think of it as a democracy, founded on a platform of equal opportunity, with the prospect of equal rewards for those who seize the opportunities and climb up every rung (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012).

The name 'MXit' stands for 'message exchange it' and is pronounced 'mix it' (Bosch, 2008). MXit is a social networking brand that uses Internet protocol to exchange messages, which is very similar to the way computer-based instant messages function (Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009). Instant messaging is the synchronous exchange of a private message with another user (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). One can engage in multiple activities such as private messages simultaneously, switching back and forth between different conversation windows (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Initially, messages used only text, but modern services like MXit, now enable users to include attachments, voice or video calls and even simple online games (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Once the individual has downloaded MXit to their mobile phone, they can chat either on a one-to-one basis with contacts who have been added to their contact list or they can participate in a chat room, also known as a Chat Zone (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009).

Chat Zones have chat rooms where groups of up to ten people can share a conversation at the same time (MXit, 2012). There are Chat Zones for cities all around South Africa, from single moms looking for support to sports fans, music lovers, college zones, teen zones or those looking to date new people (MXit, 2012). Respondents can also start their own Group Chat (pronounced Multi-mix)—a chat room exclusively for a user and their invited friends (MXit, 2012). Not only have these Chat Zones assisted South African adolescents in connecting with one another, these chat rooms have also played a major part in MXit gaining its revenue (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). Six months after the launch of MXit in South Africa, the brand was accruing a hundred thousand Rand per day within the chat rooms, at the cost of a mere two South African cents per message (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). Today, the chat rooms still account for 30 per cent of

revenue, and the cost per message remains 2 Moola all these years later (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). Moola is MXit's form of currency, which grants participants the ability to purchase and trade entertainment online (MXit, 2012). One Moola is equivalent to one cent, which can be purchased in partnership with Standard Bank by directly exchanging money for virtual currency (du Plessis, 2010).

To add a person to the contact list, the MXit user needs to send an invite to the other party, if the corresponding party accepts the invitation, the two will consequently be able to communicate via the application in real time (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009).

According to the 'About us' page of MXitlifestyle.com (n.d.), MXit, the brand that now defines itself as 'simple, energetic, iconic and a little rebellious' was created by a team residing in the town of Stellenbosch, just outside of Cape Town, South Africa (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). The application actually began as a game in the year 2000, which was to be played via Short Message Service (SMS), on mobile phones (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). However, as an SMS may cost a user up to 85 South African cents, the game was deemed as too costly and did not hold much potential in a developing country (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). Consequently, the Research and Development division of Swist Group Technologies had to reassess the game's functionality (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). It was the improvement upon this game that enabled the first version of MXit to be launched in South Africa in the latter half of 2003 (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.).

The application then began its endeavour in gaining publicity as the first mobile instant messenger to arrive in South Africa (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). Griffiths (2010) reviews MXit's marketing strategy rather extensively in her research paper. By using Rogers (2003) diffusion of innovations theory as the framework of its discussion, her research paper investigates MXit as an innovation and as a brand, and conducts research as to why and how the brand gained such immense popularity, even though it did not rely on any traditional forms of advertising via the mass media.

In April 2004, MXit's brand experienced some restructuring, as Swist's Research & Development division achieved independence as Clockspeed Mobile (MXit LifeStyle,

n.d.). Further restructuring occurred once more as the corporation became MXit Lifestyle (Pty) Ltd on the 1st of July 2006 (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). Less than a year later, on the 26th of January 2007, multinational group of media and e-commerce platforms—Naspers (Media24's majority shareholder), obtained a 30% stake in MXit Lifestyle for an undisclosed amount (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). At that time, *Naspers* claimed to have acquired these shares with a view of enhancing MXit's rapid international expansion plans (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). This purchase appeared to be effective as a mere two years later, in 2009, MXit was estimated at gaining 18 000 new subscribers and processing around 250 million messages on a daily basis (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.).

Although the brand's rapid rate of diffusion continued between 2010 and 2011, from approximately 20.5 million subscribers to 33 million subscribers, the brand experienced some restructuring within the latter part of the year once again (Watson, 2011). In September 2011, Naspers sold its 30 percent stake in MXit, to technology investment firm 'World of Avatar' for an undisclosed amount (Motsoeneng, 2011). It was at this time that World of Avatar founder Alan Knott Craig, the son of the former Vodacom CEO of the same name, took over as CEO of MXit as well (Motsoeneng, 2011).

MXit's website stipulates that the application is compatible with approximately 3000 mobile phone brands, including BlackBerry, iPhone, Windows Mobile, as well as Android (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.). In addition, the brand describes itself as 'one that everyone can identify with, and to which everyone can aspire'. It is a brand language that truly demonstrates that MXit is in touch with its users and has a strong emphasis on community creation' (MXit LifeStyle, n.d.).

Upon its inception, scholars on the Cape Flats were among the earliest and most enthusiastic adopters of the technology (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). In 2012, the bulk of the brand's userbase is still based in South Africa, however, the application is also used extensively in 120 countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, Singapore, Japan, Namibia, Italy, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom as well in the United States of America. MXit also supports connection to other instant messaging applications on different networks, such as MSN Messenger, Facebook, Yahoo, ICQ and Google Talk

(Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009). In other words, the brand is network-independent (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009).

Since its inception, it has gained immense publicity for having a profound influence on the patterns of young people's social networks and their relationships with each other (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2010). Although the brand's rate of diffusion and success is certainly profound, MXit has also received a great deal of vilification within the local press (Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2010). The media has labelled MXit as a tool that encourages promiscuity, ruins relationships and provides paedophiles with a convenient platform to chat with adolescents due to the extensive amount of anonymity the application grants its users (Chigona & Chigona, 2008:53). However, this has not deterred the brand's uptake amongst young South Africans (Griffiths, 2010; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009).

The brand, which started as an instant messaging platform in 2006, has since evolved into a fully-integrated mobile social platform that offers a spread of features, tools and social upliftment portals—including free math lessons, driver's license theory and professional counselling on drug and alcohol abuse, depression, debt issues as well as HIV/ Aids (du Plessis, 2010). Imfundo Yami Imfundo Yethu and Dr. Math provide assistance with mathematics and Angel provides assistance in the area of health, AIDS and drugs (du Plessis, 2010 citing Pasquininelli). These initiatives are available via the portal known as MXit Reach (du Plessis, 2010). From what began as a service that merely enabled users to communicate on a one-to-one basis, the application now provides users with a range of services that includes competitions, free music downloads of both local and international artists, photographs of celebrities and so forth (Andrews, 2008).

Due to the fact that MXit is a relatively new application, there is not a great deal of academic literature available on the subject. Most of the information concerning MXit can be found on the web—either in blogs or small websites. The majority of academic literature concerning the application revolves around its uses and perceptions, as well as its potential as an educational tool.

Uses and perceptions

The majority of academic research that has been conducted on MXit has been of a qualitative nature, with researchers (Bosch, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; van der Linde, 2009) reviewing the platform's uses and its perceptions. For example: Chigona et al. (2009) report on a pilot study investigating the perceptions and use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) amongst the youth in South Africa. As mentioned earlier, van der Linde (2009) has also made an interesting qualitative contribution to the field as he examines the mediating role that MXit plays in the identity formation of a sample of 16-18 year old adolescents. Similarly to Griffiths (2010), he also employed Rogers (2003) diffusion of innovation theory to support his argument. Although van der Linde (2009) utilises the Uses and Gratifications theory in his examination of MXit, his study excludes how adolescents in South Africa use the platform to interact with their brands of choice. This thesis broadens the existing body of literature in this regard.

An educational tool

There has also been a growing body of academic research that examines MXit as a means of benefitting the educational sector within South Africa (Ford, 2008; Butgereit, 2007; Walton, 2009). Due to MXit's rapid rate of adoption amongst the young people in South Africa, the brand has encouraged corporations to consider using tools such as mobile instant messaging applications to deliver an instant messaging call centre-like facility to disadvantaged citizens—as a potential educational service in advancing Mathematics (Ford, 2008:2). The Meraka Institute has already partnered with MXit in creating Dr. Math—a mobile tutoring platform to support learners with their mathematics homework (Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Ford, 2008). The application enables learners to use their mobile phones to ask questions which are routed to a variety of tutors, who are employed to provide assistance (Ford, 2008:2). As Mathematics education is crucial for South Africa's educational, democratic and economic development, a facility of this nature is exceptionally important—particularly since statistics reveal that South African students are achieving poor mathematic results (Butgereit, 2007). *Math on MXit* leverages the fact that South African adolescents are already utilising MXit as a social networking tool (Butgereit, 2007). Ford (2008:4) further supports this argument, as he states that *Dr Math* provides a 'powerful, real-time, interactive service that is cheap, accessible and popular amongst the youth.' Due to

the cost-effective nature of MXit, experts believe that the effects of providing a service of this nature could have phenomenal results (Ford, 2008:4).

Furthermore, researchers have not only investigated what MXit can do for Mathematics education, they have also investigated how the application can contribute towards improving levels of literacy in South Africa as well (Walton, 2009). The Shuttleworth Foundation's m4Lit project commissioned an m-novel, entitled Kontax, which was written by Sam Wilson and translated into isiXhosa by Nkululeko Mabandla (Walton, 2009). Written in the teen mystery genre, Kontax was targeted at teens aged between fourteen and seventeen years and was initially published in daily episodes in both English and isiXhosa on the mobisite www.kontax.mobi (a website designed specifically for use on mobile phones) (Walton, 2009). It was later also released on MXit (Walton, 2009). The m4Lit research project investigated how South African teens responded to Kontax, and how compatible the m-novel was with teens' existing mobile literacy practices (Walton, 2009). A group of isiXhosa-speaking teens (ages 14-17) from Langa and Guguletu were recruited as m4Lit participants (Walton, 2009). The research project investigated whether these teens accessed the m-novel via their phones and whether reading a mobile novel online fitted in with their existing mobile literacy practices (Walton, 2009). Two surveys, two focus groups, and usability evaluations were conducted (Walton, 2009). Data from the MXit campaign and from the Kontax mobisite were also analysed to gain insights into the responses of a broader audience (Walton, 2009).

However, this is not the only mobile novel available on MXit. The brand has launched a variety of mobile novels on MXit, which can all be paid for in Moola. *Mobinomics: MXit and Africa's Mobile Revolution*, the book by MXit CEO Alan Knott-Craig and Gus Silber on MXit's success in South Africa is one of the most recent novels that has been published to the social network. This is the first time a printed book, available in national bookstores, has been distributed via MXit (MXit, 2012). This book communicates MXit's strengths and failures as a brand and introduces its readership to MXit's employees. This is an impressive strategy to create a narrative around the MXit brand name. Narratives or stories play an integral part in distinguishing us as human beings (Fog et al., 2010). In addition, they play an essential part in assisting us in the journey of

understanding and making sense of our experiences (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). As these terms have become virtually synonymous, there are, in particular, no hard and fast rules for differentiating between stories and narratives or storytelling and narrativisation (Brown, Gabriel & Gherardi, 2009). Nor is there agreement on how stories and narratives may be differentiated from definitions, legends, proverbs, myths, chronologies and other forms of oral and written texts (Brown, Gabriel & Gherardi, 2009). Storytelling (the process of retelling or constructing these proverbs, legends, myths, stories or narratives) is a renowned and prehistoric art form that appears to be shared by all cultures and societies, often to communicate a message to audiences (Crystal & Herskovitz, 2010; Denning, 2006; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). This message is often communicated via intriguing and enthralling characters, or through its narrative structure (Crystal & Herskovitz, 2010; Denning, 2006; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). As ancient civilisations would share stories surrounding a campfire, it would help shape their identity, give their culture values and boundaries and helped shape their reputation amongst their rivals (Fog et al., 2010).

In many ways, the business world can be compared to these ancient civilisations (Fog et al., 2010). Today, scientific research has laid the foundations for a sound empirical understanding of storytelling as a way of recognising and identifying with a variety of different brands (Denning, 2006). Mark Morris, founder of *The Brand Consultancy* summarises the power of narrative branding very well in this quotation:

If you're a company that understands the role of brand narrative and a company that has adopted that paradigm, and are thinking that way, then what you've really become is a storytelling organization. The stories reside in your employees, in your customers, in your vendors – they all have different stories because they have different experiences relative to the organization. But, it's the stories they tell that will in the end drive the value for the company. It's the stories that determine the outcome: are they willing to endorse you, your product, and your services? This in turn determines whether people will buy your products and services and how much they'll pay for them (Denning, 2006:45, citing Morris, n.d.).

Regardless of the nature of the brand you are dealing with (human, product, service or place); storytelling has become an essential tool in conducting successful brand management (Crystal & Herskovitz, 2010; Denning, 2006). The stories that circulate in and around an organisation effectively communicate a mantra of the company's culture and values, heroes and enemies, good points and bad, towards its customers and other employees (Fog et al., 2010). Moreover, companies are also discovering that their

leaders can use their own stories to communicate important messages to others (Denning, 2006). This concept of self-disclosure through storytelling is now being valued as a powerful means of engaging and inspiring consumers, particularly if that story is being told by a respected leader (Denning, 2006). Stories that disclose shortcomings and failure can actually build trust amongst consumers and most importantly, stimulate discussion about the brand (Denning, 2006). This is precisely what MXit achieves through this book. Readers are given the opportunity to hear about the rise of the brand from its CEO, through the means of a narrative. Moreover, MXit users are included in the narrative, for they are essentially what contributed towards the brand being the success it is today. This is not the only narrative strategy MXit has used in its brand-building efforts. MXit also utilises narrative branding strategies to raise awareness for the brands that advertise on their platform. This strategy of creating a narrative around a brand name is reviewed in more detail within this chapter's research findings as well.

Marketing capabilities

To date, little of the available literature concerning MXit appears to have permeated the discipline of branding and marketing literature or media studies, either in terms of formal research, textbook content or academic curricula. There were only two academic articles pertaining to MXit and marketing within the academic curricular—Griffiths (2010) and du Plessis (2010). Through the means of case study methodology, du Plessis (2010) explores the various ways in which mobile marketing communications are available to the youth on MXit. Du Plessis (2010) examines two marketing campaigns (the Engen Endless Summer campaign as well as a campaign by *CAR Magazine*) to substantiate her argument. Similarly to du Plessis (2010) the researcher engages in an analysis of the Cadbury's 'tell it like it is' marketing campaign in this investigation. Furthermore, this thesis also contributes towards this existing body of marketing literature by examining how the adolescents interviewed for this thesis are using MXit to interact with their brands of choice.

In *Mobinomics*, Knott-Craig and Silber (2012) stipulate that it wasn't long after they launched MXit in South Africa that they realised its potential as a mobile marketing forum, specifically for the 'mobile generation.' This primarily consists of the 12-25 year

old demographic, with a disposable income or pocket money of their own (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). MXit's website stipulates that the brand has achieved a 'youth cult status with its South African userbase' (MXit, 2011). It is advertising to this young demographic that helps MXit gain its revenue (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012).

According to MXit, their strength as advertisers lies in their ability to promote brands from 'From Interruption to Engagement'.

In a world of split second attention spans, meaningful dialogues are key to boosting brand affinity and recall. MXit encourages participation by sparking consumer dialogue about the product or brand being advertised. It's a platform that allows advertisers to be current and responsive, offering the flexibility to plug into any existing campaign or to create something fresh. With the benefit of millions of users and the scientific accuracy of measurable statistical data, this is how to chat smart and connect with the "Instant Generation (MXit, 2011).

As an advertising forum to the youth market, MXit has the potential to assist corporations in raising brand awareness amongst the youth market and consequently, increase brand equity as well (MXit, 2011; Andrews, 2008; Aaker, 1996). Despite MXit's success as a mobile media platform, it should be noted that mobile marketing is not a new phenomenon. Mobile marketing has grown in popularity over the last several years and experts believe that it possesses the potential to become one of the most powerful one-to-one digital advertising mediums if utilised in the right manner (Leppäniemi & Karjaluoto, 2005; Ma, Suntornpithug & Karaatli, 2009). According to the Mobile Marketing Association (2009) mobile marketing refers to the set of practices that enable organisations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network. The web's interactive and quick-response capabilities via mobile phones have definitely helped them to become a direct marketing channel (Kim & Jun, 2008). Historically, mobile marketing began with short messaging service (SMS), which are text messages sent to mobile phones (Kim & Jun, 2008; Jun & Lee, 2007; Li & Stoller, 2007). In this scenario, mobile phone users are usually asked to send a text message to a certain number in order to sign up for offers such as coupons, free music or ringtones (Jun & Lee, 2007). After the launch of SMS, the multimedia message service (MMS), which can include the sending of photographs, music, movies and games, became increasingly popular in mobile campaigns, especially in Asia and Europe (Kim & Jun, 2008 citing Online reporter 2005; Jun & Lee, 2007). After that, mobile advertising began integrating SMS, MMS and the Internet to help

customers obtain information (Kim & Jun, 2008 citing Buckley, 2007). These integrated features enable consumers to participate in competitions, vote for their favourite television programmes or download coupons and ringtones (Kim & Jun, 2008). This avenue of mobile marketing remains to be a popular choice amongst consumers (Kim & Jun, 2008 citing Buckley 2007). BlackBerry and a range of other Smartphones have contributed towards improving mobile marketing as well, as users are now able to scan barcodes (Research in Motion Limited, 2012). BlackBerry Smartphones, a product of Research in Motion, have begun to diffuse within the South African mobile market within recent years. According to their official website, www.rim.com, the BlackBerry product line includes the BlackBerry PlayBook tablet, the BlackBerry Smartphone, as well as software for businesses and accessories. BlackBerry products and services are used by millions of customers around the world (Research in Motion Limited, 2012). For a mobile phone to be capable of reading barcodes it must have a camera, Internet access and a barcode reading application (Research in Motion Limited, 2012). Barcode reading applications are available for download from application stores such as the Android Marketplace, iTunes App Store, or the BlackBerry App World (Research in Motion Limited, 2012). Users can utilise barcode scanning applications to check and compare prices of products, enter competitions, add contacts and so forth (Research in Motion Limited, 2012).

The launch of MXit and the mobile phone's ability to connect to the Internet sparked a new evolution in the realm of mobile branding in South Africa (Griffiths, 2010). Since MXit began, the range of possibilities it offers its advertisers has evolved rather significantly. MXit offers particular brands the ability to deliver their message directly to the entire MXit community via text messaging, the ability to link the MXit user to downloadable content in the form of podcasts, music and movie clips directly to their mobile phone, feedback forms and competitions where the brand has the opportunity to ask MXit users for feedback about their brand as well as branded content in the form of 'Skinz' and Emoticons (Andrews, 2008). Most of this content is accessible via TradePost or MXit's Splash Screen advertising.

Similarly to how users are able to add friends as contacts on MXit, they are also able to add their brands of choice as contacts via TradePost as well (du Plessis, 2010). MXit

provides one free Tradepost message to notify users that a new contact is available (du Plessis, 2010). Any person who adds a contact can be selected to win a sponsored prize (du Plessis, 2010). Additional messages can also be purchased (du Plessis, 2010). The trader keeps in regular contact with the user, providing information about the latest goodies and competitions available on MXit (du Plessis, 2010). Services are paid for in Moola, which as mentioned earlier in this research paper, is MXit's mode of currency.

MXit's website stipulates: 'Our advertising partners have enjoyed inestimable success through growing their own brand community on MXit, and encouraging thousands of people to interact with their brand out of choice.' This is really the crux of MXit's marketing technique—the fact that it is entirely based on permission marketing (du Plessis, 2010). In other words, users are not spammed with unnecessary irrelevant advertising (du Plessis, 2010). Thus, they choose which brands they would like to receive information from (du Plessis, 2010). This attribute is what makes online branding communities so effective and so different from regular communities (Jang et al., 2008). Participation in an online community is driven by choice, whereas in traditional bounded communities membership may be imposed involuntarily by geographical location (Jang et al., 2008). MXit users choose to add a brand as a personal contact on MXit, which enables the MXit user to interact directly with the marketer within its online community. A number of other major international and South African brands have already partnered with MXit in this manner—Coca Cola, Mr Price, Clinique, Hansa, Ster-Kinekor, Peugeot, Samsung, Standard Bank, Damelin, Chappies, Engen, Sports Illustrated as well as Quiksilver and Roxy to name but a few (Andrews, 2008; Griffiths, 2010).

Tradepost also provides a list of available services, ranging from news reviews (both local and international) to movie reviews and times, horoscopes, Skinz, Emoticons and more. Similarly to how mobile phones are available in a range of colours, styles and sizes, and enable the user to personalise their instrument by choosing from a variety of call signals, MXit also enables the user to customise their MXit profile through a MXit 'Skin' (Griffiths, 2010). As discussed by du Plessis (2010), a Skin can be designed according to specific graphics, based on a brand's logo or specific promotional campaign, and should be relevant and current. A MXit user can place any desired image

as their wallpaper, also known as a MXit 'Skin' and they can customise their MXit profile to suit their personality, thus making the application compatible with the user's lifestyle and personality traits (Griffiths, 2010; Rogers, 2003:252).

Splash Screen advertising is another means for advertisers to reach their desired demographical sector on MXit (Andrews, 2008; du Plessis, 2010). Splash Screen advertisements consist of full colour advertisements displaying every time a user logs in (du Plessis, 2010). As all MXit users need to have registered accounts, this provides advertisers with clear demographics in terms of age, gender and location of their target market (du Plessis, 2010). Users can only receive one Splash screen advertisement at a time (du Plessis, 2010). This was the first kind of advertising platform to launch on MXit (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). It began as a test case campaign, which resembled an advertisement that would appear in the personal section from the classifieds (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). The font resembled red lipstick and stated: 'Looking for love. Black, Slim and Sexy seeks partner, GSOH' (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). This acronym stands for 'good sense of humour' (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). Just below that, a small picture of a Samsung mobile phone was displayed (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). This advertisement generated 20 000 views and 14 000 hits in 72 hours (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). This was the beginning of MXit's venture into the realm of mobile advertising (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). Since this advertisement, MXit's Splash Screen advertising has evolved on a rapid scale, with new techniques facilitating active engagement and interactivity.

Another two brand building platforms offered to the youth via MXit are Chat Zones and MXit Xchange. MXit enables brands to make use of Chat Zones to communicate with their base of clientele. A Hosted Chat Zone is a collection of chat rooms where members of the MXit community can engage in conversations about a brand (MXit, 2012). Since these Chat Zones are organised around a single brand, product, or company, they can be seen as a special kind of brand community (Gummerus et al., 2012; MXit, 2012). Advertisers can create a virtual world that suits their brand's personality by hosting a Chat Zone of up to 20 rooms with a maximum of 10 users per room, at any time. The chat rooms can be named to suit a particular brand, product or campaign (du Plessis, 2010). The advertiser has moderator status to initiate conversation and persuade other

users to chat about the brand (du Plessis, 2010). Users also have the opportunity to chat with popular personalities, such as celebrities (du Plessis, 2010). In addition, treasure hunts can be created where users have to visit other media to receive clues for chat rooms (du Plessis, 2010). Tradepost also offers its users games, quizzes, weather updates and career tips (du Plessis, 2010).

As introduced within the previous paragraph, another possible portal advertisers can use to build their brand on MXit is known as MXit Xchange (MXit, 2012). According to MXit's official website, Xchange was launched in 2009 as a mobile classifieds within MXit (MXit, 2012). It allows users to post and view items for sale and communicates anonymously with potential buyers or sellers before finalising a deal (MXit, 2012). It is a mobile classifieds that allows one to do deals while on the move (MXit, 2012). It is available both within MXit as well as on the web (MXit, 2012). MXit Xchange is viewable by anyone, not just MXit users (MXit, 2012). However, in order to post an advert, one needs to have a MXit account (MXit, 2012). Big organisations, individuals and pro-bono entities are able to utilise this service (MXit, 2012).

Now that we have reviewed the existing body of literature concerning MXit and its marketing capabilities, we can move on to reviewing the findings of this study.

FINDINGS: MOTIVATIONS FOR MXIT USAGE AND NON-USAGE

The following section seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Why do some adolescents not use MXit?
- 2) For what purposes do the sample of users attending Buren High School and Milnerton High School in Cape Town, South Africa use MXit?
- 3) What benefits do these users obtain from their use of MXit?

Responses from non-users

Although this study intended to investigate the motivations behind the students attending Rondebosch High School's usage of MXit, the focus group sessions revealed that the grade 11 students attending this school do not use the brand as a means of communication. The grade 11 students attending Rondebosch Boys High School perceived MXit to be an 'outdated' social network (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012). In addition, respondents attending Rondebosch Boys High School stated that they stopped using MXit because the application was no longer popular amongst their friends.

A: 'I do log on to MXit occasionally. I tried logging on the other day, but none of my friends were online. If none of my friends are using it, there is no point in me using it' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

A: 'I stopped using it because no one was on it' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Thus, the data concerning MXit usage was collected from students attending Buren High School and Milnerton High School.

Responses from users

In their discussions as to why they engaged with MXit, the participants attending Buren High School and Milnerton High School noted a number of purposes that the application served from their point of view. However, as the discussions progressed, it transpired that the use of MXit, for example, to communicate with others, also led to certain gratifications being obtained. To this end, the participants offered varying and interesting insights as to the benefits they obtained, which will all be examined throughout the course of this chapter.

Granovetter's 'Threshold Models of Collective behaviour'

Numerous male and female respondents stated that the reason they started using MXit was because 'everyone' else was using it. This is an interesting point, which displays a strong correlation to Granovetter's (1978) 'Threshold Models of Collective Behaviour'. In this model, Granovetter (1978) proposes that an individual engages in a behaviour based on the proportion of people in the social system already engaged in the behaviour (Granovetter, 1978). Granovetter (1978) uses the example of a riot to illustrate this. Different individuals require different levels of safety before entering a riot and also vary in the benefits they derive from rioting (Granovetter, 1978). The crucial concept for describing such variation among individuals is that of 'threshold' (Granovetter, 1978). A person's threshold for joining a riot is defined here as the proportion of the group he would have to see join before he would do so (Granovetter, 1978). Imagine a group of people (potential rioters), each with a threshold of 0,1,2...99 (Granovetter, 1978). This is a uniform distribution of thresholds (Granovetter, 1978). If the person with a threshold of 0 engages in some action, the person with a threshold of 2, and so on up to the final person, with a threshold of 99 (Granovetter, 1978). The process is like a cascade of dominos: once one domino (first mover) has been tipped, each domino that falls over one more domino, leading to the following insight (Granovetter; 1978). Thus, an individual's adoption of a new collective behaviour is thus a function of the behaviour of others in the group or system (Granovetter, 1978). Individuals with low thresholds engage in collective behaviour before many others do, while individuals with high thresholds do so only after most of the group has engaged in the collective behaviour (Granovetter, 1978). In addition to riots, he encourages researchers to apply this model to research regarding rumour diffusion, strikes, voting, migration as well as the diffusion of various innovations (Granovetter, 1978). Utilising this model to examine MXit's rapid rate of adoption would certainly yield interesting results. It would be interesting for researchers to conduct further investigation in the arena of MXit's rapid rate of adoption and to perhaps include Granovetter's (1978) 'Threshold Models of Collective Behaviour' as their area of focus.

Cost-effectiveness

Male and female respondents posited MXit's cost effectiveness as a common motivation for its usage.

A: 'It's a lot cheaper and you get an instant reply' (interview, Buren High School, 23/07/2012).

Numerous researchers (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; Ford, 2008; van der Linde, 2009; Griffiths, 2010) have also determined MXit's cost-efficiency to be one of the primary motivations behind the application's rapid adoption rate in South Africa. Cost has always played a noteworthy role in determining who has access to new technologies and who has not, particularly in developing countries where access to information and communication technologies is particularly expensive and difficult to access based on the limitations imposed by the digital divide (Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; Ford, 2008; Griffiths, 2010). In fact, South African consumers have long been subject to some of the highest mobile interconnection rates in the world (Research ICT Africa, 2010). Moreover, as the participants within this study are adolescents studying towards completing their high school education, they do not have full-time jobs, or a fixed income. Naturally, their finances would play a role in their decision-making.

Also, before MXit's inception, MXit users were forced to rely on SMS messaging in order to send a message from one mobile phone to another. Whilst an SMS message may cost the sender 85 South African cents, the cost of sending a MXit message may cost the sender as little as two South African cents (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009; Ford, 2008; Griffiths, 2010). It is free to download the application. However, the cost of sending a MXit message is also network dependent (Griffiths, 2010). Whilst using, Vodacom, MTN, Cell C or 8ta, four of South Africa's cellular providers, may cost the user one or two cents to send a message (Griffiths, 2010). In contrast, sending MXit messages from Cell C, another one of South Africa's service providers, is free.

Maintaining existing relationships

The most common use of MXit, discovered within the focus groups and individual interviews conducted at Buren High School and Milnerton High School is the fact that MXit helps these adolescents maintain existing relationships with friends. Moreover, it helps them maintain these friendships in a virtual environment, free from parental observation.

A: 'You can connect easier with your friends, you can talk to them, ask them about what homework you have, stuff like that' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

A: 'I use MXit to communicate with my friends and family that live far away. It's like a quick access to telling them something or hearing something from them' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'I use it to get hold of friends at time, to tell them to make plans' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

The importance of interpersonal relationships in adolescence is not a new phenomenon. Similarly to the responses from the adolescents interviewed within this study, friendship has long been cited as a feature that plays an important role in adolescent development and well-being (Berndt, 1982). Digital media platforms, like MXit, have merely provided a new way for adolescents in South Africa to communicate with one another, through the technology's ability to break geographical boundaries (Bosch, 2008; van der Linde, 2009).

Sexual experimentation

MXit also appeared to assist these students in the area of sexual experimentation. Numerous female respondents stated that they utilise MXit to chat to their 'boyfriends'. Romantic relationships are both normal and salient during adolescence (Collins, Welsh & Furman, 2009; Collins, 2003). Although some view romantic relationships during adolescence as frivolous, brief, or merely artifacts of social dysfunction, they are progressively being regarded as potentially important relational factors in shaping the general course of development during adolescence (Collins, 2003; Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Furman, 2002). There are a variety of explanations as to why adolescents develop and seek romantic relationships, many of these revolve around their ability to fulfill and foster adolescent needs, such as the attainment of independence, identity and intimacy (Miller & Benson, 1999). MXit is used to facilitate conversation and foster this sense of 'intimacy' within adolescent relationships via its cost-effective technology. Most of the studies reviewing MXit's uses and perceptions discovered that adolescents in South Africa use *MXit* to communicate with romantic interests (Bosch, 2008; Chigona & Chigona, 2008; Chigona et al., 2009). Thus, the findings within this study appear to

correlate with the existing body of literature concerning adolescents and their desire for relationship-building on the platform.

A common advantage as a result of the distance and elimination of face-to-face contact imposed by MXit usage involved an increase in confidence, particularly when conversing with members of the opposite sex. This is an example of where the Internet, and more specifically social networking, is seen to offer an advantage over personal face-to-face communication, in terms of facilitating the initiation of contact between the male and female participants.

A: 'It's fine to meet the girl face to face. But it's so much easier to get a conversation flowing when you're not in front of them' (interview, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

This is an advantage that was expressed by both male and female respondents within the study.

A: 'It's much easier to flirt with guys when you're not face-to-face. Like, I would tell a guy that he has a really hot body' (interview, Milnerton High School 27/07/2012).

This increase in confidence was not only discussed as a gratification obtained from MXit usage. Generally, respondents felt that the screen, anonymity and distance imposed by an online medium, like the mobile phone, boosted their confidence when conversing with members of the opposite sex.

Establishing new relationships

Numerous male and female respondents also stated that MXit helps them establish new interpersonal relationships.

A: 'You get under 18 chat zones, where you can talk to people your own age as well. Even people you've never met (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

A: 'We meet in the chat room, have a good conversation in the chat room and then we go private, basically to get to know each other. You have a relationship through chatting' (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

Alleviating boredom

Upon examining the data collected from the focus groups and one-on-one interviews, numerous male and female respondents also identified using MXit Chat Zones as a means to alleviate boredom. Chat Zones appeared to grant these participants a means of 'escape' from mundane activities, such as homework. Numerous male and female respondents also admitted to creating fake virtual identities via the Chat Zone function. They posited that it was common to use fake photographs as their profile picture. In addition, they also posited that it was common to lie about their age and name when chatting to respondents they had never met in an offline capacity. This is not an unusual phenomenon. Generally, most Internet-based forms of communication facilitate identity construction, as they enable a greater degree of anonymity amongst participants, and make it exceptionally easy for them to construct fake identities (Louge, 2006). This is particularly true for adolescents, who at this age, are in the process of constructing their identities (Erikson, 1968; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). This process of constructing their identity requires exploration, and for today's adolescents, who are growing up at the centre of a digital-saturated world, this process of exploration can occur within reality or virtual realms (Erikson, 1968; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Male respondents stated that they often portray themselves as older than they are to 'flirt' with older female Chat Zone users, whilst female respondents also appeared to flirt with male respondents via the Chat Zones.

Connecting with brands

It was discovered that aside from engaging in interpersonal communication with peers, numerous male and female respondents also use MXit to interact with brands. Tradepost appeared to be the most popular avenue for facilitating brand interaction on MXit. Numerous respondents utilise Tradepost to download MXit Skinz of their favourite celebrity brands.

A: 'I have Rihanna as my MXit Skin; I'm a big fan of hers. I really like her' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'I've also had Tinkerbell as my MXit Skin and Lil Wayne' (interview, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

A: 'I have Chelsea the Soccer Team. I like sports and Chelsea is my favourite Soccer Team' (interview, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

In marketing, the term 'brand' is typically applied to firms, products, and services, and in general, marketers accept that brands may be described in terms of perceived quality, image, and so forth (Thomson, 2006). However, celebrities can also be considered brands because they can be professionally managed and because they have additional associations and features of a brand (Thomson, 2006). A celebrity can be defined as a person who is well-known in one of a wide variety of fields such as science, politics, or entertainment (Stella & Poo, 2009). The celebrity/star system is essentially a marketing device (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). Celebrities are a way of making money and selling the films they appear in, the newspapers, magazines and TV programmes that feature stories about them, as well as the commodities that they endorse through some form of advertising (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). Similarly to all brands, the media industry values celebrities as commodities, rather than people, with a certain level of bankability (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). In marketing, we often refer to human brands (including celebrities) as 'personal brands' (Thomson, 2006). Entertainment celebrity brands resonated amongst male and female respondents as popular choices for MXit Skinz.

Aside from entertainment celebrities, other popular choices of Skinz amongst respondents in this study ranged from famous male-dominated football and rugby teams/brands (Manchester United, the Stormers), to clothing brands, (Roxy, Nike and Adidas). A MXit Skin appears to operate in a similar manner to the way in which celebrity posters operate in the offline worlds of adolescents. Interacting with popular media, which of course includes many celebrities, has been posited as another one of the many ways in which many adolescents construct their identities (Erikson, 1968; Engle & Kasser, 2005). Similarly to how the bedroom has been documented as a domain for adolescents to author a 'space', express themselves and stare unhindered and unembarrassed at posters of male and female celebrities, MXit Skinz provide these adolescents with a more mobile and private domain to observe and express their adoration for their favourite icons (Durrant et al., 2012; Odom et al., 2012; Steele & Brown, 1995; Engle & Kasser, 2005; McRobbie, 1991).

In addition, male and female respondents also use Tradepost to add brands to their contact list of 'friends' on MXit.

A: 'I have Nike. They will tell you about specials and fun days that they will have. Stuff like that' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'I have Adidas and Supersport as contacts. With the Adidas one, it's like a shop, they tell you if there's a sale of 50%' (interview, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

If one considers that one of the key characteristics of social media applications is the fact that they enable participants to develop relationships with one another—from a romantic, platonic or professional perspective, it makes perfect sense that brands are aiming to start formulating relationships with their supporters as well (Meadows-Klue, 2008). As witnessed from the above response, these adolescents are able to add brands to their MXit profile in a similar manner to the way they add their friends. Evidently, the Internet has become a popular avenue for relationship building, particularly amongst adolescents (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Social networking platforms are essentially relationship-building tools, whether that be conversing with existing friends, or developing new friendships (Meadows-Klue, 2008). The concept of building relationships is not a new phenomenon when it comes to the available literature on branding as well. One of the major themes of brand expert, David Aaker's (1996) book *Building Strong Brands*, is concerned with establishing bonds or relationships between the brand and the target market. Yet, prior to the advent of social media, this concept of relationship building was much more complicated. Prior to the arrival of social media, there was not a centralised meeting point where brands could connect with their supporters. Although there were blogs and company websites available that provided some form of brand community for consumers, MXit has created a central meeting point where the adolescent consumers interviewed for this thesis can connect with their friends and brands at the same time. Essentially, MXit has made the 'relationship building' phenomenon a much more accessible goal for marketers in South Africa.

Voicing dissatisfaction about poor brand performance

One of the respondents in this study also stated that he had used his Adidas contact on MXit to voice his dissatisfaction about the poor quality of a product he purchased.

A: 'I bought a pair of their soccer boots and it got worn out at the studs. So I just said like, you must make your studs a better quality' (interview, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

Cadbury's 'Tell it like it is' campaign

MXit's Splash Screen advertising was also used as a means for respondents to connect with their brands of choice. One of the respondents attending Buren High School admitted to entering the Cadbury's 'tell it like is' competition with her boyfriend, which was advertised via MXit's Splash Screen advertising option (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012). Due to its innovative brand strategy, the researcher deemed it appropriate to engage in an analysis of this campaign.

This campaign took place during January 2011. Cadbury's is a world-renowned chocolate manufacturer (Cadbury, n.d.). Founded in Birmingham in the 1800s, the brand has now established itself within numerous countries across the globe (Cadbury, n.d.).

According to fastmoving.co.za, this brand awareness campaign by Cadbury P.S. offered users the opportunity to win a weekly prize of an iPod shuffle or the grand prize of a branded iPhone and a Valentine's Day experience (Fastmoving, 2010). Users were required to create their own version of a Valentine's Day song, using the MXit portal, which they could then send to a friend (Fastmoving, 2010). Consumers were made aware of the campaign, through MXit media and on-air presence on Frenzy, on eTV (Fastmoving, 2010). The push on MXit was in the form of Splash Screens and broadcast messages (Fastmoving, 2010). Here users could click on the Splash Screens, and be directed directly to the Cadbury P.S Valentine's Day MXit portal (Fastmoving, 2010). The Valentine's Day song was created by choosing from a list of options of words/phrases to complete each line of a six line song (Fastmoving, 2010). Once completed, each song stood a chance of being selected as the winning song of the week (Fastmoving, 2010). The three best songs were chosen weekly by Cadbury P.S. and made into a music video that would be aired on the Frenzy Show on eTV (Fastmoving, 2010). At the end of each broadcast, viewers were encouraged to go to the MXit portal and vote for their favourite video (Fastmoving, 2010). Users could win MXit Moola by voting for their favourite finalist (Fastmoving, 2010). The campaign was geared at

creating awareness around the Cadbury P.S. brand, and at encouraging users to interact with the brand (Fastmoving, 2010).

This campaign possesses strong narrative and viral components. Let's begin by reviewing its narrative elements in more detail. A narrative branding campaign can be understood as a brand management initiative that possesses two main attributes: Firstly, it creates a story or narrative around a brand or a brand name, and secondly, it offers some means for consumers to be a part of the story or at least, contribute to it (Crystal & Herskovitz, 2010; Denning, 2006; Roner, 2009; Wolstenhome, 2008). What makes Cadbury's 'tell it like it is' concept so effective is the fact that it utilises an open ended narrative structure. In comparison to a closed narrative structure, open narratives permit more freedom and flexibility (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). They have also been known to begin and encourage conversations, instead of ending them, as they are conversational and responsive (Wolstenholme, 2008). Cadbury's 'tell it like it is' brand concept was a great example of an effective open narrative strategy that empowered its audience and generated a platform for them to create and share stories that contributed to its 'tell it like it is' narrative. Whilst Cadbury's founded the idea of 'telling it like it is' in its brand concept, participants were encouraged to be creative with regard to expressing how they would 'tell' their loved ones how they feel on Valentine's day.

The process of sharing content and encouraging consumers to vote was what assisted the campaign in spreading. Voters also stood the chance of winning an iPod shuffle each week, which was another attribute that encouraged their participation in the campaign (Fastmoving, 2010). Each voter had the opportunity to share their experiences with their friends—who their favourite contestant was, who they decided to vote for, who they thought should have won the competition and so forth. Consequently, contributing to the overall romantic 'story' and experience. As narratives are essentially driven by questions and answers, which hook the audience into the narrative (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007), this was an innovative strategy on Mxit's behalf. Each week, viewers were enticed into wondering what would happen next and which couple would walk away with the main prize. This ongoing process of asking and answering questions leaves the audience both satisfied and wanting more: the audience are transformed into

involved viewers, who are emotionally, imaginatively and intellectually engaged with the story world (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). It was this story and discussion that encouraged the viral element of the campaign.

Moreover, voters were also the active participants who held the most power throughout the campaign, as they were the ones who decided who would walk away with the prizes, as well as how the romantic Cadbury's 'tell it like it is' story would end. This campaign is just one example of many in the social media era, that illustrates how marketers are becoming ever-more reliant on fans to spread the word about their favourite brands (Ito et al., 2008:63). MXit's marketing manager Juan Du Toit summarises the nature evolution of the branding game in this quotation:

The way that consumers interact with brands is evolving rapidly. Media strategists know that mobile media campaigns deepen the engagement and relevance of brands within their target markets. One of MXit's core strengths to an advertiser is our ability to create and grow communities of loyal brand consumers and activists, which, in turn, offers an intriguing and difficult-to-ignore value proposition for the South African marketing industry ("SA mobile ad revenue R1-billion by 2012", 2011).

MXit places a strong emphasis on voting in its competitions and brand building efforts. Adolescents are encouraged to participate in these campaigns and have their voices heard by voting for their favourite contestants. They are given the opportunity to interact with their brands of choice and actively participate in the branding process (Demerling, 2010). This strategy of involving and engaging consumers in the branding process is a wise decision, for in contrast to the passive role they usually played in the branding game, the increasingly participatory environment of interactive media on the Internet facilitates active engagement (Montgomery & Chester, 2009). This is particularly the case for adolescents, whose fervent association with a variety of new media platforms makes them the most engaged of demographic groups (Montgomery & Chester, 2009).

Now that we have reviewed how adolescents in South Africa use MXit, we can move on to reviewing the next social media brand under investigation—Facebook. The next chapter of this thesis begins by reviewing the existing body of literature concerning Facebook and how this thesis contributes towards building upon this existing body of literature. The researcher then moves on to reviewing the findings obtained concerning

Facebook usage amongst the respondents.

CHAPTER 6: EXPLORING ADOLESCENTS' USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF FACEBOOK

Brand background

Facebook was originally created by Mark Zuckerberg; its current CEO, on the 4th of February 2004 (Barrigar, 2009). The company itself is privately owned and operated by Facebook Inc and is listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange (Barrigar, 2009:8). The current headquarters are in Palo Alto, California, with international headquarters (for Europe, Africa and the Middle East) in Ireland (Barrigar, 2009:8). Facebook was originally created at Harvard University, and was previously titled 'The Facebook' (Acquisti & Gross, 2006; Barrigar, 2009). In its earliest inception 'The Facebook' was a Harvard-only application, only allowing users with a Harvard.edu email address to join (Barrigar, 2009:8). In March 2004, membership expanded to include other Ivy League US colleges—Stanford, Columbia and Yale (Barrigar, 2009:8). From there, the site incorporated any university and college student in the United States (Barrigar, 2009:8). In September 2005, Facebook expanded to include high-school students (Barrigar, 2009:8). In October 2005, international school networks were added (Barrigar, 2009:8). Finally, in September 2006, the site experienced some restructuring once again, to allow anyone over the age of 13 with a valid email address to join (Barrigar, 2009:8). This was the same year that Facebook invited ten exclusive companies, including Apple, Amazon.com and Electronic Arts, to set up company profiles (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). A year later, they extended the invitation to all companies, tens of thousands of whom saw immediate benefits and logged in with their own 'Pages' (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Facebook Pages will be examined in more detail within the marketing section of this review.

In March 2010, Facebook passed Google to become the most visited website in the United States, accounting for 7.07% of all U.S. web traffic (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012 citing Dougherty, 2010). In 2012, Facebook is a vibrant, global phenomenon. According to Independent Online's (2012) official website, Facebook had a net income of \$205 million in the first three months of 2012, on revenue of \$1.06 billion. In all of 2011, it earned \$1 billion, up from \$606 million a year earlier (Independent Online, 2012). That is a significant improvement from 2007, when it posted a net loss of \$138

million and revenue of \$153 million (Independent Online, 2012).

Facebook's brand and brand strategy is strong in numerous ways: Its consistent, simple iconography, and clean, functional design is instantly recognisable and displays brand differentiation at its best (Bennett, 2012). Through an effective brand strategy, Facebook has become a distinct brand within its product class of social networking applications (Bennett, 2012). In the competitive arena of commerce, it is crucial for a company to retain a perceived competitive advantage over its opposition (Nilson, 1949; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). The company needs to be perceived as better than the competition in one or several aspects, as otherwise there are no reasons for a customer to choose it instead of the alternatives (Nilson, 1949:47). To overcome its handicap of intangibility as a service brand, Facebook has managed to hold true to its mission: 'Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected' (Facebook, n.d.). Similarly to other service brands, through its mission, Facebook defines its behavioural guidelines and these guidelines give the customer the right to complain if they are infringed (Kapferer, 2004). Facebook is constantly evolving, with the brand improving its shortcomings every couple of months. 'Timeline' is the latest foray into the Facebook arena, where a user's profile is literally transformed into a timeline, displaying all a user's actions on the site, since the year of joining (Facebook, 2012). The brand proves time and time again that it knows what its users need, to deliver a hyper-relevant experience that, so far, has been untouchable in the market (Bennett, 2012). Facebook's brand presence is literally all over the web and all over the world (Bennett, 2012). It possesses a presence unrivaled by any other social brand, with over 81% of current users residing outside of the United States and Canada (Bennett, 2012; Facebook, 2012). Facebook has also managed to overcome the numerous challenges usually associated with service brands—inseparability of production and consumption, intangibility, heterogeneity and perishability (Crane & Morrison, 2007; Gray, 2006 citing Lovelock, 1983; de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999 citing Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1985; Klaus & Maklan, 2007; Kapferer, 2004, citing Levitt, 1981; Kapferer, 2004 citing Eiglier & Langeard, 1990).

To begin one's usage of Facebook, users need to create a profile (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010). This profile is the focal point of one's social networking existence (boyd,

2007; Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010). Similarly to most social networking sites, Facebook users are encouraged to upload their personal profile photograph and share a range of personal information such as demographic details (age, sex, location, educational background etc.), tastes (interests, favorite bands, movies, etc.) (boyd, 2007).

Aside from the inclusion of personal details and photographs, there are two further components of a user's profile—friends and comments (boyd, 2007). On joining Facebook, users are encouraged to identify others with whom they wish to form friendships (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010). Once the connection is made, the relationship will be visually represented on each user's profile page, under the 'friends' section (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010). A request to become a Facebook friend requires reciprocation (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). One must be accepted before the person concerned is listed as a friend (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009).

In addition to creating profiles containing all of one's personal information, the application also enables users to write on the 'walls' of their Facebook friends and share photographs and videos (Acquisti & Gross, 2006; Janusz, 2009). The wall is a prominent space on the profile where the user or friends can write comments or add photographs, music or video clips (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). Alternatively, there is also an internal electronic mail system (similar to email) for sending private messages to Facebook friends (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). Facebook also has an instant chat function, where friends are able to exchange instant messages with one another. There is also a News Feed, which gives information to the user's friends about certain Facebook activities and gives the user information about activities of his or her Facebook friends (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009).

With over a billion photographs and over 14 million added each day, Facebook is the number one photo-sharing site on the Internet (Janusz, 2009:125). Local usage of the application is fairly widespread and South African users can add headlines from major South African news sites and access Facebook mobile using their cellular phones—a feature often used to update users' status messages (Bosch, 2009). One's Facebook status enables users to describe things of interest and express attitudes that they are

willing to share with their network of associates in short posts (Bosch, 2009). Facebook also allows local users to text message their status updates, at the cost of sending a regular SMS (Bosch, 2009).

There has been a global increase in media coverage on the Facebook phenomenon, though most academic research on the subject is based on North-American case studies. A search of major library databases and online journals yielded few results for studies on Facebook within the South African context. One was Macklin (2008) who used online social networking sites as part of the process of producing a film with South African artists and teachers and the second was Bosch (2009) who explored student use of Facebook at the University of Cape Town, as well as lecturer engagement with students via the new social media. Thirdly, Basson, Makhasi, & van Vuuren (2010), as introduced earlier in this research paper, have also made a notable contribution to the field as they investigate the rate of diffusion of new media amongst adolescents and the extent to which new media innovations have been adopted among South African adolescents. The next part of this chapter provides a comprehensive review of the available literature concerning Facebook, to give a sense of the direction the research has taken to this point. Whilst this review is long, the researcher deemed it important to provide a thorough overview concerning the application. This lengthy review helped focus and refine the research questions by articulating the knowledge gap, helped identify other researchers in the field, helped identify the distinctive contribution this thesis makes to the existing body of literature and also helped to produce a rationale and justification for this thesis (University of Western Sydney, n.d.).

Within the numerous academic articles reviewed on the application, six trends appear to emerge, with occasional overlapping: Uses and perceptions of the platform, the potential use of Facebook for academic purposes (including a brief discussion concerning Facebook and librarians), Facebook and social capital (including identity construction), concerns of Facebook and privacy as well as the potential use of Facebook for marketing purposes. Each of these will be dealt with in greater detail below.

Uses and perceptions

As mentioned earlier in this research paper, this chapter employs the Uses and Gratifications theory to understand the motivations underpinning Facebook's adoption. Similarly to the study concerning MXit, whilst other researchers (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009; Bumgarner, 2007; Joinson, 2008) have utilised this theory to examine how individuals use Facebook to connect with one another, how individuals use Facebook to connect with brands remains under-researched. The only study found to use the Uses and Gratifications theory in its examination of brands on Facebook was by Jahn & Kunz (2012). Using the Uses and Gratifications theory, customer engagement, and involvement theory, their study investigates the effect of fan Pages on the customer-brand relationship and what motivates users to participate (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). This was the first study that not only shows the effect of fan Pages on customer behaviour but also analyses the motives for participation and the crucial constructs to manage them successfully.

Whilst other studies use this theory to broaden the existing body of literature concerning Facebook and the uses and gratifications underpinning its adoption, the field of marketing is excluded from this. For example, using a grounded theory approach and a Uses and Gratifications theoretical framework, Urista, Dong & Day (2009) use focus groups to examine why young adults use MySpace and Facebook. Based on consistent themes emerging out of focus group discussions, their study proposes that individuals use these social-networking sites to experience selective, efficient, and immediate connection with others for their (mediated) interpersonal communication satisfaction and as an on-going way to seek the approval and support of other people. In a similar study, by using the Uses and Gratifications model as their theoretical framework, Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2008) recruited 116 students from an East Coast University in North America to use in their study concerning Facebook usage. Their study evaluates: (a) why people use these friend-networking sites, (b) what the characteristics are of the typical college user, and (c) what uses and gratifications are met by using these sites. Their results indicate that the vast majority of college students are using these friend-networking sites for a significant portion of their day for reasons such as making new friends and locating old friends. Additionally, both men and women of traditional college age are equally engaging in this form of online communication

with this result holding true for nearly all ethnic groups. Their results also showed that many gratifications are met by users in their usage of Facebook. Generally, the most common internal motivation discussed in the literature utilising the Uses and Gratifications theory were users' desires to keep in touch with friends.

An educational tool

There is a rather substantial body of research concerning Facebook and its connection to academia. Once again, most of the existing literature, particularly the early literature (Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Kosik, 2007; Matthews, 2006; Stutzman, 2008; Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007) surrounds North American case studies. Whilst high school education is examined, a common theme surrounding Facebook and academia focuses on how Facebook affects learning in tertiary institutions. Kosik (2007) found that some students use Facebook to contact people in their classes to get information about assignments, with some stating that they preferred it to the university education software programme because it provided quicker responses.

Through the means of surveys, Karl & Peluchette (2011) examine student reactions to friend requests from people outside their regular network of friends including professors, parents, and employers. They found that students have the most positive reactions to friend requests from their mother or boss. Possible educational uses for Facebook, recommendations on Facebook etiquette for business educators and directions for future research are discussed in their study as well. In a similar vein, through the means of surveys, Teclehaimanot & Hickman (2011) investigate how appropriate students find student-teacher interactions on Facebook. The results of their surveys indicate that students find passive behaviours more appropriate than active behaviours, with no difference depending on whether students or teachers perform the behaviours. Additionally, their study also discovered that men find student-teacher interactions on Facebook more appropriate than women.

Shiu, Fong and Lam (2010) also examine how people use Facebook for teaching and learning. More specifically, their paper studies how people could use Facebook for conducting courses as a replacement of expensive traditional electronic learning platforms.

Using theories of social capital and knowledge management, Wang et al. (2012) explore some potential educational uses of Facebook. Their paper discusses studies conducted at the University of Auckland and at Manchester Metropolitan University on how their students use Facebook and its impact on their social and academic lives. Their study also includes guidelines for the educational use of Facebook by tutors in a university environment.

Through conducting surveys with 300 undergraduate students at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin (2010) investigate if university students consider Facebook as a useful and meaningful learning environment that could support, enhance and/or strengthen their learning of the English language. It was found that the students believed Facebook could be utilised as an online environment to facilitate the learning of English. In addition, to determine how likely higher education faculty are to use Facebook for either personal or educational purposes, Roblyer et al. (2010) conducted surveys amongst members of the higher education faculty and students at a mid-sized southern university. A comparison of faculty and student responses indicate that students are much more likely than faculty to use Facebook and are significantly more open to the possibility of using Facebook and similar technologies to support classroom work.

Some teachers and lecturers have gone so far as to integrate Facebook into their teaching environments. The company Lookabee has also launched a platform for teachers to create their own Facebook applications to keep in touch with students (Nicole, 2007). Each Facebook application will be custom made for each teacher, and will allow them to distribute documents such as homework assignments or course notes for later downloading by students (Nicole, 2007). The same trend appears to be occurring within tertiary institutions as well. According to Barnes, Marateo & Ferris (2007), a professor at the University of Pennsylvania reportedly uses Facebook to teach concepts of social networking and to encourage critical thinking amongst his students. Duboff (2007) reports on a qualitative study at Yale, where faculty members reflected that their posts on Facebook helped break down barriers between themselves and students, as it indicated that they were apart of the same academic community. Bugeja's (2006) study partly agrees with the benefits of social networking in academia, however

his research also warns of the dangers of Facebook, arguing that it can be both a learning device and a distraction in the classroom.

By using data from a survey and focus group, Chu & Meulemans (2008) provide insight into how students are using MySpace and Facebook. Their findings are discussed to consider appropriate implementations of MySpace/Facebook in a university library setting, specifically on the pedagogical and practical feasibility of integrating social software in library instruction, reference, and outreach. Their study also aims to answer the following questions: How are college students using and communicating with online social networking? How can these technologies be utilised by libraries and librarians?

This brings us to the next trend in the literature concerning Facebook—how the application is used within libraries and how it is used by librarians. Koerwer (2007) and Miller and Jensen (2007) offer a few practical tips to help librarians' groups move beyond just a few students requesting books or asking reference questions. These include creating events for book groups or exhibit openings, showing profiles at library instructional sessions, 'friending' student library assistants, using the news feed to update the library's status or blog, or photograph new books.

Jacobson (2011) contributes to this field as well, as his study examines reported versus actual use of Facebook in libraries to identify discrepancies between intended goals and actual use. In their study, Anunobi & Ogbonna (2012) conduct a survey, with the focus to determine the awareness and use of Web 2.0 tools by librarians in Anambra state in Nigeria. Their result shows a low awareness and use of Web 2.0 tools by the librarians.

Facebook and social capital

Since Facebook's inception, numerous studies have explored its relationship to positive outcomes such as social capital (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2006; Kosik 2007; Hamatake, Lifson & Navlakha. 2005; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). More recent studies are broadening understanding in this regard as well. Using data from a random web survey of college students across Texas, Valenzuela, Park & Kee (2009) examine if Facebook is related to attitudes and behaviours that enhance individual's social capital. Their study found positive relationships between intensity of Facebook use and

students' life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement and political participation. In addition, Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2010) assess whether Facebook users have different 'connection strategies,' a term which describes a suit of Facebook-related relational communication activities, and explores the relationship between these connection strategies and social capital. Their findings reveal that only social information-seeking behaviours contribute to perceptions of social capital and that connection strategies which focus on strangers or close friends do not. They also find that reporting more 'actual' friends on the site is predictive of social capital, but only to a point.

Most recently, Vitak, Ellison & Steinfield (2011) look at the relationship between Facebook use, offline behaviours, and social provisions, a broad-based measure of social support that taps into a dimension of bonding. Similarly, Burke, Kraut & Marlow (2011) examine how Facebook affects social capital depending upon: (1) types of site activities, contrasting one-on-one communication, broadcasts to wider audiences, and passive consumption of social news, and (2) individual differences among users, including social communication skills and self-esteem. Their findings reveal that receiving messages from friends is associated with increases in bridging social capital, but that other uses are not. Yoder & Stutzman (2011) explore the relationship between the use of particular elements of Facebook and social capital. The goal in their research paper is to identify where, in the interface, perceived social capital is most effectively produced and transmitted. Their study finds that public, person-to-person communication is positively associated with perceived social capital. Through the use of a structural equation model, they provide in-depth exploration of the relationship between the interface elements and the outcome, perceived social capital.

As previously mentioned, identity presentation and construction on Facebook is another popular research topic within the body of academic literature (boyd, 2007; boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kelley, 2007; Frago, 2006; Farnham & Churchill 2011). Online social networking sites, like Facebook, have revealed an entirely new method of self-presentation (Mehdizadeh, 2010). This networking tool provides a new site of analysis to examine personality and identity (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Identity presentation and construction on Facebook centres on the user profile, which acts as a platform for users

to make public or semi-public presentations of themselves (Wilson, Gosling & Graham 2012). Each profile page is unique to the user and allows its user to literally 'type oneself into being' (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010 citing Sunden, 2003; Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012). Naturally, interactions with other users play an important role in shaping identity presentation on the application as well (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012). Studying how users choose to portray themselves in their profile presents a unique opportunity for social scientists to learn more about identity presentation in a virtual environment (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012).

The potential for profile authors to manipulate their profile raises a range of important questions regarding identity expression and construction (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012). Numerous papers have attempted to answer these questions (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012). Bouvier (2012) focuses on how undergraduate students in Cardiff, Wales, say they express identity on their profiles. The paper is based on an analysis of responses from a questionnaire and interviews with 100 students from Media and Communication degrees at the University of Glamorgan. The paper discusses a range of identity categories, some that are based around a biological model of national identity, while others focus on belonging to a territory, others on national cultural activities and others link to lifestyle identity. Zhang, Jiang & Carroll (2010) investigate dynamic aspects of social identity, grounded in patterns of social interaction in Facebook community life, drawing on social science research on identity theory and social identity theory. The authors also examine the tensions experienced by people between assimilation and differentiation with respect to group identities and role identities (Zhang, Jiang & Carroll, 2010). This study builds upon this existing body of literature by assessing how the adolescents interviewed for this thesis present themselves on Facebook. Do these adolescents document various aspects of their 'real' identity on Facebook or do they create virtual identities that do not reflect their identities in the offline world? This will be discussed within the research findings of this chapter.

Numerous studies examine the topic of narcissism in relation to identity as well. Through the means of self-reports gathered from 100 Facebook users at York University, Mehdizadeh (2010) examines how narcissism and self-esteem are manifested on the application. Participant web pages were also coded based on self-

promotional content features. Correlation analyses revealed that individuals higher in narcissism and lower in self-esteem were related to greater online activity as well as some self-promotional content (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Gender differences were also found to influence the type of self-promotional content presented by individual Facebook users. Carpenter (2012) conducts a survey that measures self-promoting Facebook behaviours (e.g. posting status updates and photos of oneself, updating profile information) and several anti-social behaviours (e.g. seeking social support more than one provides it, getting angry when people do not comment on one's status updates, retaliating against negative comments). The grandiose exhibitionism subscale of the narcissistic personality inventory was hypothesised to predict the self-promoting behaviours. In addition, the entitlement/exploitativeness subscale was hypothesised to predict the anti-social behaviours. Results were largely consistent with the hypothesis for the self-promoting behaviours but mixed concerning the anti-social behaviours.

Privacy concerns

Another one of the most prominent themes found in the academic literature concerning Facebook is the issue regarding levels of privacy permitted on the application (Jones & Soltren, 2005; Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Nosko, Wood & Molema, 2010; Christofides, Muise & Desmarais, 2009; Liu et al., 2011). This thesis contributes towards this growing body of literature by examining what the adolescents interviewed for this thesis deem to be appropriate for 'private' or 'public' viewing. The terms 'public' and 'private' are notorious for their ambiguity, which is reflected in both their everyday use and in the academic literature (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). With the advent of social media, it has been recognised that there are different ways of understanding each concept (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). In recent years, Facebook has faced a significant level of denigration and vilification within the international press due to its transparent privacy settings (Finkle, 2010; Raywood, 2009). The last revision of their privacy policy has enabled users to practically hide all the personal information displayed on their profile from the outside world, except for their profile picture, cover photo, gender and name (Facebook, 2012).

Privacy controls are now located right next to each piece of information (photo, status, link) a user chooses to share. In fact, users can even use the 'audience selector' icon to

specifically choose friends from their 'friends' list' who can see what they are sharing (Facebook, 2012). Users can also use the tool to change who they are sharing with after they post (Facebook, 2012)

However, despite these improvements to its privacy settings, one needs to remember that Facebook's privacy system will never be entirely flawless— there are minor privacy issues that are difficult to avoid. Although their privacy policy enables a user to restrict their own privacy settings, they are not able to control the privacy settings of their friends. For example: If one user (for the purpose of understanding, let's refer to this user as Bill) posts a photograph of another user (Cathy), the privacy settings of this photograph will be subjected to Bill's privacy settings, not Cathy's. Evidently, there are innate risks in sharing information on the online forum, regardless of the precautions a user may take. Due to the issues of increased transparency and sharing, no security measures on the application will ever be impenetrable. Facebook actually acknowledges this in its privacy policy (Facebook, 2011). The brand acknowledges that it cannot control the actions of other users with whom a user shares their information, they cannot guarantee that only authorised persons will view one's information and they cannot ensure that the information their users share on the platform will not become publicly available (Facebook, 2011).

In light of the brand's transparency, numerous companies have started utilising Facebook as a tool to assess job applicants (Solove, 2007; Bosch, 2009; Lehmann, 2009). Recruiters at Microsoft admit to searching the Internet for anything they can find out about people they are considering for positions, whilst several North American universities have begun to use Facebook to recruit or reject candidates applications as well (Torgeson, 2006; Solove, 2007). In their research article, Smith & Kidder (2010), encourage organisations to develop guidelines regarding the use of social networking sites in the application process, based on numerous practical, legal, and ethical issues. Generally, one cannot help but marvel at the nature, amount, and detail of the personal information some users provide on Facebook (Acquisti & Gross, 2006:2). Despite the numerous steps Facebook has taken to try and improve its privacy glitches, many people fail to edit their privacy settings sufficiently. Moreover, many people fail to care about who can observe their profile. There are still users who continue to utilise

Facebook's 'public' privacy setting, which enables a user's profile to be completely visible to the entire Internet (and searchable on Google) (Facebook, 2012). These are known as 'open' profiles (Facebook, 2012). Facebook's 'public' setting makes a profile visible to people who are not on a user's friend's list on Facebook and people who are not in their school or work networks (Facebook, 2012). Studies reveal that users provide a great deal of information, from their date of birth, cell phone number and in some cases, their home address (Acquisti & Gross, 2006:2). Upon engaging in an exploratory look at University of Cape Town students' profiles in South Africa, Bosch (2009) discovered that most of the students had limited their privacy settings, allowing the casual surfer to view their profile pages, wall postings, photographs, and other personal information, which she found occasionally even went as far as to include cell phone numbers or home addresses. This trend appears to be common within North American studies as well. Kosik's (2007) study of Facebook users at Pennsylvania State University found that students showed few reservations regarding what they posted online, at times expressing a desire for less privacy. By conducting a pilot survey of Carnegie Mellon University Facebook users, Govani & Pashley (2006) discovered that despite the overwhelming majority of survey participants knowing that they are able to limit who views their personal information, participants did not take the initiative to protect their information. A study conducted by Butler, McCann and Thomas (2011) revealed similar results, as their study explored the relationship between changing privacy policies on Facebook and its users awareness of the personal privacy setting that they have in place. According to Acquisti & Gross (2006) changing cultural trends, familiarity and confidence in digital technologies, lack of exposure or memory of severe misuses of personal data by others may all play a role in this unprecedented phenomenon of information revelation.

Marketing capabilities

There has also been an increase in literature concerning Facebook and its marketing capabilities—the avenue of primary interest within this thesis. This research has not solely been of an academic nature. There are numerous popular articles and books revolving around the concept of how Facebook can help businesses improve their visibility in the marketplace. For example: *Facebook Marketing: An hour a day* by Treadaway and Smith (2010) as well as *Facebook Marketing for Dummies* by Dunay &

Krueger (2011).

In the field of academic research, Shih's (2009) article reviews how businesses can use social web sites, like Facebook, to build sales, improve public relations, and become more efficient. Coon's (2010) dissertation provides interesting insight into the field as well, as the research paper reviews a variety of successful case studies of businesses using Facebook and YouTube. Strand (2011) also makes a significant contribution to this body of literature, as his article reviews the numerous legal challenges businesses may face in their marketing efforts on Facebook.

There are two main ways of marketing brands on Facebook; unpaid methods and paid methods (Facebook, 2012). Unpaid methods involve the usage of Pages and Groups. Facebook Pages operate in a similar manner to online brand communities (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Brand communities, defined as 'specialised non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand,' are an effective, cheaper means for brands to connect with their supporters (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001:412). According to Greenstein (n.d.) *Facebook* created 'Pages' when they noticed that people were trying to connect with brands and famous artists in ways that worked ineffectively on the site. Thus, they created 'Pages' where a variety of businesses, organisations and brands could share their stories and connect with users, in a branded online community (Greenstein, n.d.).

A Facebook fan Page is a representation of a business, public person, band, artist, company or organisation on Facebook and one simply needs to click the 'like' icon to become a follower (Technology tutorials, 2011). However, not only can one connect with their favourite artists and businesses via this function, Facebook users can also show their friends what they care about and recommend what they care about by adding Pages to their personal profile (Greenstein, n.d.). Consequently, when a Facebook user becomes a fan of a brand, a band, a movie, or a person, that information is posted on their wall and their friends might see it and 'like' it as well (Greenstein, n.d.). In addition, Facebook users can also view which Pages their friends are fans of via the 'Info' tab on their profile (Greenstein, n.d.).

Academic literature concerning Facebook Pages is steadily increasing. This study contributes towards this growing body of literature by examining how and why the adolescents interviewed for this thesis use Facebook Pages. This is an avenue of research that has not been explored within the South African media studies arena. Using a dataset of 262,985 Facebook Pages and their associated fans, Sun et al. (2009) provide an empirical investigation of diffusion through Facebook. Their examination of Facebook Pages shows that large-scale diffusion networks play a significant role in the spread of Pages through Facebook's social network. In addition, through an exploratory content analysis, Peruta, Ryan & Acquavella (2012) look at 40 of the top brands listed on Interbrand's (2011) 100 Best Global Brands of 2011 and compare the brands' web sites and Facebook Pages. The study documents that while these brands are adding content to their Facebook; they are not utilising or leveraging their brand identity to interact with consumers on these sites.

In their research paper, Cvijikj & Michahelles (2011) analyse the content shared on Facebook in terms of topics, categories and shared sentiment for the domain of a sponsored Facebook brand Page. Their results indicate that product, sales and brand are the three most discussed topics, while requests and suggestions, expressing affect and sharing are the most common intentions for participation.

Chi (2011) explores the influence of user motivation to engage in online social networking on responses to social media marketing. The study addresses two aspects of user motivation—need for online social capital and psychological well-being, and two types of social media marketing—interactive digital advertising and virtual brand community. Facebook provides the target social networking site. A survey among 502 college-aged Facebook users in Taiwan reveals that these users responded to Facebook advertising and virtual brand communities differently. In addition, the findings also illustrate that users' motivation for online social networking had varying effects on their social media marketing responses.

Consumer engagement also appears to be a popular theme within the marketing literature concerning Facebook Pages as well. Through utilising an online survey of members of a gaming Facebook brand community, resulting in 276 usable responses

from gaming customers, Gummerus et al. (2012) study the effect of customer engagement behaviours on perceived relationship benefits and relationship outcomes. The paper's findings provide suggestions regarding how firms can utilise Facebook communities to enhance satisfaction and loyalty by offering the right kinds of relationship benefits. In a similar vein, Cheung, Zheng & Lee (2012) attempt to propose a research model that explains how consumer engagement behaviours in brand communities of social networking sites affect brand loyalty. Their research model is empirically tested with 201 Facebook users and illustrates the importance of consumer engagement behaviours in social networking sites in building brand loyalty.

As previously mentioned, Facebook Groups are another unpaid portal for brands to connect with their clientele (Technology tutorials, 2011). In comparison to Facebook's Pages function, a Group is usually destined for a smaller number of people who have a common interest (Technology tutorials, 2011). Unlike the Page's function, which simply requires the click of the 'like' button, group membership requires approval from the individual who created the group (Technology tutorials, 2011). In terms of publicity, one of the key differences is that Pages are indexed by search engines such as Google, whereas Groups are not (Technology tutorials, 2011). Brands can rely on either the Pages or Group function on Facebook to gain publicity; it really depends on what the brand wants to portray or get out their interaction with members, fans or followers (Technology tutorials, 2011). Xia (2009) uses qualitative research methodology to discover whether Facebook Groups are conducive for library marketing in the United States.

Due to the nature of its technology, Facebook Pages and Groups both possess great potential to stimulate word-of-mouth communication, which has been well-documented within the literature concerning the application (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). For years, companies have purposefully sought out the most influential young connectors and opinion leaders within their social groups and encouraged them to promote brands through word-of-mouth amongst their friends (Cha et al., 2010; Montgomery & Chester, 2009). The evolution of digital media and word-of-mouth marketing has been reported as an effective means to enable this (Chester & Montgomery, 2009:21). According to Kapferer (2004) and Rogers (2003), everyone belongs to a network, a group, or a tribe,

and building a strong, influential brand requires getting closer to these groups or particular people in these groups, whose behaviour and ideas serve as a model to others. Companies need to try and persuade these influencers who are also referred to as opinion leaders, into liking their brand (Kapferer, 2004; Rogers, 2003). This holds phenomenal marketing potential, for if a particular influential person had to join a brand's Facebook Page, this could encourage their entire network of Facebook 'friends' to do so as well. This influence of the power of word-of-mouth on consumer decision-making is well-established in academic literature (Chan & Ngai, 2011 citing Steffes and Burgee, 2009). Moreover, because of its ability to encourage word-of-mouth amongst consumers, Facebook's Pages function could yield extraordinary results with regard to raising brand awareness as well—a crucial constituent in building brand equity (Aaker, 1996).

On the other hand, whilst Pages and their ability to stimulate positive word-of-mouth have the potential to assist brands in building strong, positive images, they also have the potential to tarnish brand names; due to the technology's public nature (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). In other words, they also have the potential to stimulate negative word-of-mouth (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Once a user becomes a 'fan' of a brand's Facebook page, they have the ability to publish comments on the brand's wall. Consumers can utilise this function to praise the brand about its positive quality and/or service, or consumers can utilise this wall to share their displeasure regarding the brand's poor quality or poor service (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). This study contributes towards this avenue of literature by examining if the adolescents interviewed for this thesis are using Facebook to praise brands or criticise brands? This has also not been investigated within the media studies arena in South Africa.

The danger of brands receiving criticism on this platform lies in the public nature of the Facebook Page (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). For example: If a particular brand has one million fans and a dissatisfied consumer publishes a negative comment on the brand's Facebook Page, all of the brand's fans have the ability to read the negative commentary (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Moreover, as mentioned in Facebook's introduction earlier in this research paper, Facebook also possesses micro

blogging capabilities, which grants users the opportunity to publish a 'status' message that is broadcasted via the Internet to their network of associates (Bosch, 2009). Fans can utilise Facebook's micro blogging capabilities to 'tag' particular brands in their status and distribute this status to their entire network of associates. If a particular brand is tagged in a status, not only will that status be distributed amongst the user's network of associates, the status will also appear on the wall of the particular brand's Page; once again, enabling all other fans to see (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012).

Celebrity Pages

Academic research is also beginning to investigate the nature of celebrity interaction on Facebook Pages. Lueck (2012) examines the social-media-driven convention of advertising, and seeks to analyse the type of communication that occurs between celebrity endorsers and audiences within social media. A content analysis including posts and responses from April and May 2011 is used to analyse the type of advertising messages and celebrity/audience interaction. The results imply that advertisers should utilise Parasocial Interaction to conduct successful advertising on social media platforms. This study contributes towards this existing body of literature by examining how South African adolescents connect with celebrity brands on Facebook. Are the adolescents interviewed for this thesis interested in connecting with entertainment celebrities, politicians or sporting icons on Facebook? Do these adolescents try to interact with celebrities on Facebook or is their connection with these celebrities limited to clicking the 'like' icon of their fan Pages? These questions will be addressed within the research findings of this chapter.

Political Pages

Pages of this nature also possess the potential to assist politicians in building their personal brands and political party brands as well. Similarly to how celebrities are being encouraged to interact with their fans via social media platforms, similar strategies are being encouraged within the political arena as well (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009). This study contributes towards this existing body of literature by reviewing if the adolescents interviewed for this thesis have any interest in connecting with political brands on Facebook. Some academics have cautioned against viewing political parties and politicians as brands, for they suggest this exaggerates marketing's capabilities in

the area whilst simplifying and generalising the uniqueness of politics (Smith, 2001). However, there are numerous academics who disagree, as they believe that there are several reasons why politicians and political parties can be, and should be viewed as brands; for similarly to celebrities, they also possess additional associations and features of brands (Thomson, 2006; Smith, 2001). For example, in order to be successful, brands must be perceived as genuine, trustworthy and value-based, requiring similarity between the core values of the product or company and the message it propagates (Needham, 2006). Similarly, prosperous parties must bind their outer presentational tactics to a set of core principles, ethics and values, if they are to gain and maintain voter support (Needham, 2006). Furthermore, brands provide comfort by promising standardisation and replicability, creating trust between producer and consumer, similarly to the way that parties emphasise harmony and regularity in order to build up voter trust (Needham, 2006). It is for these reasons, amongst many others, that brand building and image development have been forwarded as a vital undertaking in the strategic management of political parties (Smith, 2001 citing Kavanagh, 1995; Smith, 2001 citing Kotler & Kotler, 1999; Smith, 2001 citing Schweiger & Adami, 1999).

It would be beneficial to examine an example from the United States of America to gain a better understanding of the potential Facebook holds in this regard. Barack Hussein Obama, the 44th President of the United States is a prime example of a political figure who managed to build a strong personal brand and a strong base of supporters by utilising social media (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009). Obama's campaign strategy is regarded as a turning point in the history of political marketing and has been praised for its impressive ability to reach, inspire, and most importantly, engage supporters (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415; Heinderyckx, 2010). As reviewed earlier in this thesis, in the digital era, being able to engage supporters is an integral part of building a strong brand (Marsland, 2007). The high level of public involvement and engagement in his campaign was evident in the record number of people who volunteered, donated money, and most importantly, turned out to vote for the brand that is 'Barack Obama' (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415). While there are a variety of factors that contributed towards Obama's win, one of the defining features of his campaign was his innovative use of the Internet and other digital media (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415; Heinderyckx,

2010). Although Obama utilised a variety of avenues to build support for his campaign, for the purpose of this thesis; we will only focus on the two that are most relevant to this discussion—social networking sites and mobile phones (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415). Let's begin by examining the former—social networking sites. Obama utilised Facebook, Twitter and MySpace to gain support for his campaign (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415). By November 2008, Obama had accrued 2,379,102 friends on Facebook and 833,161 on MySpace, as well as 112,474 followers on Twitter (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415). Obama also recruited 24-year-old Chris Hughes, co-founder of Facebook, to help develop the technological aspects of his campaign (Small, 2008).

Obama also had numerous supporters outside of his official campaign, who were willing to build support for him through new media tools (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009). Once again, this proves Ito et al.'s (2008) argument to be correct—that in the digital era, if fans are kept satisfied, they can serve as brand evangelists, essential partners in negotiating a brand's success in the long run (Ito et al., 2008:63). A number of unofficial Facebook Groups were created in support of Obama (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009). In 2006, an unofficial Facebook group entitled 'Students for Barack Obama' was started by a Bowdoin college student (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009 citing Vargas 2008). The Obama campaign incorporated this and made it an official part of the campaign (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009 citing Vargas 2008). In total, there were over 500 unofficial Facebook Groups created in support of Obama (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009). This is a prime example demonstrating the shift in power that exists in the branding hierarchy due to the rise of numerous digital innovations of the last decade (Meadows-Klue, 2008; Ito et al., 2008). Consumers hold the power in the branding hierarchy, as they are able to spread positive or negative feedback about brands across their plethora of social networks (Meadows-Klue, 2008; Ito et al., 2008). Obama embraced the fact that his supporters were spreading positive news about the 'Obama' brand within their social networks and he rewarded them for their loyalty.

As previously mentioned, Obama also utilised mobile applications to gain support (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415). The campaign's mobile applications were launched in June 2007 and were upgraded in August of 2008 with the launch of Obama mobile, a downloadable application for BlackBerry Smartphones and iPhones (Abroms &

Lefebvre, 2009:415). With the use of geodemographic marketing, text messages were targeted to users depending on their location and characteristics (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415). Text messages sent to campaign supporters included regular updates on the campaign, as well as requests for involvement (5 to 20 messages per month were sent to the million mobile phone numbers which were registered through the campaign (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415; Heinderyckx, 2010). This was an intelligent Guerrilla strategy on Obama's behalf, as this flow of messages reinforced a sense of belonging to a sort of an elite 'inner circle' among participants (Heinderyckx, 2010). Essentially, the goal of Guerrilla marketing is to connect with consumers in unique and cost-effective ways, to establish a personal relationship and a superior level of impact (Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006:285). If it works, the encounter gets talked about by word-of-mouth (Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006:285). Contrary to traditional marketing strategies, Guerrilla marketing develops its campaigns according to the science of psychology and human nature (Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006:285). This is precisely what Obama's campaign achieved, as it utilised a psychological strategy to feed the ego of participants—creating the feeling of being part of a special group that enjoyed privileged channels of communication with important campaign organisers and even occasionally with Obama himself (Heinderyckx, 2010). Obama's Vice Presidential pick was announced at 3am by text message to about 2.9 million subscribers (Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009:415).

The media strategy mobilised for the Obama campaign was not restricted to the Internet: mobile phones (and particularly text messaging), landline phones (still predominantly used for calling prospective voters), traditional websites, video-sharing websites and social networks were all used to strengthen the Obama brand (Heinderyckx, 2010). Also, through new media and its viral nature, people were more likely to learn about the Obama campaign from interpersonal channels, like friends and family. According to Rogers (2003) interpersonal channels, particularly friends and family members, those who we know and trust, are more influential in shaping beliefs, attitudes and behaviour (Rogers, 2003; Abroms & Lefebvre, 2009 citing Heaney & Israel, 2002). Obama's campaign proved this to be true yet again.

Obama's success in building his personal brand is phenomenal and South African politicians can certainly learn from his campaign in building their political brands; particularly regarding Obama's usage of the mobile phone and South Africa's high mobile phone penetration rates (Goldstuck, 2011).

As previously mentioned, Facebook Pages enable their 'fans' to place their favourite and least favourite brands under scrutiny (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). This argument can be linked to Benkler's (2006) theory of the Internet becoming known as the networked public sphere. Benkler (2006) modelled this idea according to German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas's theoretical paradigm of the public sphere in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, originally written in 1962. Although the concept of the public sphere has its historical roots in ancient Greece, Habermas has really broadened academic understanding in the field (Iosifidis, 2011 citing Dewey 1954). Habermas argues that during eighteenth century England there was an emergence of a new realm of social life, or public sphere, which mediated between society and state (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox, 1964; Calhoun, 1992). It was a realm of social life in which the public structured itself as the conveyer of public opinion (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox, 1964; Calhoun, 1992:6). Concurrently, with the growth of urban culture, where there was the development of a new arena of public life, which included theatres, museums, opera houses, coffee houses and so forth, there was also the growth of a new infrastructure for social communication which included the press, publishing houses and libraries, together with improved literacy and more efficient transportation (Calhoun, 1992:6). These meeting platforms allowed for the discussion and debating of issues, which branched out from relatively small groups into affairs of the state and of politics (Calhoun, 1992). These platforms also led to increased social intercourse (Calhoun, 1992:6). In light of Habermas's theory, Benkler (2006:21) proposes that the Internet has become a novel and unique version of this concept of the public sphere.

Evidently, Facebook, a social networking platform that requires the Internet to function, also possesses the potential to operate as a public sphere (Iosifidis, 2011). Similarly to Habermas's (1964) ideal of a public sphere, where citizens are given a space to behave as a public body and confer in an unrestricted fashion, with the guarantee of freedom of

assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions about matters of general interest, Facebook holds similar potential (Finlayson, 2005; Benkler, 2006; Iosifidis, 2011). Upon becoming a fan of a particular political party brand on Facebook, users have the opportunity to hold politicians accountable for their actions, engage in rational-critical debate, increase public knowledge and voice their political concerns and frustrations on a public platform—important building blocks in the progress of democracy (Haider, 2009; South African Government Online, n.d; Benkler, 2006; Robertson, Vatrappu & Medina, 2009; Iosifidis, 2011). All of these factors have the potential to reap astounding benefits for the progress of South Africa’s democracy and deserve further investigation (Robertson, Vatrappu & Medina, 2009; South African Government Online, n.d). Essentially, it is informed citizens, making informed decisions that are at the cornerstone of any democratic society (Haider, 2009).

Although Obama’s political campaign is a strong example portraying the power of building a political brand, political utilisation of social media platforms may not work within a South African context. As democracy is inclusive and participatory rather than exclusive and segmented, the number of South Africans who are excluded from the online discussion due to socio-economic inequalities and the cost of Internet-enabled mobile phones remains a pertinent issue (Fuchs & Horak, 2008; Jiyane & Mostert, 2010). Thus, whilst Facebook grants users the opportunity to place political brands under scrutiny and engage in debate, one has to consider how many individuals will be excluded from this debate, due to the limitations imposed by the digital divide (Fuchs & Horak, 2008; Schmid, 2009). Moreover, access is not the only issue in this regard, there also needs to be an improvement in the area of computer literacy and education, to develop skills so that people can use the Internet (Haider, 2009; Goldstuck, 2010). Research illustrates, that whilst many South Africans have phones that possess the ability to connect to applications like email, instant messaging, and the ability to browse the Internet; many have no idea how to use them (Goldstuck, 2010). In practice, the participation within the public sphere during 18th century England was also limited, as it also favoured certain groups (Finlayson, 2005). Participation during this period was restricted to a small group of privileged men (Finlayson, 2005). In reality, women, the majority of the poor and uneducated individuals were excluded from participation in the public sphere (Finlayson, 2005). This is why Habermas’s (1989) ideal of a public

sphere is criticised as a space that has always favoured a wealthier class—the Bourgeois (Finlayson, 2005). Similarly to how the concept of the public sphere remained an ideal and ideology back then (Finlayson, 2005), similar restrictions appear to be affecting the Internet in operating as a public sphere in South Africa today.

Lastly, another factor that may hinder South Africans from interacting with political brands on Facebook is due to the various levels of Internet speed on mobile phones. Different Internet connections and different levels of Internet speed will grant users different online experiences. One needs to investigate if users are connecting to the Internet on their mobile devices via GPRS, WAP, EDGE, or 3G. This will play a significant role in influencing the way that South African consumers interact with political brands on social media platforms and deserves further exploration.

Paid advertising options on Facebook

The third way Facebook enables brands to reach their fans is via their paid advertising function. This is a severely under-researched area within the existing literature. This thesis provides a significant contribution to the literature by reviewing how the adolescents interviewed for this thesis feel about Facebook advertising. Moreover, it also investigates if these adolescents use Facebook's advertising options to connect with brands. Facebook advertisements are a new avenue for cost-per-click (CPC) and cost-per-impression (CPI) advertisements. The overall concept of Facebook advertisements is the same as other forms of CPC and CPI advertising; one is effectively paying adverts to be displayed to a very diverse database of potential customers (Facebook, n.d.). Similarly to Mxit's advertising that we reviewed earlier in this research paper, Facebook advertises target clientele based on demographic information, such as age, shared interests, area and so forth (Facebook, n.d.). However, since the brand's inception, paid advertising was only available for Facebook users who accessed the site via their personal computers (Indvik, 2012). It was only in March 2012 that Facebook launched its first means of paid advertising to target those who access the brand via their mobile phone (Indvik, 2012). These are called Sponsored Stories (Facebook, n.d.). According to Facebook's official website, a user (for understanding, let's refer to the user as a woman named Sarah) likes a brand's Facebook Page, or a post on a brand's Page, interacts with a brand's app, or checks-in to one of a brand's locations (Facebook, n.d.). A story about

this activity can appear in the news feeds of Sarah's friends, but they may or may not see it (Facebook, n.d.). Sponsored Stories increase the visibility of these stories by showing them more prominently; both on the right-hand side of Facebook and in news feed itself (mobile and desktop) (Facebook, n.d.).

There are several types of sponsored stories, which include: A Page Like, Page Post, Page Post Like, App Used/Game Played, App Shared, Check-in, and Domain stories (Facebook, n.d.). Let's review each of these in greater detail. A Page like occurs when a user likes a brand's Page directly from Facebook or from the Like Box on a brand's website at any point in time (Facebook, n.d.). The brand in question can use the Page Like Story to make sure the user's friends know about this action (Facebook, n.d.).

A Page post occurs when a brand publishes a post from their Facebook Page to their fans (Facebook, n.d.). The brand can use the Page Post Story to make sure that more of its fans see its most recent Page post (Facebook, n.d.).

Thirdly, the Page Post Like story occurs when one of a brand's fans likes one of the brand's Page posts in the last seven days (Facebook, n.d.). The brand can use the Page Post Like Story to make sure the user's friends know about this action (Facebook, n.d.).

The App used/game played story occurs when someone uses a brand's App or played a brand's Game at least twice or for at least 10 minutes in the last month (Facebook, n.d.). A brand can use the App Used and Game Played Story to make sure the user's friends know about this action (Facebook, n.d.). In addition, an App Share story occurs when a user shared a story from a brand's App in the last seven days (Facebook, n.d.). A brand can use the App Share Story to make sure the user's friends know about this action (Facebook, 2011).

A Check-in story occurs when a user checked in and/or claimed a deal at one of a brand's claimed Places in the last seven days using Facebook Places (Facebook, 2011). The brand can use the Check-in Story to make sure his friends know about this action (Facebook, 2011).

Lastly, a domain story occurs when a user liked a piece of content on a brand's website using the Like button, shared a piece of content from a brand's website using the Share button, or pasted a link to a brand's website in their status update in the last seven days (Facebook, n.d.). The brand can use the Domain Story to make sure the user's friends know about this action (Facebook, 2011).

One of the factors that certainly give MXit an advantage within the South African market is the fact that its ability to leverage other brands is an attribute that has been compatible for mobile phone users since its inception. Facebook has cottoned on to the mobile marketing game rather late. Now that we have reviewed the existing body of literature concerning Facebook and how this thesis contributes towards this existing body of literature, we can examine the findings gathered from the respondents.

University of Cape Town

FINDINGS: MOTIVATIONS FOR FACEBOOK USAGE AND NON-USAGE

The following section seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Why do some adolescents not use Facebook?
- 2) For what purposes do the sample of users attending Buren High School, Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School in Cape Town, South Africa use Facebook?
- 3) What benefits do these users obtain from their use of Facebook?

Responses from non-users

According to the male and female non-users within this study, the primary motivation behind them not utilising Facebook as a means of communication was because their parents had forbidden it. Certain respondents stated that their parents perceived Facebook to be a dangerous application. The male and female respondents interviewed for this thesis stated that their parents felt that Facebook's transparency and openness was not 'safe' for children. Respondents attending Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School expressed this viewpoint. According to the respondents attending Buren High School, their parents expressed no concern with regard to their usage of social media platforms.

As witnessed within this chapter's literature review, this concern does not only exist within South Africa. Facebook's ever-changing privacy settings has aroused concerns from parents as well as numerous academics (Jones & Soltren, 2005; Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Nosko, Wood & Molema, 2010; Christofides, Muise & Desmarais, 2009; Liu et al., 2011). There are also numerous websites such as 'parentingteens.about.com' and 'avoidfacebook.com' that dedicate articles to advising parents about querying, observing and preventing their children's' Facebook usage. 'Avoidfacebook.com' facilitates online discussions with forums entitled 'mothers against Facebook,' and 'Facebook is ruining young lives.' Each of the discussion forums on this website surrounds alerting parents about the alleged 'dangers' of the medium and its alleged negative effects on children.

This kind of fearful reaction is not an unusual one. The development of new media technologies has been hampered by movements of moral panic throughout history

(Chalaby, 2000). Through the means of interviews, Pearlin (1959) explored the possibility that some individuals use television as a mechanism for coping with stress. Their inquiry was directed specifically to the relationship between indicated escape needs of viewers and their viewing of television for escape purposes (Pearlin, 1959). Since it was not possible to use a large tested battery of items to measure either escape viewing or stress, the data in their paper remains suggestive (Pearlin, 1959). Nevertheless, their study does point in the direction of the hypothesis that stress is a determinant of escape viewing (Pearlin, 1959). This concept of 'mass escapism' instilled moral panic in society (Pearlin, 1959). Whilst in the 1990s, the diffusion of the Internet spawned a variety of fears as well (Kraut et al., 1998). In their research, Kraut et al. (1998) found that greater use of the Internet was associated with small but statistically significant declines in social involvement, increases in loneliness and increases in depression. The story with Facebook was no exception. In the case of Facebook, its implications pertaining to privacy and surveillance were of primary concern.

With regard to the privacy implications of social media platforms in general, one needs to remember that social networks, are businesses. Usually, online social networks' security and access controls are weak by design, to enhance their value as network goods and increase their growth by making registration, access, and the sharing of information uncomplicated (Acquisti & Gross, 2006:2).

This idea of making personal information more accessible is even entrenched in Facebook's principles: 'We are building Facebook to make the world more open and transparent, which we believe will create greater understanding and connection' (Facebook, 2011). If this is entrenched the brand's principles, how serious can they really be about protecting privacy?

Moreover, one also needs to remember that Mark Zuckerberg (creator of Facebook) would want to enhance Facebook's growth because it is a business, and corporations need to make a profit in order to succeed (Chomsky & Herman, 1988). In general, media industries will serve the interests of whoever owns and controls them—whether this is private individuals interested in making profit or governments interested in political control (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model

elaborates on this as well, as it illustrates how dominant media firms are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints relating to ownership, advertising and profit margins (Chomsky & Herman, 1988:14). Individuals like Mark Zuckerberg are not acting in the public interest; they are thinking about profits. Employees need to be paid (globally, Facebook has only approximately 3,000 employees worldwide) and advertisers and shareholders need to be kept satisfied (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012).

Facebook generates much of its revenue from advertising and when personal information is being exchanged in order to attain a profit; there is a legitimate cause for concern (Barrigar, 2009; Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012). As disturbing and brash as this may sound, the adolescent users of Facebook and the personal information they provide are essentially Facebook's products/items of value. Facebook users and the personal information they provide is what Facebook monetises on. Mark Zuckerberg has access to such an immense selection of personal information that is valuable to advertisers—do we really understand the possible implications of this? Undoubtedly, there are a variety of concerns over corporate players having access and control over such a wide variety of personal information, particularly with regard to the dissemination of our personal and private information. Only time will be able to tell what implications this could have on society. Investigating these implications should yield interesting results within further research.

Responses from users

In their discussions as to why they engaged with Facebook, the male and female participants attending Buren High School, Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School noted a number of purposes that the application served from their point of view. As the discussions progressed, it transpired that the use of Facebook, for example, to communicate with others, also led to certain gratifications being obtained. To this end, the participants offered varying and interesting insights as to the benefits they obtained, which will all be examined throughout the course of this chapter.

Similarly to the study concerning MXit, the students interviewed within this study were not influenced to join Facebook based on their consumption of mass media or

traditional means of advertising. Rather, they were influenced to use the application because they believed that 'everyone else' was using it. One respondent also stated the following:

A: 'If you don't have Facebook, you have no life' (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

Male and female users stated that Facebook had become a popular means of communication amongst their age group and not utilising the social network would result in being 'left out' (Focus group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012). Once again, it would be interesting for researchers to conduct further investigation in the arena of Facebook's rapid rate of adoption and to perhaps include Granovetter's (1978) 'Threshold Models of Collective Behaviour' as their area of focus.

Instantaneous communication and constant connectivity

Owners of BlackBerry Smartphones enjoyed the fact that their BlackBerry Smartphones enabled them to stay permanently connected to Facebook. Whereas other mobile phones operating on a GPRS or 3G connection require the user to log into Facebook via their password and username each time they wish to access the application, BlackBerry Smartphones enable a user to stay logged in to Facebook for as long as the user desires. Both male and female respondents valued this instantaneity and convenient access, as they felt that the constant need to log in to Facebook with a password and username was a time-consuming hassle. The adolescents interviewed within this thesis reflect Pietrzyk's (2012) observation, in that we now reside 'in a cultural milieu wherein speed is fetishised.' These adolescents favour convenience and instant gratification in their choices of social networks and BlackBerry Smartphones appear to facilitate this.

Maintaining existing relationships

The most common use of Facebook, which was discovered within the focus groups conducted within Rondebosch Boys High School, Buren High School and Milnerton High School, is the fact that Facebook helps both male and female adolescents maintain existing social relationships. This is achieved via Facebook's instant chat function and via its asynchronous function. Numerous respondents stated that they use Facebook to maintain relationships with friends who they do not spend time with on a regular basis,

as all one needs to do is to look through a user's photo albums, wall posts and status updates in order to stay informed about the events happening in their lives. These adolescents also maintain existing social relationships through utilising Facebook's instant chat function, through posting content on their own Facebook wall's, as well as through posting content on the Facebook walls of their friends, as stated by one respondent:

A: 'I post stuff on peoples walls, I post pictures of myself, I post photos on my friends' walls' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

Exchanging photographs

Another popular use of Facebook expressed by both male and female respondents is the sharing of photographs. This finding appears to correlate with Rivière's (2005) observation, as it reflects that the role of the photographic image has become central to interpersonal communications with the advent of new technologies. Users are given the opportunity to post photographs on their own Facebook wall, as well as on the Facebook walls of their friends. They are also given the opportunity to 'tag' their friends in a photograph. When posting a photograph on Facebook, a tag links/identifies a person from the user's friends list in the photograph.

A: 'I will chat to friends, organise parties, upload pictures' (interview, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

A: 'I upload pictures, make comments, like statuses' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

Male and female respondents also found Facebook's ability to look at photographs, post photographs and comment on photographs to be gratifying. The nature of the photographs posted on Facebook surrounded various recreational activities, such as visiting the beach, spending time at the mall, to socialising and 'partying' with friends.

The selection of photographs to display on Facebook was a key part of how both male and female respondents presented themselves to others as well. According to Rivière (2005) 'a photograph is always the result of a deliberate choice, a process of selecting what we perceive that results in a choice that is more or less conscious and through which we operate a foregrounding of one reality over another.' In light of Rivière's

(2005) observation, respondents informed the researcher that they placed a significant level of consideration into what kind of photographs they displayed on Facebook, particularly in their choice of profile picture. Respondents reflected that they only chose photographs that displayed them in the best manner possible. Respondents posited that they wanted to look 'good' and 'attractive' in their profile pictures.

Sexual experimentation

In a similar vein, male and female respondents stated that flirtatious suggestions were often exchanged through the means of photographs as well.

A: 'I'll say you look really pretty' (interview, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

A: 'It's a nice pic, I really like it' (interview, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

Some male and female respondents also stated that they enjoy the fact that they can use Facebook to browse 'open' profiles, without the user being aware that they looked at their profile. This can also be linked to the theme of sexual experimentation, as users often expressed looking at open profiles of users they perceived to be attractive. They would then evaluate adding them as 'friends' to their contact list, based on their appearance. This act of browsing open profiles on the application was referred to as 'Facebook stalking.' The term 'Facebook stalker' has become a humorous colloquial term used by users of the application. Whilst there are numerous websites dedicated to defining the term, urbandictionary.com defines a Facebook stalker as 'a person who spends large amounts of time on Facebook looking at other people's profiles, often browsing photos, walls (or wall-to-walls), groups, or recent activity posted on the stalked person's mini-feed' (urbandictionary, 2008). Another definition on the site includes: 'An individual who secretly looks up people on Facebook, going through albums, comments and personal information to piece together a picture of this person. Potentially developing into an obsession' (urbandictionary, 2008).

This concept of Facebook 'stalking' is becoming a popular topic within academic literature as well. In his research paper, Marwick (2010) argues that this act of Facebook 'stalking' is intimately tied to power relations: it is both a way to compensate for perceived weakness by obtaining social knowledge, and maintaining status

hierarchies by reinforcing the importance of others. In addition, by using an analysis of Foucault's interpretation of Bentham's panopticon, Kennedy's (2009) study aims to discover Facebook users' perception of their friends' disclosure while delving into the idea of 'Facebook stalking', specifically with regard to how users define it. In this study, certain male and female respondents expressed that the pleasure in Facebook lies in one being able to look at photographs of others, without the user knowing that you were looking at their photographs. Similarly to Kennedy's (2009) study, these responses from interviewees display a strong correlation to Foucault's interpretation of Bentham's panopticon. Similarly to how the 18th century design of the Panopticon (a building with a tower at the centre) which allowed a watchman to observe all inmates/prisoners of an institution without those prisoners being able to tell whether or not they were being watched, Facebook also allows these respondents to observe one another in a virtual space, without each other's knowledge of observation (Foucault, 1975; Kennedy, 2009).

Broadcasting status messages

Both male and female respondents also use Facebook to publish status messages, which are broadcasted to their friends' list/network of associates (Bosch, 2009).

A: 'I mainly use it to look at events and update my status' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

A: 'I search for people that I haven't seen. I will make statuses, talk to friends' (interview, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

Popular status messages included posting information pertaining to weekend outings, or inspirational content, as stated by three respondents:

A: 'If I was going out for the night, I'll say where I'm going and who I'm going with' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

A: 'I'm going to party tonight' (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

A: 'Sometimes I'll put on something from the Bible, to encourage people' (interview, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

Archiving reality

Whilst numerous respondents often utilise MXit as a fantasy realm, to lie about their age, appearance and geographical location, Facebook is primarily used to keep in touch with individuals that the users had already met within an offline environment. Evidently, both male and female respondents interviewed for this thesis primarily use Facebook to document and archive the various aspects of their lives. A respondent reflected this attribute of capturing 'real' elements of their identity on Facebook in contrast to creating a fake identity, as they do on MXit, within the following quotation:

A: 'On Facebook it's always a real photograph' (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

Seeking information

In addition, both male and female participants also highlighted their use of Facebook for information seeking purposes: 'to see what people are up to' (interview, Milnerton High School, 23/07/2012). When questioned as to how Facebook facilitates this, the respondent identified that his friends shared new information about themselves and their recent activities by updating various elements of their profile pages, with the uploading of new photos, videos and new comments. Numerous respondents identified this as a favourable attribute, as they felt that the application kept them up to date with what was happening in the lives of their friends. Similarly to Scifo's (2005) research regarding the camera phone, in which she argues that the device offers a 'photographic archive of memories, a mobile archive; always within easy reach, something to look at again and again, when feeling nostalgic, or just to pass an interstitial moment in one's daily routine,' Facebook appears to provide similar gratifications for the participants interviewed within this study.

With regard to information seeking, male respondents also posited that they had used Facebook to learn more about romantic interests, as expressed by two respondents:

A: 'I met this girl at a party and I didn't really know her and we hooked up. So I used Facebook to learn more about her, what school she went to and stuff' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

A: 'I digged³ this chick⁴ and stuff but it was the first time I met her, so she invited me on Facebook and I just checked her wall and stuff to check if guys had posted on it' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

These respondents contributions regarding the sharing and seeking of information through Facebook, reflects Singer's (1998) observation that the Internet is capable of empowering the individual both by providing them with the information they require and enabling them to create and share any information.

Alleviating boredom

Another common motivation for Facebook usage by both male and female respondents was a means to pass the time, particularly when bored, as expressed by two respondents:

A: 'When I'm bored and I've already looked at all my friends, I search for random people and look at their profiles' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

A: 'When you're bored, you can talk to people' (interview, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

The 'like' phenomenon

Both male and female respondents also found Facebook's 'like' button to be a gratifying phenomenon. Numerous respondents stated that they 'feel good' when their Facebook friends 'like' their photographs and status updates. This 'like' button, which was introduced in 2009, allows members to apply 'like' labels to messages, photographs and other content. The 'like' button is literally a button that enables users to express if they like what one of their Facebook friends has posted.

A: 'It makes me feel important. If I say something inspirational and they can relate to it' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'It's a really good feeling' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

This phenomenon appears to correlate with existing literature concerning adolescents and their desire for approval. Although peer pressure can affect all age groups, it is often

³ 'Digged' is a colloquial term that roughly translated means 'liked'.

⁴ 'Chick' is a colloquial term that roughly translated means 'girl.'

regarded as something commonly experienced by adolescents (Nichols, 2008; Stabinsky, 2009). On reaching adolescence, children are confronted with new developmental challenges (Steketee, 2012). In their search for independence and sovereignty, peer relationships become more significant and often replace parents as major sources of reward for and approval of behaviour (Steketee, 2012 citing Thornberry & Krohn, 2005). The very word 'like' is synonymous with approval, as it is a term that signifies delight, gratification and satisfaction. It makes perfect sense that these adolescents would obtain gratification from their peers 'liking' their status updates and photographs at this stage within their lives.

Privacy from parental observation

Many of the interviewees agreed that whilst Facebook is a popular means of communication amongst high school students, it has become a popular means of communication amongst their parents as well. This finding correlates with Goldstuck's (2011) research, which argues that whilst the peak age of using Facebook in South Africa is 20 years of age, there are more 51 year olds than 13 year olds using the service. Although many respondents stated that their parents utilise Facebook, they also expressed that they do not intend on adding their parents as 'friends' to their profiles due to privacy concerns.

A: 'Your Facebook life is your private life. You don't want you parents invading your personal space' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Here, similarly to Ling & Yttri (2002:162) we see the mobile phone as an instrument to 'define a sense of group membership particularly vis-à-vis the older generation.' Numerous respondents also perceived the photographs posted on Facebook to be inappropriate for parental observation.

A: 'You can't have them because then they see your pictures of what you did on holiday and stuff. Some of it's really rough stuff' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

This provides an interesting insight into what these high school students believe to be appropriate for public viewing. Whilst 'bad' photographs are not deemed to be appropriate for parental observation, they are deemed appropriate for the viewing of their entire social network of Facebook friends. Male and female respondents also

stated that whilst they do post the occasional 'bad' photograph, they do take precautions to not post inappropriate photographs within their school uniforms.

In order to maintain their privacy, some students admitted to going as far as 'blocking' their parents on Facebook. According to Facebook's official website, blocking someone prevents them from viewing your profile. Any ties the user currently has with the users they block will be broken (friendship connections, friend details and so forth) (Facebook, n.d.). The user's profile will not be visible to them and the other party will not appear in their search results or friend lists (Facebook, n.d.). Blocking is mutual, so they will also become invisible to the other user as well (Facebook, n.d.).

As examined within this chapter's literature review, the debate surrounding if Facebook should be viewed as a public or private sphere is a common topic within academic literature (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). For the students interviewed within this study, maintaining privacy appears to be withholding their Facebook profiles from their parents' observations.

A: 'I don't really post bad photos of myself on Facebook but I do swear sometimes. If my parents saw the stuff I wrote they'd moan about it or comment on it. I don't want that' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

It is clear that Facebook is valued as an avenue that helps both male and female adolescents keep their social lives separate from their parents. Instead of conversing on the landline, or verbally over their mobile phones, Facebook enables the adolescents interviewed for this thesis to maintain contact in a virtual and private environment with peers and exchange photographs of rebellious activities, without the external monitoring of parents. Studies by Ito (2005) and Green (2003), elaborate on this element of privacy granted by the mobile phone as well, in that it enables adolescents to communicate without parental surveillance. Accessing Facebook via a mobile phone appears to extend this degree of privacy, for similarly to Ito (2005) and Green's (2002) arguments pertaining to the mobile phone, Facebook has also revolutionised the power geometry of space-time compression for adolescents in the home.

Furthermore, this desire on behalf of respondents to distance from their parents is regarded as a normal part of adolescent behaviour (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). According to Steinberg & Silverberg (1986) it is a healthy and habitual part of the

development of adolescents to experience a temporary disengagement from parental ties and experience an overzealous orientation toward the peer group instead. As adolescents develop autonomy from their parents, peer relations become increasingly important and occupy an increasing amount of their time (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; Brown, 2004; Miller & Benson, 1999). As witnessed from the responses, Facebook enables these adolescents to spend more time with their peers in a virtual environment. Interestingly, one key factor that emerged in this study was that even though the adolescents interviewed for this thesis attempted to disengage with their parents by not welcoming them to interact with them via Facebook, it was the parents who paid for their mobile phones, mobile phone contracts or airtime. Thus, full disengagement from parents and autonomy was not possible. This was a fascinating observation, as the majority of participants attending Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School admitted to using BlackBerry Smartphones, which on a contractual basis, costs their parents a monthly fee of R60.

Connecting with product brands

Another common use of Facebook discussed within the focus groups and one-on-one interviews was its ability to connect both male and female users to their favourite product, service and human brands. Facebook's Pages function was posited as a popular motivation for Facebook usage. Product brands were viewed as favourable Page choices for numerous interviewees.

A: 'I like Adidas. It keeps you up to date with their clothing, what sales are happening and stuff' (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

Other popular avenues of product brands included Nike and Vans. Respondents also favoured clothing stores like Jay Jays and YDE. In the sphere of marketing, the brand relationships these adolescent consumers encounter through Facebook's Pages are referred to as co-branding strategies. Co-branding is a very innovative marketing strategy, as it enables two different companies to pair their respective brands in a collaborative and mutually beneficial marketing effort (Cappo, 2003; Kapferer, 2004). Co-branding is adopted for various reasons including, to provide operational benefits, to gain the advantage of 'spill over' effects on each individual brand and to gain a competitive advantage by increasing the attractiveness of the combined offering to the

customer (Erevelles et al. 2008). The respective brands end up formulating a symbiotic relationship (Cappo, 2003; Kapferer, 2004). Facebook benefits because the more it is able to provide to the needs of its clientele, the more likely the clientele will continue to support it. As witnessed within the above responses, brand communities on Facebook gratify the adolescent consumers interviewed for this thesis by giving them the opportunity to view the various promotions and special offers their favourite brands publish online. In addition, the various brands utilising Facebook's Pages option benefits as they have the potential to expose their brand to millions of Facebook users.

Evidently, similarly to MXit, Facebook has also created a central meeting point where the adolescent consumers interviewed for this thesis can connect with their friends and brands at the same time. Facebook has made the 'relationship-building' phenomenon a much more accessible goal for marketers in South Africa.

Connecting with celebrity brands

Celebrity brands were also popular Page choices amongst both male and female respondents. In fact, sponsors are now encouraging celebrities to speak directly to fans via their Facebook Pages, with the intention of seeing a return on their celebrity investment (Settimi, 2012). Popular choices of celebrity following on Facebook amongst interviewees included American Hip Hop artists such Drake, Eminem, Dr. Dre, Lil Wayne and Tupac Shakur. American Hip Hop artists were a particularly popular choice of entertainment celebrity following across all three of these social media platforms (Hammett, 2009). Hip Hop has always been valued as more than just music; it is valued as a particular kind of culture, and Facebook provides another avenue for the adolescents interviewed for this thesis to participate in and consume this culture (Dimitriadis, 2009). From the saggy pants to over sized clothing, Hip Hop culture has long begun to act as a vehicle for disenfranchised youth across the world, to articulate their own local needs and concerns (Pritchard, 2009; Dimitriadis, 2009). This appears to hold true within Cape Town, South Africa as well (Pritchard, 2009). In fact, Hip Hop/Rap music is amongst the most popular genres of music consumed by adolescents in South Africa (Cohen, 2008).

International celebrities and musicians like Lost Prophets, Rihanna, Beyoncé and Kim Kardashian were also favoured by both male and female respondents:

A: 'I usually do it to look at stuff from Rihanna. I go through every single photo of hers and I like it. She's very photogenic, so I like every photo of her' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'I've got a few bands that I like. Nickelback and Dj's like PH PHAT' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012)

Both male and female respondents also stated that they enjoyed receiving information from local Dj's to keep track of when they would be playing at particular events, as expressed by two respondents:

A: 'You can also follow artists and Dj's to find out where they'll be playing and when they'll be releasing an album' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

A: 'It's really cool. You can like a Page that broadcasts stuff about under 18 parties. You can find out where it will be happening and who will be playing' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

American comedians were also favoured as popular celebrity brands:

A: 'Some celebrities have like really funny jokes, like Will Ferrel. He's really funny on Facebook' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Both male and female respondents also stated that they used Facebook to try and contact their favourite celebrities. This was achieved by publishing comments on the Facebook walls of celebrities.

A: 'I also leave comments saying 'Wow, you so awesome, I love your music, you so pretty' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'I'll say that his new song is really nice and that I enjoy his music' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

A: 'When you have them on Facebook you can kind of see when their next gig will be, something like that, or give them feedback on how their performances were and so on. I've commented on them when they're been at Fez⁵ or something like that' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

5 Fez is a club that hosts under-18 parties in Cape Town

A: *'When are you coming to South Africa'* (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Before the launch of social media platforms, Facebook in particular, adolescents' involvement with celebrities was mostly mediated by the mass media (Chia & Poo, 2009). Social media platforms have increased the exposure of adolescents to entertainment celebrities and have given these celebrities a powerful influence over adolescents as well (Chia & Poo, 2009). The proliferation of entertainment media and social media worldwide has also changed celebrity culture (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Platforms like Facebook have changed the ways that people relate to celebrity images, how celebrities are produced, and how celebrity is practiced (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Moreover, as witnessed by the responses of the adolescents interviewed for this thesis, Facebook has provided them with a more intimate and interpersonal platform to communicate with their favourite celebrities (Marwick & boyd, 2011). If one examines the following of some of these celebrities on Facebook, their numbers are phenomenal. As witnessed throughout the previous paragraphs, some of the most popular choices of entertainment celebrity following amongst respondents included the likes of Eminem, Rihanna, Drake, Beyoncé, Lil Wayne and Kim Kardashian. As of the 18th of September 2012, Eminem had accrued 61,109,261 likes on his Facebook fan Page, Rihanna had accrued 60,362,861 likes on her fan Page, Drake had accrued 26,484,120 likes on his fan Page, Beyoncé had 38,605,922 likes on her fan Page, Lil Wayne had accrued 40,418,866 likes on his fan Page and Kim Kardashian had accrued 10,961,575 likes on her fan Page.

The global predominance of these celebrities and their roles in the American film, music and television industries play a significant part in the American economy, bringing in enormous profits to the USA from other countries—South Africa being one of them (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). It is perceived that there are cultural, economic and moral dangers involved in the predominance of American cinema, music and television in developing countries (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). Many of these threats surround the issue of cultural imperialism, as well as the loss of local culture and diversity (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). Hammett (2009) touches on this topic in his research paper, which demonstrates how high school students in Cape Town, South Africa negotiate global cultural flows to inform their identity formations. His study discovers that students' identity performances were strongly influenced by the style of

Western celebrities (Hammett, 2009). However, social and economic constraints to the materials needed to mimic these images of celebrities success limited students' agency as they sought to negotiate their position as raced and classed individuals (Hammett, 2009). Thus, these negotiations and constraints meant these performances were never fully realised (Hammett, 2009). In light of this, it is interesting to note that Facebook enables these adolescents to express their affiliation to their favourite brands and the expensive brands their favourite celebrities endorse at practically no cost, by simply pressing the 'like' icon.

Male respondents also viewed male-dominated sports teams and male sporting stars/icons as favourable celebrity brand choices.

A: 'I like Hershel Gibbs' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

A: 'I like Manchester United' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'I like Cristiano Ronaldo, the Stormers' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Real Madrid's top scorer and 2008 world player of the year, Cristiano Ronaldo (mentioned as a favourable celebrity icon/brand amongst the respondents in this study), is the most socially engaged athlete online and is leading a new trend in endorsements: social network deals (Settimi, 2012). He reportedly earned \$42 million last year in salary, bonus and sponsorships from Nike and Castrol (Settimi, 2012). This is not unusual, as sports stars now often earn more money through their endorsements than through their salaries (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007). As of the 28th of October 2012, Ronaldo, who happens to be the second highest paid football player in the world, had accrued 50, 444, 230 fans on his Facebook Page. Doug Shabelman, the President of Burns Entertainment, helped negotiate Ronaldo's current 3-year Clear Shampoo deal which included a Facebook campaign where his fans could choose his next hairstyle (Settimi, 2012). Ronaldo also recently drove additional traffic to the Facebook contest through his Twitter account (Settimi, 2012). This campaign is just one example that illustrates how the rise of Web 2.0 has created a shift in traditional understanding of 'celebrity management' from a highly organised and regulated institutional model to one in which performers and personalities actively address and interact with fans

(Marwick & boyd, 2011).

In contrast to the popularity of entertainment celebrities and sporting icons, the idea of 'liking' political parties/brands on Facebook was not met with any enthusiasm. Whilst certain male and female respondents found the idea of following political brands on social media humorous, other respondents found the idea of criticising politicians on a public forum to be a dangerous endeavour.

A: 'I would never make fun of the ANC on their Facebook Page. All of your details are on your profile. You never know how they will react to you saying bad things' (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

A: 'They'll skit you vrek⁶' (Focus Group, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

Although a celebrity can be defined as a person well-known in one of a wide variety of fields such as science, politics, or entertainment, research by Stella & Poo (2009) indicates that adolescents worldwide, however, seem to prefer celebrities in the entertainment arena, such as pop singers and film stars. This appears to hold true within South Africa as well. Although South African politicians and their political brands have begun utilising social media to expand their reach, its following is limited. The African National Congress (ANC) is South Africa's leading political party and has been in power since the 10th of May 1994 (African National Congress, n.d.). The party has an existing Facebook Page, as well as a Twitter account (African National Congress, n.d.). On the 28th of August 2012, the ANC had only accrued 13, 182 'likes' on Facebook. The Democratic Alliance (DA), the leading opposition party to the ANC, also has a presence on social media—both on Facebook and Twitter. As of the 28th of August 2012, the Democratic Alliance had only accrued 19, 529 'likes' on Facebook. These numbers are rather small in size, considering the total number of South Africans participating on Facebook and Twitter. As social media platforms are a popular avenue of communication amongst adolescents, politicians should consider leveraging this factor in their campaigns, as they would be able to involve young people in the political process in a novel way.

⁶ 'Skit you vrek' is a colloquial Afrikaans term, that roughly translated means 'shoot you/kill you.'

Voicing dissatisfaction about poor brand performance

Numerous respondents also admitted to complaining about the poor service they had received from companies/brands in their Facebook status.

A: 'I once complained about Vodacom in my status, because I think they are skelm⁷. They do this thing where they give you free airtime from 12'0 clock at night until 5am in the morning. Who now will talk to their friends at that time of the night? It's so ridiculous. That's why I say they are so skelm. They can give you free airtime for during the day but instead they give it to you at that time of the night' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

Certain respondents also admitted to complaining about the poor-quality of products they had purchased within their Facebook status.

A: 'I wrote that Vans are shitty shoes because you have it and then the rubber comes loose. I don't like them' (Focus Group, Buren High School, 30/07/2012).

The above responses from the adolescents interviewed for this thesis demonstrate the variety of challenges the Internet (social networking sites in particular) pose to brands, as they enable consumers to spread negative information quickly and easily (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Moreover, these responses also demonstrate how the Internet has granted consumers a greater degree of power within the branding hierarchy (Meadows-Klue, 2008; Ito et al., 2008). Although information obtained via the Internet is abundant, easily available, and often comprehensive, it can differ from information obtained via other media sources in several respects (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). For instance, in comparison to other media sources, web-based information does not always undergo an editorial process prior to publication (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). In the print media industry, sub-editors and a variety of other gatekeepers check verifiable facts, but the Internet is not subjected to this (Nel, 2005). Whereas the owners of television and print media publications are able to control what is published on the media platform, the Internet grants an open platform for everyone (Maher, 2006). Consequently, individuals are able to voice a variety of concerns regarding their dissatisfaction about various brands, regardless if this information is true or not (Maher, 2006; Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Whilst the above-mentioned brands defamed by the respondents, (Vans and Vodacom) may be deserving of criticism,

⁷ 'Skelm', is a colloquial Afrikaans term, that roughly translated means 'devious.'

they may also not be worthy of being tarnished in this way. It is nearly impossible for other social media users to tell if the critical information these adolescents have chosen to publish about these brands is true or false. On the Internet, consumers live in a confusing twilight between fact and fiction, as the information they consume online is often inaccurate, biased, or misleading (Solove, 2007; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Moreover, in a world where it is difficult to separate the true from the false, rumour and defamation can readily spread and as witnessed by the responses from the adolescents interviewed for this thesis, the Internet can be used as a powerful tool to launch malicious attacks on brands (Solove, 2007:35; Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). This is exceptionally dangerous, as the Internet has become one of the most common information sources for consumers to research product or brand information (Lee, Kim & Chan-Olmsted, 2011).

What heightens the Internet's malicious effect on brands even further is its permanence in form (Solove, 2007:33). A few years ago, printed words would dissolve and be lost in the past, as most publications would get buried away in the dusty corners of libraries (Solove, 2007:33). Retrieving the information would be a time-consuming and tiresome endeavour (Solove, 2007:33). The Internet however, locks the defamatory information these adolescents have published on their Facebook profiles into an ever-present and readily available archive (Solove, 2007; Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012).

Fascinatingly, in South Africa, Facebook and Mxit are not the only portals granting consumers more power within the branding hierarchy. The Consumer Protection Act has also created a number of concerns for brands as it affects almost every enterprise in the country (Standard Bank, 2011). The Act was signed into law in April 2009 and came into effect on the 1st of April 2011 (Standard Bank, 2011). The Act gives consumers the right to demand quality service and to full disclosure of the price of goods and services, as well as protection against false, misleading or deceptive representations (Knowler, 2011). In a nutshell, the Act strives to protect consumers against unfair business practices, giving them greater recourse against companies that supply them with products or services (Standard Bank, 2011). It sets out the minimum requirements to ensure adequate consumer protection and provides an overarching framework for all other laws that provide for consumer protection (Standard Bank, 2011). Companies

that fail to abide to the Act could face hefty penalties from the Consumer Commission and Consumer Tribunal (Knowler, 2011).

In addition, Facebook statuses were not the only avenue utilised to voice dissatisfaction pertaining to receiving poor service from certain brands. Respondents also admitted to voicing their disapproval on the Facebook Pages of certain brands.

A: 'Photomania took so long just to make a picture right. So I told them that it's actually not right that you're giving people a website and your website is shit... They responded by saying they were going to fix their website' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

In the case of Facebook, the publishing of this criticism is immediate (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Naturally, Photomania could have removed the post after it has been published but this would not be the best idea in terms of conducting good-quality public relations (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Public relations is used to create goodwill for an organisation and plays a very important role in the branding process (Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006; Nilson, 1949). Public relations specialists communicate with various stakeholders and create positive public attitudes and goodwill toward the brand or organisation (Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006:477). Most importantly, they manage a brand's image and reputation (Burnett, Moriarty & Wells, 2006:477). In essence, reputation is about how trust between parties is developed, assessed and maintained (Pavlou and Gefen, 2004; Dellarocas, 2005). This act of managing a company's relationship and reputation, often through branding, becomes a conscious act of linking positive real or perceived perceptions, images, and experiences to a firm or a product (Kietzmann et al., 2012). A good reputation then affects future actions favourably, perhaps through brand recognition during a purchasing decision (Kietzmann et al., 2012). However, this linkage is also threatening in the sense that negative associations affect a brand's reputation in an undesirable manner (Kietzmann et al., 2012). Similarly to Photomania's polite response to the above interviewee, informing her that they would improve the alleged problem, all brands should utilise complaints on social media as an opportunity to exercise good Public Relations. In the current era of increased transparency, brands should use social media platforms to show the public that they do care about the concerns of their consumers by responding to the complaints they receive both politely and efficiently (Champoux, Durgee &

McGlynn, 2012; Kietzmann et al., 2012).

Prior to the launch of these brand communities on Facebook, few social spaces existed for customers to vocalise their questions or concerns and any conversations taking place were restricted to small circles of individuals or groups (Demerling, 2010). If a customer was dissatisfied with a product, they could phone the company and file a complaint or write and submit an opinion piece to a local paper or magazine (which may or may not be published) (Demerling, 2010). As witnessed from the responses gathered from the students interviewed for this thesis, the advent of social media sites like Mxit and Facebook has given consumers a forum to vocalise their dissatisfaction about various brands.

Perceptions of paid advertising

It also appeared as though both male and female students interviewed for this thesis preferred Facebook Pages as a mode of marketing, in comparison to Facebook's paid advertisements. Their intention behind initially 'liking' the Page was to serve the purpose of receiving information about special offers, new merchandise, sales and so forth. Respondents deliberately sought the brands that they wanted to receive information from via these Pages. Facebook's paid advertising however was viewed as something undesirable.

A: 'It's so irritating. I never click on their adverts. They really frustrate me' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

This is an interesting insight considering that local mobile phone advertising revenue reached R500 million in 2010 and revenue from marketing and advertising spend on mobile phones is expected to exceed R1 billion by the end of 2012, according to predictions from leading communications companies Vodacom, Mxit and Google (Speckman, 2011). In South Africa, mobile messaging adverts are the leading type of mobile phone advertising, with approximately 35 million branded 'please call me' messages are sent out daily and 1.6 billion impressions were served in 2010 (Speckman, 2010). In contrast to these optimistic predictions, the adolescents interviewed for this thesis do not enjoy viewing pay-per-click advertising on the social media platforms they use. Thus, the findings of this thesis deserve further exploration. Whilst mobile

advertising is expected to increase in spending, more research should be conducted amongst South African adolescents and how they feel about mobile advertising.

Now that we have reviewed how adolescents in South Africa use Facebook, we can move on to reviewing the final social media brand under investigation—Twitter. The next chapter of this thesis begins by reviewing the existing body of literature concerning Twitter and how this thesis contributes towards building upon this existing body of literature. The researcher then moves on to reviewing the findings obtained concerning Twitter usage amongst the respondents.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 7: EXPLORING ADOLESCENTS' USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF TWITTER

Brand Background

Launched in 2006, Twitter is a micro-blogging service that was created by a San Francisco-based 10-person start-up company called Obvious (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). Users send messages/updates (called 'tweets') — limited to 140 characters, to a network of associates known as 'followers' from a variety of devices (Luke, 2009; Jansen et al., 2009). This phenomenon of posting a status of less than 140 characters is known as micro-blogging (Jansen et al., 2009). It is a new form of communication in which users can describe things of interest and express attitudes that they are willing to share with others in short posts, also known as micro-blogs (Jansen et al., 2009). As witnessed within the previous chapter of this thesis, a user's Facebook's status operates in a similar manner. However, the status message is not limited to 140 characters. The latest version of MXit possesses a similar kind of micro-blogging function, as MXit users are able to update and share their statuses with their fellow MXit users as well. While the shortness of the micro-blog keeps people from writing long thoughts, it is precisely the micro part that makes micro-blogs unique as these posts are so easy to consume (Jansen et al., 2009). Users can indicate whether they wish their tweets to be public—meaning that the messages appear in reverse chronological order on the 'public timeline' on twitter.com's home page and on the individual user's Twitter page, or private—meaning that only those who have subscribed to the user's feed ('followers') are able to see the messages (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). Tweets can be posted via twitter.com, text messaging, instant messaging, or from third party clients (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009).

The body of research concerning Twitter has grown exponentially since the brand's inception. Similarly to this thesis's review on Facebook; the next part of this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the literature concerning Twitter, to give a sense of the direction the research has taken to this point. There has been a global increase in media coverage on the Twitter phenomenon, though most academic research on the subject is based on North-American case studies. A search of major library databases and online journals yielded no results for studies on Twitter within the South African

context. Within the numerous academic articles reviewed concerning the application, five trends appear to emerge, with occasional overlapping: Twitter and its usage patterns (uses and perceptions), Twitter within the context of political communication, Twitter within the context of mass convergence and emergency events, Twitter's potential to facilitate online learning, Twitter and information diffusion and Twitter within the context of marketing.

Uses and perceptions

The first few studies that were conducted about Twitter (Java et al., 2007; Krishnamurthy, Gill & Arlitt, 2008) describe general features of the entire Twitter social network, including categorisation of users and their behaviours, the topological and geographical properties of the site's network and patterns of its growth (Hughes & Palen, 2009). Other researchers, such as Huberman, Romero and Wu (2008) who have also been interested in the usage patterns of Twitter, examine who users engage with on the site and who holds the most influence? They also examine the following questions: Why do users tend to follow the particular users that they do? What social interactions influence them to follow particular users? Huberman, Romero and Wu (2008) also examine social interactions within Twitter. By looking at the social network of friend and follower relationships between users in Twitter, their study discovered that users only interact with a small subset of friends and followers.

Other researchers have also utilised the Uses and Gratifications model to study the usage patterns of Twitter. However, similarly to the MXit and Facebook studies, none of the researchers have utilised this theory to investigate how users interact with brands. For example: Johnson and Yang's (2009) study applies the Uses and Gratifications theory to investigate Twitter user motives (gratifications sought) and the perceived fulfillment of these motives (gratifications obtained). By utilising a convenience sample of 242 Twitter users, satisfaction of Twitter use was investigated by comparing the differences between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained (Johnson & Yang, 2009). Two factors important to the use of Twitter were identified: social motives and information motives (Johnson & Yang, 2009). Their analysis found that information motives are positively related to Twitter use (Johnson & Yang, 2009). Although counterintuitive to the social aspects of an Internet medium like Twitter, social motives

were not significantly related to Twitter use (Johnson & Yang, 2009). Their data suggests that Twitter is used primarily as an information source, rather than as a medium for satisfying social needs (Johnson & Yang, 2009).

Chen (2011) also made a notable contribution to the field via this theoretical method. Chen's (2011) hierarchical OLS regression of survey results from 317 Twitter users argues that the more months a person is active on Twitter and the more hours per week the person spends on Twitter, the more the person gratifies a need for an informal sense of camaraderie, called connection, with other users (Chen, 2011).

This line of research has also delved into examining the social motives of Twitter, such as through metrics of reciprocity. Java et al. (2007) compare micro-blogging versus regular blogging in their study concerning the network. They find that users of micro-blogging systems engage in a higher social reciprocity as measured by a publish-to-subscribe ratio. In a similar vein, Krishnamurthy, Gill & Arlitt (2008) briefly examine the concept of reciprocity as well but add posting frequencies to their examination. In addition, Honeycutt and Herring (2009) measured the usage of the @ symbol to measure conversational engagement, while a study by Naaman, Boase & Lai (2010) codes a sample of tweets to broadly classify users as self-broadcasters or informers.

Political communication

As previously mentioned, numerous researchers (Tumasjan et al., 2010; Vergeer, Hermans & Sams, 2011; Holotescu et al., 2010) also examine the use of Twitter within the context of political communication. This thesis contributes towards this existing body of literature by examining if South African adolescents are utilising Twitter to connect with political brands or engage in any form of political communication. Vergeer, Hermans & Sams (2011) explore the use of Twitter by candidates in the election campaign for the European Parliament elections of 2009 in the Netherlands. The main focus of their study is on identifying what political aspects, such as party characteristics and candidate characteristics, influence their use of Twitter as a campaign tool. Furthermore, they also explore the effectiveness of candidates' activities on Twitter in gaining votes (Vergeer, Hermans & Sams, 2011).

Using LIWC text analysis software, Tumasjan et al. (2010) conduct a content analysis of over 100,000 messages containing a reference to either a political party or a politician. Their results show that Twitter is used for political deliberation (Tumasjan et al., 2010). Using a comparative analysis of Twitter investors, United States State Department diplomats, citizen activists, Iranian protestors and paramilitary forces, Burns and Eltham (2009) examine Twitter's role during Iran's 2009 election crisis. Their study codes for key events during the election's aftermath from the 12th of June to the 5th of August 2009 and evaluates Twitter in this regard (Burns & Eltham, 2009).

Holotescu et al. (2010) explore whether Twitter and its micro blogging capabilities had any influence on the Romanian presidential elections in 2009. Their study concludes by stating that it remains to be seen whether in the next few years' politicians shall be able to convince people to be more active in the political field by using microblogs.

Researchers (Axford, 2011; Howard & Parks, 2012; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Khondker, 2011; Cottle, 2011; Rane & Salem, 2012; Kavanaugh et al., 2012) have also dedicated a substantial level of investigation into social media and its role in the Arab Spring uprisings. The Arab Spring refers to a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests occurring in Arab countries that began on the 18th of December 2010 when a 26-year-old Tunisian street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire following harassment by a local official (Cottle, 2011).

This act resonated with others in the town and spurred mass protests, first in Tunisia, then in Egypt and a succession of other Arab states, including Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Iran, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia (Cottle, 2011). All of the protests challenged the repressive, anti-democratic nature of these regimes and called for an end to corruption, improved living conditions, democracy and the protection of human rights (Cottle, 2011; Cottle, 2011 citing International Crisis Group, 2011). Since protests began, numerous political leaders, including Tunisian president Ben Ali, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, and the Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi have been forced to step down (Rane & Salem, 2012). Other regimes in the region including Jordan, Yemen and Syria have been forced to make sociopolitical concessions and reforms (Rane & Salem, 2012).

What is remarkable about these protests is not only their phenomenal speed of succession across so many countries, but also the different ways in which protestors used social media as a tool of organisation (Cottle, 2011). Due to the protestors' avid use of social media platforms, these uprisings have been labeled as the 'Twitter Revolutions' or 'Facebook Revolutions' (Cottle, 2011). Social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, along with online bloggers and mobile telephony, all played an important role in capturing, communicating, coordinating and channelling this rising tide of opposition and variously managed to bypass state controlled national media as they propelled images and ideas of resistance and mass defiance across the Middle East and North Africa (Cottle, 2011).

When the protests began, the Tunisian government tried to ban Facebook, Twitter, and video sites such as DailyMotion and YouTube (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Within a few days, however, people found an alternative way to communicate, as SMS messaging then became the organising tool of choice (Howard & Hussain, 2011). In addition, outside the country, the hacker communities helped to cripple the government by carrying out denial-of-service attacks and by building new software to help activists get around state firewalls (Howard & Hussain, 2011). The government responded by jailing these activists (Howard & Hussain, 2011).

Using the Internet, mobile phones, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter, people interested in fighting for democracy could build extensive networks, create social capital, and organise political action with a speed and on a scale never seen before (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Digital media became the tool that allowed social movements to reach once-unachievable goals, even as authoritarian forces tried to fight back (Howard & Hussain, 2011). This means of activism via social media is an interesting phenomenon and researchers should consider investigating the concept within a South African context as well.

Information diffusion

There is a significant body of literature that examines Twitter's potential as a tool for information diffusion as well. Kwak et al. (2010) conduct a quantitative study on the application by reviewing the topological characteristics of Twitter and its power as a

new medium of information sharing. Their study answers a variety of questions including: How people are connected on Twitter? Who are the most influential people? Who do people talk about on Twitter? Concluding from the highly skewed nature of the distribution of followers and the low rate of reciprocated ties, their study concludes that Twitter more closely resembles an information-sharing network (Kwak et al., 2010). Kwak et al. (2010) also compare three different measures of influence on the application—number of followers, page-rank, and number of retweets (practice of responding to a tweet)—discovering that the ranking of the most influential users differed depending on the measure.

Other researchers have extended this body of research, for example: Starbird and Palen's (2012) study examines microblogging information diffusion activity during the 2011 Egyptian political uprisings. Specifically, they examine the use of the retweet mechanism on Twitter, using empirical evidence of information propagation to reveal aspects of work that the crowd conducts (Starbird & Palen, 2012). Through both qualitative and statistical description, they show how the crowd expresses solidarity and does the work of information processing through recommendation and filtering (Starbird & Palen, 2012). In a similar vein, by using a large amount of data collected from Twitter, Cha et al., (2010) present an in-depth comparison of three measures of influence: indegree, retweets, and mentions. Based on these measures, they investigate the dynamics of user influence across topics and time (Cha et al., 2010). They make several interesting observations (Cha et al., 2010). Firstly, popular users who have high indegree are not necessarily influential in terms of spawning retweets or mentions (Cha et al., 2010). Secondly, most influential users can hold significant influence over a variety of topics (Cha et al., 2010). Thirdly, influence is not gained spontaneously or accidentally, but through concerted effort such as limiting tweets to a single topic (Cha et al., 2010).

In an interesting review, Weng et al. (2010) compare the number of followers and page rank with a modified page-rank measure, finding that ranking depended on the influence measure. Similarly, Bakshy et al. (2011) investigate the attributes and relative influence of 1.6 million Twitter users by tracking 74 million diffusion events that took place on the Twitter follower graph over a two-month interval in 2009 (Bakshy et al.,

2011). Unsurprisingly, they find that the largest cascades tend to be generated by users who have been influential in the past and who have a large number of followers (Bakshy et al., 2011). Wu et al. (2011) also provide a fascinating insight into the study of Twitter and information diffusion, as their study examines the production, flow, and consumption of information on Twitter.

Mass convergence and emergency events

Another prominent theme in the literature concerning Twitter revolves around the context of mass convergence and emergency events, ranging from mass crises, crime incidents to natural disasters. Hughes & Palen (2009) offer a descriptive account of Twitter across four high profile, mass convergence events—two emergency and two national security. They statistically examine how Twitter is being used surrounding these events and compare and contrast how that behaviour is different from more general Twitter use (Hughes & Palen, 2009). Hermida (2010) discusses how Twitter has emerged as a key medium for news and information about major events. In addition, Heverin & Zach (2010) report on the use of microblogging/Twitter as a communication and information sharing resource during a violent crisis. The shooting of four police officers and the subsequent 48-hour search for the suspect that took place in the Seattle-Tacoma area of Washington in late November 2009 is used as their case study (Heverin & Zach, 2010). They streamed and collected over 6,000 publically available messages on Twitter and categorised them into one of the five categories: Information, opinion, technology, emotion, and action-related (Heverin & Zach, 2010).

In a similar vein, Rogstadius et al. (2011) summarise conclusions drawn while using a software prototype that collects, clusters and visualises status updates from Twitter in relation to five large-scale events during the Spring of 2011. The events tracked were the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima plant in Japan; the civil war following the public protests in Libya; the political protests in Syria; protests in various countries in the Middle East (multiple countries together) and the final and semi-finals of the UEFA Champions League (Rogstadius et al., 2011). They conclude that clustering is an efficient method to reduce information overload when tracking large-scale events, by grouping together similar pieces of information from throughout the network into single stories (Rogstadius et al., 2011).

Online education

Similarly to the research concerning MXit and Facebook, another theme found in the literature concerning Twitter examines how social networking tools and micro blogging tools, like Twitter, possess great potential for enhancing the social context in support of learning, especially in online education. There is not much research on the possible academic uses of Twitter, with existing literature focusing more on its social uses. Increasingly though, educators are recognising the possibilities of tapping into the already popular social networking site to reach students with learning material (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009). In a teaching tip, Dunlap & Lowenthal (2009) describe their use of Twitter to encourage free-flowing interactions and how these interactions can enhance social presence in online courses. They also describe the instructional benefits of Twitter, and conclude with guidelines for incorporating Twitter in online courses (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009). Dunlap and Lowenthal (2009) make an additional contribution to this field in a paper entitled *Horton hears a tweet*. In this article they share some of the insights gained using Twitter as an instructional tool and explain why they think Twitter, despite its drawbacks (and really the drawbacks of social networking in general), can add value to online and face-to-face university courses (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009).

Using qualitative research methodology, Veletsianos (n.d.) analyses tweets from 45 scholars to understand their naturalistic practices in social networks in general and on Twitter in particular. His study identifies 7 themes, which indicate that scholars participating on Twitter (1) share information, resources, and media relating to their professional practice; (2) share information about their classroom and their students; (3) request assistance from and offer suggestions to others; (4) engage in social commentary; (5) engage in digital identity and impression management; (6) seek networking and making connections with others; and (7) highlight their participation in online networks other than Twitter.

Junco, Heiberger and Loken's (2010) study examines if using Twitter for educationally relevant purposes can impact college student engagement and grades. A total of 125 students taking a first year seminar course for pre-health professional majors participated in this study (70 in the experimental group and 55 in the control group).

Their study provides experimental evidence that Twitter can be used as an educational tool to help engage students and can be used to mobilise faculty into a more active and participatory role. In a similar vein, Grosbeck & Holotescu (2008) identify the pros and cons for using Twitter for educational purposes in their case study. In their examination of the platform, they felt that Twitter proved to be an effective tool for professional development and for collaboration with students.

Marketing capabilities

Although there has also been an increase in literature concerning Twitter and its marketing capabilities, it still remains sparse on a global scale, primarily because using Twitter for marketing purposes is a relatively new phenomenon. To date, little of the available literature concerning Twitter and its marketing potential appears to have permeated the discipline of academic literature. This study contributes towards this growing body of literature by examining how the adolescents interviewed for this thesis use Twitter to interact with their brands of choice.

There are numerous popular articles and self-help books that provide practical advice for businesses about how Twitter can help them improve their visibility in the market place, particularly through its potential to encourage word-of-mouth. Lacy's (2009) *Twitter Marketing for dummies*, Thomases' (2010) *Twitter marketing: An hour a day* and Weber's (2009) *Twitter Marketing: Promote Yourself and Your Business on Earth's Hottest Social Network* are just a few examples in this regard.

According to Jansen et al. (2009) given its distinct communication characteristics, microblogging (on Twitter) deserves serious attention as a form of electronic word-of-mouth. What makes micro blogging on Twitter particularly interesting to brand managers and advertisers as a form of electronic word of mouth is the fact that it enables people to share brand affecting thoughts (i.e. sentiments) about anything, at practically anytime to anyone connected to the Internet (Jansen et al., 2009). As discussed in the Facebook chapter as well, users are able to send positive feedback about the favourite brands, or negative feedback about their least favourite brands, to their network of associates by including that feedback in their statuses (Jansen et al., 2009). In the past, companies and brands would need to spend hundreds of thousands

of dollars on marketing research to find out what consumers were saying about them (Janusz, 2009). Now, brands can 'follow' what real customers are saying about them in real time (Janusz, 2009). Moreover, they can respond to these complaints if they choose by using a unique scanning tool provided by Twitter (Janusz, 2009). However, this puts an enormous amount of stress on brand managers, as 'following' what thousands of consumers are saying about a particular brand is a very time consuming endeavour (Rinaldo, Tapp & Laverie, 2011). If a Twitter user is unhappy about the service they received from a particular brand, all they need to do is tweet about it. If the brand wants to maintain a positive image and reputation online, they are more than likely going to respond to the Tweet via the means of a unique scanning tool provided by Twitter (Rinaldo, Tapp & Laverie, 2011). A growing number of companies are keeping track of what's said about their brands on Twitter. Comcast (CMCSA), Dell (DELL), General Motors (GM), H&R Block (HRB), Kodak (EK), and Whole Foods Market (WFMI) are among a handful of companies using Twitter to provide efficient customer service and raise brand awareness (King, 2008). In addition, numerous brands, including Cadbury's, LG, Volkswagen and Virgin America, attribute their brand success to Twitter (Twitter, n.d.). The attention to Twitter reflects the power of new social media tools in letting consumers shape public discussion over brands (King, 2008). Similarly to what was discussed within the Facebook chapter of this thesis, it also demonstrates a significant power shift in marketing, as consumers now hold the power within the branding hierarchy (Meadows-Klue, 2008; Ito et al., 2008).

The few academic articles surrounding Twitter and its potential as a brand building tool include the following discussions: Jansen et al. (2009) report research results investigating micro-blogging as a form of online word-of-mouth branding and also discuss the implications for organisations using micro-blogging as part of their overall marketing strategy. After analysing 149,472 micro-blog postings containing branding comments, sentiments, and opinions, their study concludes that one can view micro-blogging as a promising competitive intelligence source (Jansen et al., 2009). Jansen et al. (2009) explore this concept in more detail in a different study as well. In this paper they investigate microblogging as a form of electronic word-of-mouth for sharing consumer opinions concerning brands (Jansen et al., 2009). They analyse more than 150,000 microblog postings containing branding comments, sentiments, and opinions

and investigate the overall structure of these microblog postings, the types of expressions, and the movement in positive or negative sentiment (Jansen et al., 2009). They find that microblogging is an effective online tool for customer word-of-mouth communications and discuss the implications for corporations using microblogging as part of their overall marketing strategy (Jansen et al., 2009).

Bulearca and Bulearca (2010) explore whether Twitter should be utilised by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in their marketing strategies. Their study concludes that, although Twitter should not be viewed as 'the be all and end all for SME's communications', it is still a critical platform to embark on, especially if companies want a chance to listen to/influence consumers' opinions.

In a content analysis, Greer & Ferguson (2011) examine the Twitter sites of 488 local television stations in the United States, based on a strategic and tactical model of media promotion. One finding of the study was that news stories were the most frequently occurring items on the sites (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). However, stations that offered news items also seldomly promoted their regular newscasts (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). Overall, stations did not appear to use Twitter to direct viewers to the station's on-air programming (Greer & Ferguson, 2011).

In a study that can be categorised within the literature concerning both marketing and education, Rinaldo, Tapp & Laverie (2011) argue that Twitter has many benefits for marketing educators who are interested in engaging students in experiential learning. Their study argues that just as marketers use Twitter to generate interest, discussion, and brand image, educators can use Twitter to generate this interest in a course through social media (Rinaldo Tapp & Laverie, 2011).

Now that we have reviewed the existing body of literature concerning Twitter and how this thesis contributes towards this existing body of literature, we can move on to the findings gathered from the respondents.

FINDINGS: MOTIVATIONS FOR TWITTER USAGE AND NON-USAGE

The following section aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Why do some adolescents not use Twitter?
- 2) For what purposes do the sample of users attending Buren High School, Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School in Cape Town, South Africa use Twitter?
- 3) What benefits do these users obtain from their use of Twitter?

Responses from non-users

One of the reasons for certain male and female respondents not adopting Twitter as their social media brand of choice was the issue of complexity. Whilst all of the interviewees attending Rondebosch Boys High School utilise Twitter, numerous respondents attending Milnerton High School and Buren High School stated that they perceived Twitter to be a complicated platform to use and understand. This appears to correlate with Rogers (2003) 'Diffusion of Innovations' theory. Rogers' (2003) theory aims to investigate why certain innovations succeed and others are rejected by society. According to Rogers (2003) the complexity of an innovation can hinder its adoption rate amongst members of a social system. Numerous students stated that despite trying to negotiate their way around using the platform, its complexity resulted in them losing interest, as indicated by one respondent:

A: 'I signed up for Twitter and it was confusing for me' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

In order for one to use Twitter, the user needs to be in possession of a mobile phone that is WAP enabled. The reason for this is because unlike SMS messaging, Twitter uses Internet protocol to exchange messages. Once the individual has downloaded the application to their mobile phone, they can follow other users. Unlike on most social networking sites, such as Mxit, Facebook or MySpace, the relationship of following and being followed on Twitter requires no reciprocation (Bosch, 2008; Jansen et al., 2009). A user can follow any other user and the user being followed need not follow back (Jansen et al., 2009). Being a follower on Twitter means that the user receives all the messages (called tweets) from those the user follows (Jansen et al., 2009).

Users also need to be able to familiarise themselves with the specific technological

Twitter 'language' in order to be able to communicate effectively on the platform. Common practice of responding to a tweet has evolved into well-defined culture: RT stands for retweet, '@' followed by a user identifier address, and '#' followed by a word represents a hashtag (Kwak et al., 2010). The retweet mechanism allows users to forward a tweet by posting it again, thus empowering the user to spread information of their choice beyond the reach of the original tweet's followers (Kwak et al., 2010; Thelwall, Buckley & Paltoglou, 2011). The intention of retweeting is often to distribute information to the poster's followers, occasionally in an altered form (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). The reposting of the same (or similar) information works because members tend to follow alternate groups of people (Thelwall, Buckley & Paltoglou, 2010). However, retweeting also serves other purposes such as helping followers to find older posts (Thelwall, Buckley & Paltoglou, 2011). If retweeted, a tweet can expect to reach an average of 1000 users (Kwak et al., 2010).

The hashtag serves the purpose of helping others find a post, often by marking the tweet topic for its intended audience (Efron, 2010). The use of hashtags highlights the importance of widely communicating information on Twitter (Thelwall, Buckley & Paltoglou, 2011). In contrast, the '@' symbol is used to address a post to another registered Twitter user, allowing Twitter to be used quite effectively for conversations and collaboration (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009).

In light of this information pertaining how to use the application, from the user's perspective, in order to understand how to use Twitter, the user needs to possess a certain degree of knowledge about mobile phones and mobile Internet. In order for the user to download the application, one needs to be able to navigate to Twitter's website, and consequently, follow the prompts to download the application to one's phone. Numerous male and female respondents attending Buren High School and Milnerton High School perceived Twitter to be much more a complicated social platform to use in comparison to Mxit and Facebook. This appears to correlate with Goldstuck's (2010) research pertaining to technological literacy amongst South Africans. As mentioned earlier within this thesis, whilst many South Africans have phones that possess the ability to connect to applications like email, instant messaging, and the ability to browse the Internet; many have no idea how to use them (Goldstuck, 2010). This study is a case

in point, as numerous students attending the less affluent schools within this investigation understood how to use Twitter.

In addition, numerous male and female respondents did not like Twitter's lack of ability to facilitate conversation, as they preferred applications that enabled synchronous methods of communication.

A: 'It's very bland. There's not much to do. All you can do is follow people' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

A: 'It's boring' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

A: 'You can't chat to people like you can on BBM and MXit' (interview, Milnerton High School, 30/07/2012).

Responses from users

In their discussions as to why they engaged with Twitter, the participants attending Buren High School, Milnerton High School and Rondebosch Boys High School noted a number of purposes that the application served from their point of view. However, as the discussions progressed, it transpired that the use of Twitter, for example, to receive information from others, also led to certain gratifications being obtained. To this end, the participants offered varying and interesting insights as to the benefits they obtained, which will all be examined throughout the course of this chapter.

Brevity in expression

In contrast, the male and female users of Twitter expressed substantial enthusiasm for the brand. In this study, a common motivation for Twitter usage surrounded Twitter's ability to provide a user with short bursts of information, as posited by two respondents:

A: 'It's a nice way of getting quick information all the time' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

A: 'On Facebook people post their whole life story as a status. Twitter is cool because the updates are shorter and easier to read' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Kwak et al.'s (2010) observation in that Twitter's 'well-defined vocabulary combined

with a strict limit of 140 characters per posting convenience users with brevity in expression' is indeed correct.

Instantaneous communication and constant connectivity

Similarly to the chapter concerning Facebook, owners of BlackBerry Smartphones enjoyed the fact that their BlackBerry Smartphones enabled them to stay permanently connected to Twitter. Whereas other Internet-enabled mobile phones require the user to log into Twitter via their password and username each time they wish to access the application, BlackBerry Smartphones enable a user to stay logged in to Twitter for as long as the user desires. Both male and female respondents valued this instantaneity and convenient access, as they felt that the constant need to log in to Twitter with a password and username was a time-consuming hassle.

Similarly to Bosch's (2008) study, the adolescents interviewed for this thesis also appeared to value their model of mobile phone as a status symbol in their patterns of social networking. Belk (1984) characterises this type of behaviour, where consumers attach importance to a worldly possession as materialism. Respondents who were owners of BlackBerry Smartphones were proud to show the researcher the colour and model of their BlackBerry Smartphones, whilst respondents who did not own BlackBerry Smartphones appeared to feel the need to assure the researcher that although they did not own a BlackBerry yet, they were planning on 'getting' one in the near future. The findings of this study appear to correlate with Shim, Barber & Serido's (2011) observation, in that consumption has become central to adolescents' experience, influencing their values and attitudes, and ultimately shaping the course of their journey toward adulthood. Similarly to studies by Skogg (2002) and Green (2003) the adolescents interviewed for this thesis value their BlackBerry Smartphones as a means of symbolic expression, to convey their social status.

Receiving information from family members

Male and female respondents stated that they utilise Twitter to 'follow' their friends and family.

A: 'I use it to follow my friends, my family and like inspirational quotes, funny tweets and Islamic quotes' (interview, Buren High School, 31/07/2012).

Contrary to this thesis's observation concerning Mxit and Facebook, where we observed a correlation to Ling & Yttri's (2002:162) view of the mobile phone as an instrument to 'define a sense of group membership particularly vis-à-vis the older generation,' Twitter is not valued as a means to maintain privacy from parents. Rather, Twitter is valued as means to receive information. Respondents were not ashamed to 'follow' their family members on the platform.

Receiving information from entertainment celebrities

Similarly to the literature reviewed within the chapter concerning Facebook, Twitter is also used by celebrity brands to maintain their 'famous' status amongst their fans (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Following international entertainment celebrities was regarded as a popular motivation for Twitter usage amongst male and female respondents.

A: 'I follow Kim Kardashian, Lil Wayne, Drake' (Focus Group, Milnerton High School, 27/07/2012).

A: 'Since Twitter's come out, we'd rather follow people on Twitter than on Facebook. They update and tweet all the time, so you can rather follow you want that way. I like celebrities and bands and Dj's (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

A: 'Some celebrities, like Will Ferrel are also really funny, so it's nice to follow them' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Although celebrity following on Twitter is not as inflated in comparison to celebrity following on Facebook Pages, the numbers remain high. As witnessed within the past few paragraphs, some of the most popular choices of celebrity following on Twitter amongst respondents included, Kim Kardashian (who had accrued 16, 143, 250 followers on Twitter as of the 18th of September 2012), Lil Wayne (who had accrued 8, 371, 611 followers), Drake, (who had accrued 8, 953, 038) and soccer icon Wayne Rooney, who had accrued 5, 026, 751 followers.

Whilst respondents enjoyed following celebrities on Twitter, they expressed annoyance at users creating fake accounts, posing as celebrities. For this reason, Twitter created a system where accounts can be verified. According to Twitter's official website, any account with a Verified Badge is a Verified Account (Twitter, n.d.). Twitter uses this to

establish authenticity of well-known accounts so users can trust that a legitimate source is authoring their Tweets (Twitter, n.d.). Verification is used to establish authenticity for accounts who deal with identity confusion regularly on Twitter (Twitter, n.d.). The Verified Badge will appear in the top-right portion of a user's profile page just above the name, location and biography (Twitter, n.d.). If the Verified Badge appears anywhere else on a user's profile page, it is not a Verified Account (Twitter, n.d.). However, despite Twitter's attempt at rectifying this problem of users creating fake accounts, the respondents interviewed for this thesis still found this problematic and frustrating.

Receiving information from sports teams and players

Similarly to the study concerning Facebook, the following of primarily male sports icons/celebrities and sporting events was also a popular motivation for Twitter usage. Male respondents within the study expressed this as a motivation for usage.

A: 'I follow comedians or I'll follow a soccer team, like Rio Ferdinand and Wayne Rooney' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

A: 'I follow updates for Sports and the Olympics and so on. But I mainly follow rugby players' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

A: 'Supersport. They give you the schedule of stuff and what not... Stormers and Springboks, they say like where they're training and stuff. You can go to the training ground, when they're there' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

Similarly to Kwak et al. (2010), this study also discovered that Twitter more closely resembles an information-sharing network. These adolescents use Twitter to share and receive information from friends, family and celebrities.

Contacting sporting icons

The male respondents interviewed for this thesis also attempt to contact their favourite sporting icons via Twitter. Entertainers, public figures and technologists actively contribute to the construction of their persona through public interaction with their fans via Twitter (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Celebrities use public acknowledgment, in the form of '@replies', to connect with their fans, whilst fans '@reply' to celebrities in the hope of receiving a reply (Marwick & boyd, 2011). If fans receive @replies back, they are regarded as an emblem of status and are broadcasted within the fan community on

Twitter (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Celebrities mention fans on Twitter to perform connection and availability, give back to loyal followers, and manage their popularity as 'personal brands' (Marwick & boyd, 2011). It can certainly be argued that Twitter brings celebrities and their fans closer together through this mechanism (Marwick & boyd, 2011). One of the male respondents interviewed for this thesis stated that he had used this tool on Twitter to 'tweet' a message to one of his favourite sporting icons and that he did in fact receive a response from the icon as well.

A: 'When the Chiefs won the semi-final I tweeted Sonny Williams and Liam Messam about their performances and stuff. Liam Messam actually tweeted back which was really cool' (interview, Rondebosch Boys High School, 02/08/2012).

As witnessed throughout the various statements gathered from male respondents in this study, rugby, the sport that has been argued to occupy a powerful place within South African popular culture, appeared to resonate across all three schools in the investigation (Nauright, 1996:127). During the apartheid years, rugby became increasingly politicised and racialised, strongly associated with Afrikaaner identity and nationalism (Grundlingh, 1996:108). Evidently, this has transformed since democracy. The findings within this study reveal that adolescents of various races and classes in post-1994 South Africa admire rugby teams and rugby players.

Similarly to the responses within the chapters concerning both MXit and Facebook, the male respondents within this study use Twitter to have some form of connection with male-dominated sports teams, or male sporting icons. Sport traditionally has been a domain of male achievement and sportsmen have always been idols, admired by male adolescents, offering them essential help and orientation (Colley, Berman & van Millingen, 2005; Biskup & Pfister, 1999). Similarly to the findings of this thesis, other studies investigating the significance of sporting icons during adolescence have identified similar patterns concerning the differences between male and female respondents. Biskup and Pfister (1999) identified that male and female pupils in Germany frequently choose athletes as role models. Based on a series of interviews, the majority of boys identified sporting heroes or action stars as their role models because of their aggression, strength and ability to get things done. Similarly to the female respondents interviewed for this thesis, the girls interviewed for Biskup and Pfister's (1999) study preferred movie and pop stars because of their appearance and social

behaviour. Ewens and Lashuk (1989) discovered similar results in their study, which found that sportsmen were identified significantly more often than sportswomen as role models, while male sports were much more popular than female sports. Similarly, using the 'Draw a Sportsperson test' Colley, Berman & Millingen (2005) investigated pre-adolescent and middle-adolescent girls' and boys' perceptions of sport. Almost all the male respondents drew male sporting figures. Evidently, this trend concerning different genders appears to exist within different countries as well.

Political brands

Similarly to the responses reviewed within the chapter concerning Facebook, both male and female respondents stated that they had no interest in following political brands or political figures on Twitter.

A: 'We can't vote, so what's the point of following them' (Focus Group, Rondebosch Boys High School, 23/07/2012).

In South Africa, political party brands have also begun to utilise Twitter to connect with the public. Both The African National Congress and the Democratic Alliance have existing Twitter accounts. As of the 7th of October 2012, the ANC had accrued 27 265 followers on Twitter, and the Democratic Alliance had accrued 13, 591 followers. In addition, political figures within these parties also use Twitter to connect with the public. As of the 7th of October 2012, Helen Zille had accrued 184, 994 followers, whilst President Jacob Zuma had accrued 169, 238 followers. However, despite their presence on social media, this sample of adolescents expressed no interest in connecting with politicians or their parties.

Keeping up-to-date with current events

Fascinatingly, another common gratification experienced through Twitter usage amongst respondents was its ability to assist them in keeping track of current events. A number of respondents stated that they enjoyed following news organisations like *Sky News* to keep track of what was happening in the world.

As witnessed throughout the chapters of this study, the adolescents interviewed for this thesis are using the mobile social networking brands available to them in a variety of

fascinating ways. The next and final chapter examines these findings in light of the bigger framework of this thesis—concerning the mobile social networking patterns of South African adolescents. In light of these findings, the researcher also provides suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis explored MXit, Facebook and Twitter to gain a better understanding of the mobile social networking patterns amongst a sample of adolescents attending three different high schools in Cape Town, South Africa. This thesis has demonstrated that whilst MXit, Facebook and Twitter can all be categorised under the umbrella term of 'social networks,' each social networking brand serves a different purpose within the lives of these adolescents. As mentioned within this thesis's research methodology, the researcher did not identify racial differences concerning the patterns of social media consumption amongst respondents. However, the researcher did identify differences in the usage patterns concerning different genders and different classes (schools) across the sample. These areas will be identified within the discussion below.

MXit

In terms of male and female adolescents' MXit use, this thesis has demonstrated that MXit resonates particularly well with many of the fundamental developmental tasks of adolescence by enabling instantaneous contact with peers (Berndt, 1982), interaction with celebrity images (Engle & Kasser, 2005), privacy from parental observation (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), as well as providing opportunities for sexual experimentation (Collins, 2003). Both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis use MXit to chat with peers that they have and have not met within an offline capacity. In addition, they primarily use MXit Chat Zones to create virtual identities to flirt with MXit users they have never met within an offline capacity.

Both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis also use MXit's Tradepost function to add brands to their contact list of 'friends.' They primarily use this function to receive updates from the product brands they purchase in the offline world, such as Adidas and Nike. The adolescents interviewed for this thesis use this option to add brands via Tradepost as they believe it provides them with product information they perceive to be important, regarding sales and discounted merchandise. Both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis also use Tradepost to download 'Skinz' of their favourite brands. Whilst male respondents favoured entertainment celebrities, male sports icons and male-dominated sports teams in their choices of MXit Skinz,

female respondents primarily favoured entertainment celebrities. Both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis also enter competitions via MXit's TradePost function. MXit facilitates peer-to-peer marketing in these campaigns/competitions, by enabling adolescents to actively participate in the branding process through their interactive, narrative-based competitions.

In this study, the students attending Rondebosch Boys High School who no longer use MXit as a communication medium appeared to alter their choice of social media brand based on the choices of their network of friends. The male adolescents attending Rondebosch Boys High School posited that as the majority of their friends were no longer using MXit as a social media platform, it was perceived as a 'useless' and 'outdated' communicative medium. In light of this evidence, researchers should conduct further exploration into adolescents in South Africa and their levels of loyalty to the brands they affiliate with. Are adolescent consumers in South Africa loyal to their friends or are they loyal to particular brands? As social media platforms are primarily utilised to facilitate interpersonal communication with a user's network of associates, is it the brand quality and name, or essentially the network of associates that would affect a user's decision to adopt or not adopt a social media brand? This research would be valuable to youth marketers and manufacturers, for brands whose consumers are strongly loyal can gain important competitive advantages, such as reduced corporate marketing and transactional costs, increased cross-selling rate, a greater positive word-of-mouth effect and reduced cost of failure (Jang et al., 2008 citing Griffin, 1996). In fact, brand loyalty is a key indicator of the sustainability of a brand because being loyal to a brand makes its consumers less likely to switch to competitive brands even when competitors offer more benefits (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012 citing Oliver, 1999). Aaker (1996) posits a similar view in his discussion pertaining to brand loyalty. Aaker (1996) states that a market can usually be divided into the following groups: noncustomers (those who buy competitor brands or are not product class users), price switchers (those who are price sensitive), the passively loyal (those who buy out of habit rather than reason), fence sitters (those who are indifferent between two or more brands), and the committed (Aaker, 1996). The challenge is to improve the brand's loyalty profile: to increase the number of customers who are not price switchers, to strengthen the fence sitters' and committed's ties to the brand, and to increase the

number who would pay more (or endure some inconvenience) to use the brand or service (Aaker, 1996).

Further research in this area would not only provide valuable information pertaining to adolescents and their levels of brand loyalty; it could also provide more insight into how the hierarchal system of class affects the purchase decisions of adolescents in South Africa. In van der Linde's (2009) investigation regarding MXit, respondents attending SACS High School, which is also located within the more affluent Southern suburbs of Cape Town, also appeared to 'have grown bored of MXit'. Similarly to the respondents attending the more affluent Rondebosch Boys High School in this investigation, van der Linde (2009) expressed that the SACS respondents interviewed for his thesis also perceived MXit to be 'behind the times'. This certainly deserves further investigation. How do adolescents attending more affluent schools perceive the MXit brand? Why do they perceive the brand in this way? As scholars on the Cape Flats were among the earliest and most enthusiastic adopters of the technology (Knott-Craig & Silber, 2012), could MXit now be associated as a brand that is more appropriate for adolescents who are less affluent?

Facebook

In terms of male and female adolescents' Facebook use, this thesis has demonstrated that Facebook also resonates particularly well with many of the fundamental developmental tasks of adolescence by enabling asynchronous and instantaneous contact with peers (Berndt, 1982), interaction with celebrities (Engle & Kasser, 2005), privacy from parental observation (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), as well as opportunities for sexual experimentation (Collins, 2003). In addition, both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis archive/document various aspects of their lives by uploading photographs, broadcasting status messages and commenting on information.

The male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis appeared to favour Facebook Pages as an avenue of permission marketing, as they use the technology to receive updates from their favourite brands. Whilst male respondents used Facebook Pages to maintain contact with entertainment celebrities, male sporting icons and male-

dominated sports teams, female respondents primarily used Facebook Pages to maintain contact with entertainment celebrities. Both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis perceived Facebook's paid advertising options to be 'annoying'. Instead of being spammed with advertising that they perceived as unnecessary and irrelevant, they appeared to value receiving information from the brands they chose to affiliate with via Facebook's Pages function. This observation provides valuable insight for youth marketers, as it illustrates how South African adolescents prefer to interact with brands.

From vocalising their disdain towards receiving poor customer service, to purchasing products of a poor quality, the male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis also use Facebook to voice their dissatisfaction about particular brands. The adolescents interviewed for this thesis use Facebook to 'talk back to brands' via two avenues— statuses and Pages. Certain adolescents interviewed for this thesis admitted to criticising brands via their Facebook statuses, which is broadcast to their entire network of friends. In addition, certain adolescents interviewed for this thesis admitted to voicing their dissatisfaction about certain brands in a more direct manner, by criticising brands on the walls of their Facebook Pages. In the social media age, the consumer now has more control than ever (Ito et al., 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Meadows-Klue, 2008) and the adolescents interviewed for this thesis are using this to their advantage.

Twitter

In terms of adolescents' Twitter use, this thesis has demonstrated that Twitter is not used to facilitate instantaneous conversation or maintain privacy from parents. Rather, Twitter is primarily used as a mechanism to broadcast information to and obtain information from both peers and brands. Similarly to the chapters concerning Mxit and Facebook, whilst male respondents used Twitter to follow male sports icons, male-dominated sports teams and entertainment celebrities, female respondents primarily used Twitter to follow entertainment celebrities. Instead of engaging in conversation, both male and female respondents favoured Twitter as a means to receive short bursts of information whilst on the move.

Thus, in contrast to Facebook, Twitter operates as more of an educational tool within the branding sphere. Whilst both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis use Twitter to receive information from certain brands, they are not using Twitter to voice their dissatisfaction about brands. In addition, unlike their usage of MXit and Facebook, both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis do not use Twitter to follow product brands.

Unlike certain students attending Buren High School and Milnerton High School, students attending the more affluent Rondebosch Boys High School had no difficulty in utilising Twitter. They do not perceive Twitter to be a complicated platform. In light of this observation, further investigation could provide insight into how class and inequality affects technological literacy levels in post-Apartheid South Africa. Do students attending less affluent schools struggle to understand new forms of digital technology? Who teaches less affluent students how to navigate on social media platforms? Do the students attending more affluent schools have better access to newer forms of technology? Who teaches more affluent students how to use social media platforms? Does the affluence of their parents affect the kinds of technology they have access to? These questions deserve further exploration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through its exploration of South African adolescents' use of mobile social media platforms, this thesis has demonstrated that although MXit, Facebook and Twitter are all significantly different in structure, there are two key attributes that bind the usage patterns of all three of these social networking brands together. Not only do MXit, Facebook and Twitter provide a platform for the adolescents interviewed for this thesis to communicate with one another; they also provide a platform for them to interact with their brands of choice. The findings of this thesis provides a novel contribution to the existing body of literature concerning social media and marketing in South Africa and also provides useful and valuable information for youth marketers and innovators. Prior to this thesis, no academic research had investigated the unique relationship South African adolescents have with brands (products, entertainment celebrities, sporting icons, sporting teams) on these three mobile social media platforms.

Both male and female adolescents interviewed for this thesis use each of these mobile social media brands to participate in some form of brand communication. Whilst MXit facilitates peer-to-peer marketing amongst the adolescents interviewed for this thesis, Facebook enables these adolescents to join brand communities and voice their dissatisfaction as consumers within these brand communities. In contrast to both MXit and Facebook, Twitter is primarily valued as a tool that disseminates brand information. Each of these social media platforms grants these adolescents a greater degree of power within the branding hierarchy (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010).

Instead of going to the branded store in the offline world and purchasing an expensive Nike or Adidas t-shirt (two popular choices of product brands amongst respondents), the respondents interviewed for this thesis show their friends what brands they affiliate with via their personal social media profiles. Whether this is via a MXit Skin, or via 'liking' the brand on Facebook, the adolescents interviewed for this thesis express their allegiance to high end brands, on public platforms, at practically no cost at all. This is a concept that certainly deserves more exploration in a developing country like South Africa.

Whilst product brands were mentioned as popular brand choices amongst respondents in their MXit and Facebook usage, connecting and interacting with celebrity brands appeared to be one of the most popular motivations for usage across all three of the social networking brands under investigation. The adolescents interviewed for this thesis primarily valued MXit, Facebook and Twitter for entertainment purposes—as a means to connect with one another and connect with celebrities. Whilst both male and female respondents favoured entertainment celebrities, male respondents favoured male sporting icons and male-dominated teams as well.

In light of these findings, further research should be conducted in this arena, to assess the power and marketing influence that celebrities hold within the lives of South African adolescents. This would provide valuable insight for marketers and innovators into the purchase decisions of South African adolescents. Do celebrity endorsements affect the

purchase decisions of South African adolescents? Brand Affinity Technologies conducted a study and found that endorsed messages on Facebook and Twitter are 50% more effective in cost-per-action than Facebook and Twitter advertisements that did not feature celebrities (Lueck, 2012). Another study by Nielsen Research concludes that 64% of adult users in the United States of America who follow a celebrity on Twitter also follow a brand, which means the celebrity follower is four times more likely to follow a brand than the average United States adult online (Lueck, 2012 citing Kramer 2011). Similar research needs to be conducted amongst adolescent consumers in South Africa to assess how celebrities influence their brand choices.

Both male and female respondents interviewed for this thesis did not express any interest in being able to communicate with politicians, or engage in political activism via MXit, Facebook or Twitter. Thus, although social media platforms certainly possess the potential to help develop a stronger democracy in South Africa, by granting participants the opportunity to critique political brands on social media platforms, there are limitations in this regard. However, as this study interviewed students between the ages of 13-17 years, further research should be conducted amongst individuals who are eligible to vote, for example: University students. Although there was little evidence to support political communication via social media within this thesis, further research amongst different age groups and different social classes may yield different results.

APPENDIX

Focus group discussion sheet

- Tell me about which kind of social networking platforms you access via your mobile phones.
- I have heard that MXit, Facebook and Twitter are some of the most popular social networking brands amongst high school students. Tell me more about your experience with these three sites in particular.
- For those of you who do use MXit, why do you use it?
- What do you usually do on MXit?
- For those of you who don't use MXit, why don't you use it?
- Do you ever chat to people you have never met? What do you usually chat to these people about?
- Are you honest about the information you include on your MXit profile? Please elaborate on any fake information you may include.
- How do your parents feel about you using MXit?
- Please tell me about the times you have ever been/felt threatened on MXit?
- Are you allowed to access MXit at school?
- What kind of photographs do you exchange on MXit?
- Have you always found MXit easy to use?
- What motivated you to start using Facebook?
- How is Facebook different to MXit?
- How many hours do you believe you spend browsing Facebook per day?
- What do you usually do on Facebook?
- How do you usually access Facebook?
- Do you ever chat to people that you have never met?
- For those of you who do use Facebook, why do you use it?
- Do any of you have your parents as friends on Facebook? Why do you or why don't you have them as friends on Facebook?
- Are any of you fans of certain products or celebrities on Facebook? Why are you fans of them?
- What are your thoughts on Facebook's paid advertising?

- Do you have any interest in following the activities of politicians or political parties parties on Facebook?
- What kind of photographs do you post on Facebook?
- Are you allowed to use Facebook at school?
- How do your parents feel about you having a Facebook account?
- For those of you who don't use Facebook, why don't you use it?
- For those of you who do use Twitter, why do you use it?
- Do you feel that Twitter and Facebook serve different purposes in your life?
- Who do you follow on Twitter?
- Do your parents use Twitter? How does this make you feel?
- For those of you who don't use Twitter, why don't you use it?
- What influences your decisions in the social networks that you use?
- Do you feel that social networking gives you more confidence when it comes to chatting to members of the opposite sex? Please elaborate.
- Please elaborate on the instances that you have created fake social media accounts.

Interview guide: Milnerton High School

- Do you use MXit?
- How do you feel MXit benefits or improves your life?
- What do you usually do on MXit?
- Do you ever use Multi MXit?
- How do your parents feel about you using MXit?
- Do you have a MXit Skin? What do you have as your MXit Skin?
- Do you have any businesses/brands as contacts on MXit? Please tell me about them.
- Do you ever use MXit to enter competitions? Tell me about them.
- Do you use Facebook?
- What do you usually do on Facebook? Why do you use it?
- Would you still use Facebook if other users knew that you looked at their profile?
- Do you like the fact that you can gaze at the profiles of other users without their knowledge?
- Have you ever used Facebook to learn more about someone that you liked? Please elaborate if you have.

- Do you ever look at the profiles of users that you are not friends with? Tell me why you do or do not.
- What kind of statuses do you broadcast on Facebook?
- How does it make you feel when people 'like' your Facebook status or photos?
- What kind of comments do you make on peoples Facebook postings?
- What kind of fan pages do you like on Facebook?
- Do you ever leave comments on the fan pages that you 'like'?
- Do you ever complain about receiving bad service on Facebook? Where do you place your complaints?
- How do you feel about Twitter?
- Why do you use or not use Twitter?
- Who do you follow on Twitter and why do you follow them?
- What kind of celebrities do you follow on Twitter?
- Have you ever tried to contact a celebrity via Twitter?

Interview guide: Buren High School

- Do you use MXit?
- How do you feel MXit benefits or improves your life?
- What do you usually do on MXit?
- Do you ever use Multi MXit?
- How do your parents feel about you using MXit?
- Do you have a MXit Skin? What do you have as your MXit Skin?
- Do you have any businesses/brands as contacts on MXit?
- Do you ever use MXit to enter competitions? Tell me about them.
- Do you use Facebook?
- What do you do on Facebook? Why do you use it?
- Would you still use Facebook if people knew that you looked at their profile?
- Do you like the fact that you can gaze at the profiles of other users without their knowledge?
- Have you ever used Facebook to learn more about someone that you liked? Please elaborate if you have.
- Do you ever look at the profiles of users that you are not friends with? Tell me why you do or do not.

- What kind of statuses do you broadcast on Facebook?
- How does it make you feel when people 'like' your Facebook status or photos?
- What kind of comments do you make on peoples Facebook postings?
- What kind of fan pages do you like on Facebook?
- Do you ever leave comments on the fan pages that you 'like'?
- Do you ever complain about receiving bad service on Facebook? Where do you place your complaints?
- How do you feel about Twitter?
- Why do you use or not use Twitter?
- Who do follow on Twitter and why do you follow them?
- What kind of celebrities do you follow on Twitter?
- Have you ever tried to contact a celebrity via Twitter?

Interview guide: Rondebosch Boys High School

- During the focus group I conducted with you and your classmates, it was revealed that MXit is no longer regarded as a popular social media brand. Why don't you use MXit anymore? When did you stop using it?
- What do you do on Facebook?
- Why do you use Facebook?
- Do you feel it is easier to chat to members of the opposite sex via instant messaging?
- Would you still use Facebook if people knew that you looked at their profile?
- Do you like the fact that you can gaze at the profiles of other users without their knowledge?
- Have you ever used Facebook to learn more about someone that you liked? Please elaborate if you have.
- Do you ever look at the profiles of users that you are not friends with? If you do, please elaborate.
- What kind of statuses do you broadcast on Facebook?
- How does it make you feel when people 'like' your Facebook status or photos?
- What kind of comments do you make on the Facebook postings of users on your friends list?
- What kind of fan pages do you like on Facebook?
- Do you ever leave comments on the fan pages that you 'like'?

-Do you ever complain about receiving bad service on Facebook? Where do you place your complaints?

-How do you feel about Twitter?

-Do you ever follow celebrities or companies on Twitter? Please elaborate.

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