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Consumer perceptions of real-time marketing used in campaigns for retail businesses

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ABSTRACT

This research empirically investigates consumers' perception of real-time marketing as a marketing tool that is increasingly being used by businesses. Based on the review of literature, the paper aims to delve into real-time marketing and explore the elements of real-time marketing that influence consumers' perception of RTM campaigns. This study adopted a quantitative methodology. A total of 201 consumers completed an online survey in Gauteng, South Africa. To identify underlying factors that influence the consumer's perception of various real-time marketing campaigns, exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Descriptive statistic was used to provide a further summary of the basic characteristics of the sample. The research findings indicate that consumers value real-time marketing communication campaigns that offer value. Consumers' perception of value includes any real-time marketing campaign that offers some financial gain in the form of immediate and personalized discounts. This research provides retailers with a greater understanding of what consumers perceive as valuable and what they regard as clutter when it comes to real-time marketing campaigns.

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Introduction

The marketing techniques used by businesses have evolved with the advancements in technology, software, digital devices and the advent of social media (Sinarta & Buhalis, 2017). Previously, businesses would push communications to the consumer but today businesses can interact with customers in real-time through various platforms (Rowe, 2016). Businesses are also able to track customers' conversations on social media, use software to gather data regarding their purchase history etcetera and send out the right messages to the right customers in real-time (Rowe, 2016). This has brought about the rise of real-time marketing campaigns used by retail businesses.

The concept of real-time marketing is not new and has been around since the mid-nineties (Huff, 2014). Many companies at the time realized that to stay up to date with trends, marketing campaigns needed to be shorter and as close to real-time as possible to adequately respond to consumers' changing needs (Huff, 2014). With the introduction of social media and the advancements of technology in recent years, businesses have been able to better engage in real-time marketing efforts and are better able to recognize opportunities to engage with and respond effectively to their customers in real-time (Torres & Restrepo, 2015). In 2013, Oreo sparked renewed interest in real-time marketing. When the power went off at the Superbowl, Oreo immediately sent out a tweet on Twitter that read "You can still dunk in the dark" with an image of an Oreo in the dark. Oreo seized an opportunity in a clever and witty way, and this paid off for the brand (Rothenberg, 2015). Many brands have since started taking advantage of the various technology and media to engage in real-time marketing campaigns (Cherukuri, 2018). As technological advancements allow for more communication channels and tools to permit real-time interaction, the more accessible real-time marketing has become to retail businesses (Lieb, 2017). Real-time marketing has been adopted by many brands and retail businesses over the years and has been widely discussed in the industry (Sinarta and Buhalis, 2017). Industry experts such as Evergage (2016) and Adobe & Direct Marketing Association (2013) have researched real-time marketing perceptions from a business and marketer perspective. These research reports provide valuable insights and key guidelines for a retail business to implement real-time marketing.

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The Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has resulted in a shift in the way in which people interact with the world around them (Globaldata.com 2020). Many countries worldwide implemented strict lockdown rules in 2020 to curb the spread of COVID-19. As a result, consumers worldwide were forced to change their behavior and many activities such as working, exercise, schooling, entertainment and shopping was moved to online platforms. The retail environment has been moving towards multi-channel strategies which incorporates various online and offline channels (Globaldata.com 2020), however, COVID-19 spurred this move. In order to gain the attention of customers in this new normal, many retailers businesses looked towards alternative strategies such as real-time marketing to stay relevant, positive and to foster positive consumer behavior (Adform, 2020). With COVID-19 being present in the world for the foreseeable future, incorporating real-time marketing into retail businesses marketing strategies can assist in building and fostering relationships with customers (O'Brein, 2020).

Despite the surge of interest and increasing use of real-time marketing by retail businesses and brands, little scholarly attention has been given to examining real-time marketing as a concept from a consumer's perspective, particular looking at the consumer's perception of this type of marketing campaigns that are aimed at them. The limited research conducted on real-time marketing comprises of discussing the implications of real-time marketing to marketers and how it can be implemented by a business (Oliver, Rust & Varki, 1998), the implementation of real-time marketing from a brand or company perspective (Thorat, Haridas, Kakkar & Alexander, 2015; Melen & Forsblom, 2017; Akcay & Okay, 2017; Willemsen, Mazerant, Kamphius & van der Veen, 2019) and the use of real-time marketing to co-create personalized customer service within the tourism and hospitality industry (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). A search on several academic databases (Ebscohost, Proquest, Web of science as well as Google Scholar) found there to be limited academic research on the concept of real-time marketing as a whole, specifically consumers perceptions towards real-time marketing campaigns. There is however a wide scope of research that investigates the elements of real-time marketing which include personalization of marketing messages (Strycharz, Noort, Smit & Helberger, 2019; Meyer-Waarden, 2013); automation of marketing messages (Tonkova, 2016; Roy, Padmakumar, Jeganathan & Kumaraguru, 2015), the use of news and events in marketing (Melen & Forsblom, 2017; Angell, Gorton, Bottomley, Marder, Bhaskar & White, 2019) and location-based marketing (Tussyadiah, 2012; Wong & Guan, 2018). While these elements are investigated in various context and industries, limited research has however focused on the use of these elements by retail businesses in real-time marketing campaigns as a whole from a consumer's perspective.

Based on the background, the problem identified in the current research was how do consumers perceive real-time marketing campaigns of retail businesses that are aimed at them. The objective of the research was to explore the elements of real-time marketing that influence consumers perception of real-time marketing campaigns of retail businesses. In order to achieve the research objectives, quantitative research was used as the research involved exploring elements of real-time marketing that influence the consumer's perception. An online survey questionnaire was developed based on the literature relating to elements of real-time marketing. The research was conducted in the context of a developing country, South Africa. As such the sample group was consumers between the ages of 18 and 65 that reside in Gauteng, South Africa. Gauteng was selected as it is seen as the countries commercial hub.

The current research bridges the gap between the business or marketer's perspective of real-time marketing as a whole available in the literature by providing a consumer's perspective of real-time marketing campaigns that are aimed at them. This research also aimed to explore the elements of real-time marketing and to determine what real-time marketing elements consumer viewed as valuable. The research contributes to marketing theory by elaborating on real-time marketing from a consumer's perspective whilst providing valuable insight into the marketing tools to practitioners to better improve communication with consumers and competitiveness.

The following sections build on the literature review and provide a theoretical background on communication in the retail industry, consumer perception. The concept of real-time marketing is discussed and the current literature regarding real time-marketing is provided. The aims, objectives and research methodology is provided, followed by the research findings. Finally, a conclusion is provided indicating the implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Communication in the retail industry

Retailing was traditionally developed as a means of trading excess goods manufactured for other useful commodities (Stobart & Howard, 2019). This trading system over time became more formalized and transformed into the retail business we know today (Stobart & Howard, 2019). A retailer refers to any business that sells goods or services to the final consumer (Berman, Evans & Chatterjee, 2018). Retailing can be described as all the activities that contribute to the value of the goods or services that are offered to the final consumer (Prabhu, 2019). Retailers perform several roles, from being the final link in the supply chain, delivering value to the customer, creating employment and communicating to the customers (Berman, Evans & Chatterjee, 2018).

Communication is essential for retailers as it is a means of building the retailers competitive advantage in the market (Zhu & Gao, 2019). The way in which retailers have communicated with customers has evolved from one-way communication (the retailer alone communicates with the customer) to two-way communication (communication can occur to and from the customer and the retailer (Berman, Evans & Chatterjee, 2018). New technology has provided retailers with the ability to communicate with the customer,

anytime, anyplace and through a medium that the consumer prefers (Pluta-Olearnik & Jadach, 2019). Kaur, Arora & Bali (2020) state that new technology and digital platforms provide retailers with analytics that can be used to improve customer satisfaction and personalize marketing efforts. Passavanti, Pantano, Priporas & Verteramo (2020), found in their research on the use of new technologies for corporate marketing communication in luxury retailing, that there are many benefits for retailers in making use of new technology and marketing communication media platforms. The research, which made use of a multi-case study approach, indicated that although retailers are aware of the benefits of using new technology in marketing communication and media platforms, the effective use of technology is still limited (Passavanti, et al, 2020). Marino & Presti (2019) indicate that technology such as mobile instant messaging provides retailers with creative and interactive means of engaging and building relationships with customers, which results in positive customer behavior.

The retailer's retailer communicates with their customer often can influence the perceptions that the consumer forms about the retailer. Chan, Chan & Tang, (2017) state that retailers communication with customer through various media channels can influence the consumer's perception towards the retailer and their products. McClure & Seock (2020) indicates that the quality of information that the brand makes available through social media can influence the consumer's attitude towards the brand and influence the consumer's purchase intention. It is thus important that retailers select the right marketing communication media to communicate with the consumer.

Consumer perception

On average, consumers are exposed to 5.000 to 10.000 advertisements from brands daily from billboards, their mobile devices, the internet, social media, e-mails, television and radio (Tunikova, 2018; Fournier, Breazeale & Avery, 2015). These brand messages that the consumers are exposed to, convey a message to the consumer. The consumers will then decide if they will pay attention to a particular message or if they will ignore the message (Roberts-Lombard & Parumasur, 2017). The messages that the consumers pay attention to will be interpreted according to their own experiences and learning (Babin & Harris, 2017).

Perception is the unconscious process that an individual goes through when he/she is exposed to stimuli, whereby the individual will select, organize and interpret the stimuli through his/her senses (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2018). Perception is selective, which means that individuals can decide which stimuli they want to pay attention to (Cunningham, 2018). As consumers are bombarded with advertising messages daily, they only pay attention to those that they perceive as useful or interesting to them (Roberts-Lombard & Parumasur, 2017). Businesses and marketers have to ensure that consumers not only pay attention to their advertisement messages but that they interpret it and understand the intended message (Babin & Harris, 2017).

Perception guides consumers when they make decisions such as which retailer to purchase at, what to purchase and which brand to purchase (Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2018). A consumer who for example has had a negative experience with a retail store or feels that the retail store is too expensive will have a negative perception about the retailer. The consumer may subsequently ignore any stimuli received from the retailer and not make any purchases. The perception of a consumer is influenced by various factors. Elliott & Cameron (1994) indicate that factors such as the quality of a product and country of origin influence the consumer's perception when making product purchases. Dehghani & Tumer (2015) suggest that advertising on social media such as Facebook significantly impacts the consumer's perception of a brands image and brand quality. Brand image and brand quality are also factors that contribute to the consumer's purchase intention (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015).

Numerous research studies have been conducted over the years by scholars to determine and understand consumer perceptions in different fields such as marketing communication, social media, travel and tourism, product quality, e-commerce etc. (Culotta & Cutler, 2016; Bilgihan, Barreda, Okumus & Nusair, 2016; Singh & Rana, 2017). Gironde & Korgaonkar (2018) examined consumers perception of personalized advertising. The study, which aimed to assess the effects of consumer perceptions of personalized advertising on purchase intention found that factors such as invasiveness, privacy controls, consumer innovativeness and perceived usefulness influenced how consumers perceived personalized advertisements. Lin, Paragas & Bautista (2016), examined factors that affect mobile consumer's perception of the advertising value of location-based location mobile advertising. The results indicate that consumers perception of location-based advertising value is influenced by privacy concerns. Consumers value of location-based advertising was found to increase consumers' response to purchase advertised brands (Lin, Paragas & Bautista, 2016). In their study of mobile political advertising, Yaakop, Ismail & Ariffin (2019) found that the consumer's perception towards the media used to interact with them influenced the way in which the consumer interacted with the communication. In measuring consumer perception, Yaakop, Ismail & Ariffin (2019) considered the role of attitude, hedonic pleasure, product information, falsity/no sense and the social role of advertising when measuring consumer perceptions. Li (2019), examined advertising avoidance of search engine advertising in China. The results indicated that consumers perception had a significant impact on search engine advertising avoidance (Li, 2019). Harms, Bijmolt & Hoekstra (2019), measured the consumer perceptions of digital native advertising and banner advertising by measuring the consumer's attitude towards an advert as well as the credibility of the advertisement. The data was collected from a panel of 303 respondents in the Netherlands. The respondents consisted of male participants between the ages of 20-40 years. The results of the research indicate that banner advertisements perform significantly better than article style native advertisements (Harms, Bijmolt & Hoekstra, 2019).

Consumer perception and marketing clutter campaigns

With so many different marketing channels and platforms available, marketing clutter increasingly more prevalent (Saini & Singh, 2020). Marketing clutter refers to the overexposure of messages and campaigns that consumers are exposed to daily, which often leads to these messages being ignored (Fetchko, Roy & Clow, 2019). When exposed to what consumers consider as marketing clutter, consumers often apply avoidance tactics such as ignoring the advertisements, banner blindness (this is learnt behavioral or active avoidance) and applying blocking software to block or remove advertising messages on various platforms or channels (Kelly, Kerr & Drennan, 2020). Rejon-Guardia & Martinez-Lopez (2014) state that advertising clutter is one of the barriers to positive consumer perceptions and ultimately consumer purchase behavior. Research conducted by Barreto (2013) making use of eye-tracking software found that consumers actively avoided Facebook advertisements that appeared on the right-hand side of their Facebook pages. Youn & Kim (2019), in their research, found that young millennials found newsfeed native advertisements of Facebook ads as intrusive and regarded it as clutter.

Rodgers & Thorson (2017) indicate that marketing clutter can have a cognitive, affective and behavioral effect on the consumer.

- i. The cognitive effect of marketing clutter negatively influences the consumer's memory of the advertisement.
- ii. The effective effect of marketing clutter results in the formation of negative attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand or product.
- iii. The behavioral effect of marketing clutter includes the avoidance of an advertisement or not clicking on an advertisement.

Hsieh, Lo, Chiu & Lie (2020) indicate that advertising that is perceived to be intrusive results in the advertising being regarded and clutter and the consumer avoiding the advert. In order to avoid being perceived as marketing clutter, retailers need to employ innovative marketing that stands out, that is not intrusive and that is tailored to the customer (Doodoo & Wen, 2019).

In a bid to effectively deliver messages and influence consumers perceptions positively, retailers have started using real-time marketing as a marketing tool. Real-time marketing allows the retailer to use the marketing communication channels and tools that the consumer prefers and to interact with and respond to the consumer's needs in real-time (Eldridge, 2018). The retailer is also able to personalize communication and interaction to deliver messages based on the individual customer's needs, wants and personal preferences, ensuring that the customer develops a positive perception about the retailer or brand (BlueVenn, n.d). This research study thus focuses on real-time marketing and how consumers perceive the use of real-time marketing campaigns of retail businesses aimed at them.

Real-Time Marketing

At the end of 2020, the total number of internet users worldwide exceeded 5 billion people (Internetworldstats, 2021). In South Africa, as of December 2020, there were approximately 36.545 million internet users, of which 34.93 million were active mobile internet users (Statista.com, 2021). The increase in access to the internet and the rapid advancements in technology and mobile devices have led to consumers who are more informed and more distracted than ever before (Euromonitor International, 2015; Hochstein, Bolander, Goldsmith & Plouffe, 2018). To break through the clutter and reach these distracted consumers, retail businesses have started using various methods of creatively interacting with consumers such as real-time marketing (Melen & Forsblom, 2017).

Real-time marketing encompasses making use of more than one channel to interact and engage with customers at any time, any place and through a medium that is convenient for the customer (Rust & Kannan, 2016). This method of marketing uses various technology and various platforms and social media to personalize market offerings that cater to the specific needs and wants of the customer in real-time (Lieb, 2017). Marketing professionals encompass several activities in defining real-time marketing; these include personalizing content in response to a retailer's interactions with customers, responding to topics or events that are currently trending on social media platforms, and engaging with customers through social media and mobile applications with geolocation as well as live web chats (eMarketer, 2014; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). Real-time marketing campaigns involve the planning, creation and execution of marketing strategies, based on current data and that is focused on current and relevant trends and that provides immediate feedback to customers (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Artug, 2020).

Real-time marketing has also evolved over the years from merely real-time interaction to include the right response through the correct channel to the right customer and at the right moment in time (Ward, 2017). Goldstein & Lee (2005), states that real-time marketing, which involves almost instantaneous responses and interaction with consumers is a part of right-time marketing. Goldstein & Lee (2005), indicates that right time marketing involves delivering the right marketing communication at the right time, through the right channels and can often take place in real-time. Carter (2017) states that to successfully implement real-time marketing today, businesses must take into consideration the context as well as the consumer's behavior, needs and wants.

In implementing real-time marketing, Melen & Forsblom (2017) found that brands do not implement specific strategies when implementing real-time marketing. Brands often use real-time marketing to show their personal and human side by being part of topical conversations and events that the consumer is interested in (Melen & Forsblom, 2017). Yoo & Gretzel (2010) indicate that in implementing real-time marketing business is required to invest in dynamic conversation with the right target audience and engage

in continuous communication with influential consumers. The success of real-time marketing also requires trust from the consumer (Yoo & Gretzel, 2010).

If used and implemented correctly, real-time marketing can build relationships with customers and foster loyalty (Lieb, 2017). Through being part of consumers' conversations as they are happening, businesses can create brand awareness, strengthen their brand values and brand personality (Melen & Forsblom, 2017). Real-time marketing allows the business to be unique and to gain a considerable competitive advantage in the market (Cherukuri, 2018). Buhalis & Sinarta (2019) found in their research that real-time interactions between the brand and the consumer enhances consumer engagement with the brand, and it adds value to the brand's competitive advantage.

According to Jasper, (2015) and Bathelot, (2013), several elements make up real-time marketing and assist in implementing real-time marketing campaigns. These elements include automation, personalization, breaking news or current events and location-based.

Personalization

A marketing message or promotion that is created specifically for the customer and is executed in real-time. The customer, for example, receives a discount based on their purchases, at the point of sale. Roy, Padmakumar, Jeganathan & Kumaraguru, (2015) states that in the present, digital marketing landscape, personalization is key in successfully increasing consumer engagement with a brand. Del Rowe (2016) indicates that consumers' engagement with a brand increases when the consumer's experience is personalized in real-time. In exploring the effects of personalized content in mobile applications and purchase intentions, Konstantoulaki, Rizomyliotis & Papangelopoulou (2019) indicates that personalized discounts and offers increased the consumer's intention to make a purchase.

Automation

This refers to the technique used to deliver pre-written messages that have been developed for the specific customer at the right time. The message is automated to be sent out based on specific actions of the customer or specific events in real-time. Automation software technology is used to track consumers online activity and based on these activities, the software is able to personalize and send out automatic messages as the consumer shops (Jarvinen & Taiminen, 2016). The objective of the automation of marketing messages is to attract and build trust with potential as well as current customers (Sangl, Oberenovic, & Akhunjonov, 2018). In their study on the effects of marketing automation on consumer buying decisions, Benjamin & Paraskevi (2019) indicated that automation of marketing communication positively affected brand awareness and brand communication. Automated marketing communication that is personalized can promote the brand at different online touchpoints during the consumer's purchase decision (Benjamin & Paraskevi, 2019).

Breaking news and current events

When a business creates marketing campaigns that are based on current events or special occasions and that are sent out in real-time through various social media channels. Santomier, Hogan & Kunz (2016) indicated in their research on the 2012 London Olympics, that brands actively made use of the Olympics to foster engagement with consumers on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. (Santomier, Hogan & Kunz, 2016). The brands identified topics that were 'trending' and created content to match the trending theme (Santomier, Hogan & Kunz, 2016). The content was created for different topics that were seen as trending at the time (Santomier, Hogan & Kunz 2016). In a study conducted by Angell, Gorton, Bottomley, Marder, Bhaskar & White (2019), the influence of newsjacking (the practice of brands taking advantage of news and current events in brands messages) on consumers attitude towards content, brand attitude and purchase intention were tested. The study which made use of a BMW campaign that was tested on 252 consumers found that the use of current events and news stories in brands communication is an effective tool.

Location-based

Location-based advertising makes use of technology and mobile devices to pinpoint the consumer's location to send out advertising messages (Molitor, Reichhart, Spann & Ghose, 2019). Two approaches are used to deliver advertising messages based on the consumer's location. The push approach entails sending advertising messages to consumers at specific locations as long as they have opted-in (given permission) to receive messages (Bauer & Strauss, 2016). The pull approach is used when consumers search for information based on their location (Bauer & Strauss, 2016). Lin, Paragas & Bautista (2016) find that consumers perceive location-based advertising as valuable and would most likely make a purchase based on the location-based advertisement received when the advertisement is received at the right time and place. Buhalis & Amaranggana (2015) state that location-based information contributes to the personalization of real-time marketing. Consumers do however have privacy concerns with regards to location-based advertising, which influences the consumer's perception of the product or brand being advertised using location-based marketing (Unni & Hermon, 2013).

Technology and new communication media are increasingly influencing consumers behavior and the way in which they interact with each other and the world around them (Macy & Thompson, 2011). Retailers and industry have thus started using various technology, software, mobile technology, social media, big data etc. to not only interact and communicate with consumers but to also enhance customers experiences in real-time (Sinarta & Buhalis, 2017). Park & Yoo (2020) investigated the use of augmented reality technology in marketing communication on the consumer's response to online retailers. The research which was conducted among

302 female consumers in South Korea indicated that the controllability, playfulness and perceived interactivity if the augmented reality influences the mental imagery of the retailer's products, which in turn affected the consumer's attitude and behavioral intentions towards the retailer (Park & Yoo, 2020: 2).

Based on the relevant literature, in order to determine consumers perceptions of real-time marketing campaigns aimed at them, the study will explore the elements of real-time marketing. Drawing from the literature, the research proposed a theoretical framework for exploring the consumer's perceptions of RTM campaigns. As illustrated in figure 1, each of the elements of RTM identified in the literature form the constructs of the proposed framework that is to be explored for the research. Consumer behavior towards real-time marketing campaigns as well as what consumers regard as clutter will influence the strength of the relationship between the real-time marketing elements and consumers' perception of the real-time marketing campaign. The research in exploring consumers' perception analysis the consumer behavior and what consumer towards RTM campaigns regards as clutter.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework

Research and Methodology

The purpose of this research study is to determine consumers' perception of real-time marketing campaigns that are aimed at consumers. Consumers are exposed to numerous advertising messages during a day and it is therefore important to deliver messages to the consumer in a way that will capture their attention and will influence them the most. Understanding consumer perception towards a specific marketing tool such as real-time marketing is thus important as it influences how the consumer will perceive the retailer and their products and ultimately the consumer's purchase decision.

This research explores real-time marketing, which has become a common marketing tool used by many organizations, retailers and brands. The outcomes of the research will indicate organizations, retailers and brands of consumers' perceptions about real-time marketing, whether consumers respond to this type of marketing or if they view it as clutter, and which methods of communication are preferred by consumers. The research contributes to the academic literature by providing greater insight into the topic of real-time marketing as a whole and how consumers perceive real-time marketing campaigns. The research also provides a measurement scale to measure consumer perceptions of RTM campaigns of retailers. The research also contributes to the retail business industry as well as to the field of marketing communication and advertising by providing a holistic view of real-time marketing and how it is perceived by consumers.

The study aims to explore the elements of real-time marketing that influence consumers perception of real-time marketing campaigns of retail businesses.

Method

The research approach and method used for this research as well as the research instrument, the sampling method and data collection and analysis will be discussed in the following section. Due to the cost associated with data collection, the research study was planned to address several research objectives that formed part of the research objectives for a master's qualification and that would lead to a completed unpublished master's thesis and a series of articles (Kallier, 2016, Kallier & Cant, 2016, Kallier, 2017). The research instrument thus was developed to ensure that it covered all of the planned research objectives. Although the demographics of the sample remain the same, the content of the articles differs based on the objectives.

In order to achieve the research objectives, exploratory research that followed a quantitative approach was used to conduct the study. A quantitative research design was deemed appropriate as the research made use of statistics and figures to explain the relationship between consumer perception of real-time marketing efforts and the various real-time marketing tools used by retailers and the effect it had on consumer behavior. In identifying real-time marketing factors that influence consumer perception, exploratory factor

analysis was conducted. The exploratory factor analysis allowed the researchers to not only identify the factors influencing the variables further but also to explore the underlying structure of the identified factors. The research also intended to describe the characteristics of the population in terms of the various real-time marketing communication tools that they are exposed to and how they react to the real-time marketing campaigns of retailers.

Sampling

The target population for the current research were consumers who were over the age of 18 and who shop at retail stores within the Gauteng province of South Africa. The research focused on the population in Gauteng as this province is considered to be the “powerhouse” of South Africa’s economy (Statssa.gov.za, 2019). With a population of over 12 million people, Gauteng is seen as the commercial hub of South Africa and makes the largest contribution to the country’s economy (Mushongera, 2017).

Consumers refer to those individuals who make purchases for personal use (Babin & Harris, 2017). Therefore, any individual who has ever made a purchase is considered to be a consumer. This research focused on consumers who make purchases from retail stores. The units of analysis for this research thus included consumers who were between the ages of 18 and 65, who resided in Gauteng, South Africa, and who frequented any retail store. The age group of 18-65 was used as per ethical requirements.

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, a convenience sampling method was used in conducting the research. The reason for selecting this sampling method was that the target population were members of the public who are consumers of retail stores in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Therefore, every individual who has ever purchased from a retail store was included in the population and any readily available individual could be included in the sample. The convenience sampling method enabled the researchers to engage with consumers who were ready, available and willing to participate in the research and it ensured representativeness of the population (Boateng & Okoe, 2015).

The sample was gathered by approaching consumers through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Information regarding the study was posted on the researcher’s social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn). Consumers were provided with information regarding research and real-time marketing on these social media platforms. A link was provided to an online Google document where consumers who were interested could provide their contact details. If these consumers agreed to participate in the research their details were recorded, and they were added as part of the database for the study. According to research conducted by We are social and Hootsuite (2019), South Africa has over 23 million people who are active on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (Businesstech.co.za, 2019). As such, these social media platforms were appropriate to identify a diverse group of consumers for the study. A total of 201 consumers provided their details and these consumers formed the database that made up the sampling frame for the study.

Measurement instrument

As real-time marketing from a consumer’s perspective is a topic that has limited research in academic literature, the measurement items used for the research was developed by the researchers. The measurement instrument made use of a five-point Likert scale that asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements to gather data regarding the consumer’s behavior, attitudes and perceptions. The measurement instrument was designed to assess consumers understanding of real-time marketing and the tools that are used for real-time marketing as well as to determine the consumer’s perceptions of real-time marketing campaigns.

The survey was divided into three sections, the first section was a screening question. As the research focused on consumers in Gauteng, the screening question asked consumers to indicate if they resided in Gauteng. If they resided in Gauteng, the responded could continue with the survey. If the respondent indicated that they did not reside within Gauteng, the respondent was thanked for their time and the survey ended.

The second part of the survey focused on determining the key objectives of the research, consumer perceptions of real-time marketing campaigns. The items for the scale stemmed from the literature and represented the constructs of the proposed theoretical framework. The item questions for each of the constructs consisted of the following:

- i. Personalization: The items of the scale that represented personalization focused on marketing messages or promotions that are created for a specific customer and executed in real-time. In order to determine how consumers perceived personalization, consumers were asked to indicate on a Likert scale for example, if they would purchase from a retailer if their website is personalized based on their previous online behavior.
- ii. Automation: The questions asked in the Likert-scale with regards to automation focused on the consumer receiving automated real-time communication or promotions based on their current purchase. Respondents were asked to indicate on a Likert scale their level of agreement to a statement, for example, ‘I will purchase from a retailer if I receive discount vouchers based on what I most frequently purchase at the time of purchase.’
- iii. Breaking news and current events: The scale items that represented the breaking news and current events construct focused on consumer’s response to marketing campaigns based on current events or news. Respondents were required to indicate

on a Likert-scale their level of agreement to statements such as 'I will purchase from a retailer if they respond to trends and specific cultural events using social media tools in real-time.'

- iv. Location-based: The scale items for the location-based construct focused on consumers response regarding real-time communication received based on the consumer's location. The respondents were required to rate their level of agreements on a Likert scale to several statements such as 'I will purchase from a retailer if they respond to trends and specific cultural events using social media tools in real-time.'

Consumers were asked to indicate their behavior towards certain real-time marketing communication. Consumers were also asked to indicate what they regarded as clutter or as useful communications. Looking at the consumer's behavior as well as what the consumer regards as clutter indicated how they perceived the various real-time marketing campaigns. Section 3 of the questionnaire focused on gathering demographic information of the respondents.

The measurement instrument was pre-tested with consumers who resembled the target population for the research. The pre-test was conducted in order to determine the suitability and clarity of the questions (Mooi, Sarstedt & Mooi-Reci, 2018). The pre-test also confirmed content validity as it assessed whether or not the content of the constructs represented what they intended to measure. For this research, the reliability and validity of all the scales and sub-scales were tested with exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's alphas (the results are discussed further in the article).

Data and analysis

A self-administered, web-based survey was used as the data collection method for this research. Once the database was collected, these consumers were sent an e-mail that had a web link to the online survey. The e-mail link redirected the respondents to the online survey platform Limesurvey where the respondents were able to complete the survey and where the data was recorded. The e-mail provided information regarding the nature of the study and indicated that once the consumer clicked on start, they provided their consent to sue the information for the research. The e-mail also indicated that consumers could opt out of the research at any point.

For the current study, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency percentages and relationships between various constructs and these were tested. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with the use of statistical software SPSS/JMP. Exploratory factor analysis is a method that is used to describe the variability of observed variables (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the real-time marketing factors that influence the consumer's behavior and their perception towards real-time marketing campaigns. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was also conducted to test the validity of the scale. The descriptive statistics provided a summary of basic characteristics of individuals, groups, environments or objects such as the distribution, central tendency and variability. Content analysis was also used for the analysis of an open-ended question used to determine consumers definitions of real-time marketing. The content analysis process included the researcher looking at each of the responses and identified the key concept of each answer. The researcher further analyzed the key concepts and grouped them to form the main themes. Four main themes were identified by the researcher in the consumer's definition of real-time marketing, these include:

- i. Real-time communication
- ii. Immediate
- iii. Personalized
- iv. Based on current events and trends

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scale used for the research. In order to determine the construct validity and reliability and to access the underlying structure of the scales, EFA was conducted.

In ensuring that the research was conducted ethically, the respondents were given a consent form indicating the nature of the research and ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the research gathered. The respondents were also given the option to withdraw from the research at any point. Ethical clearance was also obtained from the University of South Africa's Department of Marketing and Retail Management Ethics Committee.

The final survey was sent to 201 consumers who opted to participate in the study. There was a 100% response rate; however, there were a few partial responses due to qualifying questions that were asked as well as the fact that some of the respondents only answered selected questions. Given a population of over 12 million people within Gauteng, it is a 6.89% margin of error at a 95% confidence level and 50% response distribution (Raosoft.com, 2004).

Results and Discussion

The research findings looked at the respondents' demographic profile; the consumers' definitions of real-time marketing, their behavior towards certain RTM marketing communications and what consumers regard as clutter.

Demographic profile of the sample

An understanding of the demographics of the respondents provides insight into the overall image of the consumers and who they are. The respondents who participated in the study consisted mostly of females (67%) between the ages of 26 and 35 years (53%) who earned above R17 501 per month (68%). The results also indicated that 47% of the respondents held a post-graduate qualification. The detailed demographic profile of the respondents is depicted in table 1.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

	N	%
Gender		
Female	78	67%
Male	38	33%
Total	116	100
Age		
18 - 25 years	30	26%
26 - 35 years	61	53%
36 - 45 years	12	10%
46 - 65 years	12	10%
65+ years	1	1%
Total	116	100
Province		
Did not complete high school	1	1%
Completed grade 12/matric	21	18%
Post school qualification - diploma/certificate	13	11%
Post school qualification- degree	27	23%
Postgraduate qualification	54	47%
Total	116	100
Gross monthly income		
R0 - R2500	7	6%
R2501 - R5000	9	8%
R5001 - R7500	3	3%
R7501 - R10000	5	4%
R10001 - R12500	4	3%
R12501 - R15000	9	8%
R15001 - R17500	6	5%
R17501 - R20000	12	10%
R20001 - R22500	9	8%
R22501 - R30000	21	18%
R30000+	30	26%
Total	115	100%

The consumer definition of RTM

The respondents were asked to indicate if they know what RTM is and if they did, to define it in their own words. It was important to determine if consumers knew what RTM means as well as what they regard as RTM, as their definition of RTM would influence their interaction and behavior towards an RTM campaign. Respondents were asked an open-ended question to indicate if they know what RTM is and if they did to define it in their own words. Content analysis was used to determine the presence of certain words, themes or concepts within the given response to the question.

The key themes identified from the consumer's definitions of real-time marketing include:

- i. "marketing that is guided using current events or fads";
- ii. "marketing or communication with consumers that is immediate and happens in real-time";
- iii. "immediate market awareness through mediums that consumers have direct and immediate access to"; and
- iv. "retailers connecting directly with potential buyers of their product".

Based on these answers, it would seem that the respondents do know what real-time marketing is and identified four main characteristics in their definitions of RTM, namely immediate responses, direct, real-time and current events. This is in line with the definition of real-time marketing that is found in the literature as stated in the literature review.

Tools used for RTM campaigns

To gain a greater understanding of what consumers regard as RTM, the respondents were asked to indicate which marketing communication tools they regarded as RTM tools. It also indicated which tools consumers expect to be used in RTM campaigns.

It was found that respondents regard Facebook (47%), Twitter (44%), SMS (37%), direct e-mails (36%) and online pop-up advertisements (34%) as marketing communication media used as real-time marketing tools. The respondents link real-time marketing with online media, social and mobile media tools. As these tools are online marketing tools it is clear that respondents make a clear distinction between traditional media (Newspapers, posters, television, radio etc.) and online, social media tools with regards to what they constitute as real-time marketing tools. The significance of this is that it provides retailers with an indication of which marketing communication media consumers expect to be used as real-time marketing tools in their real-time marketing communication campaigns. Table 2 provides a detailed depiction of the marketing communication tools consumers regard as real-time marketing tools.

Table 2: Marketing communication media used as real-time marketing tools

Marketing Tool	N	%
Posters	5	4%
Television	18	13%
Newspapers	7	5%
Billboards	10	7%
Radio	24	18%
Newsletters	7	5%
Direct E-mails	49	36%
Facebook	63	47%
Twitter	59	44%
YouTube	34	25%
SMS	50	37%
Online pop-up adverts	46	34%
Online banner adverts	33	24%
Other (Please specify)	2	1%

The influence of RTM on consumer behavior

In order to identify if RTM influenced consumers' behavior, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements regarding their behavior towards RTM campaigns. Understanding consumers' behavior towards various RTM campaigns will indicate what consumers regard as the more effective/influential mediums of RTM.

To determine the latent factors among respondents regarding what real-time marketing communications influence their purchase behavior, exploratory factor analysis was performed. In assessing the underlying structure for the ten items of the questionnaire, principle factor analysis with varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization was performed on SPSS. The results of the scree plot, eigenvalues and percentages of variance as well as the minimum of three items per construct, two factors were identified.

The first factor accounted for 43.49% of the variance and the second for 14.1% after rotation. Most factor loadings were 0.4 or above, showing good convergent validity. The constructs are therefore uni-dimensional and factorially distinct, and all items were used to operationalize a construct's load onto a single factor. Item 10 did not load anywhere. The rotated factor loadings identified are represented in table 3.

Table 3: Factors that influence consumer behavior when targeted with RTM campaigns

Rotated factor loading			
Item no		Factor 1	Factor 2
1	I will purchase from a retailer if the retailer engages with me directly on Facebook in real-time.	0.87	0.28
2	I will purchase from a retailer if the retailer engages with me directly through Twitter in real-time.	0.82	0.23
3	I will purchase from a retailer if the retailer engages with me directly through e-mails in real-time.	0.63	0.01
4	I will purchase products of a retailer that appear on pop-up online banners that are based on my current needs.	0.60	0.04
5	I will purchase from a retailer if I receive a text message regarding store sales as I walk past a store.	0.52	0.33
6	I will purchase from a retailer if their website is personalized based on my previous online behavior.	0.52	0.33
7	I will purchase from a retailer if I receive discount vouchers based on what I most frequently purchase at the time of purchase.	0.15	0.99
8	I will purchase from a retailer if I receive discounts based on my current purchases at the time of purchase.	0.02	0.57
9	I will purchase from a retailer if they respond to trends and specific cultural events using social media tools in real-time.	0.36	0.46
10	I will purchase from a retailer if they create personalized marketing offerings at the time of purchase for me.	0.35	0.36

Rotated factor loadings indicate two factors that influence consumer purchase behavior, personalization and financial gain in the form of discounts. Factor 1, which was named personalization, consisted of various items related to the personalized interaction between the retailer and the consumer. Factor 2, which was named financial gain, consisted of items that focused on the financial gain the consumer would receive from RTM such as discounts and vouchers at the time of purchase, in real-time. Table 4 provides a detailed depiction of the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis) of the identified factors.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of factors identified

	Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Factor 1 personalization	– 1, 2,3, 4, 5 & 6	2.51	0,6073	1.0227	1.0819
Factor 2 –financial gain	7, 8 & 9	3.19	0.5875	-0.1742	-0.5189

Reliability

The Cronbach's alphas as indicated in table 3 for factor 1, personalization (0.84) and factor 2, financial gain (0.72), are above 0.7 which indicates good reliability of the factors. Table 5 indicates the Cronbach's alpha for the factor's personalization and financial gain.

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha

Factor	Cronbach's alpha	Strength
Personalization	0.8425	Very good
Financial gain	0.7243	Good

Table 6 indicates the descriptive results of consumers behavior towards real-time marketing campaigns. The descriptive results indicate that the majority (89%) of the respondents agree and strongly agree with the statement ‘I will purchase from a retailer if I receive discount vouchers based on what I most frequently purchase at the time of purchase’. The majority (55%) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree with the statement: ‘I will purchase products from a retailer that appears on pop-up online banners that are based on my current needs’. This indicates that consumers value personalized offerings. This is in line with Tyrväinen, Karjaluoto & Saarijärvi, (2020) who indicate that there is a positive relationship between the personalization of marketing communication on the cognitive and emotional customer experience components.

Table 5: Consumer behavior towards RTM campaigns

No	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Std dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	I will purchase from a retailer if I receive discounts based on my current purchases at the time of purchase.	0%	14%	53%	33%	.664		
2	I will purchase from a retailer if I receive discount vouchers based on what I most frequently purchase at the time of purchase.	2%	9%	58%	31%	.664	-.226	-.710
3	I will purchase from a retailer if I receive a text message regarding store sales as I walk past a store.	6%	50%	30%	14%	.816	.400	-.471
4	I will purchase from a retailer if the retailer engages with me directly through Twitter in real-time.	13%	49%	27%	11%	.848	.357	-.366
5	I will purchase from a retailer if the retailer engages with me directly on Facebook in real-time.	6%	49%	34%	11%	.773	.341	-.294
6	I will purchase from a retailer if the retailer engages with me directly through e-mails in real-time.	5%	50%	31%	14%	.795	.428	-.487
7	I will purchase from a retailer if their website is personalized and based on my previous online behavior.	3%	30%	52%	16%	.739	-.143	-.242
8	I will purchase from a retailer if they respond to trends and specific cultural events using social media tools in real-time.	6%	25%	45%	25%	.857	-.372	-.457
9	I will purchase from a retailer if they create personalized marketing offerings for me at the time of purchase.	3%	14%	66%	17%	.661	-.638	1.396
10	I will purchase products from a retailer that appears on pop-up online banners that are based on my current needs.	20%	35%	35%	9%	.906	.046	-.800

What do consumers regard as clutter campaigns

In determining how consumers perceive real-time marketing as a marketing tool aimed at them, it is important to identify what marketing communications the consumers view as clutter and therefore disregard, and what they pay attention to. The respondents were thus asked to indicate from a list of various marketing communication media their response in terms of whether they would “disregard”, “consider at a later stage”, “pay selective attention to” or “attend to immediately”. Table 7 indicates the range of descriptive results regarding the consumer’s response to various marketing communication tools. The results indicate as to which marketing communication media will attract the consumer’s attention and that will most likely result in purchases.

Table 6: Consumers response to the various marketing communication tools

		Disregard immediately/r egard clutter		Consider at a later stage		Selective attention /browse		Attend to/view as valuable		Std deviat ion	Skewne ss	Kurtosis
Traditional Media		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Q14.1	Television advertisements.	20	17%	17	15%	53	46%	26	22%	.999	-.505	-.755
Q14.2	Radio advertisements.	14	12%	22	19%	51	45%	27	24%	.942	-.488	-.576
Q14.3	Newspaper advertisements.	24	21%	28	25%	46	40%	16	14%	.980	-.155	-1.004
Q14.4	Pamphlets received from retailers.	44	38%	27	23%	25	22%	19	17%	1.116	.400	-1.238
ONLINE MEDIA		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Q14.5	Pop-up online advertisements.	74	64%	15	13%	20	17%	6	5%	.949	1.171	-.008
Q14.6	Online banner advertisements.	65	58%	15	13%	28	25%	5	4%	.975	.793	-.860
Q14.7	Personalized e-mails from retailers.	25	22%	35	31%	36	32%	18	16%	1.003	.058	-1.059
Q14.8	Personalized retailer websites.	17	15%	17	15%	43	38%	35	31%	1.030	-.565	-.790
MOBILE		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Q14.9	Personalized text messages from retailers.	36	32%	25	22%	29	26%	23	20%	1.132	.149	-1.384
Q14.10	Product information that pops up on the retailer's mobile website.	37	33%	23	21%	43	39%	8	7%	.989	.049	.229
Q14.11	Retailer advertisements on mobile applications.	47	41%	23	20%	34	30%	11	10%	1.044	.359	-1.229
SOCIAL MEDIA		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Q14.12	Advertisements on Facebook.	33	29%	20	17%	44	38%	18	16%	1.067	-.088	-1.289
Q14.13	Advertisements on Twitter.	53	46%	17	15%	32	28%	13	11%	1.095	.443	-1.282
Q14.14	Advertisements on YouTube.	50	44%	16	14%	38	33%	10	9%	1.062	.309	-1.374

Table
Cont'd

Q14.15	Advertisements on LinkedIn.	52	46%	17	15%	33	29%	10	9%	1.061	.443	-1.261
REAL-TIME MARKETING		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Q14.16	Discounts received based on current purchases from a retailer at the time of purchase.	5	4%	16	14%	26	23%	68	59%	.882	-1.181	.337
Q14.17	Discount vouchers received based on what is most frequently purchased at the time of purchase from a retailer.	6	5%	15	13%	32	28%	61	54%	.892	-1.085	.240
Q14.18	Text messages regarding store sales as they walk past a store from a retailer.	15	13%	19	17%	42	37%	38	33%	1.013	-.584	-.736
Q14.19	Retailers engaging with consumers directly through social media in real-time.	14	12%	19	17%	50	43%	32	28%	.960	-.582	-.530

The descriptive statistics in figure 7 revealed that pop-up online advertisements (64%) is viewed as clutter and respondents would immediately disregard these advertisements. This is in line with research conducted by Le & Vo (2017) who indicate that pop-up advertisements can often result in negative consumer attitudes as they can be viewed as intrusive. The results also indicated that respondents paid selective attention to television advertisements (46%). It is important to note in table 5, that respondents indicate that they will consider personalized emails (35%) from the retailer at a later stage and that they would attend to and view discounts received from the retailer based on their current purchases at the time of purchase (59%). From the results, it was clear that the participating respondents mainly saw value in real-time marketing campaigns that were personalized and offered immediate discounts. This is in line with the results of the factors identified in table 3, personalization and financial gain, which influences consumers behavior towards real-time marketing campaigns aimed at them. Polacsek, Moran, Thorndike, Boulos, Franckle, Greene, Blue, Block & Rimm (2018) state that incentives such as coupons and immediate discounts at the point of purchase can be used to change consumer purchase behavior.

Chi-square and ANOVA analysis were performed on the data to identify relationships between the demographic profile of the sample population (age, income level, gender) and real-time marketing. The analysis found no significant relationships that existed between the demographical elements of the sample population and real-time marketing.

Discussion

The empirical exploration of real-time marketing provides initial insight into how consumer behavior towards marketing campaigns and what the consumer regarded as clutter. The results indicated that consumer regarded real-time marketing as marketing campaigns that included current events/trends, real-time responses and immediate action. The consumer's definition of real-time marketing is in

line with the definition of real-time marketing as found in the literature, however, the elements of automation and location-based messages were not identified in the consumer's definitions of real-time marketing. This distinction was important as it provided an understanding of what consumers expect from real-time marketing campaigns.

In understanding what influence real-time marketing campaigns will have on consumers' behavior, the results indicate that consumers' behavior towards real-time marketing campaigns is influenced by two factors, financial gain such as discounts as well as the personalization of the offering. Personalized pricing promotions such as discount coupons are an effective means of persuading customers to make purchases used in marketing communication campaigns (Jiang, Lui, Wang, Shang & Ding, 2018). It is interesting to note that the results (as indicated in table 3) indicate that automated messages received, breaking news or current events and location-based messages were not identified as specific real-time marketing factors that significantly influenced the consumer's purchase behavior. In their research, Meents, Verhagen, Merikivi & Weltevreden, (2020) found that automated location-based message messages that emphasized limited offers were more effective in persuading consumers to visit the retail store.

To determine which real-time marketing tools consumers regarded as more effective/influential, the research looked at consumers' behavior towards various real-time marketing tools as well as how consumers respond to various marketing communication tools. The research shows that consumers would attend to real-time marketing campaigns that offered financial gain such as immediate discounts at the time of purchase or discounts that are personalized and based on what they frequently purchase and view these campaigns as valuable to them. The results of the research show that consumers regard online marketing communication such as online pop-up advertisements, online banner advertisements as clutter. Consumers also regard advertisements on social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube advertisements as clutter. It is interesting to note that even though consumers regard these tools as RTM tools, they have no influence on their behavior and consumers tend to disregard communications from these tools. This is in line with research by Hsieh, Lo, Chiu & Lie (2020) who indicate that pop-up advertisements can be seen as intrusive if they appear before or as the consumer is browsing through the content. Jagani & Goldsmith (2017), found in their research on the impact of relevance and clutter of advertisements on irritation, that consumers do not want to be disturbed by advertisements on YouTube. The research indicated a high level of irritation by consumers who were exposed to more than two advertisements on YouTube (Jagani & Goldsmith, 2017).

There are several reasons for this, which include that marketing communication on these platforms could be seen as invasive and disruptive. Depending on the reasons why consumers access these media platforms, consumers could not see any value in marketing communications that appear on these media platforms. Further research could provide more insight into the reasons why consumers regard these communication tools as clutter.

Although real-time marketing is not a new marketing concept, it has however not been extensively researched within the academic field of marketing from a consumer's perspective. The current real-time marketing literature (Lieb, 2017; Melen & Forsblom, 2016; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019) can offer useful empirical information for marketers and retail business regarding real-time marketing and its implementation. The current research study, however, provides a novel view as it empirically explores the understanding of the real-time marketing campaigns which are considered valuable from a consumer's perspective.

This research aimed to gain more insight into real-time marketing and how consumers perceive RTM campaigns that are aimed at them. The research was conducted amongst consumers in Gauteng, which is seen as the economic hub of South Africa. The research contributes to industry as well as academia by providing a holistic view of real-time marketing and how it is perceived by consumers. This research also identified which real-time marketing communication tools consumers are aware of, which tools they regard as useful and which tools they disregard. This will help the retail business and industry in tailoring real-time marketing campaigns that are specific to the consumers and that satisfy the consumer's needs.

Conclusion

With the advancements in technology and the many new platforms to interact with consumers in real-time, real-time marketing has become a very popular marketing technique. As such, this research aimed to identify how consumers perceive this type of marketing campaign and if real-time marketing campaigns have an influence on their behavior. The literature identified four elements, automation, personalization, breaking news or current events and location-based, that make up real-time marketing and that are used to implement real-time marketing campaigns. These elements were used as a framework for the research in determining consumers perception of real-time marketing. The empirical research however identified only two factors, personalization and financial gain as factors that influence consumer perceptions of real-time marketing. The research indicates how these elements are perceived from a consumer's perspective when used by marketers in real-time marketing campaigns.

The findings of the research indicated that consumers know what real-time marketing is and that they are aware of real-time marketing tools used by retailers. They also make a clear distinction between traditional media, media online and social media when identifying real-time marketing tools. Consumers' behavior towards real-time marketing campaigns and the media used as tools to execute real-time marketing indicates that they would not respond to it or make purchases based on it unless the campaign is personalized and based on immediate discounts. It can thus be concluded that consumers perceive real-time marketing as clutter until they find value in it – in terms of financial gain such as immediate discounts and personalization.

The research provides insight for both academia and the retail industry into consumer behavior and how they perceive marketing campaigns such as RTM. It provides retailers with an indication of what consumers view as valuable (personalization and financial gain). Understanding the customer base, how to communicate to the customer and what they regard as valuable is of grave importance to the survival of a retail business. A consumer will not purchase a product if there is no need or value for it. The key implication of this research is that it provides retailers with a greater understanding of what consumers perceive as valuable and what they regard as clutter when it comes to real-time marketing campaigns. It provides a basic understanding of consumers behavior when they are exposed to real-time marketing. The findings of the research can lead to reducing failure of real-time marketing communication campaigns and wasting of budget on campaigns that are not viewed as valuable by the consumer. Retailers can make use of the insights from the current research to better plan and execute their RTM marketing campaigns in order to achieve greater awareness and sales results.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this research study, several recommendations can be made for retail businesses that use or plan on implementing real-time marketing campaigns.

An important recommendation of this research is that retail businesses incorporate RTM campaigns into the organization's marketing plan with immediate discounts or discount vouchers based on consumers' current or most frequent purchases. These campaigns are seen as more valuable to consumers and they tend to respond to them.

The research indicates that the personalization of an offering has an influence on the consumers' behavior and as such, it is recommended that retail businesses focus on personalizing their real-time marketing campaigns for the individual customer.

Consumer preference and response to various real-time marketing tools differ and as such organizations must ensure that they use the right real-time marketing tools to target the right customers. It is thus recommended that retail businesses identify the real-time marketing tools that their consumers prefer and the tools that are most likely to catch their customers' attention before developing expensive campaigns.

Future research and limitations

It is recommended that future research be conducted to confirm the factors (personalization and financial gain) that influence consumer perception of real-time marketing campaigns aimed at consumers. Future research should also explore additional factors that could influence consumer perception of real-time marketing as well as how real-time marketing influences consumers behavior as a whole.

The research confirms that real-time marketing does have an influence on consumer behavior and consumer perception in a South African context. This influence is based on the type of promotion accompanying the real-time marketing campaign. Further research is recommended in countries around the world to further investigate if real-time marketing influences consumer behavior in a different context.

The current research offers limited insight into how to persuade customers with specific real-time marketing tools and campaigns as it focuses on providing more insight into consumers perceptions of RTM campaigns as a whole. Future research can dig more deeply into real-time marketing in order to distil higher-value insights.

A key limitation of the research is that a convenience sampling method was used and as such the data cannot be generalized to include the entire population. The research was also conducted in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. To get a holistic view of consumers' perceptions of RTM, future research will have to include a larger population

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