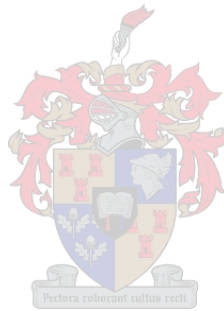


“Shattering the boundaries through self-efficacy: exploring the social media habits of South African previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs.”

by
Julie Stevens



Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree Master of Philosophy in Journalism at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Mr. Joshua Ogada
Department of Journalism

March 2013

Declaration

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March 2013

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the social media habits of South African previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs and the way in which the activity of online social networking through social networking sites (SNS) results in the outcome of building social capital for a business venture. At the heart of addressing the research topic is the concept of self-efficacy, which is explored as a key component of human motivation and behaviour. The study explores how self-efficacy beliefs are developed with regard to social media usage and their potential to influence positive outcomes for a business. Based on the research topic, the study which is empirical in nature, has applied a qualitative research design in order to interpret rather than measure self-efficacy behaviours related to social media usage. A purposive non-probability sampling procedure has been adopted to select twelve previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs for the study. Semi-structured interviews provide for an interactive and insightful data collection process. As a qualitative study, attention is given to guidelines which establish reliability and validity. Key findings from the study support and refine established Internet self-efficacy research (Eastin & LaRose, 2000) based on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). Based on the established relationships between various constructs and self-efficacy beliefs, the results of the study have been interpreted positively. The findings of the study contribute to the current digital divide debate, and point to a narrowing of the access and participation gap. According to the sample, social media has become embedded in their daily lives for both social and business purposes, and is contributing towards building social capital. This study provides scope to further explore social media as a new opportunity for previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs in South Africa.

Key words: Entrepreneur, networking, social capital, weak ties, social media, social networking sites, mobile Internet technology, digital divide, self-efficacy.

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To the team at the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship: thank you for making the interviews possible, and for allowing me to have a taste of your purpose and passion-filled work. You have created a platform for the entrepreneurs to fly (*Virgin* first class).

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the research

Introduction

The first chapter starts by exploring the development of ideas for the thesis and the main motivation behind the study. These initial ideas have been refined and focused through preliminary reading of literature related to the topic which is highlighted in summary. This process has enabled the identification of the overall objectives of the study which has resulted in establishing the main research topic to be explored. Following on from the specification of the key research problem, the overall research design and methodology which has been selected for the study is presented. The introduction is concluded with a chapter outline of the thesis including the main topics to be covered.

Motivation for the study

This study brings together the researcher's career experience in entrepreneurship development with an interest in the media's potential for facilitating social change. In particular the way in which social media has shifted human agency and action to the centre and as a result has the potential to empower people. As South African entrepreneurs embrace social media, given the affordable access which mobile technology provides, it offers new potential and opportunity. The researcher's main interest is in exploring the potential for social media to enable South African entrepreneurs to expand their networks beyond the scope of their disadvantaged circumstances, and to grow their business venture in ways that were previously not possible.

Summary of literature reviewed

As a media study with a development focus, the books, journal articles, reports, and theses used as sources of information were investigated from three perspectives including: entrepreneurship as a development imperative, the social capital inherent in the networks of entrepreneurs, and social media as a means for socio-economic development.

Drawing from the social sciences, the study has incorporated literature which examines entrepreneurship studies at both a macro level focusing on economic development, as well as at a micro level exploring the networks and social capital of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship development has been identified as vitally important to the wellbeing of any economy, given its potential to contribute to the creation of employment and the alleviation of poverty (Herrington, Kew & Kew, 2010:10). In particular, given South Africa's high unemployment rate,

entrepreneurship development is imperative (Luiz & Mariotti, 2011: 47). The literature reviewed from this perspective therefore highlights the importance of entrepreneurship for economic development in South Africa. Networking activities are considered as one of the key success factor for South African entrepreneurs (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2009: 16).

Adopting a social network perspective, the study is able to explore the importance of the social networking activities of an entrepreneur in establishing a new venture (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998: 213). The actual and potential resources which are embedded within a social network and how they impact on an entrepreneur's small business start-up are explained using the broader theoretical framework of Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 243). Social Capital Theory has been applied to a broad range of social science disciplines (Adler & Kwon, 2002: 17). This study adopts the perspective that since economic activity is embedded in society; the innovative entrepreneur develops social capital through building networks which provide external sources of information, support, finance and expertise (Cope, Jack & Rose, 2007: 214). Focusing on the structural dimension (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 244) of these networks, the benefits of having 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973: 1361) or 'bridging' social capital (Putman, 2000) are explored. Weak ties are relational ties which operate in a wider social context and can be used to provide resources, generate business and enhance reputations (Jack, 2005:1251). Links are also established between developing social capital and poverty alleviation, in particular since weak ties have the potential to cut across social groups in unequal societies (Nayaran, 1999: 2).

As a media study with a development focus, the social media component of the study has been framed within academic literature related to Information Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) with a focus on 'ICT in everyday life' research. These theoretical concepts will be defined and explored in further detail. Social media, as a component of new media studies has shifted the focus from mass media studies which examine 'processes and effects' towards one of 'mediated' communication which is networked, ubiquitous and interactive (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006: 8). A persistent theme running through new media studies is the pace of social and technological change associated with Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006: 12). This study has reviewed literature which focuses on the technologies which facilitate mediated communication and result in social uplift (Raiti, 2006: 4). In particular, the rapid penetration of mobile Internet usage in South Africa is explored as a powerful tool in people's hands to bring about social change. Their potential for business development has been found to increase the social networks

of entrepreneurs and expand their business opportunities (Weiner & Rumiany, 2007: 17). The way in which ICTs are being experienced in people's daily lives is explored by examining ICTs in everyday life literature. Adopting such an approach can be seen to complement the predominantly developmental focus of ICT4D and create a more solid basis for building knowledge (Raiti, 2006: 2). This research tradition examines the way in which ICTs are routinely incorporated into everyday life and the way in which society is becoming networked (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002: 7).

A study focused on social media in the South African context would be incomplete without examining literature related to the 'digital divide'. The literature reviewed reveals the complexities of the debate which examines inequalities taking place across a number of levels. While technological advances have shifted the debate from one of access to technology, discussions are now centered on other inequalities which are seen to persist (Tsatsou, 2011: 317). Rapid mobile phone penetration across Africa is seen to challenge existing notions of the 'digital divide' and is narrowing the access gap (Kelly & Biggs, 2007: 11). This study considers literature which explores other barriers related to skills and usages which need to be overcome in a developing context before the benefits of ICTs can be realised.

In the South African context, the study considers issues related to Internet access and usage which reveals the way in which the advent of mobile phone technology is changing the picture. Studies are considered which reveal the way in which Internet penetration is growing in South Africa through mobile technology (World Wide Worx, 2012), as well as the shift to social media use as its main driver (World Wide Worx, 2011). Various recent studies highlight the emerging social media landscape in South Africa.

It is evident from literature reviewed that new media technologies are changing people's lives, and linking them together in new ways. While the negative reactions to new forms of communication are considered, this study turns to literature which highlights the positive consequences of Internet use. This study has reviewed literature which considers the positive associations between the ways in which Social Networking Sites (SNS) as a form of social media lead to the establishment of social capital. In particular, since the technological features of SNS are seen to support the formation of weak social ties which allow users to create and maintain larger, diffuse networks of relationships from which they could potentially draw resources (Donath & boyd, 2004: 80).

In order to identify an entrepreneur's cognitive and decision making processes which lead to the recognition and exploitation of potential opportunities inherent in online social networks, this study turns to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). It is a theory which can be used to explain media usage based on personal experience with the media and the process by which this personal experience shapes expectations about the outcomes of media exposure. Within this theory, self-efficacy is explored as a key component of human motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1997). The literature consulted provides a basis for exploring how these beliefs are developed (Bandura, 2004), and the way in which efficacy judgements related to social media use are influenced by prior experience, outcome expectations and regular use (Eastin & LaRose, 2000).

Research problem

Based on the overview of the literature consulted for this study, the researcher has been able to refine and focus her initial ideas in order to construct the development of a clear research topic. The following ideas underpin the research problem:

- In the context of South Africa, entrepreneurship has the potential to contribute to the creation of employment and the alleviation of poverty. However research has shown that entrepreneurial activity in South Africa is very low.
- Networking activities are a critical success factor for entrepreneurs. The potential resources within these networks are described as the entrepreneur's social capital. Establishing 'weak ties' in ones network are highly beneficial in that they provides access to information, resources and opportunities, thereby enhancing the survival and growth of a new venture. Weak ties also have the potential to cut across socio-economic groups in unequal societies.
- Mobile phones have demonstrated potential as powerful tool in people's hands for social change using social media. Given the rapid penetration of mobile Internet in South Africa, social media usage is becoming incorporated into many people's daily lives and challenges existing notions of the 'digital divide'.
- The networking activities enabled by SNS have the potential to expand an entrepreneur's networks and enable greater access to information, resources and opportunities. This can result in the potential increase in social capital, which has particular benefit to disadvantaged entrepreneurs who are deficient in human and financial capital.

- South African entrepreneurs have been found to lack confidence in their ability to start a business. The concept of self-efficacy (belief in ability) to use social media provides the opportunity to explore this core motivator related to achieving successful outcomes for an entrepreneurs business.

Bringing these ideas together, which highlight the benefits of social capital for entrepreneurs along with the social media habits taking place in their daily lives, the author is able to pursue the goals of this study. The primary purpose of this study is to *explore the social media habits of South African previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs as a contributor to building social capital for their business. The links between social media usage and the outcomes which entrepreneurs expect to achieve for their business is explored using the concept of self-efficacy.*

Research Design and methodology

As an empirical study, the social media habits of previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs are explored in order to describe how their self-efficacy beliefs related to social media usage are established and how these influence the outcomes of building social capital for their business. Given the nature of the research topic, the study has applied a qualitative research design in order to interpret rather than measure self-efficacy behaviours related to social media usage. The themes for the research are based on established research and theory which serve as a guide for data collection and analysis. The researcher has selected semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate research method to enable an interactive and insightful data collection process with a sample of entrepreneurs. According to the researcher's judgement and the purpose of the study a purposive non-probability sampling procedure is followed to achieve a sample of twelve previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs. Data collection and analysis procedures follow guidelines established through relevant literature. Finally the study takes into consideration the criteria for evaluating the quality and rigor of a qualitative study.

Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1: Demonstrates how the idea for the study was developed and refined through existing literature, resulting in a clarified research topic. Having established the overall purpose of the study the chapter outlines the research design and methodology used.

Chapter 2: Defines key concepts, and presents the literature and theoretical framework which has informed the study.

Chapter 3: Documents the research design and methodology followed during the process of collecting primary data in the field.

Chapter 4: Provides a detailed description of the sample and its characteristics, followed by presentation of the main results obtained from the interview process.

Chapter 5: Presents a discussion based on the key themes established through the literature review and from the results of the interview questions.

Chapter 6: The results of the study according to the literature and theory are concluded and recommendations are made regarding further research and the implementation of findings.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

Introduction

This chapter sets out to review the extent of existing scholarship and empirical findings which have been identified as relevant to the scope of the study and have assisted in formulating the topic. The literature reviewed has helped to ascertain the most widely accepted definitions of key concepts which will be outlined below. It also provides a basis for establishing appropriate theoretical perspectives, and provides context for the study. The literature review has guided the researcher in identifying the most appropriate research instrumentation with proven validity and reliability, which will be outlined in the subsequent methodology chapter. Finally, the literature review has helped to establish how this study will add to the existing body of knowledge related to the social change potential of mediated communication.

As described in the introductory chapter, the literature and theory used as sources of information for the study have been investigated from three perspectives including: entrepreneurship as a development imperative; the social capital inherent in the networks of entrepreneurs; and social media as a form of new media with the potential for socio-economic development.

The chapter begins by introducing entrepreneurship development and its importance to the wellbeing of any economy given its potential to contribute to the creation of employment and the alleviation of poverty. This is of particular relevance in the South African context given the high rate of unemployment. The factors behind South Africa's low rates of entrepreneurial activity are explored, and networking as a key component of entrepreneurial success is identified.

Having established the importance of the social networking activities of an entrepreneur in establishing a new venture, the study makes use of the broader theoretical framework of Social Capital Theory to describe the actual and potential resources embedded within a social network. The literature describes how innovative entrepreneurs build social capital to provide external sources of information, support, finance and expertise for a business. The study focuses on the structural components of social capital and describes the benefits of establishing weak ties in ones network. Links are then established between developing social capital and the potential benefits for entrepreneurs from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances.

As a media study focusing on digital communication and its role in socio-economic development, ICT4D is a useful theoretical starting point. However with its bias to action as a

development practitioner tool, the knowledge base of ICT4D is solidified and complemented by examining literature on 'ICTs in everyday life'. The potential for ICTs to enhance social development is then considered in light of the rapid penetration of mobile Internet usage on the African continent. While the potential of the mobile boom is explored as a way to 'leapfrog' the 'digital divide', the inequalities taking place across other dimensions are explored.

Social media is discussed given the way it is changing people's lives. While some authors have highlighted negative reactions to these new forms of communication, this study is based on studies which focus on the positive consequences of its use. This includes the way in which building online social networks are associated with expanding weak tie relationships and result in social capital for entrepreneurs. The key technological features are discussed which provide a basis to explore the abilities of entrepreneurs to use social media platforms. Social media usage in the South African context is then discussed based on recent research findings.

Finally, in order to provide a framework to describe an entrepreneurs cognitive and decision making processes which lead to the exploitation of the potential inherent in online social networks, this study turns to Social Cognitive Theory. The theory is used to describe the mechanisms through which social media use promotes personal and social change. Self-efficacy is explored as a core belief system within Social Cognitive Theory to investigate social media usage and the resulting outcomes.

Key concepts defined

Information Communication Technologies

Given the ongoing development of technologies and services, ICTs broadly refer to all kinds of electronic systems used for broadcasting, telecommunications, and computer-mediated communications (Haddon, 2004: 1). According to Hamelink (1997: 3), ICTs encompass all those technologies that enable the handling of information and facilitate different forms of communication among human actors; between human beings and electronic systems; and among electronic systems. This study focuses on communication technologies which produce the devices, methods and networks to transmit information in digital form (Hamelink, 1997: 3). In particular with a focus on mobile technology as a platform for Internet access through cellular network protocols; and traditional sources of computer-based access, including dial-up, ADSL, or wireless broadband (Kreutzer, 2009: 2). It is generally believed that ICTs can expand public access to information and extend opportunities for knowledge creation and acquisition to a diversity of people thus enabling individuals and countries to escape the confines of poverty and

underdevelopment (Megwa, 2007: 336). This study considers the potential for ICTs to enhance entrepreneurship development, in particular given the rapid penetration of mobile Internet in South Africa.

Digital Divide

Traditionally, the concept of the 'digital divide' refers to the uneven distribution of ICTs across countries resulting in a digital disparity between the information rich and information poor societies (Megwa, 2007: 337). It has centred on questions of technological access where the uneven spread of ICTs in developed countries is leaving the developing world behind, with potentially cataclysmic development consequences (Fink & Kenny, 2003: 1). More recently, rapid technological advances have shrunk conventional divisions of access to ICTs and have shifted the 'digital divide' debate to consider other forms of inequalities in the adoption and integration of ICTs (Tsatsou, 2011: 319). This study is based on the suggestion that the digital divide can be closed through users establishing belief in their abilities to use social media, and realising the benefits of the Internet to improve their lives (Eastin & LaRose, 2000).

Social Media and Social Networking Sites

Social media can be defined as a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 allowing the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: 61). Yamamichi (2011: 6) describes the features by which social media is differentiated from other media including: (1) Internet-based, (2) mobility and ubiquity, (3) focus on users, (4) multi-way group communications, (5) large-scale and flexible interactive participation, (6) co-creation, and (7) low cost. One such application of social media are social networking sites (SNS), which are an increasingly popular online environment allowing individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others (Ellison, Steinfield, Lampe, 2007: 1143). boyd and Ellison (2008: 210) provide a comprehensive definition of SNS as a web-based service that allow individuals to: 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Various social media platforms are referred to in this study including:

Facebook: the world's most popular social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them (Facebook.com, 2012).

Twitter: a well-established social networking site which is also classified as micro-blogging. Twitter is a real-time information network for its users to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick messages (maximum 140 characters) which are called ‘tweets’ (Yamamichi, 2011: 4).

LinkedIn: the world’s largest professional network with over 175 million members and growing rapidly. LinkedIn connects individuals to trusted contacts and helps exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with a broader network of professionals (LinkedIn.com, 2012).

Entrepreneur

While numerous definitions of entrepreneurship exist, an entrepreneur is commonly defined as one who owns, launches, manages and assumes the risks of an economic venture (Greve & Salaff, 2003: 1). An entrepreneur is a person who sees an opportunity in the market, gathers resources, and creates and grows a business venture to meet these needs. He or she bears the risks of the venture and is rewarded with profit if it succeeds (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2009: 9). Entrepreneurship is therefore concerned with the discovery and exploitation of profitable opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000: 218). However it is important to extend this definition beyond the scope of the individual in order to consider the sources of opportunities and the processes of discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000: 218). It is within the scope of this broader definition that the entrepreneur can be studied within their social networks. At each stage of the entrepreneurial process entrepreneurs access people in their networks to provide inputs for different aspects of establishing and running a business (Greve & Salaff, 2003: 1). Networks can be described as the patterned, beneficial relationships between individuals, groups or organisations that are used to secure critical economic and non-economic resources needed to start and manage a business (Adams, 2009: 192).

Previously disadvantaged individuals

This study considers South African entrepreneurs who can be described as previously disadvantaged. Such a term takes into account the legacy of the apartheid era in South Africa which has resulted in, amongst many other things, the lack of appropriate education and infrastructure necessary for an individual’s entrepreneurial success (Herrington et al, 2010: 15). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) studies have conclusively shown that low levels of early stage entrepreneurial activity in South Africa are influenced by a low level of overall education, social factors that do not encourage entrepreneurship as a career path of choice, a lack

of access to finance, and a difficult regulatory environment (Herrington et al, 2010: 15).

Additionally, according to these authors one needs to take into account the recent world-wide economic crisis and the dramatic impact which this has had on economic development in South Africa. For the purposes of this study, a previously disadvantaged entrepreneur is considered in terms of the variables of having a low education and skills base, and limited access to resources as a result of the previous apartheid system in South Africa.

Social Capital

Social capital can be broadly defined as the goodwill available to individuals or groups; its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations; and its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor (Adler & Kwon, 2002: 23). It can be described as the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 243). Having identified the importance of social contacts and networks to entrepreneurship, this definition is connected to the idea of an innovative entrepreneur developing social capital through building networks in order to access information, resources and opportunities (Cope et al, 2007: 214).

Entrepreneurship development

The economic imperative for entrepreneurship development

The entrepreneurship debate is universal, being a frequent topic of academic studies and mainstream media coverage (Herrington et al, 2010: 11). Research has established the impact of entrepreneurial activity on economic growth, demonstrating the importance of entrepreneurial activity on the GDP (gross domestic product) of a country (Van Stel, Carree & Thurik, 2005: 318). Entrepreneurship is considered to be an important mechanism for economic development through job creation, innovation and its welfare effect (Herrington et al, 2010: 57). A review by Van Praag and Versloot (2007:352), confirms the important and very specific economic value which entrepreneurship brings to an economy; contributing to employment creation, productivity growth, and producing high-quality innovations.

While entrepreneurship is highly important to developing countries, the effect is often not realised due to factors such as the low human capital of entrepreneurs (Van Stel et al, 2005: 319). Human capital is created by changes in a person that bring about skills and capabilities that enable them to act in new ways and facilitates productivity (Coleman, 1988: 100). Additionally, where opportunity-based entrepreneurial activity, as opposed to necessity based

entrepreneurship, is seen as more favourable indicator for economic development, and is often low in less developed countries (Bosma & Levie, 2009: 8). This study adopts the distinction made between those who are motivated primarily by a lack of other options for making a living (necessity entrepreneurship) and those who are starting a business to take advantage of an opportunity (Herrington et al, 2010: 25). Opportunity-based entrepreneurship can be summarised as the decision by an individual to start his own business due to the fact that he has seen an opportunity in the market, which can be economically exploited (Kliphuis, 2010: 2). As a result, in order for South Africa to experience economic growth, reduce high unemployment figures, and reduce poverty levels, there needs to be an increase in entrepreneurial activity, specifically by opportunity based entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship in South Africa

Entrepreneurship is critically important in South Africa, given the major challenge presented by massive and growing unemployment. This problem is especially evident amongst the country's youth (18-35), who more often than not lack the experience, skills and education necessary to access employment in the formal sector (Herrington et al, 2010: 12). South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates recorded internationally being 23.9 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2011 (Statistics SA, 2010). Most disturbing are the findings of a recent survey published by the South African Institute of Race Relations, which states that the unemployment rate among 15–24 year-olds is 51%, almost twice the national unemployment rate (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2011).

Despite entrepreneurship's potential to contribute to employment creation and poverty alleviation in South Africa, research has shown that the country lags behind other developing countries in promoting early-stage entrepreneurial activity (Herrington et al, 2010: 12). Various reasons have been cited for this including a low level of overall education, social and entrepreneurial factors that do not encourage entrepreneurship as a path of choice, a lack of access to finance, and a difficult regulatory environment (Herrington et al, 2010: 15).

One of the factors which is seen to create legitimacy for entrepreneurship are the levels of social networking activity which takes place in society (Bosma & Levie, 2009: 10). The interpersonal relationships of entrepreneurs are viewed as the means through which they gain access to a variety of resources including information, advice and enhanced reputation (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003: 166). In a study which reviewed young South African's entrepreneurial perceptions towards business opportunities, the necessity to have contacts in order to start a

business was ranked highly (Luiz & Mariotti, 2011: 54). This was described as a particularly strong feature of the South African economy both under the previous dispensation of white business networks and the current dispensation of black business networks and empowerment (Luiz & Mariotti, 2011: 54). These factors point to the importance, amongst many other variables for South African entrepreneurs, to establish and utilise networks to identify opportunities and successfully start a business.

The 2001 GEM South Africa Report (Driver, Wood, Segal & Herrington, 2001: 28) shows that only 26% of South African adults believe they have the knowledge, skills and experience required to start a business. Black South Africans and women were the least likely to believe they had the skills necessary to start a business, but the most dramatic differences were by educational level. Adults with tertiary education were more than twice as likely to believe that they had the ability to start a business, compared to those without a matriculation certificate. The 2003 GEM South Africa Report (Ortford, Wood, Fischer, Herrington & Segal, 2003: 11) showed that not only is the number of South Africans that believe that they have the knowledge, skills and experience required to start a business low, but the proportion of young men who believed that they had the skills to start a business was also much lower than in other developing countries. An entrepreneur's self-belief in their abilities is therefore central to entrepreneurial activity in South Africa.

Networking as an entrepreneurial success factor

One of the key entrepreneurial success factors is that of entrepreneurs creating networks. Networking is the process of meeting people, building relationships that can benefit all those involved, sharing information and ideas and getting ones' business on the map (Burke & Segaloe, 2003:7). It is vital that entrepreneurs know how to work with people, and how to build a comprehensive network of contacts which may possibly be useful in the future (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2009: 16). Entrepreneurial networking is therefore an active process of setting up and maintaining mutually rewarding and cooperative relationships with other persons or businesses that can offer critical support for the development and growth of a business (Adams, 2009: 192). Networks are based on the principle of reciprocity; are built on shared interests and activities; and need to be constantly maintained (Adams, 2009: 192). Burke and Segaloe (2003: 6) identify various benefits of networking which enables emerging entrepreneurs: to establish a relationship with people they have never met, or who would otherwise not be aware of their business, or improve their existing relationships; to market themselves as well as their business

directly to people who in turn may refer other customers to them; and to share ideas, information and experience.

This study is based on the assumption that social networks are an avenue for gaining access to business opportunities, and in particular where networks can compensate for a lack of human capital such as skills and education amongst previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs. Successful entrepreneurs will therefore realise the importance of building a wide network of relationships, and see these relationships as an important sources of capital for the enterprise.

The social capital of entrepreneurs

The network perspective

The reasons why some exploit entrepreneurial activities and some do not, has been at the centre of many studies which have proposed psychological factors, personality traits, and demographic variables to explain entrepreneurial activity (De Carolis & Saporito, 2006: 42). This study turns to an alternate stream of research which focuses on entrepreneurs embedded in social networks, and describes the importance of the social capital inherent in these networks for the creation of new ventures (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991: 312, Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). The network approach assumes that network resources, networking activities and network support are heavily used to establish new firms (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998: 213). Network based research in entrepreneurship has emerged as a well established field of study which has sought to examine the process of network development during entrepreneurial activity and the impact of networks on entrepreneurial outcomes (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003: 166). Within this research perspective, entrepreneurship is seen as ‘embedded in networks of continuing social relations; facilitated or constrained by linkages between aspiring entrepreneurs, resources, and opportunities; and influenced by the interaction of chance, necessity, and purpose in all social action’ (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986).

The entrepreneurial process is one through which a new venture is created as a result of the entrepreneur bringing resources together to form an organisation in order to pursue an opportunity (Nieman & Bennett, 2002). The types of resources which an entrepreneur typically requires to start a business are information, capital, skills, and labour (Greve & Salaff, 2003: 2). However the circumstances in which entrepreneurs operate are often constrained and one of the ways to overcome these is to by accessing their extended pool of social contacts in ones network (Anderson & Jack, 2002: 195). Social networks therefore play an important role in establishing a

firm by providing access to various inputs (Greve & Salaff, 2003:2). They open up entrepreneurial possibilities, providing access to privileged information, opportunities, and enable individuals to obtain resources (Jack, 2005: 1235)

Entrepreneurship is thus seen as a relational task, where building a new business is a process of activating existing social relationships and creating new ones (Brüderl & Preisdörfer, 1998: 214). Networks are the social context of a business and can be activated according to different needs throughout the various phases of establishing a business (Anderson, Drakopoulou-Dodd & Jack, 2010: 122; Greve & Salaff, 2003:1). The networking practices of an entrepreneur extend the reach and abilities of the individual to capture resources that are held by others and so improve entrepreneurial effectiveness at both the start-up phase (Davidsson & Honig, 2003: 4) as well as through the growth of the venture (Anderson et, 2010: 121). The promotion and development of social networks can be seen as particularly important given the rapid advances in communication technologies which have enabled entrepreneurs to work in autonomous, distantly separated environments (Davidsson & Honig, 2003: 4).

Given the main tasks of entrepreneurship being the identification of a promising opportunity and the mobilisation of resources to exploit it, social networks are seen to influence both of these stages of the entrepreneurial process in that they shape information flows and trace the ties through which resources flow (Stuart & Sorenson, 2005: 211). The types of links which can be found within social networks can be described as strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) and are seen to influence the structure of networks and the way in which networks operate. These network features will be discussed further. The creation of new ventures and their success therefore depends heavily on the entrepreneur's ability to establish a diverse network of relationships (Liao & Welsch, 2005: 348).

As individuals, entrepreneurs are a product of their social environment, and as a result they will be conditioned by that environment and may perceive opportunities in a manner that is influenced by their social background (Anderson & Miller, 2002:18). In this way entrepreneurship is viewed as a significantly social practice where networking acts as an organising and governing mechanism to provide meaning, identity and resources (Jack, Anderson, & Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2008: 125). Networks are therefore much more than an extension of resources; they become a mode of being entrepreneurial, a socially constructed life world that not only mirrors, but represents their environment and helps create growth (Anderson et al, 2010: 122). As a result, an entrepreneur's social background plays an important role in determining their success. Entrepreneurs from higher socio-economic groupings are found to

have access to highly effective business support, and these networks provided a platform from which opportunities could be both recognised and realised (Anderson & Miller, 2002: 17). At the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, entrepreneurs embedded in resource poor socio-economic groups are found to be at a disadvantage as a result of their network positions (Lin, 2000: 793). This study builds on the idea that as a result of being embedded in confined social networks, as well as lacking in human capital and financial resources, disadvantaged entrepreneurs will try harder to mobilise social contacts and receive more support out of their networks (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998: 216).

It has been suggested that a one-side perspective dominates the study of social networks of entrepreneurs from an African perspective, where social networks are seen as a cure-all concept for those lacking in human and financial capital (Egbert, 2009; Kristiansen, 2004). These authors highlight various negative and restrictive aspects of social networks in the African context where an entrepreneur's networks often represent financial obligations and responsibilities from relatives and the community, and exert a drain on their resources. While these limitations of social networks in an African context have been noted, this study departs from a culture perspective, and examines the structural elements of networks based on common features of an entrepreneur's networks which are found to have similar properties across diverse cultures (Greve & Salaff, 2003: 17).

Social Capital Theory

In order to take into consideration the actual and potential resources which are embedded within the social networks of an entrepreneur and how they impact on an entrepreneurs small business start up, Social Capital Theory is introduced as a theoretical framework for this study.

Social capital is described as the broader theoretical construct to which the social network of entrepreneurs relates (Anderson & Jack, 2002: 198). Social capital can be described as the goodwill and resources that emanate from an individual's network of social relationships (Adler & Kwon, 2002: 18). These relationships are embedded within networks of mutual acquaintance and recognition which constitute a valuable resource for social action (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 243). Economic goals are also typically found to accompany social goals, being 'embedded' within the context of ongoing networks of personal relationships (Granovetter, 1985: 481).

The network contacts which lead to successful outcomes are described as the entrepreneur's social capital (Greve & Salaff, 2003: 2). Social capital is therefore widely

recognised as an important success indicator for a start-up business (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000: 223). In the context of the entrepreneurship literature consulted for this study, the importance of social capital to the establishment of new ventures has been very well documented (Anderson & Jack, 2002; Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Davidsson & Honig, 2003; De Carolis & Saparito, 2006; Jack, 2005; Lee & Jones, 2008; Liao & Welsch, 2005; Greve & Salaff, 2003; Cope et al, 2007; Gordon & Jack, 2010). Entrepreneurial social capital has been established as a crucial element of entrepreneurial activity as a means for generating information sources, developing resources and as a mechanism for acquiring business potentials (Anderson & Jack, 2002: 202). An innovative entrepreneur is therefore one who develops social capital through building networks which provide access to external sources of information, influence, support, finance and expertise (Cope et al, 2007: 214; Davidsson & Honig, 2003: 308; Adler & Kwon, 2002: 3).

The structural dimension of social capital

Social capital is increasingly acknowledged in entrepreneurship literature with various studies focusing on the three dimensions of social capital which have been identified by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998). These are described as the structural, relational and cognitive dimensions. For the purposes of this study, the structural dimension of social capital is considered in which network ties are identified as a potential source of resources and information (Liao & Welsch, 2005: 349). The structural dimension of social capital is about social interactions, and the types of relationships within a social structure (Anderson & Jack, 2002: 197). Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998: 244) describe the structural dimension of social capital as ‘the overall pattern of connections between actors with the most important aspect being the presence or absence of network ties’. The structural element envisages social capital as a bridge-building process which links individuals and provides access to a range of quality information and resources (Anderson & Jack, 2002: 207). This analogy enforces the idea that social capital does not merely exist by virtue of relationships but has to be deliberately built and strengthened in order to be effective. Building networking ties are therefore a beneficial and productive resource for entrepreneurs to exchange information, recognise business opportunities and share resources (Liao & Welsch, 2005: 349). Structural social capital essentially describes entrepreneurs embedded in their networks and the potential within these networks to access information, resources and support that are critical for venture creation (Liao & Welsch, 2005: 349; Anderson & Jack, 2002: 195).

Weak Tie Hypothesis

One of the direct benefits of social capital is that it provides the focal actor with access to broader sources of information and improves information's quality, relevance, and timeliness (Adler & Kwon, 2002: 29). Another direct benefit which has been ascribed to an individual's external connections is that of influence and power (De Carolis & Saporito, 2006: 44). These benefits of social capital are related to the nature and influence of having strong and weak ties in a social network, and what those ties can achieve for a person (Jack, 2005: 1236). In order to further explore the value and strength of ties in a network, this study has consulted Granovetter's (1973) weak tie hypothesis. Granovetter (1973) differentiates between two types of ties – strong and weak – and describes how the diversity, homogeneity and heterogeneity of these ties within a network impact on the actions of individuals. According to Granovetter (1973: 1361), the strength of interpersonal ties can be related to the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy and reciprocal services which characterise the tie. 'Strong ties' are those which can be found in nuclear family and amongst close friends which provide secure and consistent access to resources (Davidsson & Honig, 2003: 308). 'Weak ties' can be described as loose relationships between individuals, and are seen to extend one's network by linking individuals or organisations together and providing an interface for exchanges to take place (Davidsson & Honig, 2003: 308). Granovetter (1973: 1361) asserts that our acquaintances (weak ties) are less likely to be socially involved with one another than are our close friends (strong ties), and as a result low-density networks made up of acquaintances are able to provide an individual with new ideas and information. Granovetter's (1983: 201) work is therefore based on the idea that the value and strength of weak ties lies in the possibilities of connections to other social systems which are able to provide access to new and different information, resources and contacts (Granovetter, 1983: 201). Weak ties were originally shown to create opportunities for career mobility given that acquaintances rather than close family and friends who move in different social circles, are able to connect one to opportunities (Granovetter, 1973: 1369).

Entrepreneurship and social capital literature has adopted this concept extensively with consistent findings that entrepreneurs with a lot of weak ties have a competitive advantage in that they contribute to the success factors of having information that leads to opportunities and resources (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). This is given that the degree to which entrepreneurial opportunities are recognised hinges on access to private information, and heterogeneous social networks provide the conduits through which this happens (Stuart & Sorenson, 2005: 213). It has been widely used in literature discussing the social capital of entrepreneurs and provides a basis

for exploring the benefits of having diverse, heterogeneous networks (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991; Anderson & Miller, 2003; Jack, 2005; Narayan, 1999; Cope et al, 2007; Anderson & Jack, 2002; Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Lee & Jones, 2008; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005; Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998; De Carolis & Saporito, 2006; Pirolo & Presutti, 2010).

Entrepreneurs are seen to benefit from the encouragement and emotional support found in family and close friends (Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009: 880; Davidsson & Honig, 2003: 30). Networks may begin in this highly personal way, but are likely to spread to include a range of contacts exceeding family and close friends (Cope et al, 2007: 214). Bridging out of networks based on strong ties into networks based on weaker ties provides entrepreneurs with wider access to knowledge and information as well as new market opportunities (Lee & Jones, 2008: 585). While strong ties are perceived to be less beneficial for entrepreneurs in that they are likely to provide redundant information given that they move in the same social circles, strong ties have been demonstrated as a beneficial linkage to the wider social context and act as a mechanism to invoke weaker ties (Jack, 2005: 1234). Weak tie network contacts can then open the possibility to broaden the financial and human capital basis for establishing a new firm (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998: 214) and are particularly suited to the outcomes of establishing resources and opportunities (Pirolo & Presutti, 2010: 220). While strong and weak ties are both seen to positively influence different outcomes during the various phases of business start up, this study considers the effect of having weak ties in ones network and how these relate to the various network outcomes being considered. As a result entrepreneurs need to be seen to create and accelerate the development of weak ties.

The networks of previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs

It has been demonstrated that by supplementing an entrepreneurs' own business resources with the benefits of having a diverse social network, the likelihood of success is improved (Anderson & Jack, 2000; Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998). This can be achieved through the social and professional networks of entrepreneurs which provide access to ideas, opportunities and valued resources (Valenzuela et al, 2009: 880). Successful entrepreneurs are more likely to be located in network positions that are connected to lots of diverse information sources which provide information such as: ideas for new business locations, potential markets for goods and services, sources of capital or potential investors, and innovations (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991: 308). An entrepreneur who has a small set of overlapping ties is therefore at a disadvantage when competing for information with someone with a large set of divergent ties.

Given the focus of this study on historically disadvantaged entrepreneurs in the South African context, various studies have been considered which examine the effects of social support networks on disadvantaged individuals. The importance of having diverse networks has already been well established given the entrepreneurial possibilities they open up by providing access to information, resources and opportunities. Granovetter's (1973) strength of weak ties has been extended to consider the case of disadvantaged individuals, who are found to be excluded from opportunities, not because of discrimination, but because of non-overlapping social networks (Narayan, 1999: 26).

It has been established that the social backgrounds of entrepreneurs influence the social capital of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is a socio-economic process whereby economic actions are conditioned and influenced by social relations, making it important to understand the impact of the social context of the entrepreneur (Cope et al, 216). Investigating the social context of entrepreneurs has revealed that individuals from socially deprived background have networks that are concentrated on family and close friends, as opposed to well-educated entrepreneurs who have more diverse networks and reap the benefits (Lee & Jones, 2008: 562).

Research has found that social groups based on race have different access to social capital. Members of a disadvantaged group have the tendency to interact with others in the same social group and as a result of their associated social networks, they are found to be deficient in social capital (Lin, 2000: 293). The connection between socio-economic status, human capital, and social capital has also been explored by Anderson and Miller (2002:17) who confirm that entrepreneurs from a higher socio-economic class have access to highly effective business support networks which provide a platform from which opportunities can be recognised and realised.

However, qualitative studies have also shown that disadvantaged individuals with less favourable human capital and restricted financial resources make an extensive effort to activate their personal network resources to compensate for their unfavourable position by referring to their network ties (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1996: 216). These findings have been confirmed in an African context by Egbert (2009: 671), where entrepreneurs with a low degree of formal education are shown to engage in intensive networking for business success.

Links have already been established between developing social capital and poverty alleviation, in particular building ties which cut across social groups in unequal societies (Narayan, 1999: 2). A study by Liu and Duff (1973: 366) suggest that infrequent, yet strategic

weak ties which occur between differing socio-economic classes results in highly beneficial information transfer to disadvantaged individuals. According to Narayan (1999:2), focusing on the social aspects of economic development and encouraging the development of weak tie social capital is able to create social cohesion between groups and opens up economic opportunities to those belonging to less powerful or excluded groups.

In these ways, social networks can be seen to supplement negative effects of education, experience, and financial capital (Coleman, 1988: 109). In some cases highly developed social networks can even compensate for shortfalls of human capital (Light & Karageorgis, 1994: 658). These findings become relevant when acknowledging that for the socially disadvantaged to generate better returns from social capital, establishing ties beyond their social circles becomes important. The role which the Internet plays in developing these social relations has been examined by Hlebec, Manfreda and Vehovar (2006: 9), who established that underprivileged individuals reap great benefits from the Internet. Allowing individuals to grow a large network through the Internet provides the advantage of social support. The benefits of relatively simple communication through effective use of electronic forms of communication have also been identified by Lee and Jones (2008: 584) as highly important for disadvantaged groups.

ICTs and social change

Digital communication

The arrival of a new generation of digital media that is no longer based on the broadcasting logic is challenging existing knowledge about traditional mass communication (Scolari, 2009: 944). New media is challenging existing theoretical perspectives in terms of media ownership structures, greater equality of access, and the way in which society is becoming networked (McQuail, 2005: 140). The main consequences of digital communication which distinguish it from traditional mass media are that it is networked, ubiquitous in the sense that new media technologies affect everyone in society (even those who don't use them), and interactive in that it affords users greater choice and interaction with others (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006: 8). New media research entails a shift from media themselves to a focus on mediation as a central framing idea within networked societies, placing people's agency and action at the centre (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006: 9). As a new research field, no all encompassing theory of digital communication exists, so for the purposes of this study digital communication will be considered as a means of communication which allows networking, multimedia, collaborative and interactive communication (Scolari, 2009: 946).

With respect to the potential for social change, the participatory nature of digital media is considered more suitable than planned development by way of mass information and persuasion (McQuail, 2005: 141). Technologies which facilitate communication, allow information to spread faster, and increase people's ability to learn and interact, are seen as better suited to producing social change (Raiti, 2006: 3). This study contributes to research which highlights the potential for digital technologies to improve people's livelihoods. However, it is important to emphasise that the mere availability of technology can never predict its usage or possible benefits (Kreutzer, 2009: 6). Emphasis is placed on the 'social shaping' of digital technology which stresses the dynamic interaction between social forces that shape technological development and technological innovations that affect social relations (Hamelink, 1997: 29). This approach stands in opposition to ideas of technological determinism which views innovation as the cause and society as the effect (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006: 4). This study gives credence to the hybrid ways in which technologies influence, and are influenced by societies and individuals, and accounts for human agency given the unique uses and preferences for digital technology (Kreutzer, 2009: 7). An emphasis on the dynamics of the social shaping of digital technology allows for a better understanding of their social consequences.

ICT4D and ICTs in everyday life

The growing field of research which documents the role of ICTs in socio-economic development is known as Information Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D). ICT4D literature has emerged predominantly from a development practitioner perspective with the goals of: policy changes; examining the consequences of deploying ICTs for development; and used primarily to direct the work of NGO's and organisations such as UNDP and World Bank (Raiti, 2006: 1). It has been recognised that ICTs have the potential to provide traditionally disadvantaged groups with improved access to information and communication channels (Yamamichi, 2011: 3). Within the context of social development these can lead to poverty alleviation through faster and easier information delivery; information exchange and network creation; efficiency and transparency; transforming the way people live, learn and conduct business; and empowering people through the freedom of information (Yamamichi, 2011: 2). While some studies have emphasized improved productivity, this study has reviewed literature related to ICTs and social change where new patterns of ICT use are associated with significant transformations in the availability of information, and in the constitution of social networks (Donner, 2006: 5). The social change approach can also be linked to the ways in which ICTs, in particular mobile phone use, can lead to new and more specialised networks of weak ties across

geographical and social boundaries (Wellman, 1997: 179). The literature consulted on ICTs and economic development underpins a way to explore communication technology and how it can benefit entrepreneurs in enterprise development. In particular the way in which ICT-enabled social media empowers people and transforms the way they live, learn and conduct business (Yamamichi, 2011: 3).

ICT4D is a new field of study that contains few grand theories compared to other areas of social science and for this reason can be seen to lack direction (Raiti, 2006: 1). To overcome this, Raiti (2006:2) suggests that ICT4D literature should be combined with its multidisciplinary partners from the social sciences in order to provide background research and theories to help solidify ICT4D literature. Given that ICT4D research has a bias to action given its development focus, as opposed to a bias to knowledge, Heeks (2006: 1) also provides suggestions on how theoretical ideas from the social sciences can be applied to researching ICTs and socioeconomic development. His findings provide a rough map from a range of disciplines from which theories can be drawn, including Communication studies and Entrepreneurial studies identified as relevant to this study. This conceptual map has helped shape this ICT4D study and draws from Social Cognitive Theory which enables personal and social change through communication media (Bandura, 2004), as well as Social Capital Theory as an entrepreneurial study. Social Cognitive Theory is yet to be discussed in further detail.

Raiti (2006: 2) suggests that increased influence from media studies, in particular literature on ICTs in everyday life would help solidify the knowledge base and purpose of ICT4D literature. This idea has been reinforced by Donner (2006: 7), who has found it useful to look beyond the ICT4D literature and draw on recent discussions about the role of ICTs, in particular mobile phones, in people's daily lives. This study has adopted these suggestions and includes research which examines the experience of ICTs in people's daily routines. New media and the Internet have become everyday technologies, being assimilated and reconfigured to suit the demands, norms and expectations of everyday life (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002: 2). This study is focused on the growing use and versatility of mobile technologies which as personal accessories provide access to a variety of individualised content and communications services regardless of location (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002: 8). While the focus of ICT in everyday life studies is generally taken to explore usage outside formal education, work and political life, the significance of online communities and questions of building social capital do fall into this ambit of research (Haddon, 2004: 2).

This field of study considers ways in which the Internet has moved from being an elite preserve into becoming routinely incorporated into everyday life, including for those in developing countries (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002: 7). In particular the rapid adoption of mobile phone technology has raised hopes within the economic development community that people in the developing world will benefit from using the technology in their daily lives (Donner, 2006: 4). This idea will be explored in more detail. ICT in everyday life tradition therefore shares an interest in understanding the societal consequences of ICTs including concerns of the 'digital divide', where various studies have considered the usage and qualities of online experiences (Haddon, 2004: 2; Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002:12).

Explaining Internet behaviour entails viewing it as a complement to ongoing activity and forms part of the social worlds in which it is embedded (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002: 41). One of the important trends where the Internet is intersecting and impacting on people's everyday lives is the move from a group-based society to a networked society (Castells, 1996). Rather than functioning in discrete, bounded groups at home, in the community, at work, and in organisations; people now move as individuals between various fuzzily-bounded networks (Wellman, 2001). As computer-mediated communication has become part of everyday life, people lives are shaped in networks rather than groups given the permeable boundaries of the Internet allowing diverse interactions between multiple networks (Wellman 1997; Castells, 1996). The portability of mobile phones and wireless Internet access has made physical location less important, which facilitates networked individualism as the new basis of community from which individuals get support, sociability, information and a sense of belonging (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002: 39).

This study looks at the way in which mobile-enabled social media has become embedded in the daily lives of entrepreneurs. It hopes to contribute to studies which show how networked practices mirror, support, and alter known everyday practices, such as how people present themselves and connect with others (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 221). As a result of these daily online interactions, social capital is being built, which allows individuals to access information and opportunities that are otherwise unavailable (Valenzuela et al, 2009: 877). As a result of consciously maintaining and building social networks in this way, an individual's well-being and quality of life can be improved (Valenzuela et al, 2009: 877).

'Digital divide' debate

A discussion on social media is not complete without examining issues of the 'digital divide' which confront many developing countries such as South Africa. The 'digital divide' has traditionally been understood to be the inequalities in access to ICTs (Kelly & Biggs, 2007: 11). Narrowing the digital disparity between the rich and the poor is seen by many to be one of the greatest challenges facing the 21st century society (Megwa, 2007; 336). Inequalities in access can be seen to be taking place across multiple levels and divides such as within countries, between men and women, and between the young and the old (Kelly & Biggs, 2007: 11). The reasons often cited for these inequalities which arise in the developing world are that the infrastructure, human capital development and financial resources that are necessary to implement them effectively are either absent or of a poor quality. (Weiner & Rumiany, 2007: 14).

Many of these divides are evident in South Africa, in particular where the average Internet user is relatively affluent and educated versus the poor majority (Kreutzer, 2009: 1). The many infrastructural, educational and economic disparities in ICT access between urban and rural populations are also of concern in South Africa (Kreutzer, 2009: 1). Although various initiatives have been launched to counter these digital disparities in South Africa most of these attempts have tended to focus on the introduction of ICT hardware, rather than look for creative ways to expand ICT access to meaningfully benefit poor and rural communities (Megwa, 2007; 336). However despite technological difficulties related to access, Nyamnjoh (2005: 15) highlights the encouraging forms of individual creativity taking place across Africa given the opportunities which the Internet offers to marginalised voices.

Fink and Kenny (2003: 2) identify four 'gaps' which are referred to in 'digital divide' literature. These are described as gaps in access to ICTs; gaps in the ability and skills base to use ICTs; gaps in actual use of ICTs for various purposes; and gaps in the impact of use measured by financial and economic returns. Some of these gaps have narrowed and, in some cases, even reversed over time as older technologies become more evenly diffused, but other disparities have arisen suggesting that the digital divide is a dynamic concept which evolves over time (Kelly & Biggs, 2007: 11). Yet despite technological advances in the information society which have shrunk conventional divisions of access to and usage of ICTs, digital divides are still in place and present new challenges given inequalities in their adoption and integration (Tsatsou, 2011: 317).

Recent trends in 'digital divide' literature have seen a move away from the conventional binary accounts of 'information haves and have-nots' based merely on socio-economic and demographic variables. These newer studies consider instead the divides taking place on the basis of socio-cultural and knowledge barriers which need to be overcome in a developing context before the benefits of ICT based information can be realised (Tsatsou, 2011: 318; Duncombe and Heeks, 2002: 70). It is evident that as the world becomes more dependent on ICT, the 'digital divide' has come to be measured more in terms of the quality of access rather than simply the quantity of access to ICT (Kelly & Biggs, 2007: 11). As statistics on access show a shrinking 'digital divide', it therefore becomes more important to understand differences in use of ICTs (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002: 17).

More recently, the discussion has come to include the uneven spread of new media technologies and the consequences for citizens who are not participants in electronically mediated networks (Mansell, 2005: 407). This can include social media usage, where marginalised people are not enlightened on how to use social media and what can be achieved by using it (Yamamichi, 2011: 12). Mansell (2005: 407) asserts that most of the causes, consequences and remedies provided in the 'digital divide' rhetoric fail to address issues of how new media may be used to empower those who are disadvantaged. He suggests that if new media applications are to provide a tool for the empowerment of the majority of citizens it is essential to extend discussions to include the capability of individuals to make sense of the social world in online spaces. This idea has been expanded on by Jenkins (2006) who shifts the focus of the conversation about the 'digital divide' toward that of an individual's opportunity to participate in new media technologies and to develop the cultural competencies and social skills needed for full involvement. Jenkins (2006: 3) describes a 'participatory culture' which is emerging as a result of the explosion of new media technologies which enable the average consumer to engage with media content in powerful new ways. A 'participatory gap' is used to describe the divide between those who have the experience, skills and knowledge necessary to use these tools, and those that don't. The benefits of being part of a participatory culture includes the affiliations developed through online communities (via SNS), which have demonstrated opportunities for learning, cultural expression, the development of skills, and empowered citizenship (Jenkins, 2006: 3). Access to this participatory culture functions as a new form of the 'hidden curriculum' which shapes who will succeed and who will be left behind in the world of tomorrow (Jenkins, 2006: 3).

This study continues along this trajectory of research by considering alternatives to socio-economic explanations of the 'digital divide'. Literature has been considered which moves beyond issues of access towards understanding gaps in a person's abilities and skills, willingness and motivation, and effectiveness regarding ICTs usage (Tsatsou, 2011: 322). While inequalities in access to the Internet do exist, the focus of this study is rather on gaps in the extent of use, the ability to access quality information, the type of support received, and the diversity of uses (Di Maggio, Hargittai, Neuman & Robinson, 2001: 310.). It therefore follows the notion of 'quality of use' based on the central idea that as the user's belief in their abilities to use the Internet to gain certain outcomes increases' and as they experience these benefits for themselves, the 'digital divide' can be narrowed (Eastin & LaRose, 2000) It takes into account the interactive nature of the digital media experience where audiences play an active role in the social shaping of technologies, and their appropriation, consumption and impact (Livingstone, 1999: 63). More than the interactive features of the technology itself, this study considers the skills, knowledge, and self-confidence needed to be full participants in this contemporary culture (Jenkins, 2006: 8). Finally, as a study about ICTs in everyday life, this study is concerned with questions regarding what the divide means based on everyday practice, and how experience with these media tools can potentially narrow the divide (Haddon, 2005: 8).

Mobile phones for development

Best practice drawn from the field of ICT action in government, local business and education has shown that ICTs are an effective tool for development strategies serving as a vehicle for achieving poverty alleviation, and boosting economic growth (Weiner & Rumiany, 2007: 15). However the mere availability and accessibility of ICTs are not sufficient to achieve these goals. Weiner and Rumiany (2007: 15) argue that in order for ICTs to assist in achieving socio-economic development, they need to be seen as a means rather than an end in itself. As a result, in order to close the 'digital divide' and achieve sustainable development, the focus needs to be on how these tools are used in overcoming socio-economic obstacles (Weiner & Rumiany, 2007: 15). This study considers the way in which social media is being used as a tool for social development, in the wake of the increased diffusion of mobile phone Internet access amongst South Africans.

The uptake of ICTs in the developing world is improving; in particular given the rapid expansion in the usage of mobile phone technology (Herrington et al, 2010: 106). One of the key drivers of this growth is the fact that mobile communication is more easily used by people living in remote areas where ICT infrastructure was previously not accessible (Bohler-Muller & van

der Merwe, 2011: 2). As a result of the growth in mobile phone penetration amongst developing countries, prospects for bridging the 'digital divide' is becoming a reality (Kelly & Biggs, 2007: 11). Given the emergence of Internet technologies which support a global flow of information and which eradicate constraints of time and distance, new potential exists for societies to 'leapfrog' existing notions of the 'digital divide' (Steinmueller, 2001: 194). This potential exists for many young South Africans, who according to a study by Kreutzer (2009: 2) have adopted the relatively inexpensive Internet mobile phone with its potential for beneficial applications and use. Given its ubiquitous presence, mobile phone technology therefore offers a range of new possibilities for social change (Kreutzer, 2009: 1).

ICT infrastructure and the availability of Internet connection devices form the basic foundation of social media (Yamamichi, 2011:13). Social media is highlighted as a key application with the potential for bringing about political and social change on the African continent (Bohler-Muller & van Der Merwe, 2011: 2). This was highly evident in the 2010/2011 revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt which were largely organised, supported and driven through the use of social media-based tools where *Facebook*, *Twitter* and mobile phone technology allowed for extensive political expression against government (Bohler-Muller & van der Merwe, 2011: 1). These authors also highlight the potential for the growing penetration of mobile phones and mobile Internet usage on the African continent to instigate social change given the power they literally place in people's hands. Mobile social media applications are expected to be the main driver of this evolution, and can even be seen as another step towards narrowing the divides which exist between developed and emerging countries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: 67).

Mobile phones in developing countries also have enormous potential for business development as they help to increase the social networks of entrepreneurs thereby expanding the possibilities for business opportunities (Weiner & Rumiany, 2007: 17). Mobile phones have overtaken fixed phones and computers as tools in supporting the running of small business given their prevalence and accessibility (Research ICT Africa, 2008: 138). Various studies have focused on the intersection of mobile ICTs and micro-enterprise development, where they are seen to supplement business linkages, information, and building social capital through community networking (Duncombe & Heeks, 2002; Donner, 2006). A survey in Kigali, Rwanda, details the impact of mobile ownership on the social networks of micro-entrepreneurs and demonstrates the benefits of new business contacts enabled by mobile phone ownership (Donner, 2006: 3). ICTs are therefore seen as an essential tool for business, helping them to remain

competitive and prosper in both domestic and international markets and (Herrington et al, 2010: 106).

Social Media

Social media and social relationships

The digital era is witnessing the many ways in which electronic media is changing people's lives. People are being linked together in a cyberworld which transcends conventional communication boundaries, and which leads to the exchange of information, sharing of new ideas, and enabling collaboration on matters of mutual interest (Bandura, 2002: 284). The Internet has been shown to have a positive effect on personal relationships because it lowers the communication barriers created by space and time (Hlebec et al, 2006: 10). It offers the opportunity to maintain geographically diverse networks, and the social relationships of Internet users may become richer in the sense of having larger networks than those of the general population (Franzen, 2002: 107). The Internet can be seen to transform community in the way that it has become integrated into the routines of daily life, with online activities supplementing existing offline communication (Wellman, Boase & Chen, 2002; Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001).

While most would agree that the Internet has changed community, there are different opinions about the extent of the change, and not all reactions to new forms of communication are positive. Some studies focused on the likely impact of new communication technology provide evidence for the way in which individuals become alienated from society and public life as a result of their use (Turkle, 1996; White, 1997). Others have provided links between a decline in social capital where the Internet is seen to promote the individualisation of leisure time and deprive people of social interaction (Putnam, 2000). However the real effect of the Internet can depend on how it is used, therefore this study is focused on the positive consequences of Internet use. As new media have become familiar, and their use adapted through common and group conventions, they have come to function as a vital means of maintaining work and social connections in everyday life (Haythornthwaite, 2005: 126). This study is based on the general assumption that patterns of new media use related to information acquisition and community building (as opposed to entertainment purposes) are positively associated with an individual's production of social capital (Valenzuela et al, 2009: 880). This study seeks to contribute to a more accurate and positive understanding of SNS as an Internet-enabled communication and

network building tool, by examining their potential to develop social capital for a start-up business.

SNS and Social Capital

Various studies have been consulted which support a positive correlation between Internet use and building social capital through online social networks. It has been established that the reach and flexibility of the Internet offers a new forum for interacting with previously unknown individuals which results in various favourable implications, including that of establishing social capital (Best & Kreuger, 2006: 397). The power of the Internet lies in the way it forges connections between people where none existed, and thus in how it builds new weak tie networks (Haythornthwaite, 2005: 140). According to a Pew Internet 'Social Ties' survey (Boase, Horrigan, Wellman, & Rainie 2006), those with many significant online ties and access to people from a variety of social circles are more likely to get help from their networks.

The strength of interpersonal ties has already been discussed in relation to the importance of weak ties in expanding an individual's supplies of social capital (Granovetter, 1973). This rationale has been extended to discussing the benefits of using SNS as a means to create social capital (Ellison et al, 2007: 1143). Social capital might be augmented by such sites, given that new information technologies support the extension of interpersonal connectivity (Wellman et al, 2001: 451). Online interactions through SNS are shown to support both the maintenance of existing social ties and form formation of new connections outside of pre-existing social groups or location (Ellison et al, 2007: 1144). This is largely due to the technological features of SNS, which are seen to support the formation loose social ties, and allow users to create and maintain larger, diffuse networks of relationships from which they could potentially draw resources (Donath & boyd, 2004: 80). Additionally the technology is well-suited to maintaining such ties cheaply and easily (Donath & boyd, 2004). The end result of such online activity is making connections between individual that would not otherwise be possible (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 211) resulting in new forms of social capital (Ellison et al, 2007: 1146).

The benefits of establishing a large, heterogeneous network of weak ties through SNS have been shown to broaden the available information, opportunities and resources for users in the network (Donath & boyd, 2004: 80; Valenzuela et al, 2006: 880). As a result, building and establishing new online relationships leads to new forms of social capital. Added to these benefits, the expansion of social networks which enable users to join otherwise inaccessible communities, have been found to reduce perceived stereotypes and hierarchies including those of

gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Best & Kreuger, 2006: 397). It has also been suggested that using online social networks provide greater benefits for users experiencing low self-esteem and low life satisfaction (Ellison et al, 2007: 1143).

SNS and entrepreneurs

This study brings attention to the ways in which social media technologies are being adopted by entrepreneurs in building a micro enterprise. It has already been established that social networks play a crucial role in the entrepreneurial process and social media is now investigated as a means to establish and maintain these networks. However literature in which social media, entrepreneurs and their network ties intersect is very recent and somewhat limited.

Van der Krogt (2011: 4) suggests three important reasons for entrepreneurs to embrace social media: firstly as a low-cost platform on which to build your personal brand, communicating who you are both within and outside your company; secondly it allows entrepreneurs to engage rapidly and simultaneously with peers, employees, customers, and the broader public, in the same transparent and direct way they expect from everybody in their lives; and finally, social media gives one the opportunity to learn from instant information and unvarnished feedback. For many of these reasons, SNS are being adopted by a growing number of entrepreneurs who seek to deploy them for the benefit of their business; however the majority of research on this topic is focused on social media as a marketing tool, and little is known about how the use of social media may affect the networks of entrepreneurs themselves (Fisher & Reuber, 2010: 1).

A study by Fisher and Reuber (2010:2) has confirmed that entrepreneurs who invest a moderate amount of time in social interactions via social media may benefit from various insights and resources that are available and what they might be used for. Additionally, those who are more oriented toward expanding their communities and attuned to the norms that prevail on social media may be even more likely to benefit (Fisher & Reuber, 2011: 2). Because entrepreneurs can interact more with a greater range of people via social media, they may result in recognising new opportunities and assist in bringing them to fruition (Fischer & Reuber, 2010: 16). However a recent study by Kliphuis (2010) has highlighted that South African entrepreneurs, while making use of social networking platforms, do so mainly for personal purposes. Additionally according to his study, even though they are aware of the potential value of SNS for business purposes, they are not sure how to benefit from them. This study serves to build upon this by gaining an understanding of how an entrepreneurs cognitive process of

Internet self-efficacy and outcome expectations have a bearing on the use of SNS as a way to build social capital for a new venture.

Social media in South Africa

A household survey on Internet access and usage conducted by Research ICT Africa in 2008 across 17 African countries showed that ownership of personal computers and home connectivity to the Internet were very low across the continent, including South Africa with access primarily achieved through work and school. Such findings can be attributed to the high price of communications in South Africa resulting in a constraining effect on access and usage. According to a World Wide Worx report *Internet Access in SA 2010* (World Wide Worx, 2010), it was found that in 2009, 5.5 million South Africans were Internet users, representing a mere 10.8% of the population. However since then the picture has been rapidly changing given the advent of mobile phone technology. Internet penetration is steadily growing in South Africa with mobile Internet penetration at now at 70%, whilst desktop Internet penetration sits at only at 11% (Rowlands, 2012). A more recent study by World Wide Worx *Internet Access in South Africa 2012* (World Wide Worx, 2012), has revealed that the South African Internet user base had grown from 6,8-million in 2010 to 8,5-million at the end of 2011 – no less than 25% growth. According to the study, the number of Internet users in South Africa has dramatically accelerated given the impact of both smartphones and ordinary mobile phones. Penetration is now approaching 20%, and the mass market is embracing digital tools on their phones (World Wide Worx, 2012). A previous study amongst low-income youth in South Africa, (Kreutzer, 2009: 3) has also confirmed the ascent of the mobile Internet for navigating social networking sites and using instant messaging applications. These statistics provide evidence for the way in which the gap in access to technology is closing in South Africa, given the rapid penetration of affordable mobile phone technology.

A story similar to that of the rapid spread of mobile phones across Africa, seems to be unfolding again as Africans are coupling their already extensive use of cell phones with a more recent and massive interest in social media which is allowing people to interact with each other much more than in the past. In the process, Africans are leading what may be the next global trend: a major shift to mobile Internet use, with social media as its main drivers (Essoungou, 2010).

Social media has become a core pillar of Internet activity in South Africa resulting in various studies which investigate the trends and numbers behind the way in which many South

Africans use each of the major social networks (Muller, 2011). World Wide Worx (2012) provides a summary in graph format of the biggest social networks by percentage use in South Africa.

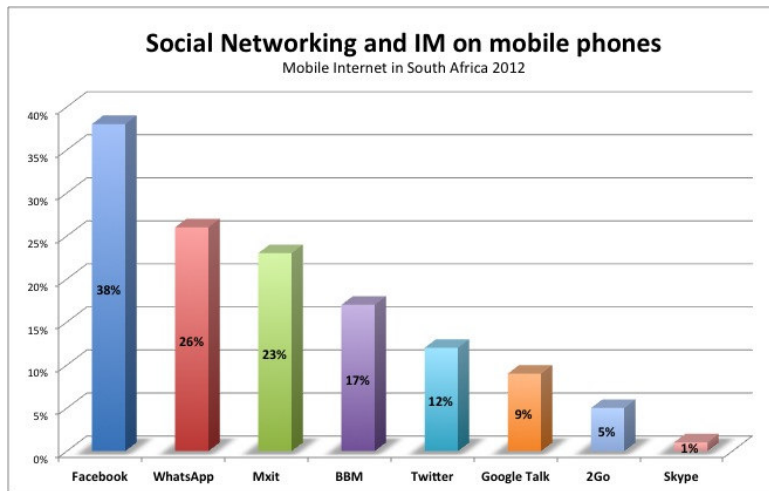


Table 1: Popular SNS in South Africa

A recent study, *South African Social Media Landscape 2011* (World Wide Worx, 2011) confirmed that South Africans have embraced social media as a core pillar of Internet activity with 1.1 million *Twitter* users, approximately 10 million *MXit* users, and 4.2 million people connected to networks through *Facebook*. The most recent statistics according to Social Bakers (2012) regarding the total Facebook users in South Africa, places the country 34th in the world with a penetration of 9.42% of the total population. Additionally, it has been established that social networking in South Africa has crossed the age barrier, the urban-rural divide, and even the relationship gap, according to new research findings World Wide Worx (2012). These statistics are revealing that social media is a fast growing communication tool for South Africans, fulfilling social, informational and entertainment roles. This study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the way in which South African entrepreneurs are adopting social media for business purposes.

Key features of SNS

It is evident from discussions so far that social media is changing the way society functions – how we communicate, connect, form ties and organise. While access to technology is no longer the dominant issue, having the knowledge of how to use it across multiple platforms has become the new challenge. For the purposes of this study it is important to describe the key features of SNS in order to establish a reference point for discussing an individual's ability to use SNS as a means to promote social capital.

Social networking sites have become an extremely popular form of social media in which participants create a self descriptive profile and make links to other members (Donath & boyd, 2004: 71). Since their introduction, SNS have attracted millions of users worldwide, and for many their use has become integrated into daily practise (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 210). There are many SNS in existence which support a wide range of interests and practises resulting in multiple ways in which users engage with them (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 210). However, the main purpose of these sites is networking, with the underlying core assumptions being: that there is a need for people to make more connections; that using a network of existing connections is the best way to do so; and that making this is easy and has great benefit (Donath & boyd, 2004: 71).

What makes SNS unique is that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks, resulting in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 211). The technological connections enabled by SNS are also seen to support 'latent' social network ties, which indicate ties that are technically possible but not yet socially activated (Haythornthwaite, 2005: 137). Links have already been established between SNS use and an individual's potential to produce social capital through such connections to disparate others. The features of SNS which enable these effects are described by Valenzuela et al (2009:881): (1) SNS helps with personal identity construction by enabling multiple channels for interpersonal feedback and peer acceptance through the 'comments' feature; (2) SNS can fulfill informational needs through weak tie networks using features such as *Facebook's* 'news feeds'; and (3) SNS enable individuals to identify with others and gain a sense of social belonging. Using SNS for entertainment purposes is not included here, since it has been established that using SNS for purely recreational purposes is negatively related to social capital production (Nyland, Marvez & Beck, 2007).

While the cultures that emerge from SNS are varied, the key technological features are fairly consistent (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 210). Most SNS enable users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate 'friends who can post comments on each other's pages, and view each other's profiles (Ellison et al, 2007: 1143). These three primary structures of SNS are summarised by boyd (2007:2) as: creating a profile, establishing a 'friends' list, and posting comments which are expanded on in more detail:

Creating a profile

After joining a selected SNS, an individual is asked to fill out forms containing a series of questions in order to generate a profile which typically include descriptors such as age, location,

interests, an ‘about me’ section, and most sites also encourage users to upload a profile photo (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 213). The visibility of a profile varies by site and according to user discretion. These structural variations around visibility and access are one of the primary ways that SNS differentiate themselves from each other (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 213).

‘Friends’ list

Once a personal profile has been created, users are prompted to identify others in the system with whom they have a relationship. The label for these relationships differs depending on the site—popular terms include ‘Friends’, ‘Contacts’, and ‘Fans’ (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 213). Participants must select who on the system they deem to be ‘Friends’ and their choice is publicly displayed for all to see and becomes the backbone for networked participation (boyd, 2006). The ‘Friends’ lists are what sew the profiles together into a large web and allow visitors to communicate with anyone who has a visible profile (boyd, 2007: 1). The term ‘Friends’ does not necessarily mean friendship in the everyday vernacular sense given the variety of reasons for which people to connect in this way (boyd, 2006). As a result, the collection of ‘Friends’ is not simply a list of close ties but instead this feature allows participants to articulate their imagined audience - or who they see being a part of their world within the site (boyd, 2007: 2). People then use the sites’ different messaging tools to hang out, share cultural artifacts and ideas, and communicate with one another (boyd, 2007: 2).

Comments

Most SNSs also provide a mechanism for users to leave messages or comments on their ‘Friends’ profiles – either privately or publicly (boyd, 2007: 2). These sort messages reflect sentiments, common activities between ‘friends’, or details about external websites or events (Valenzuela et al, 2009: 881).

Established norms

While using the established norms of social media use do not qualify as technical features, it has been identified as an important for effective use (Fisher & Reuber, 2011: 2). Those who are more oriented to expanding their communities and attuned to the norms that prevail on the social media may be even more likely to benefit from its use.

Social Cognitive Theory

So far, this chapter has established a theoretical basis to explore the social media habits of South African previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs as a means for social change through ICT4D and ICT in everyday life. Further, Social Capital Theory has been explored as a means for discussing the structure of the networks which entrepreneurs establish online which provide valuable resources for a business start-up. The study now turns to Albert Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory to explain the media selection and usage behaviours of entrepreneurs and how these relate to achieving positive outcomes for a business venture.

Social Cognitive Theory provides an agentic conceptual framework within which to analyse the determinants through which communication promotes personal and social change (Bandura, 2001: 265). The nature of human agency is central to Bandura's work, including the idea that peoples beliefs in their efficacy to exercise control over events that effect their lives contribute importantly to their attainments and resilience in the face of adversity (Bandura, 2004: 76). According to Bandura (2004: 76):

To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's own functioning and life circumstances. In this transactional view of self and society, people are producers as well as products of their social environment. By selecting and altering their social environment, they have a hand in shaping the course their lives take.

Communication systems are seen to influence human thought, affect and action in two pathways – the direct pathway which promotes change through informing, enabling, motivating and guiding; and through social mediation where media influences link participants to social networks that provide natural incentives and personalised guidance to bring about desired change (Bandura, 2001: 265). Given that people are socially situated in interpersonal networks, these informal modes of social mediation facilitated by a transactional media experience have a stronger impact on social change than direct media influence (Bandura, 2004: 77). The features of new media are seen to reinforce this view of personal agency and action. Previously the concept of 'mass society' underplayed individual agency and action, and mass communication studies viewed the communication process primarily in terms of reception and effects (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002: 9). Instead, by viewing communication as a two-way process between individuals and society the idea of a mutual shaping process between technology and social practises is reinforced (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002: 4).

Social Cognitive Theory recognises the social network structures in which people are embedded which link both personal relationships and acquaintances in overlapping network

clusters of interconnected ties (Bandura, 2001: 291). Social cognitive theory is able to describe the way in which a person's behaviour is partially shaped and controlled by the influences of these social networks as well as the individual's motivation and behaviour (Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006: 1874). New information technologies serve as important vehicles for building social networks, where online communication transcends time and space and allows people to link together across widely dispersed locals, allowing the exchange of information and new ideas (Bandura, 2001: 292). Networks also create important paths of influence, given that one is more apt to learn about new ideas and practices from brief contacts with casual acquaintances (Bandura, 2001: 291). As a result, social media is seen as a strong facilitator of social networks which creates a flexible diffusion structure allowing for transactions of information exchange to occur (Bandura, 2001: 292).

Social Cognitive Theory creates a useful approach to understanding media usage in general and social media in particular, given its wide application in the information systems literature with demonstrated validity (Chiu et al, 2006: 216). It has also been used in a variety of development contexts to explain the how advances in communication technology have enabled social change through socially-mediated communication (Bandura, 2004: 75). Some of these applications include as a strategy for Entertainment-Education (Singhal & Rogers, 1999) and in health communication initiatives (Bandura, 1994). This study draws from Social Cognitive Theory as a widely accepted and empirically validated model of individual behaviour. According to this theory, the two major cognitive forces which are seen to guide social media behaviour and their effects are self-efficacy and outcome expectations (LaRose, 2009: 15). A discussion related to these themes and how they will be applied to the study follows:

Self-efficacy

Within Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is seen as the foundation of human motivation and accomplishment and describes the belief in ones efficacy to exercise control over one's functioning and the events that affect one's life (Bandura, 1997). This core belief is based on the idea that one has the power to effect changes by one's own actions and this provides the incentive to act or persevere in the face of difficulty (Bandura, 2004: 79). Human well being and attainments require an optimistic and resilient sense of efficacy because daily realities are strewn with difficulties (Bandura, 2004: 79). This idea provides an important link to one of the often cited reasons for South Africa's low rate of entrepreneurial activity. An individuals' belief in their own skills and ability to start a business plays an important role in their decision to start a business, and this measure is low in South Africa (Ortford, Wood & Herrington, 2004: 34).

Efficacy beliefs play a key role in shaping the courses of people's lives by influencing the types of activities that people choose and the resulting personal development. By choosing and shaping their environments, people can have a hand in what they become (Bandura, 2004: 80). This study explores further the entrepreneur's self-efficacy beliefs related to the activity of online social networking and the resulting outcomes they can achieve for a small business venture.

There are four ways in which people's belief in their efficacy can be developed: (1) mastery experiences, (2) social modeling, (3) social persuasion, and (4) their physical and emotional states (Bandura, 2004: 79-80). Information is interpreted from these four sources to form the beliefs an individual has in their competencies. Belief in their competencies in turn affects the choices they make, the amount of effort exerted, persistence through challenges, and their resiliency. This study considers the various sources from which the entrepreneurs have developed self-efficacy related to social media use:

Mastery experiences: this is the most effective way of instilling a strong sense of efficacy through personal successes. It is based on the interpreted results of one's past performance (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 216). In particular, the experience of overcoming obstacles through perseverance builds a robust efficacy.

Social modeling: seeing people similar to oneself succeed through by perseverant efforts raises observer's beliefs in their own abilities (Bandura, 2004: 79). However, learning vicariously provides a slightly less effective method of strengthening self-efficacy than personal mastery (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994: 67).

Social persuasion: where individuals receive realistic boosts through verbal messages and social encouragement it can lead to people exerting greater effort, which increases chances of success. This results in the continued development of skills and of personal efficacy (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 217). According to Bandura (1997) social persuasion has the greatest effect when the individual already believes they are capable of performing the task. The danger in the use of this method is that beliefs of self-efficacy may be increased to unrealistic levels. Therefore, social persuasion should incorporate the assignment of tasks that develop self-improvement (mastery experiences) in order to insure success (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994: 67).

Physical and emotional states: are also seen to influence efficacy. In assessing personal capabilities, people often rely partly on their own perceptions of their physiological states. Emotional arousal and tension may be interpreted as indicators of vulnerability to poor performance (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994: 68).

Self-efficacy is a form of self-evaluation which determines which challenges people choose to undertake, how much effort to expend, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivating or demoralising (Bandura, 2004: 80). It is not a measure of skill, but rather reflects what individuals believe they can do with the skill they possess (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). For example, people with a low Internet self-efficacy have little confidence in their ability, and may feel uncomfortable using the Internet (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). This study centres on the idea of a form of Internet self-efficacy where an entrepreneur will have a particular level of confidence in what can be accomplished through using social media for the purpose of establishing online social networks. The aim is to assess an entrepreneur's judgement of their ability to apply online social media skills to finding information, resources and opportunities for their business. Additionally, where issues of the 'digital divide' persist, Social Cognitive theory is able to provide alternatives to traditional socio-economic explanations of gaps in access to ICT. This study contributes to current debates in the 'digital divide' literature, where self-efficacy is seen as a potentially important factor in efforts to narrow the skills gap (Eastin & LaRose, 2000).

Outcome expectations

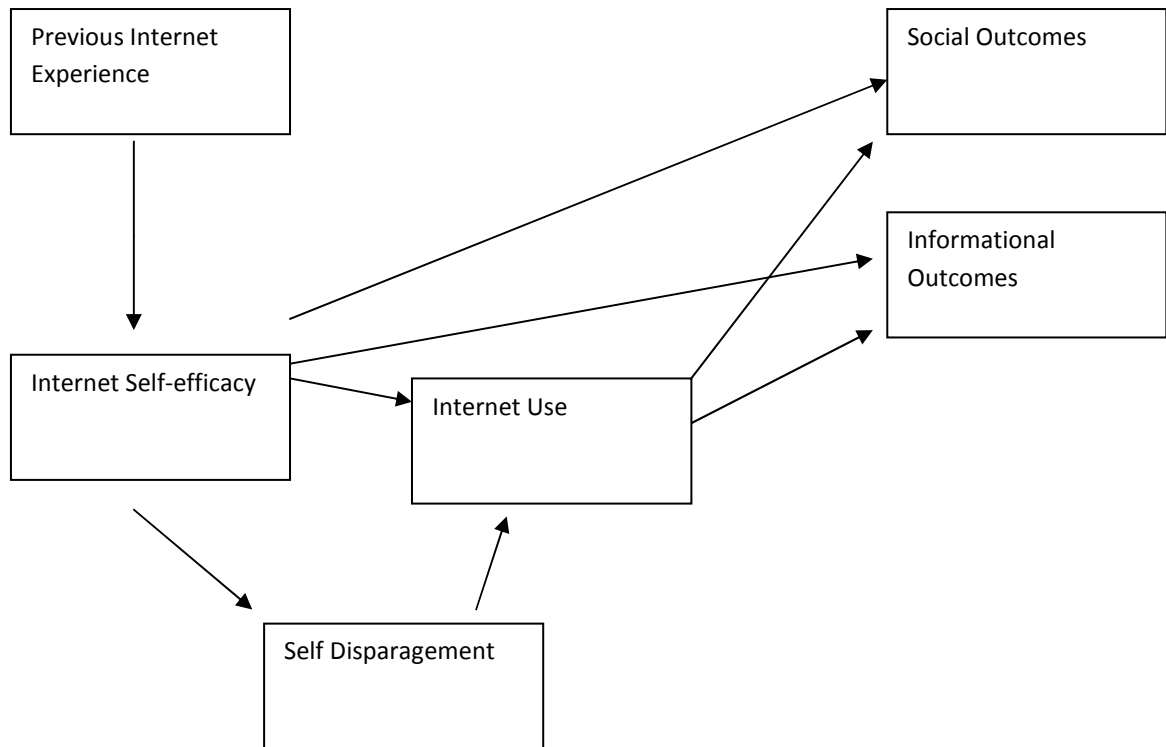
Efficacy beliefs play a central role in outcome expectations. Human motivation and behaviour are affected by the outcomes that people expect their actions to produce (Bandura, 2004: 81). Said in another way, outcome expectations are seen to influence the judgements of the likely consequences of behaviour (Bandura, 1986: 391). The degree to which an outcome is contingent upon enacting a particular behaviour is what endows outcome expectations with their motivational power (LaRose, 2009: 10). Outcome expectations can be formed through observational learning (observing the behaviour of others) or enactive learning (direct personal experience with the direct consequences of one's own actions) (LaRose, 2009: 13). Seeing others gain desired outcomes by their actions can create outcome expectations that function as positive incentives (Bandura, 2001: 276). Direct learning relies on the adequacy of the fit between one's thoughts and the results of the actions they prompt (Bandura, 2001: 269).

For the purposes of this study, the outcome expectations of information, resources and opportunities for an entrepreneur's business will be considered as an important way to develop social capital. The likelihood that people will act on the outcomes that they expect prospective behaviours to produce depends on their beliefs about whether or not they can produce the required performances (Bandura, 2004: 80).

This study will utilise these aspects of Social Cognitive theory to examine the entrepreneurs confidence in their abilities to use SNS as well as the as their expectation to benefit from particular outcomes for their business given the extended network of contacts which they hold. Additionally, entrepreneurs experiencing the benefits of the Internet (social media) for themselves, firstly by establishing self-efficacy beliefs, and then through the formation of positive expectations, can be seen as a way to close the 'digital divide' (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). According to these authors, ready access to communication technologies will not necessarily enlist active participation unless people believe they can achieve desired results by this means. Perceived self-efficacy partly determines the extent to which people use this media resource and the purposes to which they put it (Bandura, 2001: 287).

The personal cognitions of self-efficacy and outcome expectations have been extensively applied to literature describing Internet behaviours (Chiu et al, 2006: 1874). Compeau and Higgins (1995) have previously applied Social Cognitive Theory to computer training. Their research was based on the theory that watching others performing behaviour influences the observer's perceptions of their own ability to perform the behaviour, or self-efficacy, and the expected outcomes that they perceive, as well as providing strategies for effective performance (Compeau & Higgins, 1995: 118). The findings of their study confirm that self-efficacy exerts a strong influence on performance. Their study was expanded upon by Eastin and LaRose (2000) who broadened the research from considering narrow task performance to examine the overall attainments in relation to general Internet use. Eastin and LaRose (2000) established a model based on reliable operational measures of Internet self-efficacy and examined its construct validity. The path analysis model, tested within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, has established that prior Internet experience, outcome expectations and Internet use are significantly and positively correlated to Internet self-efficacy judgements. This study has founded its main research themes based on the Path Model of Internet self-efficacy developed by Eastin and LaRose (2000). Self-efficacy is explored specifically in relation to: how much prior experience the individual has with social media, their current usage practices, and the outcomes which they expect to achieve for a business start up through online social networking. A positive self-efficacy may help determine the outcomes (information, resources, and opportunities) which an entrepreneur may reasonably expect from using SNS. Initially, an entrepreneur may not expect to build social capital for their business through SNS, but subsequent direct experience or observing other users might modify both the relevant outcome expectations and self-efficacy beliefs (LaRose, 2009: 13).

Internet self-efficacy path model (Eastin & LaRose, 2000).



Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a comprehensive view of the literature and theoretical frameworks on which the research study is based. To begin, it has established the importance of entrepreneurship for economic development. This has particular relevance for a developing country such as South Africa where unemployment rates are high, and entrepreneurial activity is low. Entrepreneurship studies have been considered within a social network perspective and the broader theoretical construct to which it relates, namely Social Capital Theory. This has provided the basis to explore the structural component of an entrepreneur's networks, in particular those described as weak ties which are able to benefit their business in unique ways.

ICT4D complemented by ICTs in everyday life literature has been established as a theoretical base from which to explore the role of digital communication in socio-economic development. In particular ICTs potential to enhance social development has been considered in light of the rapid penetration of mobile Internet usage on the African continent. The 'digital divide' discussion has highlighted both the benefits of such technological progress as well as the inequalities in usage which persist.

Recent studies have shown how social media is changing people's lives – both positively and negatively. This study has focused on literature which highlights the benefits of social media and confirms positive links between social media use and establishing social capital to benefit an entrepreneur's business venture. Additionally, the rising popularity of social media usage in the South African context has been confirmed.

Finally, in order to provide a framework to describe an entrepreneurs cognitive and decision making processes which lead to the exploitation of the potential inherent in online social networks, this study has introduced Social Cognitive Theory. The theory will be used as basis to explore the self-efficacy beliefs of entrepreneurs related to social media usage and the resulting outcomes.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Introduction

This chapter documents the design and methodology followed during the fieldwork as well as the process through which data analysis was conducted. Based on the research topic, the chapter presents the rationale for selecting a qualitative research design, describes the way in which the sample was prepared for the interview process, outlines the process by which the data was collected, and describes the procedures followed for data analysis. The chapter concludes with consideration given to the reliability and validity of the chosen research design.

Research problem and key themes explored

It has been established that the primary purpose of this study is to explore the social media habits of previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs in order to describe how their 'social media' self-efficacy is related to achieving social capital outcomes for their business. The research themes for the study have been established on the basis of previous Internet studies rooted in Social Cognitive Theory. These studies have examined self-efficacy beliefs related to various Internet actions which are required to produce given attainments (Eastin & LaRose, 2000; Compeau & Higgins, 1995). The results have established empirically verified relationships between Internet self-efficacy and various constructs which form the basis of the research questions. The specific Internet action which forms the focus of this study is social media use for the purpose of online social networking. Additionally, the theoretical basis for the study provides a framework to explore the way in which self-efficacy beliefs related to social media usage are established. The key themes for the study which have been developed from existing research and theory can be summarised as follows:

- Prior social media experience results in positive self-efficacy.
- Regular social media use results in positive self-efficacy.
- Positive expectations about future outcomes as a result of using social media lead to positive self-efficacy.
- Overcoming challenges builds positive self-efficacy.
- Self-efficacy can be established through mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and having a positive and optimistic frame of being.

Research design

In order to address the research question adequately, the study will make use of primary data gathered through the process of engaging with a select group of entrepreneurs in order to understand particular aspects of their behaviour and motivation. Given the nature of the research question, it has been established that this study lends itself to a qualitative research design. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2001:39). This study has been approached as such, given that the researcher engaged with participants in a natural setting in order to learn about their attitudes and behaviour (Pitout, 1997: 105).

Authors such as Gilmore and Carson (2007: 33) have emphasised the importance of qualitative methodology in small enterprise research, in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of entrepreneurial behaviours. Qualitative methods enable the researcher to get much closer to the phenomenon, as well as in order to understand the context of the small business. According to these authors, it is unlikely that such results can be achieved through highly structured research, and conventional quantitative approaches (Gilmore & Carson, 2007: 35). The variability and flexibility of qualitative methodology contribute to their suitability to provide an in-depth understanding of the social networking activities of an entrepreneur within the context of their daily lives. The researcher has determined that it is appropriate to learn about the social media habits of entrepreneurs and their self-efficacy behaviours, by engaging with participants in a natural daily setting (Pitout, 1997: 105).

The relationship between networks and entrepreneurship is a popular field of study; however most research has tended towards using quantitative methodology. This is evident from the majority of literature reviewed for this study which illustrate that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for entrepreneurs as a means to build social capital in order to enhance knowledge acquisition and opportunity exploitation (Cooke & Willis, 1999; Liao & Welsch, 2005; Davidsson & Honig, 2003). While these quantitative studies have been useful in examining the structural features and extent of networks, they are criticised for providing a limited understanding of the content of relations, and the processes involved (Jack, 2010: 120). It is therefore argued that researching the networks of entrepreneurs should adopt more qualitative techniques in order to provide richer and more detailed investigations of ties that link actors, and to help to broaden our understanding of what really goes on in networks. This approach will

enable a better understanding of the network processes and motivations of entrepreneurs (Jack, 2010: 128; Anderson et al, 2010: 124).

Self-efficacy research based on Social Cognitive Theory has also been found to be overwhelmingly quantitative (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 219). While these studies have provided important findings to demonstrate the existence of the 'confidence gap', quantitative methods do not provide the opportunity for rich descriptions available through narrative. This has led to many self-efficacy theorists to calling for deeper insights which come from qualitative research (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 219). In order to establish self-efficacy perceptions, previous quantitative studies have developed self-efficacy scales to measure self-efficacy related to various Internet behaviours (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Eastin & LaRose, 2000). The findings from these studies have provided the basis for exploring the role played by self-efficacy beliefs related to prior experience, current social media usage, and outcome expectations. The study also aims to better understand the way in which self-efficacy is established by entrepreneurs, and to gauge the contribution made by these beliefs toward achieving social capital as an outcome of networking activities.

Qualitative research is considered to be an appropriate methodology to use when prior theoretical propositions are able to guide data collection and analysis and the researcher wishes to account for and describe contextual conditions (Yin, 1994). The basis for the themes being investigated in this study are found in the research of Eastin and LaRose (2000) who have established various causal relationships related to Internet self-efficacy with proven reliability and validity. Qualitative research is used to enable the researcher to get closer to the actor's motivations and perspective through detailed interviewing (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 10). It enables a deeper understanding of the attitudes and behaviour of people in their daily settings, where they are best able to describe their experiences (Pitout, 1997: 104). As a result of this rationale, qualitative methodology has been selected to engage with entrepreneurs of the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship at the Braamfontein site, being a familiar environment for these clients. The aim of the methodology is to obtain rich descriptions, narrative and the stories that emerge when individuals are prompted to describe their social media behaviours. The results of the study will enable insight into the social media habits of a group of South African disadvantaged entrepreneurs and whether they have the levels of self-efficacy necessary to benefit from the outcomes of building social capital through the use of online social networks.

Measurement Instruments

Introduction

The research method selected for this study has been based on the research question to be addressed as well as the availability of the research sample, given the constraints involved in accessing the total population. It is acknowledged that in qualitative studies the researcher is the main data gathering instrument (Patton, 2001: 14). The researcher then makes use of various tools in order to conduct the study, and in this case has elected to make use of the verbal technique of conducting qualitative interviews enabling the interactive collection of data from human sources (Spector, Merrill, Van Merriënboer & Driscoll, 2007). Accordingly, the primary research component of this study has been performed making use of qualitative interviews conducted with a select number of entrepreneurs.

Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interview is the most common and one of the most important data gathering tools in qualitative research (Myers & Newman, 2007: 3). The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 314). Qualitative interviews offer many advantages in that the open-ended nature of this technique allows the researcher to identify and explore key issues as they are revealed, and it allows for the opportunity to probe and examine the phenomenon to be investigated (Gilmore & Carson, 2007: 37).

There are various types of qualitative interviews which are identified as being structured; unstructured or semi-structured; or as a group interview (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Of the three, the semi-structured interview has been selected as the most appropriate for this study. This type of interview is the most commonly used approach in qualitative research where the researcher makes use of a prepared script, but also provides the opportunity for improvisation (Myers & Newman, 2007: 2). Such an approach provides for the advantages of flexibility, while being balanced by a degree of structure, resulting in quality of data (Gillham, 2005: 70). The degree of structure included depends on the nature of the study where a more structured approach is deemed suitable for evaluating or investigating a particular issue, while less structure is appropriate for an exploratory study (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003: 111). This study tends towards being more structured given the specific nature of the research topic to be investigated.

Semi-structured interviews can be used as the sole data source for a qualitative research project and are usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside of everyday events (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 315). The purpose of these interviews is to elicit detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours which can be used to provide context for other data (Boyce & Neale, 2006: 3). In this way, semi-structured interviews are deemed to be suitable for this study given that they allow for direct focus on the topic, while providing additional insight into the social media habits of the sample and relevant context to the study.

Semi-structured interviews are based on a fixed structure of key questions centered on a topic of focus which are asked to all the participants (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003: 111). The interview is scripted in advance in order to ensure that the questions thoroughly cover the research topic (Meyers & Newman, 2007: 14). Questions are open-ended and probing is used during the interview to gain further depth to an answer (Gillham, 2005: 70).

DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006: 316) suggest that for a qualitative study, between 5 - 10 key questions are developed to delve more deeply into the different aspects of the research issue. This study draws on key themes developed from the established theoretical framework, in order to describe the way in which self-efficacy related to social media usage is linked to building social capital for a business. The questions have been designed to enable the researcher to establish an overall assessment of the entrepreneur's level of 'social media' self-efficacy, as well as to build a base from which to describe the social capital which the entrepreneur holds. These two emerging pictures as well as the additional themes established through the interview process will enable the researcher to draw conclusions to the research question. Following the structure of six scripted questions outlined below, all the questions are presented to the respondents in the same order and manner. Further probing by the researcher is used to ensure that the questions are sufficiently answered and provides the opportunity to gain additional insight relevant to the study.

Question 1: How much prior experience do you have in using social media, and how do you access the Internet?

Question 2: How often do you use social media and which SNS do you make regular use of?

Question 3: Who do you connect with on SNS and what do you expect to get out of your networks?

Question 4: Establish the entrepreneurs' confidence in their ability to use social networking sites.

Question 5: Describe problems or challenges you experience when using social media, and how have you overcome these?

Question 6: Investigate how social media self-efficacy beliefs are established based on the following sources:

Mastery experiences based on interpreted results of one's past performance.

Social modeling that individuals undergo when they observe others performing tasks.

Social persuasion or social encouragement helps individuals to exert the extra effort and maintain the persistence required to succeed, resulting in the continued development of skills and of personal efficacy.

Physical and emotional states affect an individual's capabilities; where stress and tension are often indicators of susceptibility to failure.

Limitations of interviews

When used to their full potential, qualitative interviews are a very powerful data gathering technique; however it is also important to be aware of the potential problems and pitfalls in its use (Myers & Newman, 2006: 5). Some of the disadvantages to this type of methodology which have been noted for this study are summarised according to Myers and Newman (2006: 4) and other authors:

- The artificiality of the interview involves the interaction between two complete strangers leading to potential trust issues with regards to divulging sensitive and personal information.
- Given the limited time for the interview, data gathering may be incomplete and participants may create opinions under time pressure leading to unreliable data.
- Interviewees construct their stories in response to questions. This may inadvertently lead to the 'construction of knowledge' through the process of participants making up a logical and consistent story in order to appear knowledgeable and rational.
- The meaning of words is often ambiguous and participants may not fully understand the question clearly.
- Scope for probing is limited given that in-depth material is likely to come disproportionately from more articulate or confident people (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003: 111).

- Additionally, it is also important to be aware of social differences which are seen to shape the interview process and that the act of the interview is an invasive one (DiCicco & Crabtree, 2006: 317).

Given the limitations of qualitative interviews noted for this study, the researcher has investigated various means to mitigate these potential problems and pitfalls. Starting by acknowledging that the interview situation is a social encounter, both the interviewer and interviewee need to 'situate' themselves by describing who they are, including details such as background, experience, gender, age, and nationality (Myers & Newman, 2007: 16). This personal information serves as a springboard for continued discussion and also helps to establish a comfortable rapport (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 224). It is important that first impressions are managed well by dressing appropriately, and using appropriate language/jargon (Myers & Newman, 2007: 16). Establishing rapport involves gaining trust and respect from the interviewee and for the information he or she shares (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 316). This can be achieved through the interviewer showing a genuine interest in the participant as they share their personal experiences and attitudes (Pitout, 1997: 113). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006: 317) also highlight the importance of reducing social differences which many exist between researcher and interviewee by acknowledging these differences and introducing reciprocity of information sharing into the process of knowledge creation. Gilmore and Carson (2007: 37) focus on the critical importance of language used when researching entrepreneurs. They stress that business jargon should be avoided, and focus instead on the entrepreneurs experience in order to understand motivations and behaviours. In order to ensure that interviewees understand the language style used in the questions, Myers and Newman (2007: 17) suggest the use of 'mirroring'. Mirroring involves taking the words and phrases used by subjects in or to construct subsequent questions or comments which allow the researchers to focus on the subject's world and language. Leading questions should be avoided, but rather clearly stated and rephrased if the participant does not understand what is being asked (Pitout, 1997: 113). Beyond these suggestions, the nature of semi-structured interviews requires flexibility, improvisation, and openness in order for the researcher to overcome various difficulties and benefit from their potential (Myers & Newman, 2007: 17).

Interview planning process

The interview process for this study has been planned on the basis of guidelines summarised by Pitout (1997: 112):

Establishing the topic

The script for a semi-structured interview is established beforehand. Myer and Newman (2007:14) suggest that it should include an introduction to the interviewer, explaining the purpose of the interview, preparing the key questions, and a close to the interview (Myers & Newman, 2007: 14). The script prepared for this study according to these suggestions is included as an appendix (Appendix 1). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006: 316) describe the importance of developing key focused research questions in order to sample a relatively homogenous group that will have a shared experience on the topic. The key questions for this study are based on specific themes aimed at South African entrepreneurs who share similar demographics in terms of socio-economic background, and who engage with social media on a regular basis.

Selecting interviewees

The selection of a small sample of informants is based on an iterative process referred to as purposive sampling (Pitout, 1997: 113). The sampling process will be discussed further; however it is again important to note that the interviewees are selected on the basis of shared critical similarities related to the research question (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 317). This seeks to maximise the depth and richness of the data in order to address the research question.

Setting the stage

Once the interviewees have been selected, it is important to agree the time, place and theme of the interview with the participants (Myers & Newman, 2007: 13). In order to correctly set expectations as to what the interview is about, it is also important to communicate the purpose of the research and what is expected of the interviewees in advance (Pitout, 1997: 113).

The Interview process

The interview process is a personal encounter in which open, direct verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives, with the interviewer maintaining control over the interaction given the interviewee's co-operation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 317). At the outset the informant needs to be given an indication of how long the interview is expected to take, which is ideally not more than 30 minutes (Pitout, 1997: 113). The interviewer needs to clearly explain the purpose of interview and what it hopes to achieve, and as a result carefully steer the interview to stay on course, while allowing for flexibility (Myers & Newman, 2007: 12). The mark of a good interview is one of the interviewer listening to the respondent, maintaining the integrity of raw data by recording respondent's words exactly, and minimising the researcher's

perceptions or interpretations (Spector et al, 2007). Gilmore and Carson (2007: 38) highlight the importance of not interrupting when the interviewee is speaking, avoid engaging in conversations of agreement or disagreement, and using encouraging phrases such as “can you tell me more about...” or clarifying phrases such as “tell me what you mean by...”. Probing in this way is used to encourage participants to expand on their answers, to make sure a question is properly understood, and in order to encourage participants to expand on their answers and achieve in-depth understanding (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003: 111). The interview is closed by thanking the participant and providing the opportunity for the interviewee to share anything further which would add value to the research.

Ethics of interviewing

It is important for the researcher to maintain ethical standards which involves obtaining the relevant ethical approval, treating people with respect, and fulfilling commitments to individuals and organisations (Myers & Newman, 2007: 23). Before the interview starts, the interviewee needs to be effectively informed about the nature of the study and provide verbal consent to be interviewed (DiCicco & Crabtree, 2006: 319). The researcher also needs to reduce the risk of unanticipated harm which may result from the process of reflecting personal information back to the interviewee (DiCicco & Crabtree, 2006: 319). Additionally, the interviewee needs to be assured that the information he or she provides will be treated as strictly confidential, giving them freedom to express their views and opinions (Pitout, 1997: 113).

Sample design and sampling methods

Sample design

The participants selected for the study are twelve previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs identified through the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship located in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. The way in which this sample was selected is outlined in this section. Firstly, given that the study of the target population - being previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs who use social media - is too large to measure, a subset of the greater population has been identified. The researcher has deemed it appropriate to select a limited sample based on the knowledge of the total population, its elements, and the nature of the research aims (Babbie & Mouton, 2009: 166). Therefore based on the researcher’s judgement and the purpose of the study, a purposive non-probability sample has been chosen.

Sampling techniques

Given previous knowledge of the population and the aims of the study, the researcher has chosen to select the sample based on her own judgement (du Plooy, 1997: 63). The result is that the units for the study are specifically qualified to assist in the investigation. By selecting the interview participants through such an iterative process, the researcher's aim is to maximise the depth and richness of the data to address the research question (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 317). As a result, a fairly homogenous group has been selected based on critical shared similarities related to the research question (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 317). The following predetermined selection criterion for the sample has been used in order to best fulfill the purpose of the study:

- An entrepreneur, as per the definition of one who has assumed the risk of owning or is in the process of launching an economic venture (Greve & Salaff, 2003: 1).
- Being a South African citizen.
- Being previously disadvantaged which according to the definition means an individual who as a result of apartheid lacks an appropriate education and the infrastructure necessary for entrepreneurial success.
- One who has incorporated social media into their daily life, in particular SNS as a means of partaking in online social networks.

One of the main characteristics of a non-probability sample is that the sample does not represent the population, because each unit in the population does not have an equal chance of being included (du Plooy, 1997: 61). As a result, the researcher is aware that it is not justifiable or ethical to generalise the findings of the research given that it is not representative of the target population. The findings of this study are therefore limited in their application, and are interpreted based on the particulars of this study (Spector et al, 2007). However, du Plooy (1997: 61) suggests that this lack of representativeness can be counteracted by replicating the study in the future using similar samples. In order to facilitate this possibility, as much detail as possible will be provided with regard to each participant. Another potential error with this sampling technique is the potential bias introduced given the beliefs and prior knowledge of the researcher in selecting the sample (du Plooy, 1997: 63). In order to minimise this effect the Chief Operating Officer of the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship has assisted in the selection of the purposive sample. However the noted advantage of a purposive sample is that the units are specifically selected and as a result are especially qualified to assist in the research (du Plooy, 1997: 63).

This leads to the benefit of yielding highly valuable responses in a quicker and less expensive way than a probability sample.

Sample size

According to Fossey, Harvey, McDermott and Davidson (2002: 726): “In qualitative sampling, no fixed minimum number of participants is necessary to conduct sound qualitative research”. However, sufficient depth of information needs to be gathered to fully describe the phenomena being studied. Hence, sampling in qualitative research continues until themes emerging from the research are fully developed”. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006: 59) have investigated this further and have established guidelines for determining suitable purposive non-probabilistic sample sizes. Their study is based on the concept of “saturation,” or the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data. The results of their study reveal that saturation occurs within the first twelve interviews, although basic element for meta-themes is present as early as six interviews. Based on these guidelines, a purposive non-probability sample consisting of 12 participants is deemed to be sufficient for this study

Data collection methods

The process of identifying potential entrepreneurs began by contacting the COO of Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship and outlining the criteria for identifying a sample of 12 suitable entrepreneurs to take part in the research. An electronic communication was sent to a group of individuals from the centre’s client database who matched the criteria, inviting them to take part in the research. An incentive of R200 per interviewee was offered in order to guarantee participation and reward the individual for their time and transport costs. Those who responded to the communication and indicated willingness to participate in the interview were contacted by the researcher telephonically to ensure that they fulfilled the criteria. Once that was established, the researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study and outlined expectations for the interview. They were also informed that all the information they shared would be kept confidential. The interview time was then arranged according to a prearranged interview schedule and the venue confirmed. Interviews were scheduled to take place during the week of July 30th to August 3rd, 2012. The Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship in Braamfontein, Johannesburg was the determined location for the interviews to take place. It was hoped that the participants would be comfortable in the familiar setting as regular clients of the centre. A private interview room allowed the interviews to take place in a quiet yet informal setting in order to create a productive atmosphere and ensure quality of recording.

Data from the interview process collected in its raw detailed form enables the researcher to establish patterns and themes and to gain a deeper understanding of the issues being investigated (Spector et al, 2007). The most common way to collect data from an interview is with an audio recorder (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 318). In this study all interviews were recorded in this manner, supplemented by notes taken during the interview. Taking notes is critical as memory should not be relied upon (Spector et al, 2007). Note taking also helps to pace the interview and provides the opportunity to write down statements or ideas that need further probing (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 225). Raw field notes may be sketchy and are usually fairly illegible so Miles and Huberman (1994: 51) suggest that write-up should take place immediately after the interviews. While some studies transcribe recordings verbatim, for the purposes of this study it was deemed suitable to transcribe recordings at the level of a straightforward summary of the main relevant ideas given in response to the questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 51). The audio recordings and notes from the interviews provide the basis for the transcriptions highlighted in the results chapter and have also assisted in writing up the research discussion.

Data analysis and interpretation

Given the large amounts of raw data collected during the research process, the researcher needs to look for patterns, links and relationships in order to analyse and determine the meaning of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 56). One of the major hallmarks of conducting qualitative research is that data are analysed continually throughout the study, from conceptualisation through the entire data collection phase and into the interpretation and writing phases (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984: 179). As a result qualitative data analysis ideally occurs concurrently with data collection so that investigators can generate an emerging understanding about research questions, which in turn informs both the sampling and the questions being asked (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 317). This iterative process of data collection and analysis eventually leads to a point in the data collection known as saturation where no new categories or themes emerge and data collection is complete (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 318).

At the centre of this analysis is coding which enables the researcher to engage in data reduction and simplification, as well as making new connections between concepts, converting data into meaningful units, and rethinking theoretical associations (De Cuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2011: 137). Codes are defined as tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the 'chunks' of data compiled during a study, and their development is the initial step in analysing interview data (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 56). Codes can be developed from existing theory or concepts, they can emerge from raw data, or they can emerge from research goals (De Cuir, et al,

2011: 137). These authors describe the iterative process of constantly revisiting theory as well as raw data in order to develop codes. While many computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software tools are available to assist with coding and data management, this study will be coded by hand according to the suggestions of Miles and Huberman (1994).

The coding for this study begins with a 'start list' of codes suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994: 58) which are based on the conceptual framework and key variables contained in the key interview questions. This first-level coding is descriptive in nature and the aim is to summarise segments of data. Coding is always open to revision and development as the research progresses (Spector et al, 2007). These first-level codes are named close to the content they describe in order to avoid translation errors (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 225). Moving onto the second level of coding, pattern codes pull data into a smaller number of meaningful themes or constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 69). These second level codes emerge from ideas about and reactions to the meaning of the first level descriptive codes (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 225). These coding processes have assisted the researcher to make sense of the large quantity of data and appropriately analyse the interviews based on established themes.

Reliability and validity

In social science studies, particular attention is given to considerations of validity and reliability in order to assess the quality of a study. In conventional usage, the term validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbie & Mouton, 2009: 122). Reliability is the matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object would yield the same result (Babbie & Mouton, 2009: 119). While these criteria are both important, it has been noted that there is often a trade-off between the two. In particular, qualitative studies which allow for more variation and richness are seen to reduce reliability (Babbie & Mouton, 2009: 125).

While the use of reliability and validity are common in quantitative research rooted within a positivist perspective, it has been suggested that these measures need to be reconsidered within a qualitative paradigm (Golafshani, 2003: 597). Qualitative research is based on the assumption that reality is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon, therefore attempting to represent the 'truth' is an inappropriate determinant of validity (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 226). While the credibility in quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, 'the researcher is the instrument' (Patton, 2001: 14). Therefore qualitative research is based on credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003: 600).

These are achieved through the ability and effort of the researcher to eliminate bias and present a truthful proposition.

Having established that the terms validity and reliability are achieved differently in qualitative research, consideration is given as to how these can be achieved in this study. In terms of assessing reliability, in qualitative research the emphasis is on the reliability of the methods employed, demonstrating that they are reproducible and consistent (Lacey & Luff, 2001: 22). According to these authors it is important to justify the use of methodology within the context of the study; document clearly the process of generating themes and concepts; refer to previous studies to validate the conclusions of analysis; and demonstrate that methods used are reproducible and consistent. Reliability is established for this study by adhering to this checklist, and ensuring that the results are consistent and dependable (Merriam, 1988: 172). In order to maximise the reproducibility of the methodology, the details of the participants and data collection procedures are well documented.

Secondly, having established that representing the 'truth' is not appropriate in qualitative methodology, validity is to be judged by the extent to which the account emphasises the validity of the interpretation (Lacey & Luff, 2001: 22). Given that validity is judged by the extent to which an account seems to fairly and accurately represent the data collected, this study makes every effort to represent an honest reflection of the participants and their behaviours. Using original data in the presentation of results establishes a more convincing interpretation in relation to the data gathered (Lacey & Luff, 2001: 22). In addition, adopting an authentic style of writing makes the world of the participants seem more real to the reader (Adler & Adler, 1994: 383). Given the sampling methodology use for this study, external validity is not a concern, given that the findings cannot be generalised. Instead focus is given to providing detailed sample criteria for future studies that may apply the findings to similar situations and contexts or embark on comparative studies (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000: 226).

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the fieldwork obtained from the interview process which was applied to the research sample. The objective of the interview process was to explore the social media habits of a sample of previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs in order to consider the way in which online social networking contributes to building social capital for their business. The links between social media usage and the outcomes which entrepreneurs expect to achieve for their business were explored by using the concept of self-efficacy with regard to social media usage. Literature has already established that media usage behaviour is guided by self-efficacy and outcome expectations. The interview questions were structured specifically to investigate how self-efficacy related to social media usage is established, as well as the outcomes the entrepreneurs expect to get out of online social networks.

Starting with a more detailed description of the sample, the researcher presents some of the important characteristics of the research participants and how the sample was achieved. Following on from this, the results of the main findings of the interviews are presented. These results were achieved from the raw data transcribed from audio recorded interviews as well as from the interview notes taken by the researcher. The large amounts of data generated from the interviews were transcribed according to major themes centred on the key questions asked during the interview. This process has enabled the researcher to discuss and interpret the results in the subsequent chapter.

Detailed profile of the sample

According to the purposive non-probability sampling procedure outlined in the previous methodology chapter, twelve previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs were identified through the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship located in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. The entrepreneurs selected for the interview were chosen from a list of eighteen individuals who responded to an e-mail request to participate in the research. The final twelve participants were chosen firstly based on their meeting the core criteria for the sample, being entrepreneurs; South African; previously disadvantaged; and having incorporated social media into their lives. Secondly, the selection was based on the researchers' judgement of an appropriate sample, as well as input from the Chief Operating Officer of the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship as to which clients would be most suitable for the research. The twelve interview appointments were arranged directly between the researcher and the participants to

take place at the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship between the 31st July and 2nd August, 2012. Ten of the twelve participants arrived for their interview appointments. The researcher reserved the right to reschedule the two outstanding interviews to another date, should there be an identified need for further interview material. However, once the ten interviews were concluded, the researcher was confident that a ‘saturation point’ had been reached. This decision can be verified through the research findings of Guest et al (2006), which provide guidelines for determining the appropriate size of a non-probabilistic sample. According to their findings, anything between six and twelve interviews is deemed suitable in order to reach saturation and establish themes for analysis.

Table 2 below provides a summary of the demographic details of the ten entrepreneurs who participated in the research. In order to preserve their anonymity the entrepreneurs are referred to throughout the research as E1 to E10.

Table 2: Demographic details of the sample.

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Home Language	Highest level of education
E1	32	M	South African	Xhosa	Diploma in Banking and Human resources (incomplete)
E2	23	M	South African	Zulu	Grade 12 BCom Entrepreneurship (current)
E3	44	M	South African	Sotho	Grade 10
E4	38	M	South African	Xhosa	Incomplete Bachelors degree. Diploma in TV production.
E5	22	M	South African	Zulu	Grade 12
E6	33	M	South African	Tswana	Certificate in Manufacturing
E7	29	M	South African	Tsonga	Grade 12
E8	32	M	South African	Sotho	Certificate in IT & Business Management
E9	35	M	South African	Zulu	Certificate in TV Production & Communication
E10	30	F	South African	Zulu	Grade 12. Diploma incomplete.

These demographic details are revealing of various factors which have been considered important for the results. Myers and Newman (2007: 16) highlight the importance of situating the interviewee by getting an idea of who the individual is in terms of background, experience,

gender, age, and nationality. The information is useful so that readers can assess the validity of the findings, and these details of the sample are provided to enable future research to replicate the study. The entrepreneurs interviewed ranged in age from 22 to 44. The two females who responded to the request to be interviewed were both selected for the sample, however only one arrived for the scheduled interview. As a result, 90% of the study was focused on male entrepreneurs. The participants were all South African according to the criteria for the sample, and varied in home language groups. The researcher was cognisant, that given the interviews were conducted in English, this was a second language for the participants and certain misunderstandings may be encountered. However the entire sample appeared fluent in English, and to overcome any potential misunderstanding, questions were phrased in a clear, direct manner. In terms of being disadvantaged, the key indicator considered for this study was taking into consideration levels of education. While some had managed to embark on tertiary studies, there was a common indication that lack of access to funding had prevented aspirations for further education. Additionally, three participants were not able to complete their studies. As black South Africans, each participant indicated that they were from disadvantaged backgrounds given the historical legacy of the previous apartheid system. This status implies a history and persisting current reality of disadvantaged education and lack of access to opportunities which is experienced by many black South Africans.

E1: *“After completing matric I could not get funds to study.”*

E8: *“Pushed by circumstance...if I went to varsity my siblings would not have been able to attend the same level of education so I had to sacrifice that...lack of knowledge around bursaries.”*

E10: *“I want to study. However long it takes. I want to do psychology...I’m still looking for a bursary because I don’t have money.”*

As a study with a focus on entrepreneurial development, the researcher gained insight into the prior entrepreneurial experiences of the participants, considered the years of experience which had been gained in the formal sector, and then spent some time hearing about the entrepreneur’s current business venture in which they are the primary owner and risk taker. Differentiating between formal and entrepreneurial experience, was particularly revealing of whether embarking on an entrepreneurial venture was necessity or opportunity driven. In this case all the respondents except one had various years of formal work experience and had chosen to go the entrepreneurial route based on the identification of an opportunity. Each appeared confident in their own entrepreneurial ability to explore the opportunity for profit. While E3 is

currently selling clothing “for survival” he believes he has the ability to pursue various business ideas. In the case of E9 having no formal work experience, he described his entrepreneurial journey as “*I’ve always been an entrepreneur, I’ve never worked....started very young.*”

The types of businesses the entrepreneurs are involved in are listed in *Table 3*. It is important for discussion purposes to note that of these businesses, three of them are online businesses where the Internet and social media are the core means of exploiting a business opportunity. Social media itself has become the opportunity, given the low barriers to entry, and the potential inherent in online networks.

E1: “*I’m very funding averse...I wanted to start a business where I could get paid from day one.*”

E9: “*Without it (social media platforms), it was going to be very difficult, maybe I would have even changed (my business idea).*”

The phases of business are listed according to the entrepreneurs own assessment rather than scientific analysis. These provide an indication of how the business is progressing and the type of inputs needed at each particular stage. Of the sample, six indicated that their business was at a start-up stage, two at survival stage, one had reached business stabilisation, and one is in the process of growing their business.

Of particular importance to this study were the sources of capital used in starting their business. Stuart and Sorenson (2005: 215) identify the major sources of start-up capital being: (1) personal funds, (2) loans and investments from friends and family, (3) bank loans, and (4) venture capital. These authors highlight the importance of social networks in the ability to raise capital given that entrepreneurs recognise funding opportunities through information available in their networks, and investors identify promising investment candidates by searching across their networks. The entrepreneurs interviewed had either not used capital to start their business (30%), or had used their own funds (70%) to start or grow the venture. Based on the responses, it is highly evident from the sample that the entrepreneurs need funding, but struggle to access it through the formal lending institutions. Lack of funding represents a very real barrier to the entrepreneurial ventures of the sample. This information becomes relevant when considering the types of resources which entrepreneurs hope to access through their networks, and will be considered further in the results discussion. Additionally, it is also worth noting for further discussion the opportunity which the Internet offers as a way to start a business that requires little capital and therefore low barriers to entry.

E1: *“It (my first business) needed a lot of capital outlay to start-up so a year into that it failed mainly due to a lack of capital. (As result) I’m very funding averse...wanted to start a business where I could get paid from day one.”*

“I would probably look for ‘angel investors’ through my networks if I were to (access funding).”

E2: *“We have used what we have.”*

E3: *“My only problem is that I am selling clothing for a living just for the day. When trying to apply for finance they (banks) look for financial statements. The only thing I have is a copy of my ID (identity document). Financing is my biggest problem, and that is where I got stuck. If I can have it (funding) in my hands I will definitely go forward.”*

E4: *“We have needed capital but we have used our own funds.”*

E5: *“Lack of funds is a barrier to entry.”*

E6: *“I need to (raise finance)...at the moment I haven’t approached anyone...if I had to...my target now is MTN (mobile phone company).”*

E7: *“I did recently approach (named formal lending institution) but they did reject my application stating it was high risk and they didn’t understand why I needed the money to buy trucks.”*

“What entrepreneurs need is funding...there is so much red tape...I can sit here with a contract worth R8 million and I can get rejection and I can’t understand why. Who do you have to be (to get finance)?”

E8: *“We are looking to expand very fast. There is a great demand for what we are doing...what we don’t have access to right now is machinery.”*

“We are definitely not going for funding through traditional means; we don’t want to owe anybody...so we are looking to raise money through different ways.”

E9: *“I didn’t take a loan; I put my own money into the business.”*

E10: *“No I sort of recycle it (funds for business).”*

Table 3: Entrepreneurial experience and current business venture.

	Formal work (years)	Entrepreneurial experience (years)	Current Business	Phase of business	Source of capital
E1	6	6	Online campaigns through network of bloggers.	Survival	None
E2	4	5	Design and development of applications for mobile phones	Start-up	Own funds
E3	12	3	Catering, construction, cleaning, security.	Start-up	None
E4	3	8	Experiential events and film screenings. Train youth to make cellphone films.	Start-up	Own funds
E5	1.5	3	Cleaning services for events.	Survival	Own funds
E6	4	12	Online publication: football.	Start-up	None
E7	3	5	Transport and logistics	Stabilisation	Own funds
E8	8	7	Alternative decor and niche events.	Growth	Own funds
E9	0	15	Online publications: football and African news.	Start-up	Own funds
E10	3	10	Platform for performing artists and empowerment events.	Start-up	Own funds

Presentation of results

The results of this study are presented according to the key questions asked during the interviews. For ease of analysis, the results of the first two questions are presented in the form of a table (*Table 4*).

Question 1 results

How much prior experience do you have in using social media, and how do you access the Internet?

According to the theoretical basis for this study, an individual's past experiences with success and failure in a variety of situations should result in expectations that the individual carries into new situations (Bandura, 1997). These generalised expectancies should influence the individual's expectations of mastery in the new situations. According to this theory, research has found that prior experience with the Internet hones related skills and has been found to be positively related to self-efficacy. It has also been established that prior experience is the strongest predictor of Internet self-efficacy, where more than two years experience may be required to achieve sufficient efficacy (Eastin & La Rose, 2000). Therefore this question has sought to examine the length of time which an entrepreneur has been using social media as evidence of their skills acquired. This plays an important role in an individual's judgments about his or her ability to use social media to achieve particular outcomes. Secondly, it was deemed important at this stage to explore the way in which the sample of entrepreneurs accesses the Internet in order to connect to online social networks. This enables a discussion related to issues of the 'digital divide' and how the debate is potentially shifting. The results of this question can be reviewed in *Table 4*.

Question 2 results

How often do you use social media and which SNS do you make regular use of?

A significant positive relationship has been established between computer self-efficacy and computer usage in the literature reviewed (Compeau & Higgins, 1995: 134). This correlation has been broadened to include Internet skills where individuals are more likely to attempt and persist in behaviours which they regularly and capably use (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). Entrepreneurs who make regular use of social media can therefore be said to have built confidence in their ability to do so. Additionally, it has been established that entrepreneurs who invest a moderate amount of time in social interactions via social media may actually benefit from new insights about the resources that are available and what they might be used for (Fischer & Reuber, 2011: 2)

Firstly, this question has been designed to probe the way in which social media usage has become embedded in the daily lives of entrepreneurs and discussing its consequences. Secondly, this question aims to explore which of the many SNS the sample of entrepreneurs make regular use of. While the key technological features of SNS are fairly consistent, the cultures that emerge around are them varied, and they support a wide range of interests and practices depending on the select purpose for their use. These results are presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4: Social media prior experience and current usage

	Length of time using social media	Access to the Internet Mobile/ Computer	How often do you use social media?	Which SNS do you make regular use of?
E1	More than 2 years (5 years)	Mobile Internet (mostly) Computer based access (blogging purposes)	Daily	Facebook (2 pages) Twitter (personal and business) WhatsApp LinkedIn Google+ Atthepool.com (testing it out) About.me Flickr Foursquare Various blogging platforms
E2	More than 2 years (taking it seriously)	Mobile Internet (majority)	Daily	Facebook Twitter BBM WhatsApp
E3	1 year	Mobile Internet	Daily	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Yelwa
E4	More than 2 years (5 years)	Mobile Internet (50% of the time) Computer based access (50% of the time)	Daily	Facebook LinkedIn
E5	More than 2 years (4 years)	Mobile Internet	Daily	Facebook Twitter BBM LinkedIn WhatsApp
E6	More than 2 years (6 years)	Mobile Internet (80%) Computer based access (20%)	Daily (It's a religion)	Facebook Twitter BBM LinkedIn Pinterest
E7	More than 2 years	Mobile Internet	Daily	Facebook

				Twitter BBM
E8	More than 2 years (4 years)	Mobile Internet (most of the time) Computer based access (sometimes)	Daily	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Pinterest Google+
E9	More than 2 years (3 years)	Mobile Internet (networking and communication) Computer based access (blogging, multimedia)	Daily	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn
E10	More than 2 years (5 years)	Mobile Internet (mostly) Computer based access (limited to Internet cafe)	Daily	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn

Question 3 results

Who do you connect with on SNS and what do you expect to get out of your networks?

There is a dual purpose to this question to find out firstly *who* entrepreneurs actively engage with on social networks in order to establish the structure of their network. Secondly it is to establish *why* they connect with the people they do, reflecting the outcomes which they expect to achieve through using social media.

Network ties

The first aim of this question is to establish if the entrepreneur uses SNS to engage with family and close friends as evidence of activating existing social relations known as ‘strong ties’ in ones network. Further, the question investigates whether the entrepreneur actively uses social network sites to build a network of relationships outside of their immediate social circle, as an indicator of establishing ‘weak ties’ in ones network. Social network sites are shown to support both the maintenance of existing social ties and the formation of new connections outside their existing social groups and geographical location. For entrepreneurs in particular, this has been found to be an effective way to build bridging social capital through online activity, enabling connections between individuals that would not otherwise be possible. It is from these expanded networks that entrepreneurs are more likely to get help. From the discussion centred on this question, the researcher was also able to establish the importance which the entrepreneur places on building networks for business success as well as recognition of how social media offers a means to achieve this.

Outcome expectations

Secondly, this question was used to find out what each entrepreneur expects to get out of their online social networking activities. This may include social outcomes as well as expected outcomes for their business such as finding information, identifying business opportunities, and mobilising resources. Based on theory, outcome expectations are seen to influence the judgements of the likely consequences of behaviour (Bandura, 1986: 391). Research based on this theory has established the correlation between positive outcome expectations and positive Internet self-efficacy (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). Having positive expectations about the outcomes of social media usage therefore should reflect a positive self-efficacy with regards to using social media.

According to Social Cognitive Theory, entrepreneurs should be motivated to behave in a certain way given the outcomes they expect their actions to produce. Achieving particular outcomes through enacting a particular behaviour are seen as a strong motivational force. Through observing the behaviour of others gaining desired outcomes by their actions, and by learning through personal experience, entrepreneurs can be incentivised to act in a similar way. This interview question sought to find out what outcomes entrepreneurs would expect to achieve from engaging with online social networks. According to the literature reviewed, these expected outcomes are positively linked with an individual's self-efficacy (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). While it can be expected that social outcomes are derived through confident engagement with SNS, this study was mainly interested in whether entrepreneurs cited future outcomes for their business venture, including accessing information, opportunities and resources through online networking.

E1: *“Mostly friends, rarely family. Talking about what you had for breakfast is so ‘2008’ in social media terms...I get irritated when people do that. Use it mostly to engage with potential networks and with people who are friends...a lot of the time I rarely go personal on social media networks. As a result of the way I post and comment I’m getting a few speaking engagements now...this is how I market the business....not using traditional means. At first the idea was to be friends with as many people as possible on Facebook, follow as many people as possible on Twitter, and then I started realising that in order to build your network you need to build credibility around yourself. Nothing supersedes the credibility you’ve got and you don’t build that credibility through Tweets. Depending what you talk about people have an interest in what you say....another great reason why a business like mine is so relevant today. So many niches nooks and crannies out there it’s easier to find them on social media. Finding that online*

*reputation you create spills out to you being able to meet certain people and being a recognised influencer or contributor or commentator offline. What I'm finding is there is still quite a bit of disconnect between the online and offline....the online purpose in most instances is to meet offline to engage in business. Twitter and social media gives people this space to express themselves and be the people they dream of being offline. What dawned on me is that conversations that happen online are construed to be only 10% of the actual conversations that happen around a topic. Identifying opportunities and in certain instances for me as a business by the time it's on social media it's too late. Identifying potential networks, connecting with people I would not generally have access to offline. I don't think I would have become one of the top contributors on **bizcommunity.com** alongside the CEOs and experienced speakers and more platforms if it wasn't for social media. The greatest thing it does for me is shrink the world to a single 140 character tweet. The boundaries have been shattered completely which gives an upstart like me from Vosloorus...access to a person who sits in New York. Previously a person who sits in the township would have thought that people who have access to such things live in Sandton."*

E2: "Yes, friends definitely. Social media has made it easier to catch up with people....if I have them (friends) on Facebook from time to time I will write on their wall and check up on how they are doing. We have our own group...created that common bond that we have...we always know what's happening in each other's lives. We feel connected...but sometimes you realise that I haven't seen this person in three years."

On building a network of acquaintances outside close friends:

"Yes definitely, they is one guy I can mention...there is this one guy we have never met personally but have an online relationship with for maybe 3 years now for business, not that frequent but someone who is very close...I am open to and ask him anything ...also a few others who we connect with online that live at a distance. On the business side there are a lot of good business network that I have created from Facebook alone...there is an editor who I am very close with from Media24. We arrange meetings on the net...I sent him a tweet he responded and gave me his email address. For companies that I do marketing for...I've arranged radio interview, magazine appearances just from using social media."

"What I expect to get out of my networks depends on what I need at that point. I use social media in different forms...for example I started a group on Facebook called Gauteng Business Network which grew in a huge way to be something bigger than I planned it to be. People are networking

people are connecting onto it. I developed it so if I need any form of network it is simple to inbox loads of people. I've done business with one graphic designer when I needed a logo...we did barter trading. I definitely use social media to grow my business. More than the socialising, I intentionally get in there to just to benefit my business or someone in my business network. I don't know when last I checked my personal Twitter page. When I go online it's just for those network related or business related pages that I have on Twitter."

" Primarily marketing strategies through online campaigns...social media is the one we can afford and want to grown on that....despite us being able to afford it, it has more impact..."

"As a young entrepreneur I want to ensure that I have networks in order...those types of individuals at your disposal are very key. Every chance that I get when online I am just trying to create those networks to share ideas, or as a potential funder, or someone you want to work with. Even when I meet someone of high influence I think how I can benefit from this individual or who do I know who that can benefit. If I see a value or a way I could benefit from talking to an individual I do that. Social media is the best place to engage with someone. In some instances when I need someone specific I have tried calling, and don't get a good response, or send an email, and I don't get a response, so I will Google them and get their Facebook or Twitter page and start engaging. That is where people are relaxed and more easy to engage with...rather than finding them in a meeting or in a corporate space. People of high influence are on Twitter and people on Twitter have a different attitude...a way to connect."

E3: "In contact with family and friends. I don't have Facebook for my company only for my friends. Twitter I have just got into it last month...talking about my business. Never found out how to follow other people's tweets. Without people one would go nowhere, networking at exhibitions I normally attend there. Get their contacts and follow them up. Use social media for my business to be known...to market my business. Find social media important because there are some places I cannot reach for instance Cape Town, Durban, and overseas. I find it very important to use social media to get in touch."

E4: "I engage with my friends and people that I think that are interesting...through things that they post...and people that I think are relevant to what I'm doing....split between what I do is about 50% about me personally and what we are doing."

"We need relevant people to attend our event...to add value to the event whether it's through performing or assisting the running of the event."

“I have a long history in the industry...about 10 years, so I know the relevant people I want to talk to.”

“It (social media) makes it easy, it is very cost effective...and you can do it any time. It also opens you up to avenues that you may not have been aware of.”

“I have 5,201 ‘friends’ on Facebook.”

“I want to get to a space where we are streaming our content over the Internet, so wherever you are you are able to check the event.”

“We open a group on Facebook to spread the word about an event.”

E5: *“For friends... I started using social media in 2008.”*

“Mostly for business purposes...number one it’s growing my network, get clients, help people network through me.”

“We (entrepreneurs) don’t use social networks for the same reasons...for entrepreneurs it’s important to create networks.”

“I can be in Alex and I can talk to you via social network while you are in Cape Town, I can tell you everything about my business, and right on the spot you can refer me to someone if I need help...via social networks.”

“Social networks are very helpful for entrepreneurs when it comes to creating networks and growing your business.”

“Having the opportunity to interact with so many people at once...it plays a huge role...social media has opened a door...for my personality it has played a very vital role.”

E6: *“I am so into social media that I would have sessions where I would invite all my friends from Facebook...just to know who are the people that I chat with.”*

“At some stage I even forgot there was something called Facebook, but when you start having a business you start realising that this thing helps.”

“I realised one thing...my name is (name) and my blog is (name of business) so I linked the same thing on Facebook so I went back and changed the name on Facebook to (name of business)...already had 1000 something ‘Friends’ on Facebook.”

“With Twitter I’m looking at a strategy of increasing numbers....because it’s new.”

“Pinterest...I’ve been speaking to the guys that develop my website...I want to change my website to make it like Pinterest. I’ve linked Pinterest to my website because it’s interactive so you can take your picture from wherever you are and just load it onto the website.”

“Now I don’t use social media for family and friends anymore, I mainly use it to build networks for my business.”

“Building networks just happens...with anyone that’s interesting.”

“I use it to increase hits on my website...to give exposure of my business to potential investors”.

“When I started with Facebook I wanted to meet friends.”

“With Twitter I use it mainly for business.”

E7: *“What I find that I’m doing lately is that I’m getting away from using social media to connect with people I know and rather trying to use it as a net to get to connect with people that I don’t know. You will find that on my transport page on Twitter I’m linking up with transporters...I’m looking to connect with those kinds of people.”*

“All on my phone...for my line of work...its transport. Social media has worked a bonus in saving costs. Dealing with clients via email...it just helps you do so many things, be in so many places at one time.”

“With BBM it costs you R59...you get to touch millions of people.”

“I have learnt here that business is all about networking...if you can network without physically having to be there...connect with those people and find out what they are doing, what are they posting...people who I feel have a similar vision.”

“What I’m trying to do is manage it (Twitter use) and mainstream it for a purpose...so I have just stopped following 40 people recently because I find there is no value in following (them). Let me follow a person that follows somebody that adds value...that turns on a light bulb in my space.”

“It’s more just about getting your ears on the ground....the contracts are about the relationship which I manage to do quite well.”

“I connect with different people...next thing you’ve got someone PINGing you saying I want to work with you...but the first thing they ask is who you have worked with...so you give them an opportunity to suss out whether I have an interest or whether I don’t have an interest....do I follow or do I ‘unfollow’...do I keep or do I delete.”

“We are talking about this thing (on social media)...without having to pour gas in the car, have to go meet you somewhere, wait for you.”

“The company you keep. If I find that you are very consistent in not adding value I will deviate for a while.”

E8: *“I view myself as a connector more than anything. I’m the type of person who meets a lot of people along the way, and I realise that other entrepreneurs especially from previously disadvantaged areas in the townships could be doing so much better if they knew certain things.”*

“I wanted to connect with people, I’ve always been an entertainer, and I’ve always wanted to have more people know about what I do, so it was a great opportunity to get into that space. Initially when I got on it wasn’t for business, just to see what was going on.”

“I like telling a story through my social media marketing strategy.”

“I’ve built my credibility around social media so I’ve got quite a nice following, for instance on Twitter I’ve got about 1500 followers, and on Facebook my fan page is sitting at over 1000 fans and then my personal page is sitting at about 5000 friends. I’m constantly working my lists.”

“It’s opened so much more opportunities for me...it has exposed me to a bigger base, to people I would never have been able to access before.”

“We get invited to some of the most prestigious events...I get invited on the basis that I will be Tweeting, I will be reporting about the event on social media.”

“I use social media as a tool to promote my business and to promote any activity that I’m doing.”

“I am first and foremost a social person and I believe I get more business if I connect with people. So I don’t sell to people...I build relationships.”

“On Facebook for example I have different lists...when we meet it’s not just going to be social there is a possibility that somebody knows somebody...”

“I get a lot of friend requests for instance on Facebook. I don’t request anybody. What I do on a constant basis for instance now I’m sitting on sitting on just over 5,200 and your limit is 5,000 so on a weekly basis I would sit down and look at randomly 10 people are they adding value to my networks or not. If they are not I ‘unfriend’ them I remove them...and if a person has requested I check which part of the country are they in, what are they into, would they possibly benefit from

what I do, if they would then I add them, if they wouldn't then I leave them alone, I just ignore that request."

E9: *"For social purposes no, I only use it for business."*

"Now I'm ready to sell advertising space...the hits now is 500 and something thousand...I now have 25,000 people who are following the website."

"For Twitter it's a business profile and Facebook is a business and for LinkedIn its personal...using these every day."

"Before I just wanted to spread the word out...for people to know there is this website running."

"I invite a lot of friends to 'Like' the page and I tell them you can even share the page with your friends you have on Facebook so the network grows...I just put the link on his wall and he shares it with his own friends...people after seeing that they invite me to be their friend and I accept."

"If I want to interview I call...offline contacts....I have built all of them offline."

"Once the numbers are big then anything is possible."

"Without it (online social media platforms), it was going to be very difficult, maybe I would have even changed (business idea). Even now the media buyers they still prefer the ones that they know."

"(Name of association for digital publishers)...I need to be a member there...these guys are corporate businesses so you get a first preference when it comes to advertising."

"I have journalists across Southern region for this one (online publication). I get news from Zimbabwe, news from Zambia because of my friends I've met on Facebook...they are citizen journalists in their own countries."

E10: *"Fortunately for me I started quite early. In 2007 I registered my Facebook account...I registered mainly for business purpose because I didn't even know it was a social thing."*

"I haven't been actively growing my network...just a little bit, not as much as I could have if I had the resources there."

"Socialising...with friends and some family."

:"My first point of departure is (name of school) contacts...my former classmates are in the media...so that's where I started and because of those networks then I realised how many more people in the industry are connected to those people as well."

“Some of them I would meet at events, like maybe a celeb that I don’t know, but when I go and check on Facebook they are actually friends with somebody I was in school with.”

“When I respond (to friend requests) I paste the link to my page on your wall as a gift.”

“To raise awareness about my brand.”

“I’ve got an account (LinkedIn) but because I feel like it’s for people who are looking for jobs...but I have seen some nice titles that I think ooh maybe this person...promoters....I could probably get gigs by just being there.”

“(Social media gives you) access to those people who are the decision makers because some of them have Facebook profiles and you can inbox them until they get back to you. Well that has been my strategy now.”

Given the large amount of data generated through this question, the results for each entrepreneur are summarised in *Table 5* below:

Table 5: Summary of entrepreneur’s online social network structure and outcome expectations

	Online social network structure	Outcome expectations from using social media
E1	Mostly friends, rarely family. Predominantly to identify potential networks and connect with people who I would not have access to offline. Access to people of influence	Socialising, but rarely go personal. How I market my business. Develop an online reputation to build my credibility. Easier to find information on social media. Identifying opportunities.
E2	Social media has made it easier to feel connected with friends. More than socialising, I use it to intentionally grow my business. Online relationships established with business connections. Online connections that live at a distance. Started my own business network.	Socialising. Use social media to grow my business network. To benefit others in my network. Marketing strategies through online campaigns. Share ideas. Meet potential funders. Key individuals at my disposal.
E3	Family and friends. Connect with people at a distance.	Socialising To market my business.
E4	Friends. Interesting people who are relevant to what I’m doing.	Socialising Access relevant people to add value to our events. Access to new opportunities. Market our events.

E5	<p>Friends.</p> <p>Mostly to grow my network for business purposes.</p>	<p>Socialising.</p> <p>Create business networks.</p> <p>Get clients for my business.</p> <p>Help others to network through me.</p>
E6	<p>Initially family and friends, but now don't use it much for that anymore.</p> <p>Mainly use social media to build networks for my business.</p>	<p>Socialising.</p> <p>Strategy to increase numbers and hits on my website.</p> <p>Expose my business to potential investors.</p>
E7	<p>Getting away from using social media to connect with people I know.</p> <p>Use it as a net to connect with people that I don't know.</p> <p>Connect with people in my line of work.</p> <p>People who add value.</p> <p>Connect with different people.</p>	<p>Socialising.</p> <p>Business networks</p> <p>Connect with people who add value.</p> <p>An ear to the ground (information)</p>
E8	<p>Friends, initially not for business.</p> <p>Now for business.</p> <p>Exposure to a bigger base, to people I would never have been able to access before.</p> <p>People who add value</p>	<p>Socialising.</p> <p>Build relationships for my business.</p> <p>Help others to connect.</p> <p>A tool to promote my business.</p> <p>Build my credibility through social media.</p>
E9	<p>Only connect with people for business purposes.</p> <p>Invite friends who then share with their friends to grow network.</p> <p>Network of citizen journalists.</p>	<p>Grow big numbers to sell advertising space</p> <p>Inform people about my website</p> <p>Develop a network of journalists from different countries.</p>
E10	<p>Friends and some family.</p> <p>Haven't been actively growing network as much as I could have without resources.</p>	<p>Socialising.</p> <p>To raise awareness about my brand.</p> <p>Get access to decision makers</p>

Question 4 results

Establish the entrepreneur's confidence in their ability to use SNS

Literature makes it clear that self-efficacy is not a measure of skill, but rather reflects what individuals believe they can do with the skill they possess. The belief in one's capabilities to execute courses of Internet actions required to produce given attainments, describes an individual's Internet self-efficacy (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). This question does not attempt to provide a measure of self-efficacy, but is rather a reflection of the individual's proficiency in

using the technical features of social media tools. This question is therefore not an end in itself, but is directly linked to the given attainments which the individual hopes to achieve from engaging in social media activity. Each entrepreneur was asked to describe their level of confidence in their ability to use social media based on the main technological features of SNS drawn from literature being: creating a profile to represent yourself, developing a 'friends' list, posting messages or comments, and using the established norms of SNS. The researcher gave each entrepreneur a subjective ranking on a scale of 1(low) to 5(very high) based on the entrepreneurs' given responses to the question, and an overall impression of their proficiency in using social media which the researcher gained through the interview. As suggested by Bandura (2006: 308), self-efficacy is concerned with perceived capability, therefore questions have been phrased in terms of 'can do' rather than 'will do', in order to judge capability rather than intention. The entrepreneurs' perceived level of confidence in their ability to use the technological features of SNS assists in making a non-scientific judgement of their self-efficacy with regard to social media usage.

E1: Very confident in ability to use all technological features (5)

E2: Very confident in ability to use all technological features (5)

E3. Still very new and learning how to use social network sites (2)

E4. Moderately confident in ability to use all technological features (3)

E5: Confident in ability to use all technological features (4)

E6: Very confident in ability to use all technological features (5)

E7: Very confident in ability to use all technological features (5)

E8: Very confident in ability to use all technological features (5)

E9: Moderately confident to use all technological features (3).

E10: Moderately confident in ability to use all technological features (3).

Question 5 results

Describe problems or challenges you have experienced when using social media and how have you overcome these?

Whatever course one takes, there are always challenges, and unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions they have little incentive to act or persevere in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 2004: 79). Failure or difficulty when performing a task which an

individual is not confident in, decreases expectations about successful interactions with the Internet, and also decreases self-efficacy (Eastin & LaRose, 2000). Therefore understanding the challenges which entrepreneurs have faced when using social media and how they have overcome these, provides for a discussion related to perceptions of success and self-efficacy.

E1: *“Once you’ve signed up for an email address, you can then sign up for a Facebook account, but it’s what you do with the profile and keeping in mind what you want to accomplish. You are marketing yourself all the time. At first it was lack of confidence in breaking through to what seemed closed networks, and there still are. It was...realising or thinking ‘who am I to talk to (so and so) that everyone is talking about?’ The other thing I had to break through is that it’s not...in the beginning it was about following and following and following...when in actual fact social media is about creating content all the time and finding good content to share. Started out in talking about me me me me me....when actually people are interested in good content, what you’ve got access to, who you are and how interesting you are as an individual.”*

“In hindsight I understood why the business failed...yes it needed capital, but I also realised that I needed to build credibility around myself as an entrepreneur and what I do. Then I started an event called the Network Event which wasn’t sponsored and that’s when I started using a wiki to talk about it on my blog and send it out to people. The initial idea was to put myself in a position to network with as many people as possible and be the face of the network so that people approach me easier.”

E2: *“I have been using it for a while but I still feel there is a lot I need to learn in regard to social media and doing it properly so I’m always on Google researching reading articles so I know how to use it properly. I am still learning now. A challenge I still experience is the hardware and the access. If I had proper type of laptops and Internet access...it is poor and expensive. If you are not lucky enough to be in the CBD and you live where I am which is a distance outside the CBD it’s hard to get a connection and when you get it, it’s not that healthy. Another problem is using social media properly...if you use it wrong you will end up people blocking you or exiting out of your network. Initially you just do it...bombard...throw them with inboxes...in time you get to understand how sensitive people are online.”*

E3: *“Just got into LinkedIn but I’m battling to fill in all my details, it’s taking long time. I used to battle I can’t get a laptop so I don’t know what the easier way is to network. That’s when I heard him (Shaun Venter) talking in a workshop about the Blackberry.”*

E4: *"I'm on Twitter but I still don't understand it, there is so little information and way of interaction to say what you want to say."*

"A problem that I have experienced is the costs...if you want to be on the Internet, especially for us starting a very new business."

"The nice thing about computers is they have answers, if you have a problem you can go onto Google which will give you millions of responses."

"I hate the technical aspect of computers; I just want it to work."

E5: *"At first I wasn't talking to the right people...I would post stuff because mostly my Facebook was to your 17, 18 and 22 years olds...so I would post stuff that wasn't relevant to them, they were still at school."*

"Understanding how to upload pictures, how to check in, and Twitter...uuhhh...it was really challenging."

"I am a person who likes learning new things, I don't like quitting...so if something gives me a challenge, its either you die or I die...If 10,000 people can use it then clearly I can do it as well, so I had a thirst for knowledge."

E6: *"For now my challenge is with Pinterest...how to I educate South Africans (fans) to use Pinterest. How do I get people on Facebook to interact more...to teach (the fans)."*

E7: *"Perhaps the Internet services in our country could be a bit cheaper so that we can access these things better...the speed and things like that."*

E8: *"At first I didn't know what I was doing when I got on there...."*

E9: *"It has always been very easy for me."*

E10: *"The only thing that I've been battling with is resources...like a computer and the Internet...but I'm getting my handset today so I will have the Internet."*

"It's so time consuming to go to the Internet cafe."

"I'm still getting used to Twitter...I haven't been using it that effectively...using it properly...I have only just started to engage. I got comfortable with Facebook so I didn't give myself time to explore what Twitter was all about."

"I'm still also figuring out Google+...how I can use it effectively."

“The key is to keep pushing...the lady...that’s how I met her...I took her email address and phone number...I phoned and emailed until she saw me, so I think it helps. So I have decided now I’m going to do that with everything.”

Question 6 results

Investigate how social media self-efficacy beliefs are established based on the various sources.

It has been established that people’s self-efficacy beliefs are developed in four ways – through mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and judgement of their physical and emotional states (Bandura, 2004: 79). These four sources of efficacy are integrated and assimilated resulting in an individual’s performance judgements (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994: 66).

Mastery experiences:

E1: “In 2007 I started dabbling in blogging out of interest...my initial contact with social media. The idea of blogging was quite novel at the time...the early days of Web 2.0.”

“Taking the idea of how far information and the word can spread...used it as a testing ground...created a campaign by starting a group on Facebook, invited about 30 friends...group grew to 250-300 members. This was my proof of concept.”

*“Regular contributor on **bizcommunity.com**....in 2011 I was one of their top 10 most read contributors...a local site Memeburn.com...also on **id8.com**, an entrepreneurial and business blog...as a result I’ve built up experience...never had formal social media training.”*

“One of the greatest contributors aside from the network of people I had access to was the fact that I was creating my own content...helped me build my confidence and my credibility because I’ve got this thing that I write and these ideas that are my own.”

“Testing the waters how groups work on Facebook, how pages work, but this was at the back of content I was creating for events. Initially how I used Facebook, aside from sharing pictures, was out of a need to fill 50 seats at a restaurant...more than testing it out, there was a need to have a Facebook account and have as many places as possible to expose what I’m doing and engage with people.”

E2: “We see more and more the importance of it...that’s where people are all the time...on their cellphones. It’s one thing we want to master and take it forward.”

“Have learnt from mistakes we have made....through responses from people. I also learnt that we should not eliminate the personal feel. It progresses every time, and the more it progresses

there are new ways of doing it, and the more you learn about the new ways the more you have to learn about how to use those ways properly.”

“Social media is not costly like radio so for a start up brand it’s the first place to go to. We started by just developing a few campaigns using social media in order to just get the word out there. In the first month we tried we received 85,000 hits...after that we refined our strategies and went hard on the marketing and for that month received 165,000 hits.”

E3: *“I’ve just got into it...”*

E4: *“Social media opens up lots of opportunities and with opportunities comes challenges.”*

“The nice thing about computers is that they have answers, if you have a problem you can go onto Google which will give you millions of responses.”

E5: *“I’ve never asked people for instance the PING on BBM...at first they would PING me...do I have to respond? It got me thinking.”*

E6: *“I started learning all of those things...teaching myself...started blogging...writing about football. I linked it to my Facebook. From there I started seeing a response from people.”*

“For me it’s a building process, I’m learning, I’m looking at other things that influence communication, and increasing numbers.”

“I was just playing around on my Twitter account and it said to me ‘link account’ ...and it took the picture from Facebook to Twitter. Then I just wrote there ‘testing’ and posted...so then I started getting people to follow me on Twitter.”

E7: *“You go into something knowing what you want to use it for. I choose to join Facebook for this reason; I choose to join this group for this reason. For me it’s all been pretty natural.”*

“A lot of them (my friends) don’t use it...it’s my own curiosity...to find out for myself if this would work if I try this strategy.”

“I’m a late adopter by my own standards, but once I get locked into something I just fly with it because I’m curious by nature...especially when it comes to technology I like exploring something and checking out and finding out what happens when you touch this, what happens when that happens...I just explore.”

E8: *“Its majority experimental, so it’s my own usage.”*

“By that time the Internet thing was still down in South Africa but it was growing. I said okay let me do this and see what’s happening.”

E9: *“Maybe I’m smart, I never...you see people they ask me a lot of stuff.”*

“I have always been upfront...when I hear something I am going to check what is happening...I know everything that is happening online.”

E10: *“That’s how I have mainly learned (by experimenting).”*

Social modeling

E1: *“Introduced to Seth Gordon’s work which is all about Web 2.0 and all about social media and breaking business models as they exist.”*

“Super car club... I spoke to them how they opened it and the thinking behind it so the idea was to speak to as many people doing as many different phenomenal things as possible.”

*“When I started blogging, none of my friends were blogging. I’m the first among my friends to use social media...to even think and talk about Web 2.0. Instead I read **joblogs.com**, I ‘googled’ other blogs and I just read how their content flowed and looked up how to write an article...how do you write catchy punchy content and put it out there. It wasn’t necessarily close proximity or access to people who were doing it.”*

E2: *“I am open-minded to learn from everybody, especially musicians and how they use it to promote their music. Just follow them and look at the strategies they are using. If someone is kind enough you send them a Tweet or an inbox and ask them specifically about ABC and D. You learn a lot from seeing how other people are actually doing it to promote whatever. Especially people who are more successful than you ...those on social media with a huge following and a huge network. You learn all the time. I zoom in on international companies...they are the pioneers of these social media campaigns...they are more advanced than us in using social media.”*

E3: *“Met Shaun Venter he introduced me to this kind of phone (smartphone). Since getting the Blackberry its (Internet) only R60 a month. He has given me a breakthrough by introducing me to this Blackberry.”*

“Mostly when meeting people I am benefiting from chatting to different people.”

*“I was talking to a guy and he said you can advertise your company through social media site **yelwa.com**.”*

“Another friend of mine is into tourism...he has his company on Facebook....I want to find out how to do my company profile on Facebook.”

E4: *“I read a lot, I watch TV a lot so the information filters down and then I say let me just do this.”*

E5: *“People were talking about it (social media) saying how great it is for a business which is true...I wanted to know what this LinkedIn is.”*

E6: *“When I saw Pinterest for the first time I thought what is going on...then I looked at the (football) clubs that use Pinterest in the UK and I saw how effectively it has been used.”*

“What I’m doing now is that I compare with (football) clubs that are existing....and other publications that are there...I am way below...I’m on 500 at the moment...for me that’s not good enough if I want to reach out.”

“What I do is invite people...get to read more about what they do. I follow mostly your marketing guys, journalists...people that I can learn from...get information.”

“Mark Bradley...in the UK. He does fan engagement. I started following him on Twitter I sent him a message to say ‘what you are doing is exactly what I want to do...how do you do all these things?’ He said ‘it’s very easy – social media’. He linked me to all the publications. He is a mentor for me, and is coming to South Africa in November.”

“I follow the culture (UK), how they do things, how they implement stuff...like if you go to the sports SKY website - I want that blue.”

“The teams in the UK...the website where I first saw it was on Chelsea, they did a ‘follow us on Twitter’...from there I started looking at it...I became a regular visitor to their website and followed what they do. From there I started doing my own.”

E7: *“You look at the people with the most tweets and the most followers it’s your musicians...so you try and figure out okay so obviously this is working for this type of area. The music industry is using it well.”*

E8: *“I follow key people on the social media space...so if I can see that you are doing well in what you are doing I go through your timeline, I want to see what are you doing at a particular time...what’s your activity on social networks, do you have a plan or do you do things randomly...I want to see if there is certain trends that they do or introduce.”*

“(Other entrepreneurs) they are active (on social media) but they are also active in the wrong way and as a result they are not making sales. That’s the challenge that I always put out, if you are not making money using that tool then you are doing it wrong. There is no formula in terms

of how you must use it, but at the end of the day what are the outcomes of what you are putting in...I prove it time and time again.”

E9: *“I read other blogs...so many people....they inspire me and I get to know what they doing issues that they talk about.”*

E10: *“Khaya Dlanga was given to me as an example...I’m right there and following him, I’m not staying behind.”*

“Even though I don’t tweet or put a status, I go and just check what’s happening...especially the people I know have an influence then I go and check what they are up to.”

“...a certain person of influence...I will tag their name on my tweet or on my Facebook status so it appears on their page as well...using that @.”

“I would see people...when I see something then I ask ‘how did you do that’...I usually ask the person online.”

Social persuasion

E1: *“Approached a guy called Richard Mullholand (of **joblog.com**)...maybe he could help us with a presentation...told him my ideas (about blogging) and asked him to mentor me. Richard said “a lot of what you are talking about already exists so go to the site...and register a blog”. Started blogging, and through blogging I started following other bloggers...and finding out about these platforms that were out there.”*

“No, in terms of someone who showed me and trained me, and yes in that I picked up a skill and things that were happening as and when the information was being spread locally. Had a friend who used to build Joomla sites...he is one of the people I became friends and would talk about things related to social media. Bounce ideas off him, and then through him got to grips with how to create a Joomla site. Made friends with other people who were also on similar platforms and that’s when I got access to more blogs.”

E2: *“Attended a day Workshop at the Branson Centre. They had a few guys who have seen success just from using social media. A very useful and resourceful workshop...we definitely learnt a lot about things we hadn’t thought of. The workshop alerted us to the dos and don’ts of social media. They mentioned that people don’t go onto social networking to be a victim of advertising. They emphasised that don’t miss the social part, so don’t speak about your brand all the time.”*

E3: *“Attended Branson centre course last year...there is another guy he was the one who introduced me in fact to this kind of phone, the Blackberry...only R60 a month and connected all the time.”*

E4: *“A lecturer at school once told me about this social network (LinkedIn) for professionals and maybe you want to join it.”*

E5: *“No one has shown me how.”*

E6: *“I first saw it when I was speaking to a client on the phone and he said ‘are you on Facebook’, and I said to him ‘uh what’s that’...so I started registering...loaded a picture...invite friends.”*

“A friend of mine introduced me to blogging...he said this is you and you love this and you know what you want to do.”

“Another guy who is a web designer said to me, ‘I see you do blogging can we meet’. He said ‘how do you plan to do this?’”

E8: *“There is a community called **followsa.co.za**...they are like South Africa’s biggest online community. They connect people online and then take the events offline for people to connect.”*

“I don’t like introducing the ‘how to’ formula....I was telling my story, I was saying pick up the bits you feel would work for you and leave out the stuff that you don’t think will suite you because everyone has a personal style in how they do things. So it needs to be authentic, and yet even though it’s authentic you don’t need to bring out all of you onto social media. You must understand why you are using the tool... and you must also understand the audiences that you are interacting with.”

“A herd mindset...majority of people are followers...you hear a lot of talk that Facebook is out... I always bring it down to figures.”

“Facebook is still by far the best social network...it definitely brings about the best results for one simple reason, you are able to show people different aspects of what you do. Whereas on Twitter it’s a micro-blogging site. You’ve only got 140 characters and you had better be saying something smart or you lose followers. LinkedIn is more about connecting with professionals so if you are an entrepreneur in that space it’s about connecting with those professionals in the corporate environment and seeing if there are opportunities.”

E9: *“(Name of person), she was my mentor. When I met (mentor’s name) she told me about the blogs and everything. So I opened a blog....and I saw the people responding to the blog.”*

“She helped me a lot....this thing in America, she is coming from there....this blog thing...she showed us how this thing is done and so I’ve been doing it since then.”

E10: *“A friend referred me...he was like ‘ah there is this new thing...just check out this Facebook’, so I went on and registered and then I saw a marketing tool...there is so much there.”*

“We had Google come here (to the Branson Centre) so I got ‘lightbulbs’.”

“After our Google talk I realised that actually I can synchronise them (Facebook and Twitter) together and now I have just started up...now when I tweet it goes to my Facebook.”

“What I learnt there (Google talk at the Branson Centre) is that it is necessary to have a strategy...I learned that it’s important to link your business strategy and online strategy to reach your objectives.”

“The lady from FollowSA that did a talk...her strategy from what I understood...want to create my own hashtag.”

“What Google has done with Woza online websites - that is a great initiative. It’s a free website...it gets you there and it’s linked to Google+.”

Physical and emotional state

E1: Extremely positive and healthy

E2: Ambitious, positive and always eager to learn.

E3: Discouraged by lack of finance, but positive about going forward.

E4: Very positive and healthy.

E5: *“I’m a happy guy...I like interacting with people...like adding value to people”.*

E6: Very positive and healthy.

E7: Need to be on a daily high.

E8: Extremely positive and healthy.

E9: Very positive and healthy.

E10. *“I’m looking forward to the future, I’m so eager. If you as an entrepreneur are not well emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually it affects your business”.*

Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the results which were outlined in chapter 4. The discussion is based on the key themes established through the literature review and from the interview questions. The results of the data collected during the interview process provide extensive material on which to base the discussion as well as to enable additional insight into the research topic given the qualitative interview methodology selected for the research. The researcher is confident that the data obtained during the interviews is able to provide accurate insight into the social media habits of the selected sample of South African previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs. It highlights the ways in which this daily activity may result in social capital for their business venture, centred on their self-efficacy beliefs.

Question 1 discussion

Prior experience in using social media

The interviews with the sample of entrepreneurs revealed that aside from one participant, all had been using social media for well over two years. In fact the majority had been using it for at least four years. Based on previous research (Eastin & LaRose, 2000), this indicates that the 9 entrepreneurs which have more than two years experience, can be seen to have achieved sufficient self-efficacy in using social media to realise its potential to achieve certain outcomes. Additionally, considering that the major social networking sites *Facebook* and *Twitter* have only been launched since 2006 (boyd & Ellison, 2008: 212) this implies that the sample has a relatively long experience with using social media. In Internet terms, these can be described as 'early adopters'. Given the profile of entrepreneurs for the study, it is interesting to note the variation from other studies which have established a link between men with higher incomes and higher education levels being the early adopters of the Internet (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002: 12).

The length of time and resulting experience is revealing of the entrepreneurs belief in their ability to use social media to achieve certain outcomes. It was highly evident for a majority of participants, that as a result of the length of time which they had been using social media, their confidence in using the tool had evolved. As a result of their experience and confidence, SNS for a majority of the entrepreneurs has become more than a means for socialising, and it is being used extensively for business purposes. All the participants aside from E3, who is a recent user

of social media, are actively exploring and exploiting SNS as business networking tool. While E3 recognises the importance of networking for business, and is using social media, he has not connected with the potential to build networks online. This can be attributed to his lack of experience in using social media. Some of the entrepreneurs have indicated that they rarely use social media for social purposes anymore, and focus mainly on its business benefits. Additionally, it has already been mentioned that three of the businesses under consideration have established their core business opportunity based on utilising social media for profit. Social media offers scope for many business opportunities given low barriers to entry, however the business model for establishing profits through social media is not yet well established (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: 59).

Access to SNS via the Internet

It was also considered important at this point of the interview to find out how the entrepreneurs accesses social media platforms via the Internet – either through mobile phone or traditional computer-based access. The results of this question, feed directly into a discussion related to issues of the ‘digital divide’, given the context of the study taking place in South Africa with a sample of previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs. All the entrepreneurs cited using their personal mobile phones for a vast majority of the time to access SNS on the Internet. Computer-based access - either at an Internet cafe or on a personal laptop - was limited to use for activities such as printing documents, blogging and using multimedia. Some mentioned that computer-based access provided challenges, given lack of access to resources such as owning a laptop, as well as the time and cost involved in visiting an Internet cafe.

Contributing to the ‘digital divide’ debate

The findings from the sample confirms evidence from recent research that mobile handsets are for many South Africans fast becoming the Internet platform and multimedia device of choice. South Africans are adopting social media as a core pillar of their Internet usage on mobile phones, and based on the sample, the entrepreneurs are evidently seeing the potential to derive benefit for their business by investing time in online social networks. It was evident from the interviews, that smartphones have provided the entrepreneurs with an affordable and accessible means to access the Internet. Mobile technology has provided the means for entrepreneurs to ‘leapfrog’ previous societal limitations. However it may be premature to depart from discussing issues related to access given that certain technological limitations persist. It was noted during the interviews that the cost and speed of Internet service delivery in South Africa

remains a limiting factor. The quality of Internet connections for those who live outside of the CBD was also cited as a barrier.

Given the ubiquitous mobile phone use amongst South Africans, the importance of being actively involved and proficient on social media platforms as a way forward in society was also highlighted. According to E2: *“We see more and more the importance of it...people are on their cellphones all the time. (As a result) it’s the one thing we want to master and take us forward.”*

Recognising the importance of being a part of the mobile-enabled social media culture which is emerging in South Africa, highlights the relevance of Jenkins (2006) idea of a ‘participatory culture’. In order to participate in the world of tomorrow, South African’s need to have the opportunities, experiences, skills and knowledge of how to use social media. This highlights the progression of the digital divide discussion from one of access to that of quality of usage in order to close the ‘participation gap’. According to literature, given the dynamic and evolving nature of the debate, divides are taking place on a number of levels (Fink & Kenny (2003:2). Given that this study is centred on belief in one’s abilities and skills as a basis for achieving positive outcomes through social media use, the focus is on gaps in ability and motivation to participate and develop affiliations through online networks. Closing this gap is considered important in order shape an individual’s success in the world of tomorrow (Jenkins, 2006: 3). As a result, interviews were less focused on technological access, and aimed at assessing the individual’s level of participation and competencies needed.

The interview discussions were revealing of the way social media usage is evolving, and the strategies which entrepreneurs are adopting through online social networks in order to grow their business. It is highly evident from the interviews that the sample of entrepreneurs have embraced social media as part of their daily lives and for the majority it forms a continuous activity taking place through their mobile handsets. However gaps do appear to exist in the levels and purpose of use which will be discussed further. Fink and Kenny (2003:2) have also identified gaps in impact of use, which measure the financial and economic returns as a result of using digital media. As an entrepreneurship development study the economic success of a business venture is obviously the ultimate goal. However, measuring the impact of SNS in terms of financial returns is beyond the scope of this study. The potential returns for the business by way of developing social capital are the main consideration for this study, and will be discussed further.

Question 2 discussion

Regularity of social media use

Based on the interviews, it is evident that all the entrepreneurs make use of social media on a regular daily basis. This is largely due to the benefit of having constant access to the Internet via mobile phone as previously discussed. As a result, this study can confirm general positive links between regular social media usage and confidence in their abilities to do so.

Engaging with online social networks has become routinely incorporated into the participant's daily lives. In particular given that they have constant and affordable access to SNS on their mobile handsets. The activity of engaging with social media on their mobile phone can be seen as a complementary to the entrepreneur's daily lives in both their social and business spheres. Given the regularity of social media use, and the integral way in which it has become patterned into daily existence, it can be true to say that the entrepreneur's lives have become shaped by their online networks. Social media has therefore become a vital means of maintaining work and social connections in everyday life.

Popular SNS used by entrepreneurs

In considering which SNS the sample of entrepreneurs make regular use of, the question aims to establish which sites are most popular and beneficial to the entrepreneurs. While the key technological features across SNS are fairly consistent, the cultures that emerge around SNSs are varied and they support a wide range of interests and practices. It is also interesting to make comparative comment against existing research on the most popular SNS amongst South African's. *Table 6* provides a summary of the SNS used on a regular basis by the sample of entrepreneurs.

Table 6: SNS selected for regular use by sample of entrepreneurs (percentage).

Social networking sites	Number of entrepreneurs in sample using SNS	Percentage of sample
Facebook	10	100%
Twitter	9	90%
LinkedIn	8	80%
BBM	4	40%
WhatsApp	3	30%
Google+	2	20%
Pinterest	2	20%
Other	2	20%

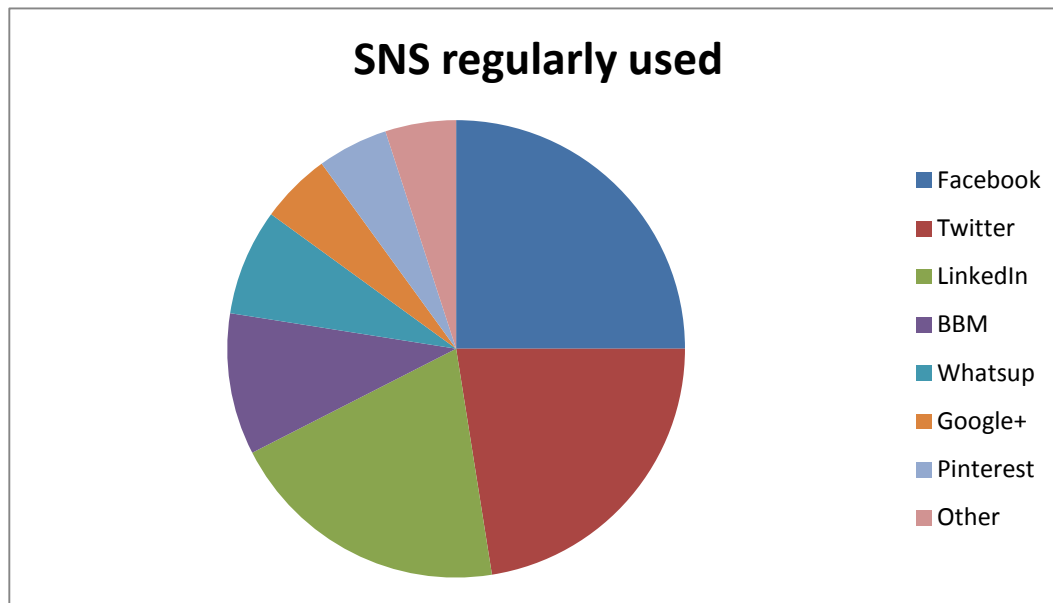


Figure 2: Graph indicating popularity of SNS used by the sample of entrepreneurs

According to recent studies, one of the biggest social networks used by South Africans is *MXit* (Vermeulen, 2012). This SNS did not feature amongst the sample of entrepreneurs, and the given reason behind this is that *MXit* is a social network utilised primarily by South African teenagers. The top three social networks used on a regular basis by the sample include *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*. It was established during the interviews that SNS are selected for specific purposes by the entrepreneurs, depending on what they want to achieve. The overall impression gained from the interviews was that the top three SNS were mainly used for the following purposes:

Facebook: building a vast network through growing a ‘Friends’ list for social and business purposes. Extensive networks are established on the basis of using one’s existing networks of ‘friends’ and then connecting with their articulated network of ‘friends’.

Twitter: following inspiring people who can add value; engaging with people of high influence outside of existing networks; building credibility for the individual; and promoting the business through ‘tweets’.

LinkedIn: Connecting with ‘professionals’ outside of social networks who can benefit the business.

Question 3 discussion

Structure of entrepreneur's networks

To summarise the purpose of this question, it was firstly to get an idea of the type of networks entrepreneurs are actively creating through social media, and secondly what they expect to get out of their networking activities. The actual and potential resources that are embedded in their social networks largely depend on the types of relationships which the entrepreneurs are activating and nurturing. While 'strong ties' are known to provide support and encouragement, it is 'weak ties' which are able to provide access to better information, resources and opportunities. Secondly, the interview delves into the process by which the entrepreneur's personal experience with social media shapes expectations about the outcomes of using various online networking platforms. The end result of the question is to establish the potential for building social capital through online social networks.

It has been established that the networking activities of entrepreneurs are very important in starting a new business given that the information which flows through networks bring opportunities and resources to a business. All the entrepreneurs interviewed recognised the importance of networking for the success of their business. The majority have recognised that social media is more than just a social tool, and are intentionally building online networks for business purposes. For the entrepreneur (E3) who is a less experienced social media user, the main source of building networks is still through 'offline' interactions such as at networking events. While face-to-face interaction still has its merits, the real advantage cited by the entrepreneurs for online networking is that it allows one to network with many people at once, and without physically having to be somewhere. It was also mentioned that entrepreneurs use social media for different purposes to their peers; therefore one can say that entrepreneurs are more deliberate about using social media for their business, and have identified the specific benefits of its use for business networking purposes. Some of the reasons given as to why social media is such a beneficial tool for entrepreneurs include: that it is cost effective and affordable, you can do it anytime, it allows you to build large networks, the potential for impact is greater, it is the best place to engage with someone of influence, and allows you to find information more easily. One of the frustrations mentioned by E1 was the 'disconnect' between online and offline relationships. While research has reported that online connections very often result in face-to-face meetings (Ellison et al, 2007: 1144), this benefit is not being experienced by this particular entrepreneur.

The discussion now considers the structure of the entrepreneur's online networks. The type of network ties which an entrepreneur is actively building through social media can describe the potential social capital of their business, given the resources inherent within these relational ties. *Table 5* in the previous chapter summarises each entrepreneurs online network structure based on their descriptions of the type of network contacts which they are actively engaging. Aside from one entrepreneur (E9), all use social media to engage with family and friends in order to stay connected for social purposes. *Facebook* is generally the way that the entrepreneurs maintain their 'strong tie' relationships. However, a majority of the interviews revealed that social media usage had evolved from social purposes and most of the entrepreneurs now primarily use social media for business networking purposes. A combination of *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn* are the most popular tools to do so according to the sample. It was generally recognised during the interviews that SNS offer the opportunity to identify potential networks and connect with people that the entrepreneur would not have access to offline. This confirms research which has established that communication technology which enables the building of online social networks results in a larger and more diffuse network of connections. A couple of entrepreneurs quoted in numbers the extent of their social networks, as either 'friends' or 'followers' reaching figures of around five thousand. They attributed these large networks to being indicators of their own online credibility as well as having deliberately established a base from which to access potential markets. These extended networks are described as building 'weak ties' which serve as the foundation of bridging social capital. The end result of building networks with people from a variety of different social circles is that one is more likely to get help from their extended network. For the entrepreneurs interviewed, the types of people they are actively engaging beyond their immediate circle of friends and family include: business connections, potential clients, people that live at a distance, interesting and relevant people, people who add value, and people of high influence. For E3 who has not fully realised the potential of using social media, the idea of 'latent ties' (Haythornthwaite, 2005: 125) can be applied, given that he has the technical means for developing beneficial weak tie networks, but has not yet activated these.

Network position of disadvantaged entrepreneurs

Research has shown that those from a disadvantaged socio-economic background are found to be disadvantaged in their confined social networking positions (Lin, 2000; Lee & Jones, 2008). They have been found to have networks that are concentrated on family and close friends, as opposed to well-educated entrepreneurs who have more diverse networks and reap the

benefits. As a result they are deficient in social capital. The findings of this study can be seen to challenge past research on the basis that the sample of previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs are no longer confined to their close social networks given the possibilities opened up by social media. They are now able to connect with people across socio-economic and geographical boundaries and gain from exposure to people of high influence from across the globe. From this study, it is evident that SNS are enabling entrepreneurs to break through previous socio-economic barriers which exist in South Africa by enabling connections between individuals which have not been likely before. Social media is also providing entrepreneurs with a platform to establish their credibility outside the formal channels of business hierarchy.

This study is perhaps better correlated with the research of Brüderl & Preisendörfer (1998) who found that disadvantaged entrepreneurs lacking in human and financial capital, will try harder to mobilise social contacts and receive more support out of their networks. It is evident from the sample that they have not been able to rely on access to finance, or their skills and education in order to successfully launch a business. One can then assume that the time and energy which the entrepreneurs are investing in building their social capital through online networks is in order to compensate for other capital deficiencies.

Outcome expectations

Having established that majority of the entrepreneurs are actively building their weak tie networks in order to derive benefits for their business, the discussion turns to the resulting outcomes by way of exposure to new information, opportunities, and resources for their business. The outcomes which entrepreneurs expect to get out of their online social networking activities is summarised in *Table 5* of the previous chapter. According to the Internet self-efficacy model consulted for this study, positive outcome expectations of social media usage should reflect a positive self-efficacy (Eastin & LaRose, 2000).

Based on the results of the interviews, it was established that the entrepreneurs expected both social outcomes and business related outcomes from using social media. Of particular interest to this study are the benefits which entrepreneurs can potentially derive for their business as a result of the resources inherent in their networks. Literature has shown that where technology such as social media expands one's social network to become large and heterogeneous, the result is an increase in information, opportunities and resources (Donath & Boyd, 2004). It is beyond the scope of this study to measure the actual outcomes which an entrepreneur gains from their online networks, and instead focuses on the cognitive determinant

of outcomes expectations which is the judgement of the likely consequences which SNS activity will produce. The entrepreneurs described various common outcomes which they expected their online social networking to produce for their business. These include: to build personal and business credibility, to access information, to identify opportunities, to share ideas, to establish a large business network, to benefit others in the network, to market the business, to access new clients, and to find potential investors. These expected outcomes indicate that the entrepreneurs are aware of the potential resources inherent in their social networks and as a result are seen to be building social capital. The results they commonly hope to achieve from building their networks are information and opportunity related. These findings confer with literature which indicates that leveraging social capital in online social networks is critical for entrepreneurial opportunity recognition and exploitation (Davidsson & Honig, 2003: 10).

Social network contacts are also seen to open up the possibility to broaden the financial base of a new business, in particular given the challenges in raising credit through formal institutions (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998: 215). Interestingly, only two entrepreneurs cited meeting potential investors as an expected outcome from their social networks. This is despite the fact that lack of access to funding is seen as a serious barrier to business growth for majority of the entrepreneurs. This presents a potential 'gap' in the entrepreneur's knowledge and usage of social media as a means to access financial resources for their business. Overall, given the positive outcome expectations of social media usage for both social and business reasons, one can say that the entrepreneurs have a positive self-efficacy.

Question 4 discussion

Ability to use technological features of SNS

The entrepreneurs perceived level of confidence in their ability to use the technological features of SNS serves as a basis for making a non-scientific judgement of the entrepreneur's self-efficacy with regard to social media usage. The findings from the interviews revealed varying degrees of ability when it came to using social media. Overall the participants were all able to make use of the basic technological features of SNS. However, only five of the entrepreneurs could be described as being very confident in their ability based on their own assessment as well as the researchers' impression. The remaining entrepreneurs expressed varying levels of doubt and difficulty with regards to social media usage indicating in certain respects, a lack of confidence. In particular, the entrepreneur who is a recent social media convert expressed difficulties with features such as creating a business profile on *LinkedIn*, and

how to use the ‘posting comments’ facility on *Twitter* (known as ‘tweets’). The varying degrees of confidence indicate potential ‘gaps’ in the entrepreneurs usage abilities of ICTs which the researcher has made reference to in a previous section.

Question 5 discussion

Challenges related to SNS

Literature has established that people who have strong beliefs regarding their capabilities will be more persistent in their efforts and will exert greater effort in mastering a challenge (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994: 73). In describing the challenges experienced by the entrepreneurs when using social media, most of the responses relate to historical difficulties stemming from when they first started using social media. The newness of social media created various challenges including: coming to an understanding of what social media is all about, how to use it properly, and navigating the norms of acceptable online behaviour. Other challenges which were raised include: breaking through to closed networks, creating content that people are interested in, mastering the various technical aspects of computers, talking to the wrong people on social networks, learning how a new SNS platform (such as *Pinterest*) works, and becoming generally proficient at using social media. The entrepreneurs described having overcome many of these challenges through effort and perseverance. Given the evolving nature of social media, many of the entrepreneurs recognise that utilising social media well is a constant learning process. It was also mentioned that the online environment itself provides various opportunities to find answers.

Other challenges expressed relate to hardware and access, namely: the resources required to access SNS such as having a laptop; the poor quality of Internet connectivity; and the costs of accessing the Internet. These challenges have already been discussed in the previous section. Overall, the interviews revealed an optimistic and resilient sense of efficacy given the challenges which entrepreneurs have faced in using social media. Having a positive self-efficacy as a belief system can be attributed to the entrepreneurs having a realistic grasp of challenges, and the optimism to overcome these through self-development and perseverance.

Question 6 discussion

Mastery experiences

The interviews sought to establish the way in which individuals have achieved success with using social media through their own efforts and by overcoming obstacles. According to literature, mastery experiences are the most effective way of instilling a strong sense of efficacy.

It is evident from all but one of the interviews where experience was lacking (E3), that mastery experiences have played a dominant role in achieving success with using social media. Drawing from the previous question focused on overcoming challenges, mastery experiences can also be seen to have established a strong sense of self-efficacy given the obstacles many of the entrepreneurs have overcome through perseverance.

Based on the descriptions provided by the entrepreneurs, it can be established that the majority of the sample have developed self-efficacy through personal mastery experiences. Given that social media is a recent phenomenon, it is not a skill where one would generally receive any formal training. The entrepreneurs have largely become familiar and successful in their social media usage through personal experimentation. A learning-by-doing approach was evident amongst most of the sample, who have built up experience by contributing to blogs, creating content, and constantly refining new and better ways using social media. Mistakes have been made, but it was commonly indicated that these have been treated as learning opportunities. Overcoming challenges and finding answers is seen as part of the learning journey. Based on these interpreted results of past performance and overcoming obstacles, it can be said that the majority of the sample have built a robust efficacy. Mastery experience has resulted through a constant learning process for the entrepreneurs who keep pace in developing their competencies as social media continuously evolves and new platforms emerge.

Social modeling

Various sources of inspiration and motivation were revealed during the interviews, providing examples of where entrepreneurs had seen others succeed with social media. While mastery experiences were by far the strongest source for most of the entrepreneurs, the research findings describe various influences which have improved the entrepreneur's competencies in using social media. These sources of social modeling can be summarised to include:

- Following other bloggers and learning from how they write content.
- Ask people online specifically how to do something you are unsure of.
- Learn from the strategy of musicians using social media: according to a couple of entrepreneurs, musicians appear to be using social media most successfully.
- Learn from people of influence on social media with a huge following and network.
- Peruse international company websites.
- Learn from other entrepreneurs and what has worked for them.
- Others organisations and individuals in the same industry making effective use of SNS.

In summary, all of the entrepreneurs interviewed had established a degree of efficacy through the inspiration and motivation they received through others and by seeing their success achieved through using SNS. It is interesting to note that observing the success of others performing tasks was most prominent in the online space, through following and learning from those who appear to be successful in the social media space.

Social persuasion

Chances of success can be increased through realistic boosts in structured situations which are brought about to enable individuals. According to literature, it is important that the encouragement individuals receive results in the opportunity to master the activity by themselves. Additionally, the chances of that happening require that the individual believes that they are capable. According to the interviews, three entrepreneurs mentioned structured situations at the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship where they had received boosts in efficacy. The entrepreneurs had attended a Social Media workshop in which they were encouraged to use social media for their business and shown how to do so. Each was now putting into practise aspects of what they had learnt indicating that efficacy had been built through the situation. Others mentioned that they had been encouraged by friends, mentors, and a lecturer at school who had guided entrepreneurs toward using certain SNS and had encouraged them to do so. While there is no “how to formula”, according to E8, it is evident that the entrepreneurs have picked up from the prompts and encouragement of others to embark on using various aspects of SNS. It is evident that based on belief in their own capabilities, they have run with the persuasion received from external sources, and made something of it through their own experimenting. It is evident from the interviews that some have made more of it than others given the degree to which social persuasion has resulted in boosting their own belief to experiment with social media.

Physical and emotional states

Assessing the physical and emotional states of the participants was based on the researcher’s judgement of the individual assessed through the overall interview responses, as well as the way in which each entrepreneur responded to the question. While stress and tension can be interpreted as indicators of susceptibility to failure, all the entrepreneurs interviewed expressed optimism and appeared to have a positive attitude. This indication as a source of information about their capabilities, also points towards the entrepreneurs having a positive self-efficacy.

Summary of main findings

The following provides a summary of the results discussion according to the various themes of the research:

Prior experience:

- Majority of entrepreneurs have had more than two years experience with social media which indicates that they have achieved sufficient self-efficacy.
- Social media usage for most of the entrepreneurs is evolving from a social tool to predominantly a business one.
- Some entrepreneurs have recognised business opportunities using social media.

Internet access:

- All the entrepreneurs access SNS through Internet enabled mobile phones for the majority of the time given affordability and accessibility.
- Computer access was still limited given lack of access and costs.

Digital divide:

- Access: mobile phones are helping to bridge the ‘digital divide’; however cost, quality of connection, and affordability of technology still present a challenge.
- Regularity of social media usage: given that all entrepreneurs interviewed had adopted online social networking as a regular daily activity, general positive links between regular social media usage and confidence in their abilities to do so can be confirmed. This provides evidence that the ‘participatory gap’ is narrowing as these individuals competently take part in online communities.
- Social media has become a vital means of maintaining work and social connections in everyday life for the sample.

Most popular SNS amongst the sample:

- Selecting which SNS to use varies depending what the entrepreneur hopes to achieve.
- The top three SNS were mainly used for the following purposes:
 - *Facebook*: building a vast network through growing a ‘Friends’ list for social and business purposes.
 - *Twitter*: following inspiring people who can add value; engaging with people of high influence outside of existing networks; building credibility for the individual and promoting the business through ‘tweets’.

- *LinkedIn*: Connecting with ‘professionals’ outside of social networks who can benefit the business.

Structure of entrepreneur’s networks:

- All the entrepreneurs recognise the importance of networks for business success.
- In general the entrepreneurs are very intentional about building networks online.
- Building networks through SNS is hugely advantageous – affordable, cuts across geographical boundaries, builds large networks, and connects to people of influence.
- Majority use social media to engage with family and friends in order to stay connected for social purposes.
- The entrepreneurs primarily use social media for business networking purposes to connect with a large variety of people outside of their social networks and as a result are building broad and diverse ‘weak tie’ networks.

Networks of disadvantaged entrepreneurs:

- Social media is enabling the sample of entrepreneurs from disadvantaged circumstances the opportunity to connect with people across socio-economic and geographical boundaries and expose them to people of high influence.
- Given financial and human capital constraints, the sample can be seen to put forward a lot of effort to activate their networks for business purposes.

Outcome expectations:

- The main outcomes which the entrepreneurs expect to get out of the online networking activities are: social, reputation, information, opportunities.
- Very few mentioned the expectation of funding for their business, despite having expressed that this was a business need.
- It was established that entrepreneurs expected both social outcomes and business related outcomes from using social media, indicating a positive relationship between outcome expectations and self-efficacy.

Confidence in using the technological features of SNS:

- The varying degrees of confidence indicate potential ‘gaps’ in the entrepreneur’s usage abilities.

Challenges in using SNS:

- All had faced various challenges in adopting and using SNS.
- The evident optimism and perseverance in order to overcome obstacles indicate a general positive self-efficacy.

Sources of self-efficacy:

- Majority of the sample had achieved success with using social media through their own perseverance and learning efforts. As the most effective way of instilling a strong sense of efficacy, mastery experiences in this case indicate positive self-efficacy.
- All the entrepreneurs have established a degree of efficacy through the inspiration and motivation they have received by seeing others succeed with using SNS. The social modeling influences were predominantly through online sources.
- Various sources of social persuasion provided entrepreneurs with realistic boosts of efficacy.
- The overall impression gained was that all the entrepreneurs interviewed expressed optimism and appeared to have a positive mood.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the main findings of the study based on the results obtained from the previous chapter. These summarised findings are then interpreted in terms of the literature and theory reviewed in Chapter 2. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future studies as well as possible suggestions on ways to implement the findings given the focus on entrepreneurship development.

Discussion of main findings

In summary, the self-efficacy beliefs of the entrepreneurs interviewed in relation to their social media usage abilities were found to be positive on the whole. This has been established on the basis of exploring various constructs which have a demonstrated positive relationship with Internet self-efficacy (Eastin & LaRose, 2000; Compeau & Higgins, 1995). Investigating the entrepreneurs' prior experience in using social media, the regularity of social media use, having positive expectations regarding the attainments they hope to achieve, and the way in which challenges were overcome were all telling of the entrepreneurs' belief in their abilities to use social media to benefit their business. The study only provided for one comparative case where prior experience was limited, resulting in a lower self-efficacy and expectation regarding the benefits of social media use for his business. Establishing a positive self-efficacy with regard to social media use is seen as an important factor in efforts to close the 'digital divide' when considering gaps in usage. In this study, there is potentially a divide that separates those who are experienced users of social media from the novice.

The research has explored the sources of self-efficacy related to the entrepreneurs' social media usage, and found that mastery experiences have the strongest influence. Interpreted results of one's past performance are the most important sources of information related to establishing self-efficacy perceptions (Bandura, 1997). These experiences result in a more robust self-efficacy given that many challenges have been overcome in the process of mastering various aspects of social media. It was recognised that using social media in order to realise its full potential is a constant self-experimenting and exploratory process. This includes learning from mistakes and overcoming challenges. It was evident that the entrepreneurs' confidence in their ability to use the technological features of SNS was quite varied. Learning how to use these tools and become proficient in social media in order to achieve various results, describes some of the challenges which entrepreneurs have faced. Given the nature of social media, it was also

established that one of the ways in which efficacy beliefs are strengthened are through the demonstrated success of online ‘models’. Individuals of influence who have established a large following through blogging or *Twitter* are particularly important sources of inspiration. Organisations and industries which have demonstrated successful ways to adopt social media also serve as important sources of influence. It was evident however, that there is no ‘how to formula’ when it comes to using social media and much of the process of discovery and learning takes place as a result of online networking itself.

Social media has evidently become a regular daily practise for all the entrepreneurs interviewed. This has largely been made possible given the accessibility and affordability of the Internet which has been enabled through mobile phones. The entrepreneurs all had smartphones which they use constantly for communication purposes and in particular to actively engage in online networking through SNS. They engaged with different applications for different purposes with the most popular being *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*. The building of networks for social purposes and more predominantly for business purposes is an intentional activity for most of the entrepreneurs. The types of networks they actively pursue online are ‘weak tie’ relationships with individuals who can potentially add value to their business in a various ways. Most of the entrepreneurs recognise the potential inherent in growing a large network, and as a result stand to benefit by establishing social capital for their business. The types of benefits they hope to achieve from their networks include building a credible reputation, accessing information, and seeking business opportunities. However few expected or recognised the potential to access funding through their networks.

Conclusion to the study

The title of this study “Shattering the Boundaries” was inspired by an entrepreneur’s response to the positive outcomes he has experienced having adopted social media into his daily life and business:

“The greatest thing it does for me is shrink the world to a single 140 character tweet. The boundaries have been shattered completely which gives an upstart like me from Vosloorus (a township on the East of Johannesburg)...access to a person who sits in New York. Previously a person who sits in the township would have thought that people who have access to such things live in Sandton (wealthy suburbs and commercial hub of Johannesburg).”

This quote in many ways summarises the rationale for the researcher’s interest in exploring the potential inherent in the social media habits of South African previously

disadvantaged entrepreneurs. Literature has provided a solid base from which to explore the potential for an individual to greatly expand their networks through online social networking, and build social capital as a result. This potential is particularly encouraging for disadvantaged individuals to benefit from the information and opportunities which can be accessed outside of their limited social circles. Entrepreneurship development in South Africa is a prominent topic, given its importance as a catalyst for job creation and poverty alleviation. Yet the challenges which previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs face are many, given lack of education, limited opportunities, and difficulties in accessing resources. Social media affords entrepreneurs the opportunity to break through traditional barriers and hierarchies across South African society and the globe, and surround themselves with potentially advantageous networks. While the researcher recognises that it is not feasible to generalise the results of this study, she believes that it affords the opportunity to further explore social media's potential both academically and practically as a development tool.

Based on this study, it is evident that social media has become embedded into the daily lives and routines of entrepreneurs as a result of accessible and affordable mobile phone technology. While South Africans in general are rapidly adopting social media, the study has provided positive evidence for the way in which entrepreneurs are benefitting their business beyond mere social outcomes. It is evident that many are recognising the potential inherent in building online networks, and as a result are intentionally using social networking tools to establish large and diverse networks. According to this study, the key behavioural motivator to unlock the potential social capital inherent in online social networks is an individual's self-efficacy. Entrepreneurs need to establish a robust belief in their ability to use SNS in order to achieve potential outcomes for their business. Having established an overall positive self-efficacy within the sample, the new opportunities which social media affords can be extended to encourage other entrepreneurs in society. However, it is recognised that beyond the scope of this group of entrepreneurs, there are many other socially disadvantaged entrepreneurs who do not recognise or have access to online benefits through social media. While the entrepreneurs in this study appear to have 'leapfrogged' divides in access given mobile technology, and are narrowing the 'participatory gap' through active and capable participation in online networks, this sample is not representative of the general population. Social media is a recent phenomenon and therefore has a lot of room to grow for the majority of people unreached.

SNS are enabling entrepreneurs to establish large and diverse networks, and connect with people of influence that they would not have access to offline. E7 aptly described the networking

scenario of entrepreneurs as “*you are defined by the company you keep*”. As a result, entrepreneurs need to surround themselves with people who add value in order to define the success of their business. It is the researchers observation that majority of the entrepreneurs interviewed are ‘connectors’ by nature, being highly social and confident individuals. Without detracting from the latent benefits which social media offers, people who build social networks easily may be more likely to use social media tools to a greater extent than those who do not network as easily. This observation may suggest a future area for entrepreneurial research.

In a divided society such as South Africa, social media offers the opportunity to break down many socio-economic boundaries. This study has provided evidence of the way in which entrepreneurs have been able to connect with individuals they would never usually interact with. It confirms that the development of weak tie social capital has been shown to create social cohesion between groups and result in economic opportunities to those belonging to less powerful or excluded groups. Where efforts to contact influential individuals have failed through traditional means of communication such as telephone, face-to-face, or even email; SNS have created a platform for a more willing and open engagement. Through pursuing relationships of value or benefit online, entrepreneurs now have the potential to reward their business start-up with advantageous information, business opportunities, and resources. However it was noted that while financial resources are a cited as a real barrier to the growth of the entrepreneurs business, the potential to connect with funding sources online is not recognised. Social media is also offering entrepreneurs the opportunity to build their reputations online, and share a credible platform alongside CEO’s of industry to talk about their business online. While extensive and rewarding connections are being made through social media, it is evident that barriers do still exist. Some networks remain closed and exclusive. In particular, mention was made that corporate South Africa is largely a closed connection, given their reluctance to adopt social media beyond marketing for their own purposes.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to demonstrate any impact which the social media habits of entrepreneurs is having on national economic indicators, it is feasible to suggest that mobile technology has placed a powerful tool for social and personal change in the hands of entrepreneurs. The reason for this is given the way in which new media enables interactivity and networking to take place, centred on the individuals agency and actions. Social media is enabling entrepreneurs to build networks cheaply and easily, which leads to broader networks that cut across both geographical and social barriers. It is evident based on the study that mobile technology has empowered entrepreneurs in these new ways.

Recommendations for future research and practical implementation

There are a number of aspects highlighted in this research that were beyond the scope of the study. In particular as a relatively new field of research, social media and the potential it affords for entrepreneurial success can be explored in a number of ways. The following suggestions for further research can enrich and expand on the findings of this study.

The sample of entrepreneurs for this study was selected broadly on the basis of being users of social media. A comparative study between entrepreneurs who use social media and those who don't may yield interesting results in terms of exploring its benefits for building networks. This study can also lead to future work which explores more specifically the boundaries between social and business uses of social networking sites and the factors which give rise to entrepreneurs relying on social networks for opportunities. Given that social media is a relatively recent phenomena, a longitudinal study could also provide for a better understanding of how social media usage and its benefits to entrepreneurs evolve over a length of time. A final suggestion is for future studies to look more specifically at the actual outcomes, as opposed to the expected outcome explored in this study, in order to measure the resulting benefits to a business of using social media.

For organisations involved in the support and development of entrepreneurs in society this study provides direction and the incentive to develop learning opportunities which encourage and enhance social media usage as a beneficial business networking tool. Key to these efforts is to assess an entrepreneur's level of participation and to help develop their competencies to become active in online networks. It provides the basis for organisations to explore ways to facilitate online connections between individuals across broader networks in society. Further, organisations could work towards ways of challenging networks which appear closed and exclusive such as those of corporate South Africa. Connections established online also have the potential to develop into important mentor relationships for entrepreneurs. Finally, the entrepreneurs themselves are ideally placed as role models to inspire others to seek out the potential inherent in online social networks, based on their own positive experience.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research questions for semi-structured interview

CONTACT SHEET

NAME: _____

CONTACT DETAILS

Contact number:

Email:

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Interview date and time:

- Tuesday 31st July: 9am 10am 11am 12pm
- Wednesday 1st August: 9am 10am 11am 12pm
- Thursday 2nd August: 9am 10am 11am 12pm

Thank participant

I am currently completing a research thesis towards a Masters in Journalism through Stellenbosch University. My interest in this particular topic is based on my experience of working in entrepreneurship development. As a media study, my interest is in exploring the way that social media places power in people's hands to bring about social change. The aim of this study is to explore the way in which an entrepreneurs social media usage abilities as well as the expectations for gaining information, resources and opportunities for their business are linked to the everyday practise of building online social networks.

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Age:

Gender: M / F

Nationality:

Home language:

Afrikaans	Pedi	Tsonga
English	Sotho	Tswana
Ndebele	Swati	Venda
Xhosa	Zulu	Other

Highest level of education:

(EDU 1 – 6)

Grade 12 or less	Bachelors Degree	Masters Degree
Certificate or Diploma	Honors Degree	Doctorate

Other:

- Years of work experience in the formal sector:
- Years of entrepreneurial experience:

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Name of Business:

Type of Business:

When did you start this business? : (BUS – YEARS)

In what phase would you describe your business: (BUS – PHASE)

- Start-up
- Survival
- Stabilisation
- Growth
- Maturity

Describe the sources of start-up capital for your business: (CAP - SOURCE)

- None
- Your own funds
- Family and friends
- Acquaintances
- Formal lending institutions (bank, micro-lender)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Question 1: How much prior experience do you have in using social media applications?

How long have you been using social media? (EXP)

- Less than 6 months
- Less than 2 years
- Greater than 2 years

How do you access the Internet to use social media? (ACCESS)

- Mobile Internet
- Computer-based access (including dial-up, ADSL, or wireless broadband).

Question 2: How often do you use social media and which SNS do you make regular use of?

How often do you use social media? (USE)

- Daily
- 2-3 times a week
- Less regularly

Which social network sites do you make regular use of? (TYPE – F,T,M etc)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- MXit
- BBM
- LinkedIn
- Google+
- Other

Question 3: Who do you connect with on SNS and what do you expect to get out of your networks?

Do you use social network sites to engage with family and close friends (activating existing social relations)?

(STRONG)

Do you use social networks to build a network of acquaintances outside of your social circles? (Creating new social networks)? (WEAK)

What do you expect to get out of your online networking activities: (SOC, INFO, OPP, RES)

- Social outcomes
- Information for your business
- Identifying new business opportunities
- Mobilising resources for your business
- Other

How important do you think it is to build your network in order for business success?

Do you believe that social media offers you this opportunity?

Question 4: Establish the entrepreneurs' confidence in their ability to use social networking sites.

Describe your level of confidence (1-5) in your ability to use social media related to use of the following features of SNS:

- Creating a profile on to represent yourself on a SNS
- Develop a 'friends' list
- Post comments or messages.
- Use the established norms of SNS (eg. Hashtags in Twitter)

Question5: Describe any problems or challenges you experience when using social media, and how have you overcome these?

Question6: Investigate how social media self-efficacy beliefs are established based on the following sources

Your belief in your ability to use social media to achieve outcomes for your business is said to be developed in various ways which we will now explore:

Mastery experiences based on interpreted results of one's past performance.

Based on your own personal experiences in using social media, would you say that you have achieved successful outcomes for your business through SNS? (MAST)

- Yes
- No

Can you give me an example?

Social modelling that individuals undergo when they observe others performing tasks.

Has your social media usage been influenced and inspired by seeing others 'doing it' successfully? Describe how.

- Yes...
- No...

Social persuasion helps individuals to exert the extra effort and maintain the persistence required to succeed, resulting in the continued development of skills and of personal efficacy. (PERS)

Have you received guidance from others (such as family, friends, other entrepreneurs, the Branson Centre) on how to use social media?

- Yes
- No

Physical and emotional states of individuals affect an individual's capabilities where stress and tension are often indicators of susceptibility to failure.

I would like to end by getting a sense of your general well being. How would you describe your current physical and emotional state? (STRESS)

Mood positive and optimistic, handling stress well and healthy.

Mood negative, depressed and despondent not so healthy.

Do you have anything else you would like to share about your social media habits?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!