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**Mobilising Competitive Intelligence as a Social Media  
Tool for Strategic Marketing Communication of  
Restaurants in Durban**

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## **Abstract**

The study focuses on mobilising competitive intelligence as a social media tool for strategic marketing communication for restaurants in Durban. It demonstrates how social media has become important in implementing strategic marketing communication in recent times by mobilising competitive intelligence in mining the data generated on restaurant social media platforms. In putting the study in context, the study used the social exchange theory and the technological determinism theory as the theoretical framework to explain the phenomenon. The study also used secondary data methodology through a systematic review approach. The article consulted electronic resources such as articles on the internet, EBSCOHOST, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The articles consulted ranged from 1976 to 2022 and were searched from a global perspective, especially the Western countries of the global north, and finally narrowed down to South Africa. Websites, like JSTOR and Google Scholar produced 90% of the search results, though Google Scholar was most dominant. The study concluded that the strategic marketing communication team must ensure that the restaurants are on social media platforms where they can mine customers data using the competitive intelligence tool and plan their marketing communication approach based on that data.

**Keywords:** *Competitive Intelligence, Social Media, Strategic Marketing Communication, Restaurants, Durban*

## **Introduction**

A major setback some restaurants make is not only in handling their social media interactions unprofessionally but also in ignoring insights and analytics that can be taken advantage of through competitive intelligence. It is against this background that Hagiu and Wright (2020), in their article in the *Harvard Business Review online*, argued that business organisations have become increasingly aware of competitors and the importance of each business enterprise being adequately informed of their competitors on social media. This realisation has indeed become imperative because it gives them knowledge of their competition, and business organisations are able to use this generated data from social media through competitive intelligence tools to increase their market share.

To this end, organisations mobilise strategic communication to inform their various stakeholders, including the internal and the external ones, so that they are not only aware of the company policies but, most importantly,

so that customers, being part of the external stakeholders, are aware of their products. Strategic communication therefore refers to policy-making and guidance for consistent information activity within an organisation and between organisations and people. Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič, and Sriramesh (2007) define strategic communication as the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfill its mission. They argue that six relevant disciplines are involved in the development, implementation, and assessment of communications by organisations: management, marketing, public relations, technical communication, political communication, and information/social marketing campaigns. This paper seeks to pursue the marketing and information/social marketing campaign components of their postulation.

To this end, there is a need to contextualise the submissions in this paper by interrogating strategic marketing communication in relation to restaurant operations in Durban. Therefore, strategic marketing communication is an experiential programme that employs multiple roles in the marketing and communication field. It also involves using multiple channels, especially the one that is most appropriate and appealing to the target audience. In the case of restaurants in Durban, the most appropriate tool to use is competitive intelligence, and the most appealing channel is social media platforms.

This study therefore seeks to probe how data mined from social media can provide advantages to the competitive intelligence tool of restaurants in Durban for their strategic marketing communication efforts. Therefore, the emphasis is on competitive intelligence. Bond (2021) sees competitive intelligence (CI) as the process of tracking, analysing, and activating information related to competitors. It is conducted with the intent of empowering internal stakeholders to improve their decision-making and execution strategies.

### **Exploring literature on different types of restaurant as a business organisation**

There are various types of restaurants that operate globally, including in Durban. The article described the types as fine dining restaurants that cater to an upscale clientele and provide the highest quality food. It usually has a formal atmosphere, and it is a sit-down establishment with a fancier menu than most restaurants. There is also the fast food restaurant, or quick service restaurant (QSR), which serves food packaged to be eaten on the go, whether from a drive-through window or counter. QSR, from the foregoing, sells food to consumers and is usually in the form of an indoor

dining or drive-through experience (Kunnammal and Suvakinn, 2016). These foods are served with minimal preparation at competitive prices, as it is a fast and convenient method of providing food services (Gyaan, 2017). QSRs are considered an indispensable part of the Durban and South African food sectors as they offer both quick food dishes and negligible table service. They cater mainly to millennial professionals and workers in general (Singh, Sarangal, and Sharma, 2020). The popularity and public acceptance of QSRs are embedded in good market values such as easy accessibility, ambience, and affordable pricing (Thackston, 2013). In recent times in Durban, there have been increased customer demands for food quality, extreme competition, as well as rising ingredient prices, which makes running a successful QSR a challenging job (Gyaan, 2017).

There are also restaurants that are casual dining establishments, which encompass a large segment of the restaurant industry. These types of restaurants range from local independent spots to larger franchises, and their defining characteristics include table service and a sit-down meal. They are also named the fast casual restaurant, which is a hybrid of fast food and casual dining, and they offer a more upscale and diverse (though still limited) menu selection with slightly higher price points than fast food establishments. This type of restaurant is also growing in Durban.

The contemporary casual, a relatively new type of restaurant, is a sit-down dining experience marked by an emphasis on atmosphere and experience. This type of restaurant often balances a relaxed eating environment with culinary trends popular with today's consumers, like sustainability, farm-to-table, fusion cuisine, and craft beverages. There is also the café, which is a beverage-focused establishment, and its offerings usually include coffee, tea, and a smaller menu of food or snacks. There are pizzerias that sell Pizza, an Italian-type bakery dough, usually in large cities. There is also the pop-up type of restaurant that might just pop up in an old warehouse, in a giant tent, or in another restaurant altogether. A pop-up might last one night only, or it might last a whole season. Finally, they highlighted the ghost kitchens, or virtual restaurants, which are a newer type of restaurant that does not have a storefront at all. Orders are placed by phone or online and are delivery-only. There is no dining room, no host stand, and no welcoming bar area. Often, there is not even a sign out front.

In South Africa, the restaurant industry is undergoing a profound transformation due to increasing globalisation and trends in the domestic market (Maumbe, 2012). The restaurant industry in South Africa is booming, as recent studies show a significant increase from 66% in 2009 to

over 80% in 2015, totaling 42 million consumers by 2017-2018 (Marx-Pienaar *et al.*, 2020; Murray, 2016). Research in their 2019 survey. According to the review of Allied Market Research, an online-based research magazine, the opportunity analysis and industry forecast from 2019–2026 of the South African restaurants by product type (processed chicken, burger, processed fish, pizza, sandwich, and others) values the food market size at \$2.7 billion in 2018 and is expected to reach \$4.9 billion by 2026, registering a Compound Annual Growth (CAGR) of 7.9% from 2019 to 2026. The research group stated that South Africa is the largest foodservice market in sub-Saharan Africa with a large and highly competitive hospitality industry (Allied Market Research, 2019; Marx-Pienaar, Du rand, Fisher and Viljoen, 2020).

A burgeoning black middle class and the establishment of restaurants in peri-urban and formerly disadvantaged areas are both contributing to this expansion in South Africa (Maharaj, 2015). These growths have led to a major restructuring of the food industry and a re-alignment of the value chain to improve competitiveness and meet consumer demands (Marx-Pienaar *et al.*, 2020). The ability of restaurant industry to respond quickly to these challenges is central to its future survival and growth (Maumbe, 2012).

According to the Stats-SA (2020) report, 330,385 people were employed in the restaurant and hotel sector at the end of December 2019, which means that the sector accounts for 3.23% of the 10.215 million employed in the formal non-agricultural sector in South Africa, thus serving as an important source of employment for young people without a university degree, those that are schooling part-time, and those that are saving to further their studies. These factors make restaurants strategic to the country's social stability and the government's youth employment programme (StatsSA, 2020), as well as the adult population.

## **Competitive Intelligence**

Customer and Competitive Intelligence are the foundations of a good marketing strategy; therefore, it is impossible to find methods to improve the Competitive Intelligence-generating process without this knowledge (Jaworski, Macinnis, and Kohli, 2003). Business enterprises are operating in an increasingly competitive environment, making it challenging to maintain a competitive advantage over time (Nenzhelele, 2012). Restaurants are part of small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMME) that are regarded as the lifeblood of economies around the world, yet they are also known to have high failure rates (Msimango-Galawe and Hlatshwayo, 2021). For

example, the failure rate of SMMEs (which restaurants belong to) in South Africa is among the worst in the world, with around 75 percent failing within 42 months of opening (Bruce Masama and Juan-Pierré Bruwer, 2018; Msimango-Galawe and Hlatshwayo, 2021). One of the reasons why this size of businesses fails is attributed to the lack of proper marketing tools that Competitive Intelligence offers (Cavallo, Sanasi, Ghezzi, and Rangone, 2021), especially using social media platforms.

This study is predicated on the premise that failure to craft and implement proactive and competitive market tools and strategies in the restaurant sector using the social media platform that delivers long-term sustainable competitive advantages can have negative consequences for the enterprise in terms of poor reputation among customers, market share erosion, and dwindling profitability prospects (Prabhu, Tracey, and Hassan, 2020). To this end, Competitive Intelligence (CI) is positioned as the most appropriate tool for achieving the goal of enhancing the marketing programmes of restaurants with a view to increasing patronage and profitability using the social media platform. It requires an organisation to grasp and know all information of strategic significance (de las Heras-Rosas and Herrera, 2021), and it is therefore the systematic collection of data that is deliberately coordinated, gathered, defined, and analysed to glean intelligence from customer behaviour and activities as well as the external environment (Sauter, 2008; Cavallo, Sanasi, Ghezzi, and Rangone, 2021). It is what savvy organisations use to track how they are performing in their respective sectors, and it helps them to develop a fuller picture of emerging trends in their marketplace and offer novel solutions that matter, which can help them increase patronage more, especially using social media (Leidig, 2021).

In strategic business planning, either in private or public-owned businesses, competitive intelligence is an integral part of developing marketing tools and strategies (Keller, 2013). Discussing further, Keller (2013) adds that Competitive Intelligence involves the legal collection of data on business or brand competitors. The information gathered on competitors is used to enhance the organisation's competitiveness (Vuori and Okkonen, 2012) on social media for strategic marketing communication of restaurants in Durban with a view to increasing patrons traffic and broadening the profitability of the restaurant.

Competitive Intelligence is a subset of knowledge management involved in the management of information about external competitors and the business environment (Deng and Luo, 2010). At different levels of

brand building, Nazier, Khedr, and Haggag (2013) maintain that competitive intelligence must be evident on all levels within an organisation, ranging from the management board to marketing to sales operations. With competitive intelligence, organisations and business owners' move away from being competitors to being competitor intelligent, this is due to the increase in developing competitive business strategies (Jaworski, Macinnis, and Kholi, 2002). The purpose of Competitive Intelligence in every business or organisation is to support or guide managerial decisions and actions (Wilson 2016).

Essentially, one of the attributes of a proactive company is to convert customer data into competitive intelligence (Jaworski, Macinnis, and Kholi, 2002; Köseoglua, Chana, Okumusb, Altinb, 2019; LIansitI and Lakhani, 2020; Zwerenz, 2020), and in a modern business environment, it is best accomplished by organisations that engage in social media monitoring and analysis amongst other methods of collecting customer intelligence (Dam, Le Dinh, and Menvielle, 2021). The business landscape changes with rapidity, and due to the continuous transformative nature of technology, it has become complex and competitive (Mosweunyane, Rambe, and Dzansi, 2019). Therefore, companies and businesses must equip themselves with adequate information on their competitors as well as that of their customers. Carson, O'Connor, and Simmons (2020) argued that when a company, especially in the consumer-based industry like QSR is informed, it becomes easy to adapt its business strategies to reflect what its market needs are and react to the moves of its competitors. To this end, formal internal and external information strategies, including the mobilisation and use of social media, become imperative (Mosweunyane, Rambe, and Dzansi, 2019).

The study of Competitive Intelligence has developed in the last decades to become a vital marketing tool for organisations (Calof, Arcos, & Sewdass, 2018). Competitive Intelligence is a marketing and business tool within strategic management, and it is gaining significance as a procedure that enables businesses to have a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Salguero, Gámez, Fernández, and Palomo, 2019). To this end, organisations that use CI as a tool for marketing and business planning will be the ones that have a deeper understanding and evaluation of their business (Carvalho, Picoto, and Busch, 2021).

Competitive intelligence as a marketing tool, as it is generally used in business enterprises, is important in the restaurant business. Managing a restaurant business is not competitive and, as earlier stated, has a high mortality rate, and this is a major reason why restaurants employ competitive intelligence as a toll to mine and deploy data mined from their

social media platforms for marketing. Competitive Intelligence has the capacity to reveal, through close analysis of messages posted, the demography of the customers, and this type of information empowers social media, communication, and marketing personnel of a restaurant to plan their marketing activities.

## **Social Media**

Akpan (2021) and Hruska and Maresova (2020) posit that social media is usually a preferred channel of communication in this super information age, and they include Instagram, Facebook (and all its features, especially the reel), Tik-Tok, WhatsApp, YouTube, Short Message Service (SMS), Telegram, Google (and all its features, including analytics), Snapchat, Telegram, Clubhouse, and Twitter.

The introduction of social media into the web space over the years has increased the maintenance and development of brand equity for business owners (Wilson, 2016). Social media has become one of the most utilised strategies for brand building. Although there is a dearth of knowledge about the implementation of social media as a tool for competitive intelligence in the restaurant industry (Fournier and Avery, 2011; Shaitura, Ordov, Lesnichaya, Romanova, and Khachaturova, 2018; Carvalho, Picoto and Busch, 2021), companies use social media to interact with their current and prospective customers to gather and implement useful marketing insights from them. Social media has become an integrated marketing tool for companies to market their products and services (Keller, 2013).

The use of social media platforms by brands and consumers has bridged the gap of ineffective communication in business (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Social media is a tool that has been used by both brands and consumers to improve and enhance two-way communication (Wilson, 2016). Different brands and organisations have engaged in the use of social media to create awareness of their products, provide update on their businesses, and even engage with customers via their social media platforms (Carvalho, Picoto and Busch, 2021). These platforms are interactive and mainly allow user-generated content. The biggest and most used of these platforms is Facebook (Hruska and Maresova, 2020), and according to a Business Tech survey in 2021, Facebook is also the largest social media platform in South Africa. Facebook has opened a large market for business marketers, as it enables them to reach many clients and prospective clients through viral marketing that is viewed by millions of

consumers (Stieglitz et al., 2018). One of the industries that has widely accepted the use of Facebook as one of the social media platforms for business promotion is the restaurant industry (Garber and Wright, 2014). The rapid growth of Facebook and the engagement of business owners adopting Facebook as a medium to advertise their services rather than the use of traditional media have affected social change in business outlooks (Kannammal and Suvakinn 2016).

Apart from Facebook, Instagram which is a sister company of the former (they are both owned by Meta), is also very important in restaurant marketing. However, both platforms are open to abuse. Competitor can sponsor a malicious posting while reviewing the restaurant; also, disgruntled customers who may not have a credible reason but perhaps were informed to keep the noise level down can post reviews that do not really reflect the character of the restaurant. It therefore behoves on the management of the restaurant to address the issues raised, and in the case of what they feel is unjustifiable and malicious, they may report it to the community rules manager of the social media platform on an unfair comment basis, and sometimes those kinds of postings are taken down. But suffice to add that every comment should motivate the restaurant to address the concern expressed.

However, Akpan (2021) says from his study that there were 5.43 million Instagram users in South Africa in January 2021, up from 4.89 million in July 2020. The majority of Instagram users in South Africa are female, accounting for over 53.8 per cent of the app's audience in the country. A cursory look at the restaurant in Durban shows that Instagram is popular with them, and in the same vein, their followers are mostly female, who do not only follow the restaurants but also tag them when they are posting pictures of themselves, the food they are eating, their drinks, and the ambience of the restaurant.

### **Durban being the location of the study**

Durban, a coastal city in eastern South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, is known for its African, Indian, and colonial influences. It sits on an area of Area: 2 292 km<sup>2</sup>, with a weather temperature of 25 °C, wind at 29 km/h, and 81% humidity. With a population of 3,721 million (2018), Durban is the third-largest city in South Africa. The city has a botanical garden that showcases African plant species and has the busiest container port in Africa and one of the busiest in the southern hemisphere. Durban's harbour entrance was widened and can now take some of the world's

largest “super ships”. Durban is home to the Ushaka Marine World, which is the world’s 5th largest aquarium.

Durban has long beach fronts and practically competes with Cape Town for tourists, either from abroad or local, many to whom come to the city because of its warm weather. Restaurants in Durban therefore play host to a large resident population and tourists who either come from overseas or from within the country. These visitors and residents serve as a strong market for the various restaurants in the city mostly concentrated on Florida Road in Morningside area of the city, Davenport area of the city, Umhalanga area of Durban North, and inside the many big malls. The restaurants operate from breakfast to dinner and most stay open beyond 8 pm, and some of them play some live music, and jazz band over the weekends. There are also restaurants operated by other nationals like the Thai, Chinese, Arabs, Muslims (usually licenced to operate Hallal kind of restaurant, which means all meals are devoid of pork), Ethiopians, and West Africans especially Nigerian restaurants, which are not only patronised by Nigerians, but by other Black Africans, including black South Africans. This means that restaurants have to be competitive to survive, hence the mobilisation of competitive intelligence in their strategic marketing communication.

### **Social Media as a Competitive Intelligence Tool in Strategic Marketing Communication**

With these myriads of different restaurants scattered across Durban, both in numbers and types, there is a strong need for them to adopt a comprehensive marketing communication strategy for them to be effective and profitable. This means the restaurants will need to adopt social media and competitive intelligence, which is the process in which a company gathers and analyses information about its industry, business environment, competitors, and products with the goal of directing their future strategy. In ensuring the effectiveness of restaurants, Fournier and Avery (2011) noted that there is a lack of understanding and technical skill on the part of some marketing managers on how to successfully use social media strategies to implement and build effective competitive intelligence advantage among restaurants (Chatterjee and Kar, 2020). In their study, Hofer-Shall (2015) explained that some companies engage with customers’ feedback; however, many of these companies have not developed a marketing tool on their social media platforms to turn competitive

intelligence, including the feedback, into profit or increased patronage for their businesses.

Todri, Adamopoulos, and Andrews (2021) also argue that some business enterprises engage with their customers' activity, even though many of them have not fully developed methods and strategies that would help their businesses turn customers' feedback into data for Competitive Intelligence which will in turn become a marketing tool that will bring in more customers. Similarly, some restaurants are reviewing their customers' online activity, but many may not have evolved to develop a competitive intelligence strategy to appreciate their customers' activities that can be mined from social media and therefore have complete insight into the data and use it in an actionable way that will increase their customer base and profitability (Todri, Adamopoulos, and Andrews, 2021; Paglioni, 2020; Jackson, 2016; Alfreðsdóttir and Steinþórsson, 2018).

According to Ying Lin (2020), consumers are more inclined to consult reviews online before making a purchase. Furthermore, Kaemingk (2020) stated in a survey on *customer talks online* that 93% of customers read online reviews before buying a product, and this shows that restaurants in Durban would require a strong presence on the social media platform so that reviews of their customers can serve as a marketing tool for potential customers. Similarly, restaurant customers in Durban engage social media to read reviews when they are making choices of restaurant to patronise, and indeed state in their reviews after their visit to the restaurant why they chose the restaurant.

Social media platforms are used by consumers to express their wants, desires, or experiences, and people read such reviews to determine their patronage of such brands (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Hence, with this available knowledge, restaurants in Durban have not adequately used social media data, which gives them an advantage in Competitive Intelligence to attract customers to their respective outlets (Brikett, 2016). This is the reason for this paper, which seeks to explore whether restaurants in Durban use social media as a marketing tool for competitive intelligence that will translate into customer patronage.

Though there is a dearth of literature on actual users of social media in Durban and also numbers of restaurants with social media present, according to Statista<sup>1</sup>, 28 million South Africans use social media as of 2022, and Durban being the third largest city in the country in terms of population and economic activities, many Durbanites have access to social media logically. This population cuts across ages and classes, and this

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.statista.com/topics/9923/social-media-in-south-africa/>

includes the restaurant patrons in Durban. To this end, restaurants in Durban have a presence on social media platforms.

### **Social Exchange Theory and Technological Determinism Theory as the Theoretical Frameworks**

Social exchange theory is a concept based on the notion that a relationship between two people is created through a process of cost-benefit analysis. In other words, it is a metric designed to determine the effort poured in by an individual in a person-to-person relationship. In their work, Pan and Crotts (2012) state that all social media are dependent on users providing content, and an understanding of the motives behind why individuals participate appears fundamental to the nurturing of the relationship. Social exchange theory argues that the major force in interpersonal relationships is the satisfaction of both people's self-interest, but as argued by Mitchell, Cropanzano, and Quisenberry (2012), the relationship has to be contextualised and applied for mutual satisfaction to take place.

Correspondingly, the strategic communication marketers of a restaurant will mine, contextualise, and use the data about the existing customers to place their restaurant as a venue that will provide satisfaction to the prospective customer.

Social exchange theory originated from sociology studies, which explored exchanges between individuals or small groups (Emerson 1976). The theory mainly uses a cost-benefit framework and comparison of alternatives to explain how human beings communicate with each other, how they form relationships and bonds, and how communities are formed through communication exchanges (Homans 1958). The theory states that individuals engage in behaviours they find rewarding and avoid behaviours that have too high a cost. In other words, all social behaviour is based on each actor's subjective assessment of the cost-benefit of contributing to a social exchange.

The exchange with each other is contingent on reciprocal actions from the other communicating party (Emerson 1976). The mutual reinforcement could be analysed through a microeconomic framework, though many times the rewards are not monetary but social, such as opportunity, prestige, conformity, or acceptance (Emerson 1976).

To this end, once the restaurants in Durban are able to connect with their various customers, they can apply the social exchange theory by interacting with them and making them feel that their patronage is

appreciated. The restaurants in Durban can get the intelligence of their customers from their social media pages, especially their Instagram pages, Facebook pages, especially the reel section, which is posted to tell a story, and websites linked with Google where they can get data from Google Analytics, a web analytics service offered by Google that tracks and reports website traffic.

The analytics will give the restaurant competitive intelligence to be able to engage with the clients who have either made a review on their social media pages or website linked to Google, make them feel important and appreciated on the one hand, and also gather demographic and psychographic information for their strategic marketing communication.

Also, the paper mobilises the Technological Determinism Theory to contextualise how the technology tool of competitive intelligence riding on social media platforms of the internet has become important in modern strategic marketing communication.

Technological determinism theory is a reductionist theory that assumes that a society's technology progresses by following its own internal logic of efficiency while determining the development of social structure and cultural values. In other words, there is a link between technology and society. Technological determinism is the idea that technology, shapes social change. It determines our future. According to the work of Kamalpreet Gill Singh, which was peer reviewed by Chris Drew<sup>2</sup>, they argued that technology shapes social change. It determines our future. This position re-enforces the argument of Thorstein Veblen, who actually coined technological determinism and said that technology is the driving force of culture in society, and that it determines its history.

McLuhan (1964), in his seminal work *Understanding the Media*, advised that the media and not the content only should be focused on and studied, as they are a capable of disrupting traditional media. It can therefore be argued by this paper that any time there is a new medium, there is a disruption of the old one. This paper's position is corroborated by some authors, who say that social media is now used for social networking and that its users have formed some sort of republic of the same homogeneity. Social media literally connects people across cultures, religions, and boundaries and lets them feel like members of a single community. SM has not only converted the world into a small village but also shaped every aspect of human social life (Azam, Shakirullah, Sadaf, Owais & Khan; 2020).

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<sup>2</sup><https://helpfulprofessor.com/technological-determinism-theory/> - Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> July 2023

In his work, “*A Look Through Technological Determinism, Social Constructivism, Modernity and Social Media*”, Finaly (2022) said that social media has a profound effect on humanity and has allowed for electronic communication between multiple people while also sharing information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos, comments, and counselling, including advices on restaurants. To this end, this paper believes that competitive intelligence, which gathers data from social media, has become compulsory as a tool for strategic marketing communication because patrons of restaurants in Durban do not only rely on reviews and comments on restaurants to make their dinning decisions; they also leave their comments to express their own experiences after dinning.

## **Methodology**

This paper is a qualitative study, and the authors mobilised a secondary data methodology through a systematic review approach. The article consulted electronic resources such as articles on the internet, EBSCOHOST, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The principles of netnography, a strong tool for online researchers and marketers, which follow six steps of ethnography research planning, entry, data collection, interpretation, ensuring ethical standards, and research representation (Kozinets, 2010), were adhered to.

Data were gathered based on information on these search engines on the internet. The articles consulted ranged from and were searched from a global perspective, especially the Western countries of the global north because of their advancement in marketing restaurants through social media, and finally narrowed down to South Africa. Websites, JSTOR, and Google Scholar produced 90% of the search results, though Google Scholar was most dominant with a contribution of 65%. The key words and phrases used for the search were centred on foregrounding the problem of Durban Restaurant using competitive intelligence for their strategic marketing communication.

The inclusion criteria focused on restaurants that are based in the city of Durban in KwaZulu Natal province in South Africa. The data was analysed using the systematic review approach, and the authors start by indicating the research questions, checking for existing reviews and protocols of the subject matter, defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria, searching for the studies, selecting the studies based on the pre-

defined criteria, extracting data from the included studies, and evaluating the risk of bias of the included studies. After establishing that the data are either scholarly materials or websites that have objectives, the data was presented in this study.

## **Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendation**

The findings of this study are that competitive intelligence is an appropriate tool that can provide the kind of analytics that is required to bring foot traffic into restaurants in Durban, especially those that cater to the upscale market demographic. Also, restaurants in Durban that are not on social media are likely to have a low traffic of customers since most diners visit the internet to google good restaurants in Durban. If a restaurant's name is not thrown up in the analytics, the prospective customer will likely not visit the restaurant's social media platforms to explore the restaurant's ambience, food, and also read through reviews and all comments. This finding is consistent with the technological deterministic theory.

This study concludes therefore that it is important for Communication Marketing to ensure that their restaurant is on all social media platforms especially Instagram, Facebook and also have their website and their names linked to Google analytics. The paper also says that restaurants should have their own story produced and uploaded to Tik Tok, their Facebook reel, for their customers who have either followed them or liked their pages to see, so that prospective customers can watch different experiences on these platforms.

The paper also concludes that to achieve effective intelligence, the marketing communication team of the restaurant will have to monitor and evaluate the human traffic that is viewing their social media platforms and also the comments and likes that are being made with a view to appreciating the demography (characteristics of the customers, like gender) and psychographic intelligence (understanding the consumers' emotions and values for more accurate marketing activities), so they can place the restaurant appropriately to the class of target customers.

The study recommends that to fully take advantage of the competitive intelligence that social media offers, the strategic communication marketing team should also bring in celebrities who are social media influencers to dine in their restaurants and encourage these celebrities to upload their pictures and videos of their experiences in the restaurant to their respective social media platforms for maximum exposure to fans and people that follow them on their platforms. Most likely, prospective customers that are

searching for a place to eat will get a chance to read through reviews from celebrities and other diners and decide to come to the restaurant, which in turn will generate more data on social media so that competitive intelligence tool can be employed further for an effective strategic communication marketing programme.

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