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Glossary of Terms

SOCIAL MEDIA
Social media are websites that allow the user to create his own account and to build up a network of his own friends, family, or other people he knows. Through this network, he can see what the people he shares a network with post, or what other people they know.

FACEBOOK
Facebook is a platform that allows people to create a profile of themselves. This profile includes personal information as well as pictures. This information can be visible to people that are connected to that person, or can be hidden if the user wants to. The user can see, share, like, or comment on his own posts or posts that were made by others. Facebook allows the user to stay in contact with friends and family, as well as making new connections by adding contacts to the contact list, so called “Friends”. This expression does, however, not necessarily imply a real friendship, but rather is a term for people that were added to one user’s network of people.

TIMELINE
A timeline is a Facebook-related term. Every user’s timeline looks different, as every user has a different circle of Friends. Depending on what they post, will appear on their friends’ timeline, a stream that contains of all the posts made by Friends or the user itself on the platform.

BLOG
A blog is a platform that contains articles mostly written by individuals, about certain topics. Readers can subscribe to the blog and stay updated about new articles published on the blog. Users also have the chance to comment on articles and to engage in the topic discussed by the person that wrote the article, the so-called “blogger”.

YOUTUBE
YouTube is a video platform that allows users to upload self-made videos or watch other user’s videos. Comments can be made underneath each video, and users actively engage in discussions about the video uploaded. Every user that has uploaded a video once has his own video channel, to which other users can subscribe and get notifications about the latest videos that have been uploaded.
CROSS-USE
Using more than one social media platform, such as Facebook linked with Twitter. Using Hashtags (#) can link a post to certain newsfeeds.

TRAVELERS
Travelers, as being referred to within this research, are people that stay in South Africa for several months. The purposes of the visits from the travelers of this research are internships, studying or the visit of a language school.

TRAVEL AGENTS
Travel agents are people that bring people to South Africa, such as internship organizations, youth travel organizations, or language schools.
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Executive summary

This research is an opinion-based case study to find out how Unique Rand Card can use social media as a cost-efficient way to reach out to its target markets in order to overcome late brand awareness. Social media has been chosen as a marketing tool as it attracts mostly younger people, who are in line with UR Card’s target group, travelers between 18-35 years.

The factors that are believed to influence awareness among target groups about the brand are the choice of social media channels, the frequency with which these channels are used, as well as the influence of social media in the travel stages. Trustworthiness of the information published on social media also played a big role.

Travelers as well as travel agents were interviewed to gain their opinions in this field as well as to find out what social media channels they use for product information, as well as how often they use it and what kind of information they think is trustful.

Existing knowledge was consulted in order to find out about the most influential social media channels, which ones are mostly used together, as well as social media influence in the travel planning stages. Primary data was collected by interviewing travelers as well as travel organizations in order to find out what they think about the above-named aspects as well as how they use social media.

After having conducted interviews with the different groups, opinions were compared in order to come to the conclusion that both groups use Facebook as their main source of information about products. However, social media is not used by travelers to post a recommendation about a product on social media, but rather tell someone face-to-face when being asked specifically.

Travel organizations use Facebook in order to get more traffic to their Facebook website by posting entertaining content that does not necessarily have to do with their company, but gets the people’s attention.

While travel organizations make use of Facebook every day, travelers find that seeing a post of a company every day on their newsfeeds is too much.

Both groups agree that a website which includes useful information for current or prospective travelers will be a step towards awareness, and see it as a good way to sell the product through it.

UR Card as a “Travel Buddy”, which gives reliable and useful information, will have to change the content of its social media platforms in terms of useful information that can be shared by travelers. This
will then lead to more brand awareness as people will consult the UR Card online platforms for travel tips and advice.
1. Project context

1.1 Introduction
This research intends to give recommendations to UR Card in terms of raising brand awareness among UR Card’s target groups – travelers – in order to have them learn about the product prior to their travels.
This research starts with the general background of the company, and describes the product more in detail.
The theoretical framework will give an overview of the theories found from secondary research regarding brand awareness and social media. The research design will give an overview about the research objects as well as the research areas. After that, the research questions will give a little more insight into what exactly must be known in order to give recommendations for UR Card at the end. The research findings will reflect what was being said during the interviews with the research objects, and at last, recommendations will be given to UR Card on how to use social media to raise brand awareness.

1.2 General background

Unique Rand Card (UR Card) is a tourism-based company settled in Cape Town, South Africa, which developed a prepaid debit card in order to increase the safety of tourists visiting South Africa.

During the past two years, the product has been adapted as a response to the market. The product development stage has been passed and it is now to increase brand awareness about the product among travelers.

According to the Marketing manager, the company has established a network and gained status among its partners and clients. So far, the number of card sales, which is an average of 100 cards per month, is acceptable, but can be pushed to a higher amount (Nexus #1, Appendix, p. 56). For the near future, the company wishes to sell an average of at least 400 cards per month.

During the past two years of its existence, UR Card has concentrated on the Western European as well as the North American market. In order to increase their customer amounts, the company decided to focus on the Indian and South American markets, as well as Central Africa and the Middle East by
increasing the brand awareness among these target groups. These markets will be targeted as they are either upcoming or already established countries visiting South Africa, reasons being short-term stays such as holidays (including backpacking), and the visit of a language school; as well as long-term stays such as studying, internships, as well as language schools as these stays can have a duration of several months.

1.3 Problem definition

UR Card is a rather small company with a limited budget concerning marketing activities to attract new customers. Also, the marketing manager assumes that people only use the knowledge that they acquired before their actual holiday, namely during their travel planning phase. Given that awareness about the card amongst the target group does not exist, leads to the problem that those groups are not likely to purchase the card, even if they learn about it during their stay in South Africa. Through the use of E-marketing, the UR Card company hopes to reach their targeted audiences prior to their arrival to South Africa due to their assumption that if these audiences learn about the product earlier, this will **overcome late brand awareness**. However, this has not been proven yet. For that reason, this research focuses on finding the right strategy to reach the targeted audience through social media. This tool has been chosen as the internet became one of the most powerful tools and has proven to be one of the fastest media to broadcast messages to a broad audience in a cost-efficient way (Ohiagu, 2011). Unique Rand Card wants to use E-Marketing because it wants to prevent that **travelers learn about the product at a late stage**, e.g. at the end of their stay in South Africa.

More specifically, this research project focuses on the use of social media by travelers for their travel purposes, and travel agents using social media in order to create brand awareness for new customers as well as staying in touch with existing customers. Social media as a way of creating brand awareness has been chosen by UR Card, as 90% of the world wide social media users are 18-29 years old (Pew Research, 2013), which overlaps with the age of UR Card’s target groups of backpackers (18-35 years), interns, students, and volunteers.
2. Organizational context

2.1 The product

The following description of the company gives an overview about the product, mission and vision, as well as current marketing communications activities.

The company is a small company with two directors and three employees. Each department of the company (Marketing, Accountings, Customer Service) consists of only one person per department, however the two directors work together with the Accountings and Marketing departments. Unique Rand Card was founded in 2012 by Amy Liu and Howard Johnson with the aim to facilitate the stay of visitors of South Africa. UR Card targets younger people such as language students, interns, as well as volunteers as they mostly stay for a longer period than usual holiday travelers. The company introduces the product to language school students on a weekly basis, depending on the number of new arrivals, which lies between 1 and 20 students per week.

The product is the so-called UR Card (Unique Rand Card), a prepaid debit card which can be purchased either directly at the UR Card office, or at several other tourism-based points of sale. The card has three components:

1. Safety
   The safety component is the most important one as it improves the quality of the visitor’s stay in South Africa. It prevents card owners from carrying big amounts of cash with them. It can also be used to withdraw money from the ATMs, charging the owner less withdrawal fees than their domestic credit cards. The card is PIN-protected and will be blocked and substituted immediately in case it gets lost or stolen.

2. Local Financial Management
   The card can be used by companies to pay their interns with, as foreign people cannot open a bank account in South Africa. Therefore, companies can load the salary on the intern’s UR Card. The card functions as a simple, local, cashless payment method for travelers and locals alike.

3. Special Deals
UR Card has partnered up with several tourist companies in Cape Town in order to give UR Card clients discount on day tours and accommodation (Spamer, R. 2014).

2.2 Mission
The mission of UR Card is to service increased safety and convenience to at least 10% of all new arrivals to South Africa, within the identified market segment before 2016 (Spamer, R. 2014).

2.3 Vision
UR Card seeks to be the leading financial travel service provider for tourists in South Africa reaching high brand awareness (be a top-of-mind company) for all visitors and locals alike (Spamer, R. 2014).

2.4 Current marketing communications activities
Recently, UR Card had its logo and company name printed on two public transportation vans which drive throughout Cape Town. The busses can easily be spotted as the design consists of the typical green color of UR Card (Appendix, p. 19). People, who posted a picture they had taken of the bus on the company’s Facebook page, had a chance to win a prize. This competition was designed in order to create brand recognition and exposure among card holders as well as brand awareness among new potential clients.

Furthermore, UR Card uses Facebook as main channel to keep its customers informed about special offers, events, etc.

In the past, UR Card tried to overcome late brand awareness by trying to introduce the product to several travel agents from different countries by sending out an email to those agents with a short introduction and product information. However, little or no response came back.

Social media is already used as a marketing communications strategy tool by UR Card. The main social media tool used by UR Card is Facebook. However, the content that is updated on UR Card Facebook website is mostly regarding business events or news about magazines that published an article about UR Card.
3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction
In this chapter, theories are presented which were explored in order to find factors that influence brand awareness through social media. After giving a definition of brand awareness and social media, it is described what factors influence social media, the frequency in which social media is used as well as social media in the travel stages will be described.

3.2 Definition of brand awareness
Brand awareness is defined as the extent to which prospect customers recognize the brand and make an association between the brand and a certain product (Business Dictionary, 2014).

3.3 Definition of social media
Social media, Web 2.0, or social networks, are online platforms that allow the users of those websites to contribute to its content and take part of the creation of it. This is called User Generated Content (UGC) and seems to attract a large number of people all over the world. On social media platforms, people connect with family, friends, or people with the same interests. The content published and shared on social media websites are a mixture of facts, opinions, experience. The content shared on social media websites consist of comments, forum posts, life documentations, or information search (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2006).

Millions of contributions (posts) are made available everyday through its users. Those posts can be shared, liked, or commented on by other users. Social media have proven to be a cost-effective way of spreading information fast (Ohiagu, 2011).

3.4 Factors influencing brand awareness through social media
The internet and especially social media have become an important information source for travelers due to their credibility and trustworthiness, which is created by using the networks in which users can post recommendations, opinions, etc. on different products and services. Research done by eMarketer(2013) shows that in 2013, Facebook counted 1.73 billion users. Every user is part of a network of their own friends, family, colleagues, etc. Users are able to post online comments, pictures and make their profile available for other users to see. People as well as businesses are able to contribute to the content of the network (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). Shortly, this means that consumers, by sharing and commenting,
turn into promoters of a destination or product which can have positive promotional effects (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013).

3.4.1 Social media channels and brand awareness

According to the European Social Media and E-Mail Marketing Study (eCircle, 2010), social media platforms are, when it comes to brand awareness, mainly used for the acquisition of product information, rather than direct sales. This indicates that social media have an influence on brand awareness.

3.4.2 Cross-use of social media platforms

Research has revealed that although Facebook remains the dominant social network, people cross-use other social media platforms to retrieve information from. It has been shown that Facebook is used by 65% of YouTube users and 71% of Twitter users (Pew Research, 2013). Twitter users show the highest rate of sharing information with friends and followers (eCircle, 2010). It will therefore be researched what channel is being used for what kind of information, e.g. price, news, entertainment, etc.

A study of Nielsen (2012) revealed that consumers trust recommendations shared by users more than all other forms of advertising. This shows that recommendations made on social media can contribute to brand awareness.

3.4.3 Frequency of social media use and brand awareness

By looking into existing knowledge of E-Marketing, it has been stressed significantly that social media is the new way for companies to communicate with existing and prospect customers. Research has shown that social media provides opportunities for companies to build and maintain a strong relationship with (potential) consumers, which seems to be the most cost-efficient way. With its ability to share, follow, and tag events or people, information spreads fast and can have a great impact on people’s perception of products and/or services (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). By sharing, liking, or commenting a post on social media, this post spreads to other users’ social media newsfeeds, which will cause a more frequent contact between the post and the social media user. Thus, the more frequent a user sees a post made about a product, the more attention he will pay to it, which will have an influence on his awareness.
This is proven by the following theory:

Mere Exposure theory

Zajonc (2001) showed that participants of his study who were exposed to positive stimuli, showed an increase of empathy for the objects used in that study. Thus, the people developed a preference for objects that were familiar to them. This research will analyze how often travelers use social media for product information search, as well as how often travel agents use social media for giving product information as well as both sides’ opinions about the frequency of this product information.

3.4.4 Timing of social media in the travel stages

Based on the fact that travelers learn about UR Card too late, the stages of holiday planning and the influence of social media on the planning process is an important aspect. People who are looking for information about a travel-related product rely on opinions and recommendations of other travelers or people who have experience with the product/service (Fotis, Buhalis & Rossides, 2012). Another aspect of using social media is the sharing of travel experiences with friends or people who are connected with the person sharing the information.

A study conducted by Facebook (2013) provided an overview over the travel planning stages of Facebook users and what role social media play in these stages. These stages are: Dream, Plan, Book, Experience, Reflect. The study revealed that it is in the second travel planning stage (Plan) when users start looking not only for information about the place itself, but for other information related to the destination. Other research has revealed similar stages of travel planning. It is relevant for this research project to know when prospect travelers start looking for additional information about the destination (meaning not the destination itself) and, more specifically, what information they are looking for. Therefore, it will be researched when and how prospect travelers look for information related to their travel destination, as well as what information they trust the most and how much planning is done prior to the travels. As social media gives everyone the opportunity to make a post and contribute to its content, it is essential to know whether users of social media trust content that has been published on
social media. Fotis et. al (2012) suggest that content on social media is perceived as being more trustworthy than information from tourism websites, travel agents or mass media.
4. Research design

4.1 Conceptual design

The following model shows the fields of research examined throughout this project as well as the factors that have a direct influence on brand awareness.

4.1.1 Conceptual model

- Social media channels
  - cross-use

Frequency of social media use
- share, follow, tag
- Mere Exposure

Social media’s influence in the travel planning
- pre-travel
- during travel
- post-travel

Direct influence on Y

Dependent variable

Awareness among target groups about UR Card
Channels and the cross-use of those various channels is a concept that will be used during the research that will give an insight into the traveler’s and travel agents’ use of these channels and how they are combined when looking/publishing information about products/services.

Channels and their frequency of use are important aspects as it will be necessary to examine the use of social media and in what frequency the channels are used for product information. Furthermore, it will be researched how often travel agents publish product information should as well as both sides’ opinions about the frequency.

The concept of social media’s influence during the travel planning stages will be examined as this can lead to useful knowledge about the use of social media prior, during and after the travels, and how travel agents make use of social media in the traveler’s planning.

4.1.2 Research objective

The stage of the intervention cycle is the stage of diagnosis. The problem has been identified and it is now to examine the background and the factors that cause the problem and action can be undertaken in order to solve the problem (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). Due to the problem of UR Card, which is that people do not learn about the product prior to their arrival in South Africa and therefore are not aware of the benefits of the product, the company needs to find a way to reach their target audiences at an earlier stage of their travel planning. According to the marketing manager, this unawareness might be influenced by the holiday mode the people are in once they arrive in South Africa. The research objective is thus to

A) make recommendations to Unique Rand Card for a cost-effective marketing communications strategy on how to use social media to raise awareness among travelers about the product prior to their arrival to South Africa,

B) by providing an overview over the opinions held by travelers and travel agents on the effects of what channels are used, the frequency of use of those channels, as well as the influence of social media in the travel planning stages, on the brand awareness of Unique Rand Card

4.1.3 Research framework
The research framework consists of the studies of the different topic areas necessary to find a suitable marketing communications strategy in order to increase the sales of UR Card. In order to achieve this goal, the following objects will be studied:

Research objects

The research objects of the research are the opinions held by travelers and travel agents about the previously named concepts.

Firstly, the use of social media channels by the travelers will be researched, together with the frequency of use of the same channels by the travel agents will be found out.

The second research object is the cross-use of various channels as it is to find out what information is appreciated in which channel. In comparison to that, the travel agents will be interviewed in order to find out about their cross-use of these channels.

The third and last research object will give an overview over the travel planning stages of the travelers and at what stage they are looking for information related to the destination. Travel agents’ use of social media in order to reach the traveler in one of the stages prior to their arrival to South Africa will be researched.
4.1.4 Research framework model

Objective part A:
Giving recommendations for UR Card on a marketing communication strategy on how to use social media to raise brand awareness.
4.1.5 Research questions

In order to reach the research objective, three central research questions with additional sub-questions have been designed. The first and theoretical question is about what is known from theory about the use of social media for information about products and services in order to create brand awareness.

The second central question is an empirical research question and concerns the opinions held by travelers and travel agents about social media and how they are being used by these groups.

The third question with its analytical characteristic will analyze the similarities and differences between the opinions held by travelers and travel agents concerning social media channels, frequency and influence in the travel planning.

Theoretical Central Question

What is known from theory and preliminary research about the various channels of social media, cross-using of various social media channels in order to create brand awareness, and the impact of social media in the travel planning?

1) What social media channels are, according to theory, the most influential ones?
2) What combinations of social media channels have been proven to be most effective?
3) In what stage of the travel planning can social media have the biggest impact?

Empirical Central Question

What opinions are held by travelers and travel agents with regards to social media and its channels, cross-using of various social media channels in order to create brand awareness, and the impact of social media in the travel planning?

1) What channels are used in what frequency by travelers and travel agents?
   1.1) How often do travelers use social media for getting product information?
   1.2) How often do travel agents use social media for giving product information?
1.3) What are both sides thinking about the frequency that social media should be used for product information?

2) What channels are used together?
   2.2) What channel is perceived to provide the most trustful information?

2.1) What information published on these channels are perceived as trustworthy by the traveler?
   2.2) What information do travel agents think is perceived as trustworthy by the travelers?

3) How often and for what reason is made use of social media by the travelers and the travel agents during the travel stage?

**Analytical Central Question**

What similarities and differences can be identified when comparing the opinions held by travelers and travel agents regarding social media channels, cross-using of social media channels, and the impact of social media in the travel planning?

**4.2 Technical design**

**4.2.1 Nature and scope of the research**

The research strategy will be a case study, as it is to find out about travelers’ as well as travel agents’ choices and motivations in-depth. It is of great importance for UR Card to learn about the potential client’s planning phases and use of social media. Therefore, semi-structured interviews will be carried out with travelers as well as travel agents. Open question interviews will give an in-depth insight into the topic.

The research strategy will be described out according to Verschuren & Doorewaard (2010) and includes the following steps:

Step 1) As the research objective is to find out about traveler’s choices and decisions, it will be opted for depth rather than breadth.

Step 2) A qualitative approach will be used in order to gather as much insight into the decision making of the travelers.
Step 3) An empirical research approach will be used in order to get as many realistic results as possible.

Step 4) The research strategy will be a case study in order to collect in-depth data to get an insight into the traveler’s and travel agent’s minds.

Step 5) Questionnaires will be handed out to the travelers, in order to get an impression of their level of English. The questionnaires will give an insight into the opinions and will be followed-up by interviews. Semi-structured in-depth interviews will be done with both groups as it gives an insight into the opinions held on the use of social media. Seven interviews will be conducted with the travelers and two will be held with travel agents. The reason for this is that this research is a case study, which has the characteristic of using a relatively small number of research units; the number of cases ranges between one and twelve at most (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010).

These travelers have been chosen as they are the target group of UR Card, and at the same time are, as mentioned earlier, people who make use of social media. The travel organizations have been chosen as they have experience in the field of tourism and can give an insight into their ways of creating brand awareness. As UR Card has several partners with exactly the client groups that UR Card is targeting, two travel organizations will be selected.

4.2.2 Methods for data collection

Primary as well as secondary qualitative data will be gathered. Secondary data will be collected by looking into what is known from existing theories on the previously mentioned topics. Primary data will be gathered by conducting interviews with travel agents and travelers between the age of 20 and 26 years and collecting questionnaires from travelers.

An inductive approach is used as it is to build up a theory that has been grounded in the data collected during the research (Saunders, 2009).

The data knowledge will be processed into information by summarizing and analyzing the findings. The opinions held by both groups will be summarized separately. First, the opinions held by travel agents will be summarized. After that, a summary of the opinions held by travelers will follow, so that both opinions held can be compared and differences and similarities will be made clear. These findings will then lead to a conclusion which will then be transformed in the form of recommendations for UR Card.
4.2.3 Research objects

The research objects of the research are the opinions held by travelers and travel agents about the previously named concepts.

The first research object consists of the travel agents who will give information about their use of social media channels of cross-using of various channels. Also, they will give information about the frequency of use of these channels and, at last, information about social media’s influence in the travel stages.

The second research objective consists of travelers who will be asked about what social media channels they use for product information, how often they use them, as well as the cross-use of several social media channels. Also, they will give information about the influence of social media in the travel stages.
5. Research results

The research results contain answers to the Theoretical as well as the Empirical Central Questions. The Theoretical Central Questions are answered by reviewing literature of existing knowledge of this field of expertise. The Empirical Central Questions were answered by conducting interviews with travel agents as well as travelers which were then interpreted by the researcher. The Analytical Central Question is answered by comparing the opinions held by travelers and travel agents regarding the use of social media for product information.

5.1) Theoretical Central Question:
What is known from theory and preliminary research about the various channels of social media, cross-using of various social media channels in order to create brand awareness, and the impact of social media in the travel planning?

5.1.1) What channels are the most influential ones?
Companies have recognized the importance of social media and therefore created company profiles on several social networking platforms in order to stay in touch with existing customers, or attracting new customers in a cost-effective and practical way (Nezamabad, 2011).

Previous research has shown that Facebook, Twitter and Youtube are the three biggest social media channels, meaning that those channels have the most members (Experian Hitwise, 2010). The same research revealed that social media websites are an important tool that drives traffic to company websites (Experian Hitwise, 2010). However, it is also being said that companies, that want to make use of social media, should focus on only few channels, instead of having many social media accounts (SmallBusiness, 2013). This is because if social media is used, the company should take care of those few channels thoroughly, in order to give sufficient information on each channel and a coherent combination of information for the different channels (SmallBusiness, 2013).

The original use of social media websites has changed as more and more companies enter the network. Before, social media’s users were “private” persons who used the platforms to stay in contact with others or to post content. Now, businesses discovered social media as a new way of staying in touch with existing consumers or attracting new ones. The two main reasons for people to connect with a brand on social media are 1) being up to date regarding discounts, and 2) to read consumer reviews.
As for the first reason, people use social media websites to find out about discounts, special offers, or promotions. According to Experian Hitwise (2010), consumer reviews, plays a big role as people rather trust the opinions of existing product consumers rather than a company’s advertisement slogan (Experian Hitwise, 2010).

Research by Cms Wire (2013) has shown that the top five social media channels are the following ones:

1) Facebook: With more than one billion active users since 2012, Facebook has become the leading social media channel. Information can spread fast since “everybody has it”, and information can be shared easily by just one mouse click.

2) Twitter: An advantage of Twitter is that it is used by large parts of the population, just as Facebook. However, posts cannot contain more than 140 characters, which makes it difficult to make a post that contains complex content.

3) LinkedIn: This platform is made for people who want to build a network with other people or companies, with the purpose of building a career. Thus, LinkedIn is mostly used for career-related purposes.

4) YouTube: YouTube is a channel which essential aspect is visualization; for companies, it is especially useful to post “How To” videos, where (potential) customers can learn how to use a product. According to 60 Second Marketer (2010), it is essential to keep the videos short and interesting.

5) Blogs: Blogs can help to promote a product as well, for example in product feedback, supposed that the feedback is positive.

The first two channels are channels that help businesses to connect – either with other businesses or its (potential) customers. YouTube and Blogs are channels that can help to promote a product, as information published on those platforms can be more extensive and/or visualized.

Social media, as mentioned earlier, have the power of influencing people as users have the ability to tag, like or review every aspect of the travel experience and therefore make it visible to other users, whereby individuals will be influenced by peer groups much more than before (Amadeus, 2012),
meaning that if they see a post, review, or comment about a product or service, this might have an influence on their opinions.

The internet, and especially social media have developed a great impact on its users. People using the internet and social media are better informed than ever before (Manap & Adzhuradin, 2013). According to research conducted by Text100, recommendations from family and/or friends were ranked as the number one influence when it comes to choosing a travel destination. As today’s world is increasingly online, these recommendations can be understood as mentioned online as well as offline. Another well trusted source of information are travelers who post reviews, comments, statements online. These sources, although everyone could post content, are seen as more reliable than information provided by professional travel guides (Text 100, 2013), thereby emphasizing that the review/post should be written by an independent person (someone that is not involved in tourism by, for example, representing an organization operating in tourism) (Dou, Walden, Lee & Lee).

The reason why these recommendations are appreciated by many of the social media users is that although little is known about the person that posted those recommendations, opinions, or comments, they are perceived as more honest, as the person who has published the post is not commercially motivated, whereas statements of official tourism websites are perceived as more biased, intending to sell something to the reader (Manap & Adzhuradin, 2013). It is to say that is does not play a role whether the feedback that was published is positive or negative; in both cases, it helps the reader, either by encouraging him to buy the product by describing all the positive features of it, or advising the reader not to buy a product if bad experiences were made (Manap & Adzhuradin, 2013).

Research has shown that it is the interactivity that attracts a lot of users. Especially in the tourism sector, the ability of everyone that has an opinion to share experiences makes social media an increasingly important tool for travelers (Manap & Adzhuradin, 2013). Online reviews create a certain expectation for the reader, and there is a high amount of trust in online reviews (Manap & Adzhuradin, 2013).

Social media are a facilitator when it comes to sharing opinions, experiences, reviews, stories, or pictures, which makes it an important tool for its users, as information is easy to access, and found to be more reliable than other sources of information, such as sites of travel guides (Manap & Adzhuradin, 2013).
5.1.2) What combinations of social media channels have been proven to be most effective?

According to Experian Hitwise (2010) users of social media do not only use one social media platform. In fact, they are users of several platforms, instead of being just a Facebook user, or just a YouTube user. Nowadays, a post on Facebook does not necessarily only stay on Facebook, but can be connected to Twitter or can contain a link of a YouTube video that is embedded on the Facebook page. Thus, by watching the video on Facebook, users might not necessarily aware that they are actually using YouTube, thus cross-using is already taking place without leaving the Facebook website.

In order to reach a broad target audience, all social media platforms used by the company should be used, as not every member of the target group might be on Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube, but it is likely that they are users of at least one of those platforms.

There are more than 50 different social media platforms. In all cases it must be made sure that the content published on those platforms is coherent with content with the brand website, and also the style should fit with the brand (LinkBright Media, 2014).

According to LinkBright Media (2014), it is important for businesses to connect with its customers on more than one social media platform, as there are more social media platforms than ever before, which gives the business a choice of the channels it wants to use. The most popular ways to market a product over social media are Facebook and Twitter, however Twitter might make it difficult to market a product due to its 140 character restriction, which gets even more difficult to write something about the product when a link is posted, as this will take your amount of characters used in the post. This is the reason why cross-using of different social media platforms is the right way to market a product. Whenever a post on Twitter is made that refers to the product, a link should be provided to direct the user to another social media platform or the product website directly, where additional information can be found. It can either be linked to Facebook for the user to find out more about a campaign, to Google Plus to connect with the company, or to LinkedIn to make the user join the company’s business network (LinkBright Media, 2014). Thus, posting one link that directs the user to another website or social media platform can already be defined as cross-use.
5.1.3) In what stage of the travel planning can social media have the biggest impact?

Social media has changed the travel planning enormously. Prospective travelers heavily rely on reviews made by other travelers and use social media to get more information about the travel destination, products, restaurants, accommodation, and activities. Social media is being used before, during, as well as after the trip, but the internet is just as important for inspiration as it is for the travel planning (Facebook, 2013).

Before the trip, prospective travelers mostly use social media to get inspirations of destinations, either intentional or unintentional. Intentional inspirations happen when the social media user has decided where he wants to travel, so that his purpose of using social media is to look at pictures about his desired destination, and to get more information about the destination itself as well as additional information, such as accommodation and other things such as the ones mentioned above. Unintentional inspirations happen when the social media user sees pictures about a destination that he has not considered to travel to before. By seeing the pictures made during the trip by friends, family, or other people within his network, he might be inspired as he sees that people he knows have been to a destination before of which he might have thought it is not feasible to go there (it might have been too far).

When looking into the travel planning, Facebook (2013) revealed in its study that 51% of all study participants claimed that travel related posts are under the top three of the posts that they see on Facebook and 42% were travel experiences shared on Facebook timelines. Facebook has become the main information source about friends’ and family’s vacation destinations and experiences (Facebook, 2013). Experiences are shared by uploading pictures of the travel destination or activities done, and can be seen, shared, liked, or commented on by everyone who sees the content on his timeline. When a picture gets, for example, commented on, this picture will show up on the timeline of the person that created the comment, thereby making it possible for other people that are connected with this person but not with the person that posted the original picture, to see the picture and maybe get inspired by it.

Facebook (2013) identified five stages of the travel planning, which are:

1) Dream: During this stage, people are getting inspired by other people’s travel experiences which are made visible through pictures, or posts. This inspiration even takes place when people were not
considering a vacation, or when they were considering a vacation, but did not have the destination shown on Facebook in mind. Places that seemed too far to reach will seem manageable when seen on pictures posted by friends and family.

2) Plan: In the Planning stage, the potential traveler must have built enough confidence in order to book the vacation. If the potential traveler is not sure enough about the trip, he will most likely not go through with the booking. According to the study, people are most confident when having received recommendations about the travel destination by friends or family.

95% percent of the users that took part in the study claimed that they look for travel-related information prior to their departure.

3) Book: It was revealed during the Facebook study (2013) that nearly all of the respondents claimed to use Facebook before and after the booking. Reasons were contacting people they were going to travel with together, post a status, or share the website link of the booking site, in order to let others know about their excitement about the booking and trip that is laying ahead of them.

4) Experience: Even during the trip, Facebook seems to be an important aspect of the traveler’s routine. Reasons for using this social media channel during the vacation are 1) staying in contact with friends and family, as well as 2) using it because it has become a habit, and 3) posting pictures about the experiences made.

5) Reflect: As soon as the vacation ends, 99% of the study participants claimed that logging on to Facebook is one of the first things they do when (or even before) they come home (Facebook, 2013). The content that is created consists of pictures, experiences made, and information as well as recommendations about the trip. Through this, someone else might get inspired, causing the next travel planning.

As pointed out by the Facebook study (2013), recommendations made by friends and family play a major role in the traveler’s mind. Text 100 (2013) also pointed out the relevance of this source of information and reveals that it is more influential than internet research. Thus, the product information has a big influence on the traveler, but mostly because it was published by friends or family.
5.2 **Empirical Central Question:**

What opinions are held by travelers and travel agents with regards to social media and its channels, cross-using of various social media channels in order to create brand awareness, and the impact of social media in the travel planning?

Two different groups were interviewed – once, the travelers, and second, the travel agents.

Seven travelers were interviewed in order to find out about their use of social media channels, frequency, as well as the influence of social media in their travel planning. The interviewees of this group came from different countries and had different reasons for their stay in South Africa – three interns from the Netherlands, one intern from Spain, one Business Management student from Angola, and 2 language students from Germany were interviewed. The age of these travelers ranged from 20 to 26 years. In total, five female interviewees and two male interviewees participated.

The interviews were conducted as face-to-face interviews. Every person was interviewed alone, so that answers that were given would not be influenced by other interviewees. Each interview took approximately 15 minutes, depending on how long the answers given by the interviewees were.

The second group consisted of travel organizations. Two interview partners were chosen for this. One interviewee was employed by a language school in the city centre of Cape Town. The other interviewee worked as a tour guide for a tour operator company that organizes Game Drives, adventure tours, or day tours. Both of them are around 26 years old, South African citizens and take care of their companies’ social media marketing.

**5.2.1) What channels are used in what frequency by travelers and travel agents?**

5.2.1.1) What channels are the most influential ones?

During the interviews, it became clear that Facebook is the channel with the most influence. All travelers claimed to use Facebook at least three times a week, some use it every day. It plays an important role for the travelers because it is used for contacting friends or people that have been to South Africa before or by looking at pictures of South Africa posted by friends or family members.

Blogs also had an influence on the travelers, because of the opinions that were given by the bloggers. However, none of the interviewees recalled the names of the blogs that they used, as most of them
found these blogs by searching information about South Africa on Google. A statement of interviewee 5 summarizes it pretty accurately: “I don’t use specific blogs, I search for the specific thing on Google and then if I find a blog about it I read it.” (Nexus, p. 67)

YouTube was mostly used by the travelers to watch videos about Cape Town/South Africa to get an idea of what kinds of activities can be done. Also, one traveler said that they mostly “use YouTube when I want to get some more information about a product and they have a little movie, like a tutorial, and you get a look at the product and what to do with it” (Nexus, p. 67).

5.2.1.2) How often do travelers use social media for getting product information?

After having conducted the interviews with the travelers, a significant finding is that all of the interviewees used Facebook for product information in preparation of their stay in South Africa, at the same time being the most visited social media platform for product information.

Blogs are the second most visited social media platforms for product information, due to its ability to give more extensive information about a product. Twitter was seen as not very important for this purpose. YouTube was only considered for product information when it was about explanations on how to use a product, such as tutorials.

A majority of the students claimed to use social media for product information once a week, while others mentioned that they use this platform for the same purpose at least three times or at least once a week. Social media is mostly used by the interviewees for product information when they already have a specific product in mind, which they then search on social media by typing the name into the search bar on the social media website.

5.2.1.3) How often do travel agents use social media for product information?

The travel organizations that were interviewed said that they post something every day. One of the interviewees mentioned that he does not make more than two posts a day, as he believes that people who follow the company on social media might perceive it as annoying and “spam”. However, it is not only product information that is published by the travel organizations, but also content that is more entertaining and not about the product, but it should still relate to tourism, or more to what the company does, e.g. pictures of wild animals for tour operators. The goal is to get traffic to the website, and make people comment, share, and like posts that were made by the organization. The reason behind this is, according to the travel organizations, that the post will appear on other people’s
newsfeeds, so that they will automatically see the company’s name and will go to their website, in case they are interested in what the company is all about. A comment made by a language school employee was that he mostly makes posts during the weekends, because he knows that people check their social media accounts during that time, which brings a lot of comments and likes. He also mentioned that when he posts pictures of, for example, a trip that he made with the students, should not exceed the amount of 15 pictures, as he believes that too many pictures will keep the people from looking at them.

Next to Facebook, Instagram is used on a regular basis by the language school for posting pictures about trips that were organized by the school, as this also attracts language students.

5.2.1.4) What are both sides thinking about the frequency that social media should be used for product information?

Travel organizations

A suggestion that was made by one of the employees of a travel organization was that a company should not make too many posts, but rather create a post that has an interesting slogan or picture that will gain other user’s attention. The more people like, share, or comment on that post, the more it will appear on other people’s newsfeeds, thereby spreading without the original user’s influence. Instead of making a lot of posts and getting only a couple of likes or comments per post, he prefers having 60 or 70 likes or comments on just one post.

On the other hand, the same person thinks that people might get more interested in the organization when they see that there is activity on the website, but it also depends on the information that is posted. When being asked about whether a company should make posts with the same information in order to gain people’s attention, he suggested that it might be the same information, but it should have a different wording, so that the same information stays interesting.

A comment was made by a travel agent as he mentioned that language students do a lot of research before their trip, they are provided with access to the intranet page of the school. Making friends on that platform as well as gaining as much information as possible is the students’ goal. However, as soon as the students arrive, nothing happens on the intranet page anymore.

Another travel agent said that he thinks it is appropriate to make a post every day, even if it does not directly have to do with the company itself, but is related to the tourism industry.
Travelers
As for the travelers, most of them think that companies should not post product information or other information every day, as this is perceived as too much. The interviewees mentioned that it does not matter whether this is only information about the product itself, but also information related to the product, or even not related at all. Three or four times a week would be convenient, in the eyes of the travelers.

5.2.2) What channels are used together?

5.2.2.1) What information published on these channels are perceived as trustworthy by the traveler?
The interviews with the travelers revealed that posts, reviews or recommendations about a product are the type of information that the travelers trust most. The reason for this stated by most of the interviewees is that the content that was made originates from an “independent” person, and that the level of trust is higher in this case than when a company gives information, as this might be biased, as the motive of the company is to sell its products. Also, the social media user and his friends are likely to share the same interests, which make their information about a product even more trustworthy, as friends know what the social media user likes in particular. The same applies for individual bloggers, as they are perceived independent from the brand and for that reason, they will make statements about a product that will not be affected by a brand. Individual bloggers state their own opinions and are not influenced by a brand. Only one interviewee claimed that she does not trust individual bloggers’ opinions, as she is afraid that the opinion of the blogger might be too different from her own taste. One traveler that claimed that she trusts official tourism information websites just as much as statement made by her family, said that she only looked at those websites because she saw on social media that a couple of her friends gave that website a “Like”, so she assumed that the website must be trustworthy.

5.2.2.2) What information do travel agents think is perceived as trustworthy by the travelers?
Travel agents understand that recommendations made by friends and family on social media is the most trustworthy source of information, as there are many other sources of information which might cause confusion to the traveler, because they might not know what source to trust. The fact that there are many completely different services, and the travelers do not know who to trust with all of that. That is
why many potential customers ask for an opinion from someone who has made experience with the product, rather than clicking on a link that they came across, without knowing what the product is all about.

Travel organizations understand the point of view of travelers and even referred to their personal use of social media. The reason of trusting word-of-mouth on social media is that personal recommendations are more trustful than information given by the company itself, as companies only give the advantages of their products, and not the disadvantages, while word-of-mouth also is about disadvantages of a company or a product. Also, one travel agent said that while companies would not hesitate to lie to its customers about its products, people who have made experience with the product would.

One of the travel organizations mentioned that this is also the case with the UR Card; the students would not buy the card if nobody from the UR Card company would come in every week to explain what the product is and how it works.

5.2.3) How often and for what reason is made use of social media by the travelers and the travel agents during the travel stages?

Dreaming: When looking at the travel stages that were mentioned earlier, the students claimed that they make use of social media before the travels mostly to gain information and inspiration about their travel destination and information related to the destination. Also, students claimed that they use social media to contact friends who were currently staying in South Africa to obtain more information.

YouTube, according to the travelers, is a good way to get a first impression.

Planning: When planning their trip, social media was used to express the excitement about the trip as well as to gain more information. The use of social media during this stage is very similar to the use during the Dreaming stage, as more information is looked for by the prospective travelers.

Booking: During this stage, social media was not used by most of the students, except for telling friends that the traveler is going to South Africa.

Experience: During this stage, social media was mostly made use of to post pictures about experiences made and staying in touch with friends

Reflect: During this stage, the travelers used Facebook to let their friends on social media platforms know that they were back, to post more pictures about the trip, as well as to stay in contact with friends.
made at the travel destination.
None of the students said that they would post content about a product that has been useful for them. However, they claimed that they would recommend it when they were asked by someone that wants to know about tips and advice about the travel destination that the traveler has been before.

All of the travelers mentioned that they would have been interested in the UR Card website if it contained useful information not only about the product, but also about tips and advice about South Africa such as safety tips, Visa extensions, as well as upcoming events. One traveler mentioned that she would have liked to have a website that provides all useful information about South Africa and sell the product through it. Only one traveler thought that this was not a good idea; he would rather offer this service to the travelers after they have purchased the UR Card, so that the service of the company will only be offered when a card was sold.

Also the travel agents agreed that a website that contains more than just product information would be useful, and that UR Card could become a “Travel Buddy” for travelers, by providing useful information such as mentioned before.

5.3) Analytical Central Question:
What similarities and differences can be identified when comparing the opinions held by travelers and travel agents regarding social media channels, cross-using of social media channels, and the impact of social media in the travel planning?

5.3.1) What channels are used in what frequency by travelers and travel agents?
Facebook is used every day by travelers as well as travel organizations, which makes it the most frequently used channel.

YouTube was not mentioned at all by the travel organizations, while travelers mostly use this channel when they are looking for more information about a product.

Instagram is used by travel organizations whenever they have organized a tour. Travelers use Instagram, but not very often.

5.3.1.1) How often do travelers use social media for getting product information?
Travelers claimed to use social media at least three times a week, others use it every day.
5.3.1.2) How often do travel agents use social media for giving product information?
Travel organizations claimed to post something on Facebook every day, but not more than twice a week as they believe that it would be annoying for their followers on social media.

What are both sides thinking about the frequency that social media should be used for product information?
Travel agents claimed to post content every day on Facebook, while travelers see posts made by companies every day as too often.

5.3.2) What channels are used together?
Travel organizations claim to want to use more than only Facebook; one travel organization tries to use Instagram on a regular basis. The other company tries this as well. The belief of both companies is that Facebook and Instagram are the channels that are mostly used together.
Travelers use Facebook as their main source of information; Instagram is sued when it comes to visualizations, for example pictures of the travel destination.
YouTube is not used by travel organizations, but by travelers. However, this channel is only used when a specific product is searched for.

5.3.2.1) What information published on these channels are perceived as trustworthy by the traveler?
Travelers perceive recommendations made by friends or family on social media as the most trustworthy source of information. However, none of the travelers would make a post about a product or a company that they have liked. All of the interviewed travelers mentioned that they would give a recommendation to someone who asked them for advice face-to-face or in a private message on one of the social media platforms.

5.3.2.2) What information do travel agents think is perceived as trustworthy by the travelers?
Travel organizations believe that travelers trust recommendations made by friends or family are trustworthy, as “the reason why they don’t trust information from tourism websites is because there is so many of them” (Nexus, p. 83).
5.3.3) How often and for what reason is made use of social media by the travelers and the travel agents during the planning stage?

Travelers use social media during the Dreaming stage mostly for inspiration about where to go. The travel agents cannot make use of social media while the traveler is still in this stage, as it “would be a bit difficult, because it is hard to be reaching out to everybody” (Nexus, p. 83). During the Planning stage, the traveler looks for tips and advice about things to do at the destination, recommendations about accommodation, and other information related to the travel destination. Travel organizations make use of social media during this stage the travel organizations contact travel agencies in the traveler’s home country, so that when the traveler does his research, he might learn about the travel organization. During the Booking stage, the travelers book flights and accommodation. One of the interviewees of a travel organization said that “That is a very important phase, because a lot of our bookings come from online bookings from overseas” (Nexus, p.83).

During the stage of Experience, the travelers claimed to use social media mostly to post pictures and to tell their friends about their experiences, while for travel organizations, this is useful as the pictures will be seen by other people, who might be inspired by the pictures.

During the last stage, Reflect, the travelers evaluate their trip. However, most of the students “posted something on Facebook, but just to let everyone know that I am back”(Nexus, p. 64).
6. Conclusions

6.1) What is known from theory and preliminary research about the various channels of social media, cross-using of various social media channels in order to create brand awareness, and the impact of social media in the travel planning?

6.1.1) What channels are used in what frequency by travelers and travel agents?

Channels
As was found out during the research, the main channel used by both travelers and travel organizations is Facebook. When the travel organizations were asked what kind of social media channels were used by them, they immediately commented on the lack of time regarding the social media activities. Contradicting to the findings of Cms Wire, that Twitter is under the Top Five social media channels being used, neither the travelers nor the travel organizations have integrated Twitter into their social media use. Blogs of individual travelers have an influence on travelers, but only because they were found on Google. Travel organizations that were interviewed do not make use of these platforms. The travel organizations see the social media marketing as a full-time job, which is not manageable when other responsibilities are assigned to them, especially when it comes to the cross-using of social media platforms, as more platforms require more time and ideas.

However, travelers that trusted blogs for information about products, as well as travel organizations think that the UR Card website should contain more information other than the product itself, such as advice regarding safety tips or places to visit. Only one traveler thinks that UR Card should only offer advice and tips to the traveler after the purchase of the UR Card. This is an interesting suggestion, but can be difficult as the information given to the traveler for money must be always up to date, thorough, detailed, reliable, and especially ‘worth the money’. As UR Card does not have many staff members and social media is, according to one of the travel organizations, a full-time job, it would be very unlikely that UR Card had enough time to realize this plan. Furthermore, people who pay for the advice and tips might expect more of an itinerary than only advice or travel tips.

6.1.2) What combinations of social media channels have been proven to be most effective?
Travel organizations think that Instagram and Facebook or Twitter and Facebook are the most effective channels when being used together. However, none of the organizations is currently taking thorough
care of more than the Facebook channel. Travelers use mostly only Facebook for product information. Instagram or YouTube are only used when looking for visual presentations of the destination.

6.1.3) In what stage of the travel planning can social media have the biggest impact?
While travelers look for product information, travel organizations use it to give information. Both sides agree that Facebook is a trustworthy source of product information, as long as this information is published by friends or family. Interesting here is that travelers that were interviewed rely heavily on recommendations made by friends or family, but would not publish recommendations as a post on social media, but rather tell someone face-to-face or in a private message when being asked specifically. Thus, it is unlikely that satisfied customers of UR Card will make a post on social media in order to recommend the product to others, as can be concluded from the findings. When using Facebook as a company, travel organizations claimed to post every day, but not more than twice a day as they fear that their customers would see it as spam. However, travelers do not want to see product information every day.

6.1.4) What channels are used in what frequency by travelers and travel agents?
From the research findings it did not only become clear that Facebook is considered as the main channel, but is also the channel that is most frequently used by both travelers and travel organizations. While travel organizations make posts every day, even if the content is not product-related, travelers think that this frequency is too high. They do not want to see posts every day. Travel organizations use Facebook frequently, but pay attention that they do not make too many posts, because they know that this might bother their Facebook followers.

It is surprising that travel organizations make posts every day, but not very often about their companies themselves, but more about other, tourism-related content.

6.1.5) How often and for what reason is made use of social media by the travelers and the travel agents during the planning stage?
Travel planning stage Social media is influential; there is no way around it. If companies want to keep in touch with former, current, or future customers, social media is going to be one of the most important
marketing tools. Social media puts clients back into the center of attention, makes it possible for them to interact with the company.

The influence of social media during the travel stages differ on the purpose of the Facebook user; while travelers mostly use it in order to get a better impression of South Africa, and to get more information about the destination itself as well as products/activities, the travel organizations use it in order to stay in touch with their customers as well as to make other customers aware of their products. While travelers use social media to look for specific product information, the travel organizations use their social media channels to not only post content about the product itself, but to keep their users entertained and to make it interactive.
7. Recommendations

7.1) Social media channels must be useful for the traveler

As was found out during the research, travelers as well as companies still use Facebook as their main channel. UR Card already has a Facebook channel, but does not interact with its customers on it. Until now, content on the Facebook website only contains news on special deals at the UR Card website or articles about the company published by magazines or website. The updates about deals might be useful for the customer, but there is no need for the customer to interact with UR Card on that. The information is given to the customer, who sees it on their Facebook newsfeed, and reacts accordingly – either he shows interest and takes action, or he stays uninterested, as the deal might not be his taste. This is why UR Card needs to make its social media channels more interactive – the creation of useful content on social media will help the company to establish brand awareness. As found out during the research, travelers do a lot of research during the Planning stage and look for websites that contain useful tips and advice. UR Card, when having a website will useful and informative content, that can be shared by others, can reach its goal of early brand awareness by becoming the “Travel Buddy” of travelers. The website should include:

- useful advice for safety in and around Cape Town
- travel tips
- content about Cape Town, the card, activities, or other content related to South Africa which will be useful for travelers, written by other, independent persons

As this is what travelers look for when planning their travels. The content could be created by:

- the company itself, as it operates in the tourism sector and therefore has sufficient background knowledge about the different areas in South Africa
- former or current users of UR Card that know of places to go
- bloggers, who get invited to write something about the product

They can be convinced to contribute something either by:

- Giving out vouchers for every useful article written for the website
- Giving them a sample card which they can test and then write a review or article about it which can either be published on their own blogs, or the UR Card website, or both
7.2) Cross-use: bring it all together on one website

It was found out that social media users do not restrict themselves to only one social media platform – for product information purposes, Facebook and blogs were the most frequently used channels.

In order to combine at least these channels most effectively, UR Card should consider www.themeforest.com, a website that provides individual, private users as well as companies with blog templates, which automatically combine the blog with other social media platforms. Also, pictures and text, as well as videos can be incorporated. The template that suits UR Card best can be chosen and purchased for a rate not more than $30 (once-off), which is still cost-effective, which also plays a factor in this, as stated in the research objective. This solution will include all the channels that were used by the travelers that were interviewed –

- a blog to give more (independent) information about the product itself, or information about places to go. Here, it is important that the company distinguishes itself from other South Africa–related websites. Writing about visiting Table Mountain does not make the information more useful than any other website writing about the “obvious” places that are on every traveler’s list when visiting South Africa. The website should contain information about places that not everybody knows about when he comes here, so UR Card can become sort of the “Travel Buddy” that gives insider tips as interviewed travelers showed interest in that.
- pictures of the destination, where website visitors can look at pictures of tours booked by UR Card, or UR Card events. Visitors can be encouraged to post their own pictures onto the website and leave a little comment underneath it, so that it becomes a “wall of memories”
- the Facebook page, where UR Card should give useful information. UR Card should spread information such as Visa regulations, safety tips, or facts about South Africa. Other than that, the Facebook page can be made more interactive by posting pictures and ask a question to it (“Who knows where this picture was taken?”). It is best when posts that are made by UR Card do not always have to do with the product. Content that is entertaining will get much more attention by people than only product information. The content that is seen by the people might get shared, or people might visit the UR Card Facebook page for more of those posts, which will make them see the company logo and name, so that the user might follow up on that and see what the company is all about. Facebook is a useful tool to connect and strengthen the relationship with users.
- a YouTube channel, where users can watch a video about the product, or other, destination-related things. YouTube is a useful tool when it comes to “How To” content; further explanations about the product can be given, or made visual to the user.

Twitter does not seem to be used by travelers or organizations. At this point, UR Card should focus on Facebook and a blog, because these were the tools that was shown most interest in. Also, as mentioned earlier by the travel organizations, social media requires a lot of time, which is why UR Card should focus on the social media platforms that travelers think are useful first. Twitter can always be added to the social media platforms being used.

The “Travel Buddy” aspect can be fulfilled by the above-named and if done properly and updated on a regular basis, people will see that the site shows activity, and can be referred to by travelers who are being asked for recommendations by friends. This leads traffic to the site, so that automatically, the ranking at Google gets better, making UR Card more likely to be found by other people when searching for information about South Africa.

7.3) Frequency: do not post too often, but on a regular basis

Travelers think that posts made by a company every day is too much. It is important to take this into account, as the travelers are the target groups, and if they are bothered by the amount of posts by UR Card, this might lead to a negative outcome.

UR Card should choose two or three days a week where posts can be made. By doing this, the information will be sent out to its targets, so that they can rely on new advice of UR Card. Certain days can be picked for certain information, such as:

- Tuesday: Safety tips for a certain travel area in South Africa
- Friday: Tips for free entrance in night clubs
- Interactive post: Ask question to followers on social media
Other than that, interaction with the customer is a must – if a customer leaves a comment, UR Card must react immediately, so that the customer sees that the site is active, and that it is taken care of on a regular basis. Also, it shows that UR Card cares about its customers.

Travel organizations mentioned that they get more responses during the weekends. A chance to get more response by the customers on social media is to schedule posts. This is a function which can be found on Facebook, when a status update is made. By clicking the on the button, a post can be written, which goes online at the time that the person making that post wishes.

7.4) Social media in the travel planning stage: Help the traveler PLANNING his travels

When looking at the travel stages, UR Card should focus on the travel stage, as this is the stage where most information on social media is looked up, and prospective travelers look for recommendations or informative websites.

Being the “Travel Buddy”, UR Card should provide knowledge about travel tips in and around Cape Town, Visa regulations, as these have recently been changed and could cause the traveler some difficulties, and other useful advice.

When providing reliable and informative information, the travelers will refer to UR Card when looking for or recommending information. Users will share the link so that more traffic will be led to the website.
8. References


Amadeus (2012). From chaos to collaboration – How transformative technologies will herald a new era in travel. Amadeus IT Group SA


ThemeForest


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<tr>
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<th>2011</th>
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</table>

Note: Internet users who use a social network site via any device at least once per month; numbers may not add up to total due to rounding.
*excludes Hong Kong

Source: eMarketer, April 2013

Table of people using social media

source: eMarketer
Bus with Unique Rand Card logo
Organogram: Structure of Unique Rand Card

External

- Directors
  - Vendors
    - Service
    - Registration
    - Marketing
  - Agents
    - Selling
    - Promotions

In-house

- Director 1
  - Marketing
  - Operational systems

- Director 2
  - Backend processor

- Marketing Manager
  - Marketing
  - PR
  - Accounts Management

- Accounting Manager
  - Accounting
  - Bookkeeping
  - Loading & Registration

- Administration Officer
  - Administration
  - Marketing Assistance
  - Enquiries
  - Registration of Cards
  - Customer Service
Market research about the effect of social media on brand awareness (Unique Rand Card)

This questionnaire was designed in order to find out about how social media can affect brand awareness. The reason you have been picked for this questionnaire is that you are within one of UR Card’s target groups, which consist of travelers, language students, volunteers, interns, backpackers, etc.

This questionnaire contains questions about your use of social media. The answers given by you will only be used for this research and will NOT be given to third persons. Your identity will remain completely anonymous (please see Consent Form attached to this document).

If you should have any questions, please contact me: admin@urcard.co.za
The following questions were designed to find out more about your use of social media when looking for product/service information and information related to your travels.

**Social media channels**

What social media channels did you use most for product information related to your travel (for example activities, accommodation, etc.)? (Multiple answers are possible)

1) ( ) Facebook  
   ( ) Twitter  
   ( ) Youtube  
   ( ) Pinterest  
   ( ) Blogs  
   ( ) Other: _______________

2) Why did you use these channels?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________

3) Did comments/likes/tweets of friends about certain products/services have an influence on your purchase decision?

( ) Yes, they have a great influence, I bought some products/services because of recommendations of friends/family/people I trust

( ) Sometimes they influence me, but only after I have looked up additional information about the product

( ) No, no influence at all
Frequency

4) How often did/do you visit social media websites for product information related to your travel destination?
   ( ) Once a week
   ( ) At least three times a week
   ( ) Once a day
   ( ) Several hours a day
   ( ) I do not use social media

5) Please give an indication about the relevance of the social media channels you used when looking for product information (1= very important to me, 5= not important to me at all; you can use the same number for multiple answers).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<td>Blogs</td>
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<td>Other:________</td>
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</table>
6) Please give an indication of the frequency of use of social media related to your travels (1= very often, 2= often, 3= normal, 4= rare use, 5= not at all):

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>Other:______</td>
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</table>

7) When did you use social media the most?
   ( ) Before my travels
   ( ) During my travels
   ( ) After my travels

8) Please name the reason for your use of social media before, during or after your travels (e.g. posting pictures, staying in touch with friends, ....).

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

9) How trustworthy do you find product information on social media?
   ( ) I find it trustworthy when it is recommendations made by friends/family/people I know
   ( ) I find it trustworthy when it is advertised by companies on its timeline
   ( ) I find it trustworthy when it is displayed as an advertisement on social media (banner ads,...)
   ( ) I do not find any information published on social media trustworthy
10) Please give an indication about your personal impression of trustworthy information sources (1= very trustworthy; 5= not trustworthy at all); you can use the same numbers for multiple answers:

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<tr>
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<td>Travel blogs of individual travelers</td>
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<td>Information published by friends /family/people I know on social media</td>
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11) Have you ever heard about UR Card (Unique Rand Card) before you came to South Africa?
( ) yes
( ) no

If yes, how did you hear about the product?
( ) Social media (please write down specific social media channel here_____________)
( ) Friends
( ) Company website
( ) Tourism website
( ) Tourism information centre
( ) Other: _______________________________ -

Thank you for your participation!
**Interview files**

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<th>Interview file # 1</th>
<th>Date: 3rd of February, 2014</th>
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<td><strong>Purpose of the interview:</strong> Briefing - get insight into the company’s goal of the research</td>
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<td>Duration: about 30 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main Topic:</strong> desired situation of UR Card regarding card sales</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Place:</strong> Cape Town, South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>interviewer:</strong> Lena Kruse</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>interviewee:</strong> Ronak Spamer, Marketing Manager of UR Card</td>
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<td><strong>Role of interviewee:</strong> Answering open questions</td>
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<tr>
<th>Nexus:</th>
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</table>

**Topic 1: Satisfaction about card sales**

- Selling around 100 cards per month
- Want to sell 400+ cards per month
- Being satisfied about card sales would imply not being hungry for growth

**Topics 2: Awareness of the product amongst target groups**

- Not enough people are aware of the product
- the product is new and our international branding has rolled out recently
- Product is complex and therefore needs an educational note
- Awareness and responsiveness to educational note most effective when learned about prior to arrival to South Africa
- once the people land here will switch into holiday mode and will only make use of those tools and information gathered in their planning phase

**Topics 3: most important aspects of card**

- safety
- convenience, as the card can be used as a flexible cashless payment method for travelers and locals alike

**Topic 4: target countries (South America, India, the Middle East, Central Africa)**

- those countries are either upcoming or already established visiting countries in terms of numbers to South Africa yearly (next to the traditional markets such as Western Europe, Great Britain and North America)
- also, the banking systems in those countries do not always make it easy for the travelers and visitors in regards to their financial international fund management (e.g. international transactions and card payments)

**Conclusion:** Unique Rand Card wants to focus on the above named countries in order to increase card sales and provide help to travelers with their financial management. As the product has an educational note regarding safety, the company assumes that it is more effective if the traveler learns about the product during the holiday planning phase and therefore becomes aware of the product.

<table>
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<td><strong>Time:</strong> 19.00-1915</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the interview:</strong> get insight into the opinion of travelers about their use of social media and brand awareness</td>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> 15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Place:</strong> Best Western Cape Suites Hotel, Cape Town</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name of interviewer:</strong> Lena Kruse</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name of interviewee:</strong> Pia</td>
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</table>
Role of interviewee: Student from the Netherlands, currently staying in Cape Town for her internship at a school

Sub-topics: social media channels, frequency of use, use of social media in the travel planning stage

Reasons for interviewing: to get in-depth knowledge and opinions of travelers on social media

Description: interview transcript

1) Why did you choose South Africa as your travel destination?
   Our school gave us different options that I could go to for my internship. All the places that they offered were places where they also speak Dutch, but here in South Africa they speak English, so that is good for me as I can practice my English.
   I got no information about SA from my school. I got information from a travel agency.

2) How did you use the social media channels that you ticked in the questionnaire? Facebook for recommendations, Youtube for...?
   I did not really use social media to get more information about products. I looked at some pictures from friends that have been to SA before, and I looked for what they wrote about it. But this is more for other information rather than SA itself.
   When I use social media for product information, it is mostly because I came across a product by accident, or I look at the Facebook page of 4exchange (the organization that organizes the room inquiries), and on their page you also see some stuff or a link, and then you follow that link.

3) What websites did you visit when looking for information about South Africa?
   Kapstadt Magazin, there is also an English version.
   When I see a recommendation of someone about a product and I am interested in it, I do some more research to get more information about it.
   I also saw an interview from a friend of mine, also about Cape Town, and sometimes I got interested in things he said and asked myself “what is that exactly?”

Frequency

4) How often do you see information about a product/service on your social media channels?
   Just every once in a while, it also depends on what they write about products. I didn’t see a lot of information about SA.

5) Did you ever change your mind about a product when it appeared on your timeline on a regular basis?
   - Did it change your attitude positively?
Yes, sometimes it happens, I asked myself “What site is that?” so if you see it over and over again, you think “Why not”
- Did it change your attitude negatively?
  Not because I read about it too often on social media, but emails, that you get all this information from companies and all the advertising, so that you think it’s enough and that they should stop.

Trustworthiness

6) You said in the questionnaire that you trust information published by friends/family/people you know on social media as much as tourism information websites. Why?
   It’s because they know what I do, and I know what they do, so you can see what they think is good and what not. I trust tourism information websites because most of the times these are websites that my friends like, so when I see that they liked it, I think that something must be good about that website.

Cross-use

7) Did you link social media channels with each other (are there certain combinations of channels that you use together)?
   Just when there is a link or if I want to watch a video then I use YouTube.
   I use YouTube when I want to get some more information about a product and they have a little movie, like a tutorial, and you get a look about the product and what to do with it.

Travel planning

8) When did you start planning your travels? (How early)
   At my school, I had to write a letter about where I wanted to go, that was last year in January or February, and then we got a “Go” in March. At the end of September, the school approved our internship, and then we started looking for a school (internship placement), for accommodation, and in January this year we knew what school we would do our internship at. We booked our tickets in November, but at that time we didn’t have any accommodation. Flight was the first thing we booked after our internship got approved, and after that, we booked the accommodation. We didn’t look up information about the activities here in Cape Town, we did that when we came here.

9) You said you were using social media before, during, and after your travels for posting pictures, staying in touch with friends.
   Before: I used it to inform my friends that I am going to travel to SA.
   During: I post pictures about my experiences and mostly to stay in contact with my friends.
   After: I used social media after my travels to stay in touch with friends I made during my travels

10) Would you recommend a product that you have bought here to your friends if you
thought it might be useful for them?
- Would you share/post information that was useful for you and that you think would be useful/interesting for others?
I probably would not recommend or post something about it on social media, but I would recommend it to my friends when I talk to them personally.

11) Please describe your use of social media and what information you were looking for during the following stages of the travel planning:
Dream – getting inspirations about a travel destination
Yes, it happened before that I got inspired by pictures on social media to go to a destination.
Plan – having decided on a destination and starting to plan your trip
During that stage, I informed my friends on social media that I am going to SA.
Book – Going ahead with the planning and getting “serious” – your bookings are made
I took a picture of my ticket and published it on social media so that my friends could see that I booked my flight and I am going to SA.
Experience – you are at the destination itself and make your experiences
During that stage, I mostly post pictures and stay in contact with my friends at home.
Reflect – you reflect and evaluate your trip

Early awareness

12) Imagine you would do research before you start your journey to South Africa and a friend of yours posted positive feedback about the UR Card. Would you have followed up on this? Would you have looked for further information about the card?
Yes, I would have been interested if I learned about the product before. It is safer than using my bank card. And if I would have read about it before, you know exactly what it means, what it is all about and what you can do with it.

13) Would you think the UR Card would be useful for you?
see above
14) Why did you not purchase the card?
I don’t need it that much for discount.
15) Would you be interested in a blog that writes about activities in and around Cape Town, useful tips and advice, discounts, etc? Travel Buddy
Yes, I would check that website, because it would be very useful

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<td>Name of interviewee: Charlotte</td>
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<tr>
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Social media channels

1) Why did you choose South Africa as your travel destination?  internship
2) How did you use the social media channels that you ticked in the questionnaire? Facebook for recommendations, Youtube for...?  Facebook for information
3) What websites other than social media did you visit when looking for information about South Africa?  south Africa tourism

Frequency

4) How often do you see information about a product/service on your social media channels?  A few times a week
5) Did you ever change your mind about a product when it appeared on your timeline on a regular basis?  (For example, you see a post made by a friend about a product, but you are not really interested in the beginning. Then you see another post by another friends, and another,...)  yes
   - Did it change your attitude positively?  yes
   - Did it change your attitude negatively?  no
6) You said in the questionnaire that you use social media mostly before your travels. What exactly do you use it for?  To gather information on the location and things to do

Trustworthiness

7) You said in the questionnaire that you trust recommendations by friends/family and travel blogs from individual travelers more than other sources. Why?  Because it doesn’t come from the company itself and I trust my friends

Cross-use

8) Did you link social media channels with each other (are there certain combinations of channels that you use together), for example, every time you use Facebook, you also use ....?  no

Travel planning

9) When did you start planning your travels?  (How early)  6 months before going
10) Would you recommend a product that you have bought here to your friends if you thought it might be useful for them?  yes
    - Would you share/post information that was useful for you and that you think would be useful/interesting for others?  Yes
11) Please describe your use of social media and what information you were looking for during the following stages of the travel planning:
Dream – getting inspirations about a travel destination. I used Facebook to contact friends in South Africa to obtain more information.
Plan – having decided on a destination and starting to plan your trip. I didn’t use social media.
Book – Going ahead with the planning and getting “serious” – your bookings are made I didn’t use social media.
Experience – you are at the destination itself and make your experiences. I shared my experiences through Facebook.
Reflect – you reflect and evaluate your trip. I shared my final experiences on Facebook.

Early awareness

12) Imagine you would do research before you start your journey to South Africa and a friend of yours posted positive feedback about the UR Card. Would you have followed up on this? Would you have looked for further information about the card? yes

13) Would you think the UR Card would be useful for you? yes

14) Would you be more interested in the UR Card website if it included a blog that has information about activities in and around Cape Town, useful tips and advice, discounts, etc and serves as a kind of “Travel Buddy”? yes
**Interview File # 4**

**Date:** May 19, 2014

**Year/Semester/Block:** Semester 8, block 4

**Time:** 15.30-15.42

**Purpose of the interview:** get insight into the opinion of travelers about their use of social media and brand awareness

**Duration:** 12 minutes

**Place:** Best Western Cape Suites Hotel, Cape Town

**Name of interviewer:** Lena Kruse

**Name of interviewee:** Katharina

**Role of interviewee:** Language student from Germany

**Sub-topics:** social media channels, frequency of use, use of social media in the travel planning stage

**Reasons for interviewing:** to get in-depth knowledge and opinions of travelers on social media

**Description:** interview transcript

### Social media channels

1. **Why did you choose South Africa as your travel destination?**
   
   Because I always wanted to get to know South Africa, its culture and its people. My aunt and uncle have been there before and I was just fascinated by their pictures.

2. **How did you use the social media channels that you ticked in the questionnaire?**
   
   Facebook for recommendations, Youtube for...? Channels Just to get information and watching pictures

3. **What websites did you visit when looking for information about South Africa?**
   
   To be honest, I don’t remember, I just looked it up on google or bing and then followed the suggested pages.
Frequency

4) How often do you see information about a product/service on your social media channels? Nearly every day

5) Did you ever change your mind about a product when it appeared on your timeline on a regular basis? (For example, you see a post made by a friend about a product that you were not interested in in the beginning. Then you see another friend posting about the same product, then another one,....)

- Did it change your attitude positively? Yes, I started to think about this product.
- Did it change your attitude negatively? No, not at all.

Trustworthiness

6) You said in the questionnaire that you trust travel blogs of individual travelers less than all other information sources. Why? I think that I don’t trust their information, because it’s their individual opinion and as people are different, I’m not sure if they represent my point of view.

Cross-use

7) Did you link social media channels with each other (are there certain combinations of channels that you use together)? No.

Travel planning

8) When did you start planning your travels? (How early) That depends, but most of the time I start to plan my travels a few weeks in advance, maybe even three months.

9) You said you were using social media mostly during your travels for posting pictures, staying in touch with friends. Would you recommend a product that you have bought here to your friends if you thought it might be useful for them? Yes, absolutely.

10) Please describe your use of social media and what information you were looking for during the following stages of the travel planning:
Dream – getting inspirations about a travel destination - Watching pictures and reading
other people’s texts about their travel experiences
Plan – having decided on a destination and starting to plan your trip - Watching pictures of this destination and starting to look after more information posted by my friends
Book – Going ahead with the planning and getting “serious” – your bookings are made - Nothing
Experience – you are at the destination itself and make your experiences - Posting pictures, texts, staying in touch with my friends and family
Reflect – you reflect and evaluate your trip - Posting more pictures and writing about my experiences

Early awareness

11) Imagine you would do research before you start your journey to South Africa and a friend of yours posted positive feedback about the UR Card. Would you have followed up on this? Would you have looked for further information about the card? Yes, I would have asked my friend for more information.

12) Would you think the UR Card would be useful for you? Yes, absolutely and I'm sure that I'm coming back to South Africa and then will buy a UR Card as soon as possible.

13) Why did you not purchase the card? I did.

14) Would you be more interested in UR Card if they would give tips and advice, for example about the night life, visa, safety, etc on their website? (This doesn’t mean that you would have to buy the product.) No, but that would be a nice extra service.
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<td><strong>Name of interviewee:</strong> Michelle</td>
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<td><strong>Role of interviewee:</strong> Student from the Netherlands, currently doing her internship in Hotel Management in Cape Town</td>
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<td><strong>Sub-topics:</strong> social media channels, frequency of use, use of social media in the travel planning stage</td>
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<td><strong>Reasons for interviewing:</strong> to get in-depth knowledge and opinions of travelers on social media</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> interview transcript</td>
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**Social media channels  MICHELLE**

1) Why did you choose South Africa as your travel destination?
   I didn’t really choose South Africa, to be honest. I wanted to go to China for my internship, but I didn’t get a Visa, and then they send me to Cape Town. But I really like Cape Town, I am really glad that I am here and not in China, because it is very relaxed here, not so strict, and in China it is a really different culture. I have more of a holiday kind of feeling here. My school got me a placement and they had an information evening a couple of days before all the interns left, with some general information, how to be safe, about the laws, etc.
2) How did you use the social media channels that you ticked in the questionnaire? Facebook for recommendations, Youtube for...?
   I asked friends on Facebook who have already been to Cape Town before if they could help me and if they had some more information for me, and I also read some blogs from people that stayed in Cape Town for studies or internships. As for the blogs, there are some websites where people that go away for a while can upload articles, so I used that one to get more information.

3) What websites did you visit when looking for information about South Africa?
   I looked up a lot on Google, and there is also a lot of information on Trip Advisor.

**Frequency**

4) How often do you see information about a product/service on your social media channels?
   Since I don’t really have a phone or a laptop anymore, I don’t check social media that often, but I used to check social media daily, so I saw basically everything that the people posted.
   If it was something that was interesting or useful to me, I just contacted the person that made the post and send him a private message.

5) Did you ever change your mind about a product when it appeared on your timeline on a regular basis?
   - Did it change your attitude positively?
     Yes, I think so, I mean on social media you also see a lot of trends that are coming up.
   - Did it change your attitude negatively?
     Yes, sometimes, but not really when friends posted it, but more from advertisements.

**Trustworthiness**

6) You said in the questionnaire that you trust official websites that publish content more than the content published by individual travelers. Why?

**Cross-use**

7) Did you link social media channels with each other (are there certain combinations of channels that you use together)?
   No, I don’t check blogs that much, Facebook is really like a routine, I check it in between.

**Travel planning**

8) When did you start planning your travels? (How early)
   Because I thought I was going to China, I had to arrange everything really fast. I think I organized everything within 6 weeks. I got the internship first, then I booked my flight, and
then I booked my accommodation. After that, I read a bit about activities in Cape Town, but not really much because I wasn’t really excited to go to Cape Town.

9) You said you were using social media mostly before your travels.
I used it to find to find accommodation, like the place I am staying at right now, and also for information about my internship, like the hotel I am working at. I checked if they had social media websites and what is going on there.
10) Would you recommend a product that you have bought here to your friends if you thought it might be useful for them?
If someone really asked me for information, then of course, but I wouldn’t post something on Facebook that tells people that I liked something in particular.

10) Please describe your use of social media and what information you were looking for during the following stages of the travel planning:
Dream – getting inspirations about a travel destination
Yes, I did it a lot, pictures of Cape Town,
Plan – having decided on a destination and starting to plan your trip
I did book a student ticket, I think I found that one on social media. It is an organization that I am following on Facebook, so I knew that they had those tickets.
Book – Going ahead with the planning and getting “serious” – your bookings are made
I didn’t use social media during that stage.
Experience – you are at the destination itself and make your experiences
I didn’t post any pictures on social media or publish anything else about my travels.
Reflect – you reflect and evaluate your trip
I went to Curacao for a couple of months, and when I came back I posted something on Facebook, but just to let everyone know that I am back.

Early awareness

11) Imagine you would do research before you start your journey to South Africa and a friend of yours posted positive feedback about the UR Card. Would you have followed up on this? Would you have looked for further information about the card?

12) Would you think the UR Card would be useful for you?
Yes, it would have been very useful for me. I have a South African bank account, but it took me a lot of time and I had to go to a lot of banks before they gave me one.

13) Why did you not purchase the card?
   I didn’t know about it. If I had known about it before then would have taken it into consideration. I didn’t even know that I am not officially allowed to have a South African bank account.

14) Would you be interested in a blog that writes about activities in and around Cape Town, useful tips and advice, discounts, etc? Travel Buddy
   Yes, it would be very useful, if you give information about all this stuff and then sell your product in it.
**Social media channels**

1) **Why did you choose South Africa as your travel destination?**
   I chose SA because of friends advice, like my friend was here before and he liked the city and everything, so I talked to him. But the most I was influenced by my father, cause his friends have been here before. He was asking them for suggestions for a destination to send his son for studies. He wanted to send me to Canada but that was too far away.

2) **How did you use the social media channels that you ticked in the questionnaire? Facebook for recommendations, Youtube for...? Channels**
   Facebook: I use the search tab for specific things.
   Blog: I don’t use specific blogs, I search for the specific thing and then if I find a blog about it I read it.

3) **What websites did you visit when looking for information about South Africa?**
I just use Google, because there is all the information you need. Websites of Guesthouses, I visited these a lot, it is the first thing you look for, or hotels. Websites of accommodations. If I need to go somewhere. How do you look on Youtube? I just type what I want, I just see the commercials. From Youtube, I can see videos, and from Facebook I can see pictures. Even if u click on a video on Facebook you get to Youtube. On Youtube, I look for the commercials of the product. I trust those commercials, I can see the real thing. On Facebook, I cant, and I don’t even know if it is real or not.

Frequency

4) How often do you see information about a product/service on your social media channels? Only when it’s interesting to me, I look for more information. I see recommendations quite a lot.

5) Did you ever change your mind about a product when it appeared on your timeline on a regular basis? It actually grabs my attention, because when everyone posts it then it must be something cool, so the people that pot about it must have been there personally.

- Did it change your attitude positively? Yes, because it is more trustful the more people post about it, so I can ask them.
- Did it change your attitude negatively? No, I just ignore it.

Trustworthiness

6) You said you I would trust my friends more than companies cause they have the experience. Companies advertise their products to you but they have to lie to you in order to get your interest.

Cross-use

7) Did you link social media channels with each other (are there certain combinations of channels that you use together)? Yes, if I have to see pictuesm I use Facebook, but for videos I Use YT cause there is no way around it that you get redirected to Youtube. I just use FB tostay upto date.

Travel planning

8) When did you start planning your travels? (How early)

2 months before I came here, cause my father told me I would be sent so CT, but I have never heard about that plan before. I started googling stuff about CT, but only the positive stuff that made me convince myself about going CT.

9) - Would you share/post information that was useful for you and that you think would be useful/interesting for others?
yes I would, but I use wordof mouth, like in person. 
I don’t post product recommendations on my social media timeline.

10) Please describe your use of social media and what information you were looking for during the following stages of the travel planning:
Dream – getting inspirations about a travel destination
I get excited by seeing pics and videos of something.
Plan – having decided on a destination and starting to plan your trip.
I use SM a lot in this stage, cause I must make sure I won’t get lost. To get me more excited. Find out more about things to do and things to invest in.
Book – Going ahead with the planning and getting “serious” – your bookings are made
I use Fb to tell my friends that I booked my travels and am excited.
Experience – you are at the destination itself and make your experiences
Reflected – you reflect and evaluate your trip
I have my videos but I never put it on FB or YT.

Early awareness

11) Imagine you would do research before you start your journey to South Africa and a friend of yours posted positive feedback about the UR Card. Would you have followed up on this? Would you have looked for further information about the card?

12) Have you heard about UR Card? No.

13) Would you think the UR Card would be useful for you?
Yes, it would have been, But you have to look at the competition as well cause the banks have also baking cards. If I am a student I can just go to the bank and they give me a card just without the discount. The advantage of UR Card is that it is nice for a short period of time, when they don’t get a banking card.
Some people might think that UR Card might be a risk cause they don’t know the product, so they ask themselves why they would put money on the card. They think they might as well take their cash.

14) Why did you not purchase the card?
Because I was lazy. I was interested at first, but I didn’t have the time to go to the office and
buy card. I also already had a SA banking card, but it would ave been interesting for me to try the UR Card. It is easier to get a UR Card than to get a banking card, cause u need a letter from the school and a lot of other stuff.

15) Would you be interested in a blog that writes about activities in and around Cape Town, useful tips and advice, discounts, etc? Travel Buddy

It depends what I am going to do. But I would visit the website and see about its activity.
**Interview File # 7**

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**Social media channels  XANNE**

1) **Why did you choose South Africa as your travel destination? (She is doing an internship)**
   Our school gave us different options about the places we could go to, but not all the countries we wanted to go to. It was Aruba, Curacao, but I wanted to go to a place that is not only beach. My school did not provide any information about SA, only about the internship, so I had to go to a travel agency.

2) **How did you use the social media channels that you ticked in the questionnaire? Facebook for recommendations, Youtube for...?**
   I did not really use social media for more information about SA or products. Most of the information that I needed, I got from Google or books about travel.
When I look for product information on social media, sometimes I look on Facebook for a club or for a store or something about the country.

3) What websites did you visit when looking for information about South Africa?
   Kapstadt Magazin.
   When I see that one of my friends posted something about a product and I am interested in the product, I follow up on that and look up information myself to learn more about it. I click on the link and also google it and get more information about it.

**Frequency**

4) How often do you see information about a product/service on your social media channels?

5) Did you ever change your mind about a product when it appeared on your timeline on a regular basis?
   - Did it change your attitude positively?
     Yes, sometimes I got curious and did some more research. First, you’re not interested, but when you see it a lot and again and again, you just want to get some more information.
   - Did it change your attitude negatively?
     More from newsletters, rather than from social media.

**Trustworthiness**

6) You said in the questionnaire that you trust information published by friends/family/people you know on social media more than you trust any other source of information. Why?
   I think it’s because I know my friends and they know me, I know how they live and what they use, and they know what I live and what products I use.

**Cross-use**

7) Did you link social media channels with each other (are there certain combinations of channels that you use together)?
   No, most of the times I use Facebook.
   As for a product, I most of the time use YouTube for information about how to use a product, how do you buy, how do you fix stuff

**Travel planning**

8) When did you start planning your travels? (How early)
   At my school, I had to write a letter about where I wanted to go, that was last year in January or February, and then we got a “Go” in March. At the end of September, the school approved our internship, and then we started looking for a school (internship placement), for
accommodation, and in January this year we knew what school we would do our internship at. We booked our tickets in November, but at that time we didn’t have any accommodation. Flight was the first thing we booked after our internship got approved, and after that, we booked the accommodation. We didn’t look up information about the activities here in Cape Town, we did that when we came here.

9) You said you were using social media mostly before, during, and after your travels for posting pictures, staying in touch with friends.

10) Would you recommend a product that you have bought here to your friends if you thought it might be useful for them?
- Would you share/post information that was useful for you and that you think would be useful/interesting for others?
I don’t really recommend products on social media. If I think a product was useful, I talk to my friends in person and recommend it to them.

11) Before: mostly because I wanted to inform my friends that I am going to SA. During: I post pictures about what I am doing here in Cape Town and to stay in contact with my friends. After: I used social media after my travels to keep in touch with friends I made during my travels.

12) Please describe your use of social media and what information you were looking for during the following stages of the travel planning:
Dream – getting inspirations about a travel destination.
Yes, social media inspired me to go to places. When I saw pictures, I thought I can go there too.
Plan – having decided on a destination and starting to plan your trip
During the planning stage, I informed my friends on social media where I am going to. Book – Going ahead with the planning and getting “serious” – your bookings are made
I used social media during this stage to show my friends that I got my ticket (I took a picture of it)
Experience – you are at the destination itself and make your experiences
I used social media during this stage to stay in touch with friends at home and to post pictures about SA.
Reflect – you reflect and evaluate your trip
Early awareness

13) Imagine you would do research before you start your journey to South Africa and a friend of yours posted positive feedback about the UR Card. Would you have followed up on this? Would you have looked for further information about the card?

I think I would have been interested in the card if I would have known about it before my travels, because it is easy to use and you can use it everywhere. I would not have to take my bank card so it is safer with a UR Card.

14) Would you think the UR Card would be useful for you?

see above

15) Why did you not purchase the card?

I don’t think I need it that much in terms of discount.

16) Would you be interested in a blog that writes about activities in and around Cape Town, useful tips and advice, discounts, etc? Travel Buddy

Yes, I would visit the website. I also visit Kapstadt Magazin, they also write about that.

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**Interview File # 8**

**Date:** May 23, 2014

**Year/Semester/Block:** Semester 8, block 4  
**Time:** 16.30-16.40

**Purpose of the interview:** get insight into the opinion of travelers about their use of social media and brand awareness  
**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Place:** Best Western Cape Suites Hotel, Cape Town

**Name of interviewer:** Lena Kruse

**Name of interviewee:** Tom

**Role of interviewee:** From Germany, came to Cape Town for a 2 months language course
### Sub-topics: social media channels, frequency of use, use of social media in the travel planning stage

### Reasons for interviewing: to get in-depth knowledge and opinions of travelers on social media

### Description: interview transcript

#### Social media channels

1. Why did you choose South Africa as your travel destination?
   South Africa offers great weather combined with cheap living and windsurf conditions.

2. How did you use the social media channels that you ticked in the questionnaire? Facebook for recommendations, Youtube for...?
   - **Facebook**: Gathering of information concerning South Africa, by contacting locals and former visitors.
   - **Youtube**: Videos about South Africa gave a great opportunity to get a first picture of my destination

3. What websites did you visit when looking for information about South Africa?
   - [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)
   - [www.south-africa.info](http://www.south-africa.info)
   - [www.capetown.travel](http://www.capetown.travel)
   - certain blogs

#### Frequency

4. How often do you see information about a product/service on your social media channels? Often (several times a day)

5. Did you ever change your mind about a product when it appeared on your timeline on a regular basis? Yes, windsurf board. Friend's recommendations changed my mind towards the product.

#### Trustworthiness

6. You said in the questionnaire that you trust recommendations made by friends/family on social media more than information published by companies. Why?
   Friends / Family / People I know on social media, are people I have known for a period of time, which made me able to judge their trustworthiness to a certain extend. Those I find trustworthy will not lie about their experiences with a product. Neither will individuals writing in a travel blog.
Companies or employees on the other hand are likely to commit forgery in order to increase the reputation of their product.

**Cross-use**

7. Did you link social media channels with each other (are there certain combinations of channels that you use together)? No, I have never linked social media channels

**Travel planning**

8. When did you start planning your travels? (How early)
   About 2 months before my departure

9. - Would you share/post information that was useful for you and that you think would be useful/interesting for others?
   Yes I would, but have not done so during my travel, yet

10. Please describe your use of social media and what information you were looking for during the following stages of the travel planning:

Dream – getting inspirations about a travel destination. I used YouTube to get a first impression of Cape Town and things that I can do.
Plan – having decided on a destination and starting to plan your trip. - Facebook: Questioning friends about what to plan and how to and also visiting certain websites for information.
   Book: There was no real use of social media, except of the booking itself but otherwise I didn’t use it.
   Experience: I use social media in this stage to stay in touch with home and friends.
   Reflect: I stay in touch with friends that I have made here by using social media.

11. Imagine you would do research before you start your journey to South Africa and a friend of yours posted positive feedback about the UR Card. Would you have followed up on this? Would you have looked for further information about the card?
   Yes, I would have and indeed did so.

12. Would you think the UR Card would be useful for you?
   Yes, I would and thought, as it gives a good opportunity of save traveling without the need of cash.
Some people might think that UR Card might be a risk cause they don’t know the product, so they ask themselves why they would put money on the card. They think they might as well take their cash.

13. Why did you not purchase the card?
   I own a credit card myself which allows me about the same features. This made a UR Card unnecessary for me.

14. Would you be interested in a blog that writes about activities in and around Cape Town, useful tips and advice, discounts, etc? Travel Buddy
   No, I would not and I would highly recommend not doing so. Instead these features should be included after the purchase of the card, as this, in my view, is highly attractive to travelers, but if viewable on the website without purchasing the card first, might reduce the need of the card itself.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interview File # 9</strong></th>
<th><strong>Date</strong>: May 16, 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year/Semester/Block</strong>: Semester 8, block 4</td>
<td><strong>Time</strong>: 10.00-11.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the interview</strong>: get insight into the opinion of travel organizations about their use of social media and brand awareness</td>
<td><strong>Duration</strong>: 60 minutes</td>
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<td><strong>Place</strong>: EF Language School, Cape Town</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name of interviewer</strong>: Lena Kruse</td>
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<td><strong>Name of interviewee</strong>: Brad</td>
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<td><strong>Role of interviewee</strong>: Sports &amp; Activities Coordinator at EF, also responsible for taking care of the social media websites of EF</td>
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<td><strong>Sub-topics</strong>: social media channels, frequency of use, use of social media in the travel planning stage</td>
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<td><strong>Reasons for interviewing</strong>: to get in-depth knowledge and opinions of travelers on social media</td>
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<td><strong>Description</strong>: interview transcript</td>
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**Social media channels**

1) What social media channels do you use?
   Facebook, my EF, Instagram don’t really use Twitter. Use Instagram globally but I don’t really do anything in terms of uploading pictures.

2) Why are you using especially these channels?
   Obviously Facebook is Facebook, number one brainwashing tool in the world, you can reach a lot of people in the world, this is how our generation is trained: it is just staring on Facebook website ... especially if you post something it is going to pop up on people’s timelines. You are seeing things over and over again and it sticks to your mind (mental recognition).
   I would like to start an Instagram account specifically for EF Cape Town, and while I am on
tours I want to create hype around what I am physically doing right now. I want to make people who do not take part in my tours jealous and I want to show them “Look what we are doing right now” so that I can market my tours as well. There is just so much to do. I think social media is a whole job, you need to have someone whose whole driving force is focusing on that. They cant have any other responsibilities. I got a million other responsibilities; I would like to focus on social media activities, but there is too much to do. You need someone to take care of only social media, someone who understand it properly and someone you pay for it. At the moment with what I am doing, I have to manage the Facebook page and my EF, which is not supposed to be that much, but just those 2 things, I feel like I don’t have enough time to put enough effort in it.

I think social media is a full-time thing. There is a whole team in Zurich with 12 or 14 people to manage social media (global social media), it’s not a one person thing. When I went over to Zurich for meetings with the social media team, their expectations in terms of activities, social media, was beyond what you can physically do next to other responsibilities. They could teach us, share with us, which was so amazing, to actually understand that all these things are possible, it was really amazing to understand the implementation and the physical time that it takes to do all those things that they want us to do, it is 100% unrealistic. There is no way that I could keep up. A lot of stuff that they were talking about was the interaction between the likers and the page itself (Facebook). Everytime someone likes something or comments, you need to be there every single time. Every single time someone says “nice photo” you need to follow that stuff up right away. You post a picture asking people to answer it, and then you answer all their questions one by one, and that is creating like a buzz around the post, and that pushed your overall reach higher, and then your feeds appear more on other people’s newsfeeds, cause it has been hyped up, because more people are reacting to one post. Also, a lot of the stuff that they tried pushing to us was trying to posting pictures and then ask “Do you remember where this is?” , things that people can relate to, create a buzz around the post, your reach is higher, more people are interacting around that post, and the post will appear on more people’s facebook pages. You can post questions, things that force people to interact with the page and the account itself, and that is when the feed starts to appear more on other people’s pages.

3) How do people learn about EF?

EF has some crazy campaigns (ef.com) one of the main things that people look at before they come to SA is SA and its cultural diversity, about EF and its activities, I think based on the clients profiles they get recommendations of destinations. People see all these cool things that they can do in SA and they automatically choose SA, and sometimes I feel the pressure to fulfill all their expectations.

I would say various different marketing campaigns, they get it from all different sides.
4) Do you think reviews/comments about former students about EF might influence others?
   Definitely, sure it does, for example on my Ef you can read people’s reviews and info about
   SA and the school itself.
   80 % of the people that are interested in it (after UR Card gives the intro) are Saudi,
   Lybians, Arabs, Middle Eastern always show the highest interest in the card

   **Frequency**
5) How often do you publish information on Facebook?
   Every day. Not more than 2 in day, cause then it spams people. Rather make a really great
   post, like a really nice picture, grear slogan, something like that, and create like a hyper on
   that specific thing, like commenting on people’s comments, answering questions, all of that
   around post. Instead of post and post and post and getting ionly 1 or 2 likes. One post is
   really good and getting 60, 70 likes and the more likes you get the more it shows up on
   peoples newsfeed.
6) Are the posts only about the school or also about other stuff?
   I post random stuff, also funny stuff in the weekends, but I like to point those duties off to
   other people. It depends on the person that is helping. I schedule posts for the weekends.
   You can schedule a post so that it goes off at any time. When people check out the
   Facebook page during the weekends, you get a lot of interactions, because you know that
   people are doing nothing, like going to the beach. Never more than 2 a day, never upload
   more than 15 pictures about activities, because no one wants to sit there and check
   through 80 pictures.

7) How many students are exposed to what you post on social media?
   I can tell you, on Facebook it tells me how many people a specific post has reached, how
   many people saw the post, how many newsfeeds it has been put on, all that information is
   accessible.
   When you manage a page, like with page management profile.

8) Do you know how many people/if people, like former students, talk about your company,
   recommend your school?
   Yes they do, sometimes I target the students who have left. For example yesterday I
   posted a picture about a graduation, and also the long-term students that were here were
   commenting on it, so that brings back that aspect. So you start to lose the interest of
   people that have left the school, and you post something and you get them back. You will
   be so surprised what kind of random things that you post will attack people’s receptors,
   like something like a picture of Arnold’s breakfast, something that people do every week.
   The memory restores there.

9) Mere Exposure Theory:
   I think its hard to find a balance. I try to not post more than 2 posts a day, because
otherwise I think people will get freaking annoyed. But in the same aspect, maybe they will get more interested because they see that there is activity, I suppose it depends on the information you’re posting.

- Do you think it should be the same information every time or should it be different information?

  Maybe the same information but shared in a different way, word it differently, maybe in a different color, whatever the case may be. Maybe there’s a service that is always the same, try to get the same information out all the time

10) 10) Are students exposed to what EF posts on social media?

  They do a lot of research before the trip

  intranet of EF, online profile, post pictures, make friends, maps, restaurants, .. they use it a lot before they come and as soon as they are in CT they do not use it anymore. The moment they get here they don’t even use EF for their study purposes, not adding friends,...

  I feel the same with the Facebook page. Trying to get more reach and more likers, try to make people talk on the page.

  With UR Card, I think trying to reach out to the people before they come is going to be the winner.

  The schools get all their campaigns from the headquarters in Zurich. #EF Moment campaign.

  The central social media team pushes it through all different channels. There are about 200 different EF websites, with different services, ..

  Doenst matter which one of the EF pages you liked, you are going to see that post. Good global connection.

  Not a lot of participants for competitions, although I mention it in my presentations (EF Moment), but I cant get people to participate.

## Cross-use

11) Do you think it’s helpful to use more than one social media channel at a time?

  It takes time, if you have the time, I think totally, you can have your Facebook account or blog, and your Twitter account, and your Instagram, and maybe your LinkedIn Profile or whatever. I think those are your five top sites to manage, but it is a fulltime job and it can’t be taken lightly. You will be putting half of your effort into something that’s not helping. Rather not put any effort into it at all or go 100 %.

12) When you combine social media channels, what do you think is important?

  You have to have the time to take care of every channel, everything needs to be coherent. If you upload a picture on your Instagram, share it over your Twitter account, to make it
repost over Facebook and to let it automatically upload to your blog, (I don’t know how to do that) at the same time. For me, I would like to do that.

13) What do you think are the channels that are mostly used together?
   I think Instagram is the next most popular thing after Facebook. And then Twitter. I’d say Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, for us anyway, because of the pictures, the student’s experiences.
   Globally we have an EF blog, but not specifically for Cape Town, but I don’t even know how it works. We’ve got a video editing app, so if you download the EF mytake, you can design your own video and upload it via your Apple products, you post it and it gets shared.

**Trustworthiness**

14) Most of the students that I have interviewed said that they trust information published by friends/family on social media more than any other information. Why do you think is that?
   I think the reason why they don’t trust information from tourism websites is because there is so many of them. So they think who should I trust? There are all these different options, all these different services, even if there are completely different services, they don’t know who to trust with all of this. I think that is what affects people’s decision making, they’d rather go listen to someone they know by randomly clicking on a link they don’t know, because there are million links that pop up offering different things, and how do you know, I mean I would never click on something I don’t know. Well I click on it, but without research and physically getting some feedback from someone I would never really go for it.
   The same with UR Card, the students ask what it is and don’t see why they should use it, until someone physically comes in says that it works and that it is a good service. I would not trust it just by looking at this. Which is also something for you guys to think about, trying to market outside of the country. And it is so hard for someone, like offering that service outside of SA, and for people that don’t know the service, they wouldn’t trust the service. for people outside of the country without being referred to it. Maybe the travel agents can market it in various different countries, that notify the people about it before they come to SA. I think you also need to physically go to the country, it’s hard to market something telephonically because everything sounds like a sales pitch.

15) From your experience, what was the channel that was most effective in terms of marketing the school?
   I would say probably Instagram does pretty well in terms of marketing the students’ experience. I think that Facebook is also great, but on Instagram the people keep on seeing all these lifestyle shots that people are taking, 24 hours day, I think this is why a lot of people choose to come here. But I think it goes hand in hand between those two. I think Twitter doesn’t really do anything.

**Travel planning**

16) Do you think that social media channels are the best way to target people before they
come to South Africa?
I would say that would be a great way and maybe also ..
I am not noticing much about LinkedIn, but I don’t know if maybe that would be a good
way to maybe make connections with possible agencies that could sell your product or
contacting people and being able to have business relationships with them online to be
able to understand your product better and then market your product to their clients, that
could be a good way in terms of other social media channels.

17) Do you get any feedback from students why they don’t buy the UR Card?
Ask Taryn about it. I just think it’s very difficult to understand, you know when you don’t
understand English to 100%, so you are talking and talking, but people don’t understand.
Even when I am doing activities, you think that people are understanding, but then when
you actually physically talk to that person one on one, you realize they lost you after you
say Hello. A lot of the Europeans they all come with a high level of English already, so for
them it is easy to understand, but the rest, they are literally just staring at a wall. You give
them the basic information and in the end they come to you and they ask you the most
basic questions, they cant understand the first thing, so I cant understand how they
understand everything around that. So there’s a lot of problems with that that you have
here.
Role of interviewee: In charge of social media at Cape to Addo, also responsible for bookings, sometimes works as a tour guide

Sub-topics: social media channels, frequency of use, use of social media in the travel planning stage

Reasons for interviewing: to get in-depth knowledge and opinions of travelers on social media

Description: interview transcript

Social media channels

1) What social media channels does your company use?
   We are currently using Facebook, Twitter not so much, Pinterest, and I just put Instagram on my phone. We also do link sharing with other companies, for example it could work with UR Card, so we put a link on our site and you put a link on your site. Obviously you need to do it with websites that have to do with your product, so for UR Card I assume that it might not be a bad idea to see if you could do it with some airlines or travel agents, that would be your main thing, but overseas travel agents.

   - Why do you use exactly these channels? Why not other channels?

2) For what reason do you use social media?
   Most of our target market is the youth travel industry and the way that knowledge is going these days, you need to have social media. A few people have found us on Facebook, not even Google. Because for me, it was always Google searching, like “What do I need?”, go into Google and type it in. And I found one or two people I know that found us on Facebook, so you need to kind of keep up with the trends, and if you don’t, you are going to be left behind.

3) How do people learn about your company?
   I’d say it’s probably more Google than social media, but social media you have to use it because you cannot upload pictures of your tours on Google for example but on Facebook or Instagram.

4) Do you use certain channels for certain information?
   No. I haven’t diversified or chosen that I am going to do, for example, specials on Twitter or just random facts on Facebook. I mix it up any way I can. On Facebook, I try to upload something every day, maybe one day some random picture of an elephant, the next day will be an interesting fact on Addo (website). So we are trying to mix it up and keep it
interesting because I think as a company if you are posting the same sort of thing every time you are limiting yourself and the audience.

5) From your experience, how do your customers use social media to learn about your company/to receive information about current events/offers? (Do they use certain channels for specific information?)
I don’t know if our customers use certain channels for specific information.

6) What, in your eyes, is the most relevant social media channel used by your customers?
Facebook

7) Do you think that comments/reviews of people on social media help to increase brand awareness?
We have had customers that came to us based on recommendations of friends. Word of mouth is probably the biggest one, because you rather trust a friend than something you find on the internet. TripAdvisor is a huge source of information. What I would do, if I am researching a company, I would go to their website and check it out, then go to their Facebook page, see if there is any bad responses or bad reviews, or I go to TripAdvisor and then Facebook. So I would use three different channels to look at how this company’s doing, because I mean the website is going to be about what they say about themselves, TripAdvisor would be what other people are saying about them and Facebook would be almost like to get a feel of what the company’s all about.
We encourage our customers to publish something about us. We have done a couple of things. For every customer that comes on our bus, we have a feedback form and we will email them afterwards, not like a spam email, but something saying like “If you enjoyed the tour, feel free to post something on TripAdvisor and then we give them the link. And then what I have started doing is to incentivizing the tour guides to try to push the guests to TripAdvisor and Facebook and to post some photos. So I said to the guides, for every TripAdvisor review that you get, that mentions your name, we will give you a R200 voucher for a restaurant in Cape Town. So all they have to do, if they have a bus with thirteen people, and every single person writes a TripAdvisor review, they get 13 vouchers. It doesn’t encourage the customers to fill out anything but it encourages the guides to push the people. Because at some of the tours, it is almost like the guides and the guests become friends. SO after spending five days with the guide, and he asks for a review on TripAdvisor, it would be kind of rude if you don’t. So we get a lot of responses that way, and if people didn’t have a good time, then we just say don’t write about it. You don’t have to do a 3-star review, rather just don’t say anything.
8) How often does Cape Town Tourism publish information on social media?
On Facebook every day, Twitter not so much, I need to get going on that. Pinterest I did for a little while, and Instagram in my holiday. But I set myself a goal that towards the end of June must at least know how they all work. I had one person one day that mentioned Instagram and Hashtags, but every time I see these hashtags on Facebook, I hate it. I don’t get how it works. The person that told me about it said that it works amazingly well for active users on Facebook, because they will be on Twitter, and Instagram, these kind of people use these channels on their phone all the time, so you get more of those people that are active on social media. So if you post something on Facebook and ask them to send you some pictures of an event they went to, this will only work with an active audience, and I am trying to get that going. You have to work with all three together, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook in order to get that active audience.

9) How often are people exposed to it? Do you get any feedback in terms of click rates, etc?
You can see how many people have seen the post. So if I post something and I look the next day and I see that one person liked it, one person shared it and it had 518 views. If I post something from my company onto UR Card’s Facebook page, I am getting all the people from my company, and all the people from UR Card to look at that. And then say another company likes it and shares the post, all the people from that company as well get to see it. So you get to build up this little audience, although it has nothing to do with the people from the other company.

10) How often do other people (e.g. former or current customers) talk about your company on social media?
Every now and then. Not enough as far as I am concerned. We got a Twitter message the other day from someone that liked our tour and has really enjoyed it.

11) Do you think that if people see a lot of recommendations on social media on a product they weren’t interested in in the beginning, might change their opinion about that product positively/negatively?
That’s tricky because I don’t think everyone is interested in our company, so it is not necessary to advertise your product on Facebook. It is more about getting really cool posts that get the attention, more like random things, because people like to see it. So I very often post more like those things, because I really often get much more of a response to that than I would for offering discount on one of our tours. I find posting more interesting stuff that doesn’t necessarily have to do with the company itself, is better actually, as long as it is in the same sort of sphere of what you do. Like I try to find nature posts, because that is Safari, like adventure posts, because you are doing adventurous activities. It doesn’t have to do with the company, as long as you are getting exposure and get people who might not even care about our company, but then see the post and then go to our
Facebook page and then see that we are doing tours.

Trustworthiness

12) Some students that I interviewed said that they trust information on social media that was published by friends/family/people they know more than information published by tourism websites. Why do you think they trust this information more than other information? Of course, at the end of the day a person who runs a company and runs a Facebook page posts what is good for them. A company wouldn’t hesitate to lie to you whereas your friends and family would.
- Do you think that this kind of information is indeed the most trustful information? Yes, definitely, I mean as a family member I am not going to do a tour with some drunk guy and then go back to my sister and tell her it was amazing.

Cross-use

13) Do you think combining social media channels with each other is helpful (for example, Twitter linked with Facebook)? Yes, I think that also ranks you on Google much higher. Because the more interest and activity you have on these channels brings you up. As soon as someone types in “Adventure Tour” or “Garden Route”, our company name comes up first.

14) What do you think are the channels that are most used together? Facebook and Twitter. Or Facebook and Instagram.

15) When combining social media channels, what, in your opinion, is important? I am not going to start posting pictures about bachelor partys on Twitter and then start talking about crocodile attacks on Facebook on our website. It should all be in the sphere of tourism, nature, adventure, animals, Cape Town.

Travel planning

16) In what stage of the travel planning do you focus most on the client’s needs? Dream – The potential traveller gets inspiration about a destination by looking at pictures, reading reviews, etc. This would be a bit difficult, because it is hard to be reaching out to everybody. Plan – the traveller has decided on a destination and starts planning the trip Definitely where they are doing research, because we contact travel agencies and are part of certain travel websites overseas. Book – the traveller gets “serious” and makes all bookings (flight, accommodation, ...)
That is a very important phase, because a lot of our bookings come from online bookings from overseas.

Experience – making experiences at the destination (activities, meeting new people,...) That is actually probably our biggest one. Because we work with so many agents here and because we have got such a strong presence with the guys who are continually doing tours, we often run into each other, and then we talk about the tours to each other, and then we go into the actual travel agency

Reflect – reflecting on and evaluating the trip
We do a follow up email and what I used to do when I was a guide was that I sent them a photo that I took and said Thank You.

Early awareness

17) Did the use of social media increase the brand awareness of your product/services? I would say it is more of a maintenance thing, because when you think about it, you are going to spend a lot of money, but you would not just spend it. Presumably you would check it out. From my personal experience, I always go on Facebook and check it out, because it often gives you an insight, when you don’t have a 100% control of it. People can post on there and then say it wasn’t as good as it is.

18) From your experience, what was the channel that was most effective in terms of brand awareness/increase of sales? What was the channel that got most traffic to your website?
Facebook

19) In your opinion, how can a company try to reach out to its targets prior to their arrival to South Africa? I would try to connect with a company that is in line with what you do. For example with us, I would try to connect with a company that is youth travel, with lots of followers on Facebook, always posting stuff, and I would try to get in line with them, and get a good name with them.
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I herewith certify that I am the sole author of the attached paper, and confirm I have not used any other primary and/or secondary sources other than those mentioned in the attached bibliography.

All references used from published and/or unpublished texts in the attached paper, have been acknowledged appropriately in source references, and are included in the attached bibliography.

In addition, I herewith confirm this paper has not previously been submitted in its present, or any similar form.

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Date : June 2, 2014

City : Groningen, the Netherlands
Interview topics

Graduation Assignment:
A Marketing Communications Strategy Advice
How to use social media to overcome late brand awareness.

Written for Unique Rand Card

Lena Kruse
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International Communication

Date of submission:
June 2, 2014

Supervisor: Hanneke Brakenhoff
Second Assessor: Astrid Berg

**Topic 1: Social media in the travel industry**

Social media has influenced the travel industry enormously. Travel organizations can communicate with customers more easily and more personally. Customers can give direct feedback to the company, and the company can react to it immediately. The importance of social media for travel organizations shall be discussed during the examination interview.

**Topic 2: Information source Facebook**

It started as a networking website, offering people to stay connected with each other. Now, Facebook has become one of the most influential web tools. Information search does not (only) work with search engines anymore – Facebook has become a huge source of information. Facebook as a main information source shall be discusses during the examination interview.

**Topic 3: Brand awareness being influenced by social media**

Social media raised a completely different approach of marketing products and services. The ability to send out information to people has become more effective, as certain groups with the same interest can be targeted more efficiently. A comparison between traditional marketing and the new ways of marketing through social media will be the third topic for the examination interview.
External expert summary

A Marketing Communications Strategy Advice:
How to use social media to overcome late brand awareness

Lena Kruse
382523
Internship at UR Card

Graduation supervisor: Hanneke Brakenhoff
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The Graduation Assignment

This research is an opinion-based case study to find out how Unique Rand Card can use social media as a cost-efficient way to reach out to its target markets in order to overcome late brand awareness. Social media has been chosen as a marketing tool as it attracts mostly younger people, who are in line with UR Card’s target group, travelers between 18-35 years.

The factors that are believed to influence awareness among target groups about the brand are the choice of social media channels, the frequency with which these channels are used, as well as the influence of social media in the travel stages. Trustworthiness of the information published on social media also played a big role.

Travelers as well as travel agents were interviewed to gain their opinions in this field as well as to find out what social media channels they use for product information, as well as how often they use it and what kind of information they think is trustful.

Existing knowledge was consulted in order to find out about the most influential social media channels, which ones are mostly used together, as well as social media influence in the travel planning stages. Primary data was collected by interviewing travelers as well as travel organizations in order to find out what they think about the above-named aspects as well as how they use social media.

After having conducted interviews with the different groups, opinions were compared in order to come to the conclusion that both groups use Facebook as their main source of information about products. However, social media is not used by travelers to post a recommendation about a product on social media, but rather tell someone face-to-face when being asked specifically.

Travel organizations use Facebook in order to get more traffic to their Facebook website by posting entertaining content that does not necessarily have to do with their company, but gets the people’s attention.

While travel organizations make use of Facebook every day, travelers find that seeing a post of a company every day on their newsfeeds is too much.

Both groups agree that a website which includes useful information for current or prospective travelers will be a step towards awareness, and see it as a good way to sell the product through it.

UR Card as a “Travel Buddy”, which gives reliable and useful information, will have to change the content of its social media platforms in terms of useful information that can be shared by travelers. This
will then lead to more brand awareness as people will consult the UR Card online platforms for travel tips and advice.

**Interview Topics**

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ACC 9: What next?

Lena Kruse
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Internship at Unique Rand Card, Cape Town
International Communication
Academic counsellor: Joyce Kremers
Deadline: June 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2014
During the study programme of International Communication, I have learned certain skills that have prepared me for the time after my studies, when it comes to looking for a job.

I enjoyed the time at Hanze University Groningen as a student, as I was able to make a lot of experiences. However, I have decided that I will not do my Master’s Degree after I have graduated. During my internships in Cape Town, I could see what it is like to work, and to get an insight into the tourism business. During my internship, I was part of the marketing team and I really enjoyed working in this field. The tourism industry in Cape Town offers a friendly working environment with lots of opportunities to get more insights into this world. This is why I am planning to go back to Cape Town after my graduation. I have had a job interview at GTS Cape Town, a customer service provider for Lufthansa & Co. I feel that this is a good start; this job offers me the opportunity to get more experience in the customer service, which is always a must in the tourism industry. For me, this is the perfect start when it comes to finding a job in the city I want to live in.

Identifying issues/problems

I have learned to identify issues and problems more easily, as I was ‘trained’ to do so during the IC study programme. Solving issues is a must when it comes to cooperations, which I have also learned during my internships. Weekly staff meetings prevented miscommunications and helped to address a problem more easily and quicker than waiting for a person to report a problem on his own initiative. Communication between the parties is a must, and I have improved my facilitation skills in this matter. Using various sources for solving a problem is essential, as it describes the problem from different angles, which might help to get a better understanding of it and to learn that it might not be coming from only one direction, but there might be different factors that contribute to the undesired situation. I have also learned that a research project that addresses the problem must be well-prepared; during my graduation project, I have learned to listen to both what the company wants and to what my supervisor from Hanze advised me to do. Also, it is essential to get a good understanding of the problem; if the issue is not clear, it might not be solved in the end.

What is an important aspect for me is when I was working as a consultant for UR Card, I had to pay attention not to get too involved. A consultant must stay neutral in order to identify all problems
properly. Due to the fact that it was my second internship at UR Card, I already knew the company, I knew its goals, and when I came back for my graduation internship, I had to find my place in the company; not as an intern, but as a consultant.

**Giving a policy advice**

Giving policy advice was something that I have never done on my own before. At the end of my internship, I had to present my results to the company in order to give them recommendations. Although I have worked hard, I did not know what my boss and my supervisor would think of my work. Everything turned out well, and I was proud of myself that I had managed to give useful recommendations.

The difficulty for me was to get people to help me with my research in terms of interviews; although everyone I asked for their contact details told me that they would help, but nobody of those persons replied to my emails. So at the end of my research, I had to find other persons that would help me with my research, which was quite tricky as I had made a completely different time schedule which was not useful at all at the end of my internship.

What I have learned from this is that I cannot rely on others. There should always be a Plan B, so that my work will not be affected if external persons cannot cooperate.

Time management plays a big role in this. I have learned to schedule everything at least one week earlier than it actually needs to be done, especially when it is about people that are offering their help, but for whom it is not mandatory to participate. A lot of the people who I wanted to interview were working in the tourism industry, so I could not rely on them having a lot of time. Thus, communicating with especially external audiences is something that I will have to improve.

**Intercultural competencies**

Through the IC study programme, I was prepared for working together with other cultures. The UR Card team has South African, Chinese, and German staff members, which offers a lot of cultural diversity. Being prepared to expect different values about things helped me to prevent misunderstandings. Also, working with external people was not too difficult for me, as I knew that the working flow of South African might be different from the German way of doing things. My South
African colleagues, for example, like to be told what task they had to do while my German colleague always looked for new ways of doing things. I knew that this is not ‘laziness’, but rather the way that they work.

Conclusions

All in all, I am satisfied with what I have achieved so far, although there are still competencies that I have not fully developed yet.

Especially after the internships, I feel like I am better prepared for the business world, and to look for opportunities that will bring me further in life.

When I compare myself now to how I was when I started my studies, I am proud of how I have developed. The aspect that I am most proud if is that I went to find myself a job in South Africa. In 2010, I would have never thought about working abroad.

For now, I hope that everything will work out the way I planned it. I would like to live in South Africa, although I do not know for how long. I will see where life will take me, but most of all, I will focus on opportunities that will improve my skills as a communications professional.