

Social network practices: An investigation into the perceptions of businesswomen

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Elsa and Eddie Petersen.

Thank-you for all your love, support, patience and sacrifices. Your motivating words kept me going through all the difficult times.

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ABSTRACT

In the business environment, businesswomen experience various challenges that impede their growth within organisations. Therefore, the social networking phenomenon has become much more than interacting and learning more about people within a social environment. Businesswomen are developing and utilising their social networks to gain much-needed social support in order to establish balance amongst their diverse responsibilities, including work and childcare responsibilities.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the social network practices of Gauteng businesswomen. In order to gain insight into these social network practices, qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews was used. The most important findings of this research are discussed below.

- Networking is a learnable skill that can be adapted to any situation. It involves interacting with people, sharing information and is based on relationships that are developed and maintained.
- An individual's networking efforts are driven by a specific motivation (business and/or personal) and are therefore focused. Furthermore, businesswomen utilise networking as a marketing tool on a personal level and within their businesses.
- Social networking takes place in informal environments and individuals can utilise their social networks to make new friends. Social networking is also a gathering place for people with similar interests.
- Social networks consist of supportive people and people with similar values. Business contacts can also be found in social environments.
- Businesswomen, especially businesswomen with children, experience various challenges in their social networking efforts.
- Businesswomen perceive social networking as a valuable tool and utilise their social networks in order to gain support.
- Successful social networking behaviour includes integrity, respect, love of other people, hard work, reciprocity, clear networking goals, confidence, leveraging available networking mechanisms and avoiding poor networking behaviour such as being impolite, not honouring meetings, disrespecting and taking advantage of other people and negativity.

This research contributes to literature in that it provides further background to the concept of *social networking*. It further provides insight into the needs and expectations of

businesswomen regarding *social networks*. The research can also serve as a basis for social network development in organisations. Although the research had promising results, various limitations were noted. These are discussed below.

- The participants found it difficult to fit the interviews into their busy schedules and they had limited time to participate in the interviews as a result of personal and professional obligations. It seemed that the interviews were not highly prioritised by the participants.
- The place of interviewing (a central coffee shop) was noisy at points, such as the waiter bringing the account, loud music playing at times and a noisy parking lot. This might have influenced the quality of the recordings.
- Although a representative population was sought, the population consisted of mostly white women who had no children under the age of twelve. The sample also only included businesswomen in the Gauteng Province.

This qualitative research could be used as the basis of a quantitative study. This includes using the identified findings and developing a measuring battery (questionnaire) to further investigate the social network practices of businesswomen.

OPSOMMING

In die besigheidsomgewing, ervaar besigheidsvrouens verskeie uitdagings wat hulle groei in ondernemings beïnvloed. Dus is die sosiale netwerkvorming fenomeen veel meer as net interaksie om mense beter te leer ken binne 'n sosiale omgewing. Besigheidsvrouens ontwikkel en gebruik hulle sosiale netwerke om die benodigde sosiale ondersteuning te verkry en sodoende 'n balans te bereik tussen hulle diverse verantwoordelikhede, insluitend werk en kindersorg verantwoordelikhede.

Die primêre doelwit van die studie was om die sosiale netwerkpraktyke van besigheidsvrouens in Gauteng te ondersoek. Om insig te verkry in hierdie sosiale netwerkpraktyke, is kwalitatiewe navorsing in die vorm van in-diepte onderhoude gebruik. Die mees belangrikste bevindinge van die navorsing word vervolgens bespreek.

- Netwerkvorming is 'n leerbare vaardigheid wat aangepas kan word in enige situasie. Dit sluit in interaksie met mense, asook die deel van inligting en is gebaseer op verhoudinge wat ontwikkel en onderhou word.
- 'n Individu se netwerkvormingspogings word gedryf deur 'n spesifieke motivering (besigheid en/of persoonlik) en is dus gefokus. Besigheidsvrouens gebruik verder hulle netwerkvorming as 'n bemerkingsinstrument op beide 'n persoonlike en besigheidsvlak.
- Sosiale netwerkvorming vind plaas in informele omgewings, waar mense met soortgelyke belangstelling byeenkom en individue hulle sosiale netwerke kan gebruik om nuwe vriende te maak.
- Sosiale netwerke bestaan uit mense wat ondersteuning bied asook mense met soortgelyke waardes. Besigheidskontakte kan ook gevind word in sosiale omgewings.
- Besigheidsvrouens, veral besigheidsvrouens met kinders, ondervind verskeie uitdagings in hulle sosiale netwerkvormingspogings.
- Besigheidsvrouens sien sosiale netwerke as 'n waardevolle instrument en gebruik dit om ondersteuning te verkry.
- Suksesvolle sosiale netwerkvormingsgedrag sluit in integriteit, respek en liefde vir ander mense, harde werk, resiprositeit, duidelike netwerkvormingsdoelwitte, selfvertroue, gebruik van beskikbare netwerkvormingsmeganismes en die vermyding van swak netwerkvormingsgedrag, soos om onvriendelik te wees, om nie afsprake na te kom nie, om ander mense te misbruik, onbeleefdheid en negatieweiteit.

Die navorsing sal 'n bydrae lewer tot literatuur deurdat dit 'n aanvullende agtergrond verskaf vir die konsep van *sosiale netwerkvorming*. Dit gee insig in die behoeftes en verwagtinge

van besigheidsvrouens ten opsigte van *sosiale netwerke*. Die navorsing kan ook as 'n basis dien vir sosiale netwerkontwikkeling in ondernemings. Alhoewel die navorsing belowende resultate getoon het, is verskeie beperkinge geïdentifiseer. Dit word vervolgens bespreek.

- Die deelnemers het dit moeilik gevind om die onderhoude in hulle besige skedules in te pas en het beperkte tyd gehad om aan die onderhoude af te staan, as gevolg van persoonlike en professionele verantwoordelikhede. Dit het ook voorgekom of die onderhoude nie prioriteit geniet het by die deelnemers nie.
- Die plek waar die onderhoude plaasgevind het ('n sentrale koffiewinkel), was by tye raserig (harde musiek en 'n lawaaierige parkeerterrein) en daar was onderbrekings, soos byvoorbeeld die kelner wat die rekening bring. Dit kon die opname van die onderhoude beïnvloed het.
- Alhoewel 'n verteenwoordigende populasie gesoek is, het die populasie meestal bestaan uit wit vrouens wie geen kinders onder die ouderdom van twaalf jaar gehad het nie. Die steekproef het ook slegs besigheidsvrouens in die Gauteng Provinsie ingesluit.

Rakende dié navorsing, bestaan die moontlikheid dat die kwalitatiewe navorsing gebruik kan word as die basis van 'n kwantitatiewe studie. Dit sluit in om die geïdentifiseerde temas te gebruik en 'n meetinstrument (vraelys) te ontwikkel om die sosiale netwerkpraktyke van besigheidsvrouens verder te ondersoek.

KEYWORDS

Networking

Women

Social network

Social support

Gauteng businesswomen

SLEUTELWOORDE

Netwerkvorming

Vroue

Sosiale netwerk

Sosiale ondersteuning

Gauteng besigheidsvrouens

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Opsomming	vi
Keywords / Sleutelwoorde	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Problem statement	1
1.2 Definition of terms	4
1.2.1 Networking	4
1.2.2 Social network	4
1.2.3 Social support	5
1.2.4 Gauteng businesswomen	5
1.3 Research objectives	5
1.3.1 Primary objective	6
1.3.2 Secondary objectives	6
1.4 Research methodology	6
1.4.1 Literature review	6
1.4.2 Empirical study	6
1.4.2.1 Research design	7
1.4.2.2 Participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure	8
1.4.2.3 Data collection	11
1.4.2.4 Data analysis	15
1.4.2.5 Trustworthiness	16
1.4.2.6 Ethical considerations	17
1.5 Overview of chapters	18
1.6 Chapter summary	18
1.7 References	18
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE 1	24
2.1 Introduction	25
2.2 Literature background	27
2.2.1 Networking	27
2.2.1.1 Maintaining relationships	28

2.2.1.2 Motivation behind networking	29
2.2.2 Social networking	31
2.2.2.1 Contents of social networks	33
2.3 Research objectives	34
2.4 Research methodology	34
2.4.1 Research design	34
2.4.2 Participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure	34
2.4.3 Data collection	36
2.4.4 Data analysis	37
2.4.5 Trustworthiness	38
2.4.6 Ethical considerations	38
2.5 Themes and findings	39
2.5.1 Conceptualisation and characteristics of networking	39
2.5.1.1 Networking is interacting with people	40
2.5.1.2 Networking entails sharing information	40
2.5.1.3 Networking is a learnable skill	40
2.5.1.4 Networking can be done anywhere	41
2.5.1.5 Networking entails building and maintaining relationships	41
2.5.2 Reasons and motivations for networking	44
2.5.2.1 Networking must be focused	44
2.5.2.2 Networking is a marketing tool	44
2.5.2.3 Business motivations behind networking	45
2.5.2.4 Personal motivations behind networking	46
2.5.3 Conceptualisation and characteristics of social networking	47
2.5.3.1 Social networking takes place in an informal environment	47
2.5.3.2 Social networking is a way to make new friends	48
2.5.3.3 Social networking is a gathering place for individuals with similar interests	48
2.5.3.4 The subject matter and intention of social and business networking differ	49
2.5.3.5 Social networking is informal and business networking is formal	50
2.5.4 Contents of social networks	51
2.5.4.1 Supportive people	51
2.5.4.2 Individuals with similar values	51
2.5.4.3 Business contacts can be found in social environments	51
2.6 Conclusions	52
2.7 Recommendations	54
2.8 Limitations	55
2.9 References	56

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH ARTICLE 2	61
3.1 Introduction	62
3.2 Literature background	65
3.2.1 Networking behaviour of businesswomen	65
3.2.1.1 The specific challenges experienced by working mothers	67
3.2.2 Successful networking behaviour	68
3.3 Research objectives	69
3.4 Research methodology	70
3.4.1 Research design	70
3.4.2 Participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure	70
3.4.3 Data collection	71
3.4.4 Data analysis	73
3.4.5 Trustworthiness	73
3.4.6 Ethical considerations	74
3.5 Themes and findings	74
3.5.1 Businesswomen's perceived experiences of social networking	75
3.5.1.1 Women network differently to men	75
3.5.1.2 Networking is a valuable tool	78
3.5.1.3 Social networks provide support	78
3.5.2 Networking challenges that businesswomen experience	81
3.5.2.1 Women do not network well in business	81
3.5.2.2 Women do not give as much network support as they are able to	82
3.5.3 Networking challenges that working mothers experience	82
3.5.3.1 Working mothers miss out on networking opportunities	82
3.5.4 Successful social networking behaviour	83
3.5.4.1 Networking should be conducted with respect, integrity and love for other people	84
3.5.4.2 Networking is work-in-progress	85
3.5.4.3 Networking includes reciprocation	85
3.5.4.4 Clear networking goals must be set	86
3.5.4.5 Confidence must be portrayed	87
3.5.4.6 All available networking opportunities can be utilised	87
3.5.4.7 Networking behaviour to avoid	88
3.6 Conclusions	88
3.7 Recommendations	90
3.8 Limitations	91
3.9 References	92

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS	99
4.1 Introduction	100
4.2 Conclusions	101
4.3 Recommendations	135
4.4 Limitations	137
4.5 References	138
APPENDIX A	140
APPENDIX B	142
APPENDIX C	144
APPENDIX D	145
APPENDIX E	148
APPENDIX F	150
APPENDIX G	152

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Information on the interview participants	9
Table 1.2	Steps in data analysis	15
Table 1.3	Strategies applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings	16
Table 2.1	Steps in data analysis	37
Table 2.2	Participants' views and perceptions on networking	39
Table 3.1	Steps in data analysis	73
Table 3.2	Participants' perceived experiences of social networking practices	75
Table 4.1	Research objectives and the main themes	101
Table 4.2	Networking is interacting with people	102
Table 4.3	Networking is about adding value	103
Table 4.4	Networking entails sharing information	103
Table 4.5	Networking is a learnable skill	103
Table 4.6	Networking can be conducted anywhere	104
Table 4.7	Networking can take place in formal or informal situations	104
Table 4.8	Networking involves building and maintaining relationships	104
Table 4.9	Networking is about leveraging relationships	105
Table 4.10	Networking involves building long-term relationships	105
Table 4.11	Like-minded people pursue common interests in networking	106
Table 4.12	Networking entails mutually beneficial relationships	106
Table 4.13	Networking is a reciprocal network	106

Table 4.14	Networking entails helping other people	107
Table 4.15	Networking does not entail using people to gain something	107
Table 4.16	Networking entails giving to the people with whom an individual networks	107
Table 4.17	Networking is motivated	108
Table 4.18	Networking must be focused	109
Table 4.19	Networking is a marketing tool	109
Table 4.20	Networking as a means to market yourself	109
Table 4.21	Networking as a means to sell products or services	110
Table 4.22	Business motivations behind networking	111
Table 4.23	Personal motivations for networking	111
Table 4.24	Social networking takes place in informal environments	112
Table 4.25	Social networking takes place when people are having a drink or dinner	113
Table 4.26	Having a barbeque constitutes social networking	113
Table 4.27	Social networking entails looking for dates	113
Table 4.28	Social networking as a means to build new friendships	114
Table 4.29	Social networking is a gathering place for people pursuing similar interests	114
Table 4.30	People with similar interest participates in community projects	114
Table 4.31	People with similar interests participates in clubs	115
Table 4.32	The subject matter and intention of social and business networking differs	115
Table 4.33	Business networks are more structured than social networks	116
Table 4.34	Social and business networking is similar	116
Table 4.35	Social networking is formal and business networking is informal	116
Table 4.36	Social networking is entertainment-focused and business networking is goal-orientated	117
Table 4.37	Contents of social networks	118
Table 4.38	Women and men network differently	119
Table 4.39	Women are better at networking than men	119
Table 4.40	Women are more willing to share contacts and offer assistance	120
Table 4.41	Women share too much information when networking	120
Table 4.42	Women adopt a networking approach that is emotional, while men adopt a networking approach that is targeted	120
Table 4.43	Women are more supportive and open than men	121
Table 4.44	Men are more ego-driven than women	121
Table 4.45	Men have stronger networks than women	121

Table 4.46	Men have strong networks as a result of networks built from school days	122
Table 4.47	Networking is a valuable tool	122
Table 4.48	Networking connects and empowers women	122
Table 4.49	Social networks provide support	123
Table 4.50	All women need support	123
Table 4.51	Working mothers need a support network	124
Table 4.52	Working mothers need business support	124
Table 4.53	Working mothers need personal support	125
Table 4.54	Working mothers need support when their children are young	125
Table 4.55	Child minders are a source of additional support	125
Table 4.56	Car pools are a source of additional support	126
Table 4.57	Women do not network well in business	127
Table 4.58	Women do not give as much network support as they are able to	127
Table 4.59	Working mothers miss out on networking opportunities	128
Table 4.60	Businesswomen need to attend to their children	128
Table 4.61	Working mothers experience time constraints	129
Table 4.62	Businesswomen experience stress	129
Table 4.63	Networking should be done with respect, integrity and love for other people	130
Table 4.64	Individuals first need to build a relationship with the person with whom they are networking	130
Table 4.65	Trust needs to be established before the network can be utilised	131
Table 4.66	Networking is work-in-progress	131
Table 4.67	Networking is reciprocal	132
Table 4.68	Individuals need to determine the needs of the person with whom they are networking	132
Table 4.69	Individuals need to give to the people with whom they network	132
Table 4.70	Individuals need to have networking goals in relationships	133
Table 4.71	Individuals need to have networking goals when attending a networking event	133
Table 4.72	An individual should portray confidence	134
Table 4.73	An individual needs to leverage all the available networking mechanisms	134
Table 4.74	Individuals need to meet people outside their sphere of reference	134
Table 4.75	Poor networking behaviour to avoid	135

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the social network practices of Gauteng businesswomen. Chapter 1 presents the problem statement and a discussion of the research objectives in which the primary and secondary objectives are set out. The various terms used in the dissertation and the research methodology are subsequently presented. The chapter concludes with a chapter overview that outlines the chapters of this dissertation.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The working world has become increasingly complex (Yeung, 2006:ix) and a greater number of challenges than ever exist in this regard, including business mergers and acquisitions, globalisation, the outsourcing of jobs, the downsizing of programmes and job cuts (Rezac, 2005:viii; Yeung, 2006:ix). In a world characterised by change and uncertainty, the reach and durability of networks is critical. Employees find themselves increasingly leaning on their networks, with a view to gaining new opportunities (Rezac, 2005:viii), as positive networking can lead to career success, improved finances and personal happiness (Rezac, 2005:viii–ix).

As women began to enter the labour force, they began to recognise the importance of networking (Travers, Pemberton & Stevens, 1997:61). It is suggested that if women become more integrated in social networks (informal networks); more women could reach senior management positions (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001:15). Within the business environment, women tend to be excluded from male networking practices (Linehan, 2001:828; Linehan *et al.*, 2001:15) and they experience various social obstacles (such as men having more social power in organisations than women, lack of women mentoring and women networking in organisations and the exclusion of women from social networks) that impede their growth within organisations (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994:16, 20-21; Linehan *et al.*, 2001:13-15). As is the case with their international counterparts, South African businesswomen experience the challenge of the glass ceiling (Mathur-Helm, 2006:324) and thus find it difficult to reach senior level positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005:68). Much has been done to ensure gender equality, but a fair measure of gender discrimination is still evident in the South African business environment (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:90). An additional challenge that women experience is that they are still viewed as the caretakers of their households, even though they are employed outside the home environment (Beddoe,

1998:132; Lips, 2006:291). This presumed role of mother and employee results in women experiencing stress due to work-home conflict (Moen, 1992:47; McLean, 2002:13), which has a direct bearing on their work-home balance (the balance between personal and professional responsibilities) (Ogden, McTavish & McKean, 2006:47, 48).

It has been suggested that women require support in this regard and that networking can provide women with this support, for example support relating to the complexities of work and family (Knouse & Webb, 2001:228). Women require support in order to maintain a balance between their diverse responsibilities in terms of career and childcare, as these responsibilities generate high stress levels that affect women's health negatively (Gill & Davidson, 2001:385). In this regard, social support is an important resource that women can utilise. It has been suggested that women have realised the importance of social support and have increasingly been utilising their networks in order to gain higher levels of social support (Rothstein & Davey, 1995:24). The social networks of individuals are viewed as the resource provider of this much-needed social support (Walker, Wasserman & Wellman, 1993:71), and the supportive relationships within this social network (such as family members, friends and co-workers) decrease the stress that women experience (Baker, Israel & Schurman, 1996:1156; Putney & Bengtson, 2005:107; Lips, 2006:294).

The term *social network* refers to a set of nodes connected by a set of ties that represents some form of relationship – or even a lack of relationship – between the nodes (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve & Tsai, 2004:795). These nodes include individuals, teams, work units or organisations and concepts (Borgatti & Foster, 2003:992; Brass *et al.*, 2004:795). Recent research has indicated that a social network is a collection of individuals who are linked together by the relationships between them (Downes, 2005:411). Friends, co-workers and acquaintances form part of an individual's social network (Rezac, 2005:24). De Klerk (2006:85) suggests that a social network include personal networks or connections that give an indication of the relationship that an individual has with other people in his or her personal capacity. In order to gain access to information, resources and opportunities, individuals rely on these personal contacts (Crowell, 2004:15).

Internationally, social networking research has not focused on specific areas but has rather addressed social networks in general (for example Rosenthal, 1997; Wang & Najir, 2006). It has investigated the social networking practices of men and women (for example Klyver & Terjesen, 2007) and the utilisation of social networks for career success (for example Van Emmerik, Euwema, Geschiere & Schouten, 2006; Gray, Kurihara, Hommen & Feldman, 2007). Research on social networking has also been conducted within the health sciences

(for example Wieslander, Baigi, Turesson & Fridlund, 2005). Social networking has been more widely researched within the information technology sciences (for example Adamic & Adar, 2005; Neumann, O'Murchu, Breslin, Decker, Hogan & MacDonaill, 2005; Downes, 2005; Potgieter, April, Cooke & Lockett, 2006).

Social networking has not been researched widely within the South African context. Research has been conducted on networking in general (for example De Klerk & Kroon, 2007), as well as on gender issues and discrimination within organisations (for example Mathur-Helm, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005). Social networking in a South African context has been more widely researched within the health sciences (for example Feitsma, Koen, Pienaar & Minnie, 2007; Pronyk, Harpham, Busza, Phetla, Morison, Hargreaves, Kim, Watts & Porter, 2008; Ncama, McInerney, Bhengu, Corless, Wantland, Nicholas, McGibbon & Davis, 2008). These studies have typically focused on the effects of social support and social networks on people living with HIV/AIDS in rural areas in South Africa. Case studies (for example Gilbert & Soskolne, 2003; Campbell, Nair, Maimane & Sibiya, 2008) have also been conducted within the health sciences.

From the discussion above, it is evident that limited research has been conducted on the supportive nature of the social networks of businesswomen in South Africa. Mathur-Helm (2006:324) has shown that South African women experience various dilemmas that are forcing them to make complex personal choices, as their family responsibilities continue to increase with their work responsibilities. This study recognises that South African businesswomen experience certain challenges in their lives but there is no information concerning the social network practices of these women and the way the utilisation of social networks can provide them with the support they require. Therefore, the importance of the current study is lodged in its contribution to literature and its objective to conduct substantial scientific research in order to direct further development and education practices of businesswomen in particular. This research will enable businesswomen and organisations to understand the concept of *social networking* and recognise the importance thereof for South African businesswomen. Organisations can establish internal training initiatives that will assist businesswomen in becoming more aware of social networking and the benefits it holds for their personal and professional lives. Establishing these initiatives will provide organisations with the opportunity to provide their female employees with the support they require in order to gain balance between their personal and professional responsibilities.

It is propounded that an investigation into the essential social networks of businesswomen in South Africa is required to provide these women with the support they require in their daily

working lives. This study undertakes such an investigation, for which the following research questions are posed:

- 1 What is meant by the term *networking*?
- 2 What are the motivations behind the networking efforts of Gauteng businesswomen?
- 3 What is meant by the term *social networking*?
- 4 What are the contents of Gauteng businesswomen's social networks?
- 5 How is social networking perceived by businesswomen in Gauteng?
- 6 What networking challenges do businesswomen in Gauteng experience in their social networking efforts?
- 7 What networking challenges do working mothers experience in their social networking efforts?
- 8 Which behavioural elements are necessary to ensure successful social networking?

1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

As the following key terms play an integral role in this study, they are defined below: *networking*, *social network*, *social support* and *Gauteng businesswomen*.

1.2.1 Networking

Networking can be defined as a technique used by individuals to build and maintain contacts and share information, advice and support. It refers to an interaction that is mutually beneficial (Boe, 1994:9; Forret & Sullivan, 2002:251; Tullier, 2004:30); it can be utilised by individuals to gain social support, make new friends, develop additional interests and gain career advice (Boe, 1994:9; Forret & Sullivan, 2002:252). For the purpose of the current study, *networking* is defined as the process of building and maintaining relationships with the expectation that the established relationships will be mutually beneficial, in that information, advice, contacts and support (personal and work support) are provided and gained from the networking interaction.

1.2.2 Social network

A *social network* is defined as a group of people who are interconnected, live in organised communities and have a common purpose (Braude & Francisco-La Grange, 1993:14). *Social networks* are linkages between individuals and include friends, co-workers and acquaintances (Rezac, 2005:24) that provide social support (Walker *et al.*, 1993:71). Personal networks form part of an individual's social network (De Klerk, 2006:85). These

include family and friendships that develop from school ties, college, church, sports clubs or shared interests (Michelli & Straw, 1997:5), that are based on the exchange of assistance and support (Michelli & Straw, 1997:5; Tullier, 2004:77) and assist in developing a balance between personal and professional lives (Michelli & Straw, 1997:20). Social networking takes place when individuals build and maintain relationships by interacting socially with other individuals (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13). For the purpose of the current study, *social networks* are defined as interconnected individuals, including friends, family, co-workers and acquaintances that provide social support to each other.

1.2.3 Social support

Social support is considered a one-dimensional characteristic of relationships (Walker *et al.*, 1993:74) and is defined as a mechanism used to protect people from the effects of stress and help them cope better with daily concerns (Maguire, 1991:xiv; Walker *et al.*, 1993:74). The basic unit of support for the majority of people includes their families, as they can provide the strong, intimate bonds that people require. Maguire (1991:xiv) suggests that when individuals do not have a basic familial support system, they frequently concede to the effects of the stresses in their lives. Other sources of social support include friends, supervisors, co-workers and the organisation at which the individual is employed (Wadsworth & Owens, 2007:77). For the purpose of the current study, *social support* is defined as a tool that individuals utilise in order to gain support from their social networks (including friends, family and co-workers) to help them cope with daily challenges.

1.2.4 Gauteng businesswomen

Businesswomen are defined as women who are active in business (Gove, 1976:303). For purpose of the current study, *businesswomen* are viewed as women that are either employed and actively participating in the activities of a business in the Gauteng Province or who are the owners of profit- or non-profit businesses and that are involved in the management of the business at any level.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives form a primary objective and secondary objectives, which are discussed below.

1.3.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the social network practices of businesswomen in Gauteng.

1.3.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of this study are:

- 1 to investigate the concept of *networking* through qualitative research;
- 2 to determine the motivations behind the networking efforts of Gauteng businesswomen;
- 3 to investigate the concept of *social networking* through qualitative research;
- 4 to investigate and compile a description of the contents of Gauteng businesswomen's social networks;
- 5 to identify the businesswomen's perceived experiences of social networking;
- 6 to determine the networking challenges that businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts;
- 7 to determine the networking challenges that businesswomen with children experience in their social networking efforts; and
- 8 to investigate the successful social networking behaviour of businesswomen.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology consists of a literature review and an empirical study. The findings of the study are presented in the form of two research articles.

1.4.1 Literature review

A brief literature review is presented for each article. The literature reviews focus on the concepts of *networking* and *social networking*. The reviews examine the extent of past research of both of these concepts. Databases consulted include Emerald, EbscoHost, JStor, Science Direct and the Sloan Network.

1.4.2 Empirical study

Important aspects of the empirical study to be noted are the research design, participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations.

1.4.2.1 Research design

Research is the systematic, controlled, valid and rigorous exploration and description of what is unknown and the establishment of associations and causations that permit the accurate prediction of outcomes under a given set of conditions (Kumar, 2005:20). The strength of what is found (that is, the research results) in conducting research largely depends on the way in which it was found (Kumar, 2005:20). According to Kumar (2005:20), the research design is the plan of the way in which the researcher will go about attempting to find answers to the research questions. It includes the study design and the proposed plan whereby the research will be conducted, the measurement procedures, the sampling strategy, the frame of analysis and the time-frame (Kumar, 2005:22).

An interpretive or qualitative research approach was used in this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:100, 508; Teddlie & Tashakkari, 2009:15, 22, 86). The objective of this study is to develop an improved understanding of the social network practices of businesswomen in Gauteng and interpret these understandings. Therefore, the reasons for choosing this research design are:

- 1 the inquiry aim of this paradigm is oriented to the production of reconstructed understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:100); and
- 2 qualitative research is a set of interpretive activities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003);

Further reasons for choosing an explorative research design is as follows:

- 1 limited prior knowledge existed on the topic under investigation (Struwig & Stead, 2001:7; Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk, 2005:84); and
- 2 in-depth and rich information and insight into the general nature of the topic under investigation was needed (Tustin *et al.*, 2005:84).

In-depth interviews as a qualitative method were used in order to investigate the social network practices, by probing the participants' responses and seeking to uncover the reality underlying their initial, superficial responses (Webb, 2002:122). With in-depth interviews, the research topic was investigated, in order to help uncover the participants' views and perceptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:108) of social networking in their personal and professional lives and interpreting these views and perceptions in order to understand the phenomenon of social networking (Teddlie & Tashakkari, 2009:6).

1.4.2.2 Participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure

A non-probability purposive voluntary sample was used to sample the participants for the in-depth interviews ($n = 31$). Gauteng was selected as the region of study, as it is viewed as the heart of South Africa's commercial business and economic sectors (SA, 2009). It reached a growth rate of 5.7% during 2007 (SA, 2008). The main sectors contributing to the GDP (gross domestic product per region) are finance, property, business services, manufacturing, and general government services (SA, 2008; SA, 2009). A large number of businesses at which businesswomen are employed are also situated in this province (SA, 2009). Businesswomen from various cultures and backgrounds within the Gauteng Province were included in the sample, as Gauteng is typically a cosmopolitan city.

In order to gain access to the sample, a well-known networker in Gauteng, the CEO of Women in Finance, was contacted to provide the names of businesswomen who could be invited to the interviews. Inclusion criteria for choosing this networker included:

- 1 a woman who works in business;
- 2 a woman who is well-known under the businesspeople in Gauteng;
- 3 a woman who has knowledge on the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* and
- 4 a woman who is willing to share valuable networking contacts.

The networker first made contact with the businesswomen by e-mail and introduced the researcher and study to them. Thereafter, she gave the researcher's contact details to the businesswomen in order for them to contact her if they were willing to participate in the study. The criteria for choosing the participants included:

- 1 women who work in business;
- 2 women who live and work in the Gauteng Province;
- 3 women who would be willing to share their personal social networking experience;
- 4 women who would be available to contact afterwards for cross-member checking; and
- 5 women who are English- and/or Afrikaans-speaking.

The interviews were conducted between November 2008 and January 2009. This was viewed as a difficult time of the year for the businesswomen, as they had to meet deadlines at the organisations at which they were employed and also had personal obligations that needed to be fulfilled; thus although many of them were willing to participate in the study, they had no time to do so. After a week, five participants who were willing and available contacted the researcher and interviews were scheduled. Prior to scheduling the interviews, a schedule with potential dates and times for the interviews was developed. As many

interviews as possible were scheduled in the same week in order to keep transport costs to the minimum. Interviews were scheduled in such a manner that they did not interfere with the participants' daily schedule. Following these interviews, a non-probability snowball sample was used to find additional businesswomen to participate in the study. Snowball sampling is used to gain one participant through another (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:161). It was used in this study because participants were not easily accessible and suitable, and available participants could not be readily identified (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:162). The five participants were requested to suggest businesswomen who would possibly be interested in participating in the study.

Participants were representative of several of the industries that contribute significantly to GDP in Gauteng (SA, 2008). These industries include business services, construction, education/training, fashion, finance, human resource consulting, information technology, law, property and tourism. Two participants were representative of all of the above-mentioned industries. Descriptive information on the participants in the sample is given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Information on the interview participants

Participant	Age Category	Ethnicity	Highest level of education completed	Children under the age of 12 living at home	Marital status	Industry
1	45 – 54	White	B-degree	No	Married	Information Technology
2	45 – 54	White	Diploma / certificate	No	Divorced	Business services
3	25 – 34	Black	Diploma / certificate	Yes, three	Divorced	Finance (banking)
4	35 – 44	Black	Postgraduate education	Yes, one	Widowed	Education / training
5	35 – 44	Black	Diploma / certificate	Yes, two	Married	Finance (banking)
6	45 – 54	White	Postgraduate education	No	In a long-term relationship	Education / training
7	25 – 34	White	B-degree	No	Married	Business services
8	45 – 54	White	Diploma /	No	Single	Business

Participant	Age Category	Ethnicity	Highest level of education completed	Children under the age of 12 living at home	Marital status	Industry
			certificate			services
9	45 – 54	White	Diploma / certificate	No	Divorced	Education / training
10	45 – 54	White	Diploma / certificate	No	Married	All industries (networking)
11	45 – 54	White	B-degree	No	In a long-term relationship	Human resource consulting
12	35 – 44	White	Grade 12	Yes, one	Divorced	Property
13	25 – 34	White	B-degree	No	Engaged	Finance (banking)
14	35 – 44	White	Postgraduate education	Yes, two	Divorced	Human resource consulting
15	35 – 44	White	Diploma / certificate	Yes, two	Divorced	All industries (business chamber)
16	35 – 44	White	Postgraduate education	Yes, one	Married	Law
17	35 – 44	–	Postgraduate education	Yes, two	Single	Finance (banking)
18	25 – 34	White	Postgraduate education	No	Single	Finance (banking)
19	25 – 34	White	Postgraduate education	No	Single	Finance (banking)
20	Under 25	Black	Postgraduate education	No	Single	Finance (banking)
21	25 – 34	Indian	Postgraduate education	No	Single	Finance (banking)
22	35 – 44	White	B.Com.	No	Divorced	Finance (banking)
23	25 – 34	Black	Diploma / certificate	No	Single	Finance (banking)

Participant	Age Category	Ethnicity	Highest level of education completed	Children under the age of 12 living at home	Marital status	Industry
24	-	White	Diploma / certificate	No	Single	Fashion
25	25 – 34	White	Postgraduate education	Yes, one	Married	Finance (banking)
26	35 – 44	Indian	Diploma / certificate	No	Single	Finance (banking)
27	35 – 44	White	Diploma / certificate	Yes, one	In a long-term relationship	Business services
28	45 – 54	Black	Diploma / certificate	No	Divorced	Information technology
29	35 – 44	White	B.Com.	No	Single	Construction
30	35 – 44	White	Postgraduate education	No	Married	Finance (banking)
31	35 – 44	White	Postgraduate education	No	Single	Tourism

During the interviews, one participant did not feel comfortable indicating her ethnicity and another participant did not feel comfortable indicating her age category.

1.4.2.3 Data collection

The data collection for this study consisted of qualitative in-depth interviews and field notes. In-depth interviews are considered a method of collecting qualitative data through one-on-one interviews (Tustin *et al.*, 2005:162). Such interviewing underlines two essential characteristics (Kumar, 2005:124): it involves face-to-face, repeated interaction between the researcher and participant and it seeks to understand the participant's perceptions on the topic under investigation. Owing to the repeated contact and time spent together, it is assumed that rapport between the researcher and participant is enhanced and that the resultant understanding and confidence between them will lead to in-depth, rich and accurate information (Kumar, 2005:124).

In this particular study, in-depth insights were needed on the social network practices of Gauteng businesswomen. In-depth interviews were thus used to elicit detailed data regarding these practices (Webb, 2002:124–125). In-depth interviews hold the advantage of providing the opportunity to ascribe directly a response to a single individual; such interviews also allow the researcher to develop close rapport and a high degree of trust with the participant, which may encourage an uninhibited flow of conversation and information that is relevant and truly indicative of the participant's views and perceptions (Webb, 2002:124–125). Furthermore, the combination of the interview and observations allows the researcher to understand the views that the participants hold regarding their daily social networking activities (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:108). In addition, a large amount of data is gained in a relatively short period. Webb (2002:125) however cautions that this qualitative method can be costly in terms of time and money. A large amount of money is spent in order to conduct the interviews and to analyse the results. It is also important for the researcher to exercise a high degree of subjectivity during the interviews (Webb, 2002:125). Interviews involve personal interaction with people and cooperation is thus an essential element. Participants may be unwilling or could perhaps feel uncomfortable in sharing all that the researcher hopes to explore and they might not be truthful in their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:110).

The duration of the interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour. The majority of the interviews were conducted in a coffee shop. In order to accommodate time constraints, ten of the participants were interviewed at their place of employment because they did not have sufficient time to travel to a central location. The coffee shop at which the interviews were held was considered a central location at which both the participants and the researcher could meet. The neutral and relaxed atmosphere (soft music playing, gentle breeze blowing) of the coffee shop placed both the participants and researcher at ease. Attention was paid to the atmosphere of the room in order to ensure a relaxed environment. Dividers were set up in order to ensure privacy during the interviews. The researcher offered the participants refreshments (coffee, tea, something to eat) before starting the interviews. The researcher introduced herself and explained the objectives of the study, as well as the procedure that would be followed during the interview. Participants were given the opportunity to provide background information about themselves (for example, who they are and where they work) in order to facilitate the comfort of both the researcher and participant.

The same agenda was used in each interview. The following questions were asked:

- 1 How do you conceptualise *networking* and what are the main characteristics of networking?
- 2 Why do you network; that is, what are your motivations for networking?
- 3 How do you conceptualise *social networking* and what are the main characteristics of social networking?
- 4 Describe the contents of your social network.
- 5 How do you perceive social networking?
- 6 What challenges have you experienced in your social networking efforts?
- 7 As a working mother, what networking challenges have you experienced in your social networking efforts?
- 8 Which behavioural elements do you feel are necessary to ensure successful social networking?

The aim of the first question was to gain a possible definition of the concept of *networking* and to determine the main characteristics thereof. The aim of the second question was to determine whether networking plays an important role in the lives of the businesswomen; that is to investigate their motivations behind networking. The aim of the third question was to gain a possible definition of social networking and to determine the main characteristics thereof. The aim of the fourth question was to investigate the contents of the participants' social networks. The aim of the fifth question was to investigate the perceptions of social networking of businesswomen. The aim of the sixth question was to determine the challenges that businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts. The aim of the seventh question was to determine the networking challenges that businesswomen with children experience in their social networking efforts. The aim of the eighth questions was to determine the behavioural elements that are needed to ensure successful social networking.

All interviews were audio-taped with the permission of the participants. The researcher used a tape recorder, as well as a digital recorder as backup to ensure that no data would be lost. During the interviews, the researcher made use of probing questions (such as: "can you please elaborate?") in order to encourage the respondent to continue with what they were talking about (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:130). Other techniques used included minimal responses (for example, paralinguistic responses such as nodding occasionally and encouraging verbal responses such as "I see", "I understand what you are saying" and "I hear what you are saying") and summarising (such as: "you told me earlier that you see trust as one of the important elements within your social network. Can you please elaborate on that?"). At the end of each interview, paraphrasing was used (for example: "so, networking

plays an important role in your life?”), which allowed the participant to elaborate on and further interpret what they were saying (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003:55).

During the interviews field notes, including observational and personal notes, were taken. In the observational notes the participants' reactions towards questions, as well as their posture and facial expressions when answering questions were documented. Personal notes documented the researcher's emotions before, during and after each interview. The researcher's own biases, reactions and problems experienced during the interviews were also documented in the personal notes (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:135) as well as the date, time and location of the interviews. Directly after each interview, the researcher completed her field notes. Field notes were used to record the researcher's experiences during the interviews (Shank, 2006:60) and to make sense of the research setting (for example, notes were taken on the research surroundings such as the atmosphere of the room where the interviews took place) (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:258). The field notes assisted the researcher in managing the data and compiling the research results (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:258). After each interview, the participants were asked to complete a short biographical questionnaire that included their age, ethnicity, qualifications, marital and parental status, and the industry in which they work. The participants were then thanked for their contribution. Thereafter, each tape was labelled in order to ensure the anonymity of each participant.

Thirty-one interviews were conducted over a period of three months. A researcher typically conducts twenty to thirty interviews based on several visits to the field to collect the data (Creswell, 1998:56). Data saturation was reached after the twenty-third interview. Data saturation is reached when the researcher does not gain any new information from further interviews (Kumar, 2005:165) – in this case no new information was gained from the interviews following the twenty-third interview. However, the researcher decided to conduct more interviews in order to obtain a larger number of rich direct quotations related to the identified themes, and to ensure that no new information had been missed. E-mails were sent out at a later date to thank the participants again for their contribution and to report on the progress of the study. This was done in order to ensure that the relationships established during the interviews were maintained in such a manner that future participation of the participants would be likely (for example, participants would be available for member-checking).

1.4.2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the data that has been collected (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:150). Several steps were followed in analysing the data. The steps are illustrated in table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Steps in data analysis

Step	Description
Step 1	The data was first organised and prepared for data analysis. This included transcribing the audio recordings and typing up the field notes (Creswell, 2003:191). The researcher, with the help of a transcriber, transcribed the thirty-one interviews. A transcriber is an independent third person who assists the researcher in translating the verbal utterances into written text (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:345). The transcriptions from the interviews were analysed separately by making use of the theme approach and open coding as discussed by Creswell (1994:153).
Step 2	Next, the data was explored. During this step, the transcripts (textual data) were read through in order to gain general insight into the participants' overall views and perceptions as expressed in the interviews (Creswell, 2003:191). The interviews were then read through a second time and matters regarded as the most important (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:347) and relevant to understanding the social network practices of Gauteng businesswomen were highlighted. By highlighting these matters, the most important sections within the textual data were located (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:350). Notes were drawn up on matters found to be emphasised throughout the interviews.
Step 3	The data was then classified into three groups, namely perceptions, experiences and recommendations. This was done in order to assist the researcher when coding the collected data.
Step 4	Thereafter, the data was coded using open coding. This coding technique entails the researcher reading the textual data line by line (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:348) and then applying a name or code to each section of the text that is regarded as important by the researcher (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:350).
Step 5	Main themes were identified. Coding was used to assist the researcher in identifying major themes or categories within the collected data (Creswell, 2003:193; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:349).
Step 6	After themes had been identified, sub-themes and additional themes were identified and relationships amongst the themes, sub-themes and additional themes were sought (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:237). The identified sub-themes and additional themes were then categorised under the main themes. A co-coder was used to ensure correspondence between all the identified themes and sub-themes. The direct quotations of the participants were then used to support the major findings of the study as

Step	Description
	will be presented in chapter two and chapter three (Creswell, 2003:194).
Step 7	Lastly, member-checking was used to ensure the credibility and validity of the research findings (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:95). With member-checking, the views and perceptions of the participants were presented to them in order to allow them to correct any errors due to mistakes they might have made during the interviews or due to the researcher's misinterpretation of the words or actions of the participants. Member-checking also allowed further data collection through the participants' responses to the interpretation of their views and perceptions (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:96).

1.4.2.5 Trustworthiness

Alternative models appropriate to qualitative designs are needed in order to ensure rigour in qualitative research without sacrificing the relevance thereof (Krefting, 1991:215). Guba's model for qualitative research was applied with a view to ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991). The criteria for identifying trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Krefting, 1991:217–221). An overview of the strategies used during the research process is presented in Table 1.3. These strategies were utilised in order to ensure trustworthy findings.

Table 1.3: Strategies applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings

Criteria	Strategy	Application
Credibility	Data triangulation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2002:146).	Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews and making field notes. The social networking theory was also reviewed.
	Peer examination	A panel of reviewers (North-West University Ethics Committee) reviewed the research proposal and the study supervisor evaluated the interview agenda.
Transferability	Interview techniques	Interview techniques such as probing questions, summarising and paraphrasing were used during the interviews, in order to increase the credibility of the findings.
	Detailed description	Detailed information about the participants, research settings and methodology was collected, in order to allow other researchers to transfer the findings of this study.
	Nominated sample	Participants who were knowledgeable on the concept of <i>social networking</i> were sampled to participate in the study.
Dependability	Co-coder	A co-coder assisted the researcher in identifying the

Criteria	Strategy	Application
	Auditing	research themes and establishing correspondence between the identified themes and sub-themes. The researcher audio-recorded all interviews and took field notes, which facilitated auditing.
Confirmability	Confirmability auditing	The transcriptions and field notes can be made available for auditing.

1.4.2.6 Ethical considerations

Before interviews were conducted, the North-West University Ethics Committee approved the nature and approach of this study. After consent was granted, the process of recruiting participants began. The research was at all times conducted in an honest, fair and respectful manner and the researcher did not knowingly discriminate against the participants on the basis of their age, sex, ethnicity, religion and language (Struwig & Stead, 2001:67).

The confidentiality and anonymity of each participant were also respected. When using qualitative research methods, it is important not to compromise the confidentiality of the sources and the settings (Shank, 2006:119). The confidentiality of the participants was ensured by only the researcher, supervisor (co-coder) and an independent transcriber having access to the audio recordings. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants outside the interviewing context, no participant names were recorded alongside any phrases documented during the interviews. Confidentiality was further ensured in that the researcher did not disclose issues that the participants wished to keep confidential (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:80). The anonymity of the participants was further ensured in that the location at which the interviews took place was not identified (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:78).

At the beginning of each interview, the participants were given information on the study, its objectives and the process that would be followed during the interview. It was emphasised that the data collected from the interviews would be handled with confidence outside the interviewing context. Participants were asked to sign consent forms. This is seen as an agreement between the researcher and participants, whereby the participants agreed to participate in the research study and gave the researcher permission to collect and use the data gathered from the interviews in the study (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:82). The consent form stated that participation in the study was voluntarily, that participants could withdraw from the interview at any stage and that the researcher would not participate in the interview

(Daymon & Holloway, 2002:78). Participants were also asked to agree to complete a questionnaire after the interviews.

After the completion of the study, each participant will receive a copy thereof. A data report will also be drawn up for the participants, Women in Finance and Absa Capital, which will include basic information on the study, the findings, conclusions and recommendations. Women in Finance is a non-profit organisation promoting women within business. This organisation assists in the empowerment of women and all small businesses with regard to financial literacy and finances (WIF, 2005). Absa Capital is a division of ABSA Bank Limited. The organisation provides hedge funds to large corporate and governments, asset managers and institutional clients with solutions to their financing and risk management needs (Absa Capital, 2007). An additional data report will be drawn up for Women in Networking (WIN). This is a networking organisation within Absa Capital. This report will include the research findings specific to the participants who are members of WIN and employed at Absa Capital.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 will examine the networking practices of Gauteng businesswomen. In this chapter the businesswomen's perceptions of *networking* and *social networking* will be investigated. Thereafter, Chapter 3 will investigate the social networking practices of Gauteng businesswomen, which will focus on the perceived experiences of businesswomen of social networking. Lastly, Chapter 4 will present the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this study.

1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has sketched the problem statement and given the research questions in response to the problem statement. In addition, the chapter has presented the research objectives that attempt to answer these research questions. It has also presented the research methodology used and the research procedure followed. Lastly, the chapter has given a brief layout of the chapters that follow.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE 1

THE NETWORKING PRACTICES OF BUSINESSWOMEN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the networking practices of businesswomen in Gauteng, South Africa. The study of women's networking practices is critical as networking can assist women in obtaining the support they need both in the business environment and at home. Networking serves as a tool that assists individuals in gaining a balance between their personal and professional lives. A non-probability purposive sample, followed by snowball sampling, was used to select businesswomen for in-depth interviews ($n = 31$). In-depth interviews as a qualitative method were used to investigate the networking practices of these participants. The results indicate that businesswomen have various perceptions regarding the concepts of *networking* and *social networking*. It was also found that they include certain types of people in their social networks and that they receive various business and personal benefits when their networking is focused. These findings provide a background to the manner in which businesswomen perceive networking and social networking, and therefore the findings can serve as a basis of internal training initiatives to raise businesswomen's awareness of networking and social networking, together with the meaning this may hold for them in their work and personal lives. This information can further be utilised by businesswomen for social network building.

KEYWORDS: Networking, Social networking, Businesswomen, Gauteng, South Africa, Qualitative research.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Networking is a dynamic, ever-changing process (Boe & Youngs, 1989:9) that involves the development and maintenance of personal and professional relationships with the intention to share information that will be mutually beneficial to the involved role-players (Boe, 1994:9; Tullier, 2004:9). Networks can serve as an individual's safety net and moral support when personal changes take place (for example, when changing jobs or career paths, or moving to a new city). Individuals can utilise networks to gain social support, to develop new friendships, to develop additional interests and it is viewed as an important tool that individuals can utilise when he or she needs career advice (Boe, 1994:9; Forret & Sullivan, 2002:252).

Internationally, research on networking has not focused on specific areas. Research on networking has been conducted in various fields, including knowledge management (for example Seufert, Von Krogh & Bach, 1999), industrial and commercial training (for example Williams, 2000) and marketing (for example O'Donnell, 2004). International research has

been conducted on social networks in general (for example Gray, Kurihara, Hommen & Feldman, 2007; Rosenthal, 1997; Topper, 2007) and on the internal and external networks of women in business (for example Travers, Pemberton & Stevens, 1997). International research has also been conducted on the difference between the networks and networking practices of men and women (for example Bastani, 2007; Brass, 1985; Van Emmerik, Euwema, Geschiere & Schouten, 2006; Ibarra, 1992; 1993; Rothstein & Davey, 1995; Waldstrøm & Madsen, 2007) and on networking as a tool for women to achieve business opportunities and career success (for example Ehrich, 1994; Knouse & Webb, 2001; Linehan, 2001; Pini, Brown & Ryan, 2004; Singh, Vinnicombe & Kumra, 2006).

South African research on networking has been conducted on business networking in South Africa (De Klerk, 2006; De Klerk & Kroon, 2007; 2008). Other research on networking within the South African context includes research on inter-organisational learning networks (for example Morris, Bessant & Barnes, 2006) and inter- and intra-industry networks (for example Denner & Oosthuizen, 2008). Research, that focuses on gender issues and discrimination within organisations has also been undertaken (for example Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Mathur-Helm, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2005). Many research efforts and case studies within the health sciences that focus on the effects of social support and social networks on the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa have also been conducted (for example Campbell, Nair, Maimane & Sibiyi, 2008; Gilbert & Soskolne, 2003; Feitsma, Koen, Pienaar & Minnie, 2007; Ncama, McInerney, Bhengu, Corless, Wantland, Nicholas, McGibbon & Davis, 2008; Pronyk, Harpham, Busza, Phetla, Morison, Hargreaves, Kim, Watts & Porter, 2008).

It seems as if limited research has been conducted specifically on the networking practices of South African businesswomen. The study of networking amongst businesswomen is critical, as networking is a vital tool that may assist businesswomen in gaining learning opportunities, developing their personal skills, making social contacts and increasing their self-confidence (Travers *et al.*, 1997:63-65). The objective of the current study is to develop an improved understanding of the networking practices of businesswomen in Gauteng. This is achieved by means of an investigation into the way businesswomen perceive networking and social networking. The motivation behind their networking practices is also explored and the contents of their social networks are investigated. The research findings of this in-depth investigation into networking could form part of internal training initiatives that will introduce businesswomen to the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* and the meaning these may hold in their work and personal lives. In this way, a contribution can be made to the personal and professional development of businesswomen in urban areas.

2.2 LITERATURE BACKGROUND

For purposes of this study, the literature background is divided into two main sections, namely networking and social networking.

2.2.1 NETWORKING

Networking is a concept described from the perspectives of many researchers (for example Boe, 1994; Lucas, 1994; Misner & Morgan, 2000; Kay, 2004; Tullier, 2004; White, 2004; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005; Bannerman, 2006; Yeung, 2006). It involves meeting with people, interacting with them and building strong relationships (Boe, 1994:9; Lucas, 1994:20; Misner & Morgan, 2000:13, 20; Tullier, 2004:31; Bannerman, 2006:15, 20). In networking, individuals interact with the intention to build long-term relationships (White, 2004:5). Networks consist of relationships that can be mutually beneficial and mutually trusting (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13). Bringing beneficial elements into the relationship-building process is critical (Kay, 2004:171). In networking, individuals share information, ideas, advice, resources and support that can benefit all the role-players involved at a personal or professional level (Boe, 1994:9; Misner & Morgan, 2000:13; Tullier, 2004:30; Bannerman, 2006:15).

Networking is a skill that can be learned (Yeung, 2006:17). These skills can be acquired and must continually be developed (Boe, 1994:7; Kay, 2004:3) as it is critical for personal success (Rezac, 2005:xiii). The social skills of networking include knowledge, patience, practice and a positive attitude (Rezac, 2005:xiv) and can be acquired by anyone who is willing and ready to work hard (Boe, 1994:8). Networking can be adapted to any situation in which and at any time at which people meet (Yeung, 2006:22). Although most connections between people are still made in the traditional way through relationships with friends, family and co-workers that are already part of an individual's life (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:229), network opportunities can arise from formal situations (for example, a scheduled networking appointment with someone) and informal situations (for example, an unplanned conversation with someone on a plane, train or bus; Tullier, 2004:31). Further examples are mothers meeting each other at school events or parental meetings, or women meeting at the dentist, beauty salon or gym (Tullier, 2004:37). Because networking can take place in various environments, individuals need to be open to interacting with people in any situation (Tullier, 2004:37; Yeung, 2006:23).

2.2.1.1 Maintaining relationships

Networking does not only involve interacting with people and building relationships; maintenance of the developed relationships is also a critical aspect of ensuring network success (Boe, 1994:9; Tullier, 2004:30; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13). In order for networkers to gain mutual benefits from their networking efforts, their network contacts need to be continually maintained (Boe, 1994:9; Tullier, 2004:9; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13). People provide different kinds of support and it is unlikely for one person to provide all the needed support. Individuals should therefore maintain relationships with a wide variety of people in order to ensure provision of all types of needed support (Walker, Wasserman & Wellman, 1993:72).

Networking does not involve selfish practices (Tullier, 2004:8) and individuals should not treat their network relationships in an underhanded manner. In networking, individuals should focus on the relationship and not on the outcome of that relationship (Boe, 1994:72). A balance must be established between developing, maintaining and utilising relationships (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:183). Therefore, it is important to establish emotive connections between individuals when networking initially (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:191) and later utilising the network. This involves getting to know the individual first before utilising the networking relationship (Boe, 1994:72; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:191). Individuals should network with the intention to build long-term relationships for mutual gain or benefit (White, 2004:5). Solid and strong relationships are built over time and when these are based on trusted and secure foundations the network relationships will be enduring (Kay, 2004:79).

Networking is mutually beneficial (Boe, 1994:9; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13) and should be viewed as a reciprocal process. Individuals should be willing to give what they have received because reciprocity is a basic principle of networking (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:75). Networking does not entail asking people for jobs or using them to gain what is needed (Tullier, 2004:8–9; Yeung, 2006:168). An individual should first give to the people in his or her network because generosity is a critical element of strong networks (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:75). The ability to nurture network relationships and to keep them current constitutes an essential life skill that can contribute to the well-being and happiness of individuals (Rezac, 2005:xii) and such relationships can allow individuals to meet and share experiences with like-minded people (Kay, 2004:12, 19; Nierenberg, 2005:14).

2.2.1.2 Motivation behind networking

A well-cultivated and nurtured network can assist individuals in various ways (Michelli & Straw, 1997:21). Building and maintaining relationships can support and nourish individuals personally (Michelli & Straw, 1997:2) and when people feel supported, their well-being is influenced positively (Michelli & Straw, 1997:8). Networking further provides individuals with the opportunity to build friendships and rapport, and to gain trust, respect and regard for other people (White, 2004:6). It also provides an individual with the opportunity to create positive energy with others, resulting in their considering the individual should an opportunity arise (White, 2004:5, Yeung, 2006:18). In networking, individuals need to have a goal in mind (Yeung, 2006:19), as networking efforts need to be focused in order to achieve the desired networking outcomes (Nierenberg, 2005:1; Yeung, 2006:19). Additional motivations behind networking are discussed below.

1 Networking as a marketing tool

Networking is viewed as a marketing tool (White, 2004:68; Rezac, 2005:120; Bannerman, 2006:17) that can be utilised by individuals to market themselves (Kay, 2004:34; White, 2004:6) and their products or services in situations in which the networking opportunity is created in the right environment (White, 2004:6). As networking is a source of trusted information about people (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:14), it is important for an individual to be honest in terms of his or her strengths, talents, skills, creative ideas and successes when marketing himself or herself (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:15).

2 Networking as a support system

An individual's network can serve as a safety net and provide moral support (Boe, 1994:9), as networking involves building foundations for relationships that are mutually supportive and empowering (Boe, 1994:14). With the constant change and the increased demands of the working environment and the increase in technological innovations, the importance of human interaction is often overlooked. Networking can serve as a support system for an individual because strong personal networks are a mechanism that can be used in order to gain support for all the challenges that an individual experiences (Misner & Morgan, 2000:21).

3 Networking as a means of building new contacts

When individuals wish to start a new business, it is important for them to build a network of contacts (such as clients, customers and investors) that will be in place at the time of the start-up. Networking is a tool that can assist individuals in building these contacts (Yeung, 2006:11). Internal and external contacts need to be built (Kay, 2004:13). The purpose of building contacts within the organisation is to be well informed, which allows individuals to maximise the opportunities that come their way. External contacts (such as clients, work providers and suppliers) will act as referrers, bridges, sources, links and influencers to help achieve personal goals (Kay, 2004:3, 13).

4 The influence of networking on business practices

Networking is a tool that individuals utilise when they wish to start a new business or charitable project, search for new investors, expand the customer base of a business and look for new partners when strategic alliances need to be formed (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:24–26). Networking can also assist individuals in increasing business or in advancing their careers (Kay, 2004:34).

5 Influence of networking on career development

Networking is considered an important means by which individuals can take responsibility of their own careers, (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:27), as it can assist them in achieving their career goals (Boe, 1994:12) and enhance their professional lives (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:22). When individuals have strong personal networks, they can achieve higher job satisfaction (Kay, 2004:4). According to Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:23), networking can assist individuals if they wish to change their career direction or be promoted, or are looking for a new job. In searching for a new job opportunity, it is important to network or communicate with key individuals who are knowledgeable about the particular field or industry. Network contacts are regarded as a good source of field specific information as individuals can share their experiences of the particular field or industry in which they work (Tullier, 2004:15).

6 Networking as a means of sharing beneficial information

Networking is an invaluable tool that individuals can utilise to meet one another and exchange information (Boe, 1994:9; Bannerman, 2006:15). Good networkers are seekers

and providers of information (Rezac, 2005:143). When networking, individuals exchange information that benefits the involved role-players personally (for example, asking a neighbour for the name of a good dentist in the area; Tullier, 2004:6-9). When individuals network effectively, they exchange information, advice and support that lead to mutual success (Boe, 1994:150), growth and happiness of the role-players involved (Tullier, 2004:30).

2.2.2 SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networks are viewed as an individual's social contacts (Gottlieb, 1981:203; Rezac, 2005:24) and include friends, colleagues and acquaintances (Rezac, 2005:24). Individuals are linked together by the social relationships between them (Downes, 2005:411). An individual's social network (for example, his or her network of friends and acquaintances) is a resource provider of social support that assists him or her in coping with everyday problems or crises (Walker *et al.*, 1993:71). An individual's social network also provides instrumental support such as childcare, a ride to work or financial help (Crowell, 2004:16).

Personal networks form part of an individual's social network (De Klerk, 2006:85) and refer to an individual's own group of personal contacts (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2004:11), which include family members and friends that often emerge from school ties, college, church, sports clubs or shared interests (Michelli & Straw, 1997:5). Broadly, personal networks include all those with whom an individual interacts on an informal basis (Walker *et al.*, 1993:73). Personal networks tend to be social in the sense that they usually develop outside of the business environment and are based on the exchange of help and support (Michelli & Straw, 1997:5; Tullier, 2004:77), in order to facilitate a balance between personal and professional lives (Michelli & Straw, 1997:20). Individuals usually rely on their personal contacts to gain access to information, resources and opportunities (Crowell, 2004:15).

Interacting socially results in the building and maintaining of relationships (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13). It is possible for life-long friendships to be built through meeting individuals in non-business environments (such as individuals having dinner at a mutual friend's house). Social networking can take place when individuals are having dinner or lunch out, or are attending other social events, such as wine-tasting evenings (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:230; Nierenberg, 2005:27; Yeung, 2006:89–90). Social networking through the Internet is a means by which an individual can meet new people and can even be utilised to look for dates. It can also be utilised to connect with other individuals to

discuss shared interests such as music or films, to conduct business or to develop affiliate and business partners (Power, Power & Coote, 2006:58).

Social motivations behind networking include the development of new friendships (Boe, 1994:9; Bannerman, 2006:29). Building friendships is critical as individuals cannot be effective networkers without being sociable and this cannot be achieved in the absence of friends (Bannerman, 2006:29). Interacting socially is also important for career development because local community involvement is regarded as an effective way to make career connections. Strong connections are built, for example, through individuals becoming involved in charitable work. Involvement in charitable activities displays positively regarded characteristics, such as trust, that render people attractive candidates for networking. Participating in clubs (such as sports clubs or health clubs) is also an effective way for an individual to extend his or her social network (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:232–233).

An individual's network of social relationships can potentially be used for business through the development of commercial exchanges and working alliances, and the gaining of career advice and opportunities (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:14). Opportunities can also arise, for example, through talking to other parents when attending a hockey practice or through an individual eventually introducing himself or herself to the individual he or she sees in the lift each morning (Rezac, 2005:114). Networking events within organisations are also a mechanism through which networking opportunities can develop. These can include inviting people to a breakfast meeting, lunch or after-work event, wine-tasting with a wine expert in the meeting room, a social gathering to watch a televised budget speech or a reception for introducing a business associate from another section of the organisation (Rezac, 2005:119).

Social networks can also serve as a source of support. Individuals can use their personal contacts to help gain balance in their lives because networking provides a strong bridge between personal and professional lives (Boe & Youngs, 1989:26; Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry & Gordon, 2007:99–100). An individual's personal network is critical to his or her well-being (Michelli & Straw, 1997:15). The investment, development and maintenance of personal networks are therefore critical (Michelli & Straw, 1997:15) because these can provide opportunities for support, stimulation, challenges, appreciation, acceptance, involvement and enjoyment (Michelli & Straw, 1997:20) that can assist in maintaining balance. It is also important for an individual to maintain the individuals in his or her support network to prevent them feeling used or burnt out (Boe, 1994:153).

A distinction is commonly made between formal and informal networks or formal and informal structures (Ibarra, 1993:58). A formal network (business network) is seen as a set of formally specified relationships, whereas informal networks (social networks) involve patterns of interaction that are more discretionary and where the intent of relationships are work-related or social. The intention of networking efforts differs when individuals have different objectives. If an individual is networking in order to enhance his or her profile, such an approach and activity level will be different to that of an individual who is networking with a view to gaining assistance in order to start a new business (White, 2004:14). Business networks are more structured than other types of networks. Strategic networking takes place when individuals are focused in their networking approach. They purposefully seek out individuals with whom they wish to build relationships, and nurture those relationships (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:15–17). Networking for business purposes is likely to take place in the context of a business activity than an activity with the aim of pleasure or recreation (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:183). With informal networks, the interaction between individuals is more flexible (Ibarra, 1993:58).

2.2.2.1 Contents of social networks

Social networks consist of groups of individuals who are interconnected, have similar purposes (Braude & Francisco-La Grange, 1993:14) and are providers of social support (Walker *et al.*, 1993:71). Individuals within social networks use informal social network activities, such as similar social interests shared between colleagues, as a means to socialise with each other (Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006:56). According to White (2004:66), it is important that individuals include those who share similar values and interests in their networks. When no common ground exists between individuals within the network, contacts will not be sustainable in the long-term.

Business contacts are often found within social environments. These environments include networking events, conferences, business-related social gatherings (Rezac, 2005:114), evening events (such as drinks, a buffet dinner, a sit-down dinner and sampling wine at a wine cellar), charity fun runs and launches of new products or a church picnic. These might take the form of social occasions, but they are valuable opportunities to network (Tullier 2004:36; Rezac, 2005:113; Yeung, 2006:89–90).

2.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the networking practices of businesswomen in Gauteng, South Africa. In order to attain this primary objective, the following secondary objectives were formulated:

- 1 to investigate the concept of *networking* through qualitative research;
- 2 to determine the motivation behind the networking efforts of businesswomen in Gauteng;
- 3 to investigate the concept of *social networking* through qualitative research; and
- 4 to investigate the contents of Gauteng businesswomen's social networks.

2.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology consists of various elements, namely the research design, participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

2.4.1 Research design

The research undertaken in this study is explorative in nature. This type of research design was chosen because limited prior knowledge existed on the topic under investigation (Struwig & Stead, 2001:7; Tustin *et al.*, 2005:84) and insight into the general nature of the topic under investigation was needed (Tustin *et al.*, 2005:84). In-depth interviews were used to investigate the topic under investigation in order to uncover the participants' views and perceptions on networking and social networking (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:108).

2.4.2 Participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure

The sample population consists of a non-probability purposive voluntary sample of businesswomen who work and live in Gauteng ($n = 31$). Gauteng, one of the nine provinces in South Africa, is regarded as the economic powerhouse of South Africa and the heart of the country's commercial business and industrial sectors (SA, 2009). A well-known networker in Gauteng was contacted to provide the names of businesswomen to invite to the interviews. Inclusion criteria for choosing the networker included:

- 2 a woman who works in business;
- 3 a woman who is well-known under the businesspeople in Gauteng;
- 4 a woman who has knowledge on the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* and

5 a woman who is willing to share valuable networking contacts.

The criteria for selecting the participants were:

- 1 women who work in business;
- 2 women who live and work in the Gauteng Province;
- 3 women who would be willing to share their personal networking experience;
- 4 women who would be available to contact afterwards for cross-member checking; and
- 5 women who are English- and/or Afrikaans-speaking.

The interviews were conducted between November 2008 and January 2009. Unfortunately, many of the businesswomen contacted found this a difficult time of the year to participate in the study because they had several personal and work-related responsibilities. Five participants who were willing and had sufficient time to take part in the study were contacted and interviews were scheduled. A non-probability snowball sampling technique was used to gain access to other Gauteng businesswomen with whom interviews were conducted. This was done by asking each of the five original participants to identify other Gauteng businesswomen who would possibly be able to participate in the study.

The majority of the participants (73.7%) were White, while 20% were Black and 6.7% were Indian women. Most of the participants (43.3%) were between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four, 26.7% were between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four, 26.7% between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four and 3.3% under the age of twenty-five. In the main, the participants held a diploma or certificate (38.71%) or a postgraduate qualification (38.71%), and were thus mostly representative of the sample. The remainder of the participants held a Bachelor degree (19.35%) or a Grade Twelve certificate (3.23%). A large percentage of the participants were single (35.5%), some were divorced (25.81%) or married (22.6%) and had no children under the age of twelve (67.74%). A smaller percentage of women were engaged (3.23%), widowed (3.23%) or in a long-term relationship (9.7%) and had children under the age of twelve (32.26%). The participants were representative of various industries. The majority of the participants were from the financial industry (45.16%). Other industries included business services (12.9%), education/training (9.68%), human resource consulting (9.68%), information technology (6.45%), property (3.23%), law (3.23%), construction (3.23%), fashion (3.23%) and tourism (3.23%), and 6.45% of the participants were representative of all industries. During the interviews, one participant felt uncomfortable indicating her ethnicity and another participant felt uncomfortable revealing her age.

2.4.3 Data collection

In-depth interviews and field notes were used to collect the data. Face-to-face interaction between the researcher and participant during the interviews provided in-depth and rich information on the topic investigated (Kumar, 2005:124). The duration of the interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour. A central location was selected for conducting the interviews. In order to ensure a relaxed environment, a coffee shop with a relaxed atmosphere was chosen. Furthermore, in order to ensure privacy during the interviews, dividers were set up in the coffee shop. The researcher offered the participants refreshments in order to ensure that both the researcher and participants were at ease. The participants were asked to sign consent forms prior to the interviews. The same agenda was used in every interview, in which the following questions were asked:

- 1 How do you conceptualise *networking* and what are the main characteristics of networking?
- 2 Why do you network; that is, what are your motivations for networking?
- 3 How do you conceptualise *social networking* and what are the main characteristics of social networking?
- 4 Describe the contents of your social network.

The interviews were audio-taped with the permission of the participants. During the interviews, probing questions, minimal verbal and paralinguistic responses, summarising and paraphrasing were used with the aim of allowing participants to explain and interpret to a greater depth and extent (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003:55). Field notes were taken during and directly after each interview, including observational and personal notes. The researcher noted her feelings and the reactions of the participants before, during and after the interviews and completed her field notes after each interview, in order to facilitate data management and compiling the research results (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:258). Following the interviews, the participants were asked to complete a short biographical questionnaire. In order to ensure anonymity, each audio-tape was labelled directly after the interview.

Data saturation was reached after the twenty-third interview. Data saturation is reached when no new information is gained by the researcher from further interviews (Kumar, 2005:165). However, the researcher decided to conduct additional interviews in order to gain a larger number of rich direct quotations on the identified themes and to ensure that no new information was missed. At a later date, e-mails were sent out to thank participants again and to report on the study's progress.

2.4.4 Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted in steps. These steps are illustrated in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Steps in data analysis

Step	Description
Step 1	In the first step, the data was organised and prepared for analysis. This included typing the field notes and transcribing the interviews (Creswell, 2003:191) from verbal utterances to written text (textual data) with the help of an independent transcriber (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:345). The textual data from the interviews was analysed separately using the theme approach and open coding, as discussed by Creswell (1994:153).
Step 2	In the second step, the data was explored by a first reading of the transcripts in order to gain a general insight into the views and perceptions expressed in the interviews (Creswell, 2003:191), and thereafter a second reading in order to highlight the most important (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:347) and relevant issues with the aim of better understanding the networking practices of businesswomen.
Step 3	In the third step, the data was grouped into three categories: the participants' perceptions, experiences and recommendations on networking. This assisted the researcher during coding.
Step 4	In the fourth step, open coding was used to assign codes to each section of the text that was highlighted as important in the second step (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:350).
Step 5	In the fifth step, major themes were identified (Creswell, 2003:193; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:349).
Step 6	In the sixth step, sub-themes and additional themes and relationships amongst themes were identified (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:237). The identified sub-themes and additional themes were then placed under the focused main themes. A co-coder was then used to ensure correspondence between all the identified themes and sub-themes. The quotations of the participants were then used to support the major findings of the study (Creswell, 2003:194), as will be demonstrated in Section 2.5.
Step 7	In the last step, member-checking was used to ensure that the views and perceptions of the participants had been correctly recorded and interpreted. This was done by presenting the transcripts to the participants in order for them to correct any errors they might have made during the interviews or to correct misinterpretations on behalf of the researcher (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:96).

2.4.5 Trustworthiness

According to Krefting (1991:215), alternative models appropriate to qualitative designs are needed to establish rigour in qualitative research without sacrificing the relevance thereof. Guba's model for qualitative research was applied in this study in order to ensure that the findings were trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991). Criteria used to ensure that the findings are trustworthy included credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:219; Krefting, 1991:217–221). Strategies used to ensure the credibility of the findings included data triangulation (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002:146) and peer examination. To ensure the transferability of the findings, various interview techniques (such as summarising and paraphrasing) and detailed description were used. A nominated sample was also chosen. Strategies used to ensure the dependability of the findings included using a co-coder and auditing the interviews (recording all interviews and making field notes). Confirmability auditing (making transcriptions and field notes available for auditing) was used to ensure the confirmability of the findings.

2.4.6 Ethical considerations

In conducting qualitative research, ethical considerations are critical. Before the research was conducted, the North-West University Ethics Committee approved the nature and approach of this study. After consent was granted, the researcher began the data collection process. The confidentiality and anonymity of each participant were respected at all times. The confidentiality of the participants was ensured by only the researcher, supervisor and an independent transcriber having access to the audio recordings. No participant names were connected to any phrases documented during the interviews. Participants were informed about the nature of the study (that is, the background information on the study, the research objectives and the process to be followed) before each interview was conducted. Participants were asked to sign consent forms allowing the researcher to use the collected data. These forms stated that participation was voluntary, the participant could withdraw from the study at any point and that all the data collected would be handled with confidentiality. During the interviews, the researcher was honest and fair and conducted the interviewing process in a respectful manner. No one was discriminated against on the basis of their age, sex, ethnicity, religion or language (Struwig & Stead, 2001:67).

2.5 THEMES AND FINDINGS

A summary of the main themes and sub-themes is given in Table 2.2. The findings are reported according to each main theme grouped with relevant sub-themes. The verbatim responses (direct quotations) of the participants during the interviews are also included as support.

Table 2.2: Participants' views and perceptions on networking

Main themes	Sub-themes
2.5.1 Conceptualisation and characteristics of <i>networking</i>	2.5.1.1 Networking is interacting with people 2.5.1.2 Networking entails sharing information 2.5.1.3 Networking is a learnable skill 2.5.1.4 Networking can be done anywhere 2.5.1.5 Networking entails building and maintaining relationships
2.5.2 Reasons and motivations for networking	2.5.2.1 Networking must be focused 2.5.2.2 Networking is a marketing tool 2.5.2.3 Business motivations behind networking 2.5.2.4 Personal motivations behind networking
2.5.3 Conceptualisation and characteristics of <i>social networking</i>	2.5.3.1 Social networking takes place in an informal environment 2.5.3.2 Social networking is a way to make new friends 2.5.3.3 Social networking is a gathering place for individuals with similar interests 2.5.3.4 The subject matter and intention of social and business networking differ 2.5.3.5 Social networking is informal and business networking is formal
2.5.4 Contents of social networks	2.5.4.1 Supportive people 2.5.4.2 Individuals with similar values 2.5.4.3 Business contacts can be found in social environments

2.5.1 Conceptualisation and characteristics of *networking*

Participants perceived various perceptions of *networking*. These are discussed below.

2.5.1.1 Networking is interacting with people

Four participants perceived networking as a way to interact with other individuals. The following quotations illustrate this finding: *"I think networking is being able to interact with other people whether it is a social or business environment."* and *"Networking is actually being able to interact with other people whether they are strangers or [people] that you are familiar with."* Literature is consistent with this finding in that networking is viewed as the ability to meet with individuals, interact with them and develop relationships (Boe, 1994:9; Lucas, 1994:20; Misner & Morgan, 2000:13, 20; Tullier, 2004:31; Bannerman, 2006:15).

In addition to this finding, six participants further indicated that while networking, individuals interact with each other in order to gain value (such as gaining knowledge, new information and new contacts) from that interaction. Some of the responses in this regard are: *"So networking for me is being around other people, actively interacting and speaking with them with the intention of being able to gain some knowledge, some new information or even making new contacts."* and *"... taking lessons from that interaction to say what have I drawn from this conversation or what contact actually add value in my life that I have been able to draw from networking."* This finding is supported in the literature. Bannerman (2006:15) suggests that networking refers to people meeting with each other and sharing information that has the potential of being beneficial. People meet other individuals and develop relationships with the intention to share ideas and gain referrals, advice, information, support and resources (Boe, 1994:9; Misner & Morgan, 2000:13).

2.5.1.2 Networking entails sharing information

Two participants perceived networking as a means by which information can be shared. The following quotations illustrates this finding: *"Networking is an informal means of getting information [and] sharing information that has also got a key role in generating new relationships [and] maintaining new relationships."* and *"Well, I guess for me [networking] is more like information-sharing sessions whereby women from different sectors get together then share information."* The literature extensively provides support for this finding. *Networking* refers to people meeting and sharing information with each other (Boe, 1994:9; Misner & Morgan, 2000:13; Tullier, 2004:30; Bannerman, 2006:15).

2.5.1.3 Networking is a learnable skill

The participants (two participants) perceived networking to be a learnable skill. The following quotation illustrates this finding: *"Networking is something that can be learnt."* This

finding is supported in the literature. Networking is a learnable skill (Yeung, 2006:17) and entails social skills, which can be acquired by anyone who is willing and ready to work hard (Boe, 1994:7, 8).

2.5.1.4 Networking can be done anywhere

Three participants felt that networking is not restricted to any one location or environment. Networking can take place in any situation or environment and at any time. Examples of the participants' responses are as follows: "*Networking for me is any situation that you are in whether it is weekends, dinner, formal or informal situations and you are promoting yourself and asking questions like what people do and what they are interested in.*" and "*I see networking as something that can be done in all environments all the time.*" This finding is consistent with the literature. Networking can be adapted to any situation where people meet (Yeung, 2006:22). Individuals need to be open to any networking opportunities as people interact with each other anywhere (for example, at the dentist, beauty salons or gyms (Tullier, 2004:37).

In addition to this finding, one participant indicated that networking can take place in formal or informal situations. The following quotation supports this finding: "*Networking can be on a formal basis or informal basis.*" This finding is supported in the literature. Tullier (2004:31) states that network opportunities can arise from formal and informal situations. Networking can involve an informal conversation with a friend, family or co-worker, an e-mail sent to a colleague or a formal appointment scheduled with an individual unknown to the individual concerned (Tullier, 2004:32).

2.5.1.5 Networking entails building and maintaining relationships

Seven participants indicated that networking involves building and maintaining network relationships. For example, the participants stated: "*And I see networking more as being about building relationships, not just initiating [relationships, but] building relationships and maintaining those relationships, making sure that it is sustainable so that the network doesn't dry up.*" and "*So I do not think it is just getting to know people, but I think it is keeping relationships as well. A network doesn't remain a network unless energy is put into it.*" The literature extensively provides support for this finding. Networking does not only involve developing relationships but also involves maintaining these relationships through interaction (Boe, 1994:9; Tullier, 2004:30; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13).

The first additional finding concluded that networking involves leveraging any relationships that have been built. No emotive attachment needs to be made with the involved role-players before making use or benefiting from those networking relationships. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations support this finding: “... *it is leveraging relationships, it is not making an emotional attachment to someone, it is leveraging an acquaintance.*” and “... *it is leveraging any relationship.*” This finding is disputed by Boe (1994:72), who claims that treating relationships in an underhanded manner is an obstacle to successful networking. In networking, it is more important to focus on the relationship than the outcomes of that relationship. Individuals must make an emotive connection in order to establish a bond with the other person he or she networks with before utilising that relationship (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:183; 191).

Regarding this finding, two participants also mentioned that networking entails establishing long-term relationships and that establishing these relationships takes some time. The following quotation illustrates this finding: “*It is more like a long-term relationship.*” and “*I think networking is meeting with people with a view of building relationships. It is not something that is a quick thing; you cannot meet somebody and say I am really networking.*” This finding is supported in the literature. According to White (2004:5), networking occurs when people meet with others with the intention to develop long-term relationships for mutual gain or benefit. Building these relationships requires time, commitment and effort (Kay, 2004:10) and therefore, an individual must be focused and patient in building these networks (Kay, 2004:79).

The participants (two participants) further indicated that networking gives like-minded people the opportunity to pursue common interests and gain support. The following quotation supports this finding: “*They allow a space for like-minded people to pursue a common interest and gain support and understanding as well as camaraderie through this medium.*” This finding is supported in the literature by Nierenberg (2005:14), who recommends that individuals include like-minded people in their network. The individuals with whom it is the easiest to interact are those who have common interests and ambitions and share similar life experiences with the individual concerned, as such common ground facilitates networking opportunities.

The second additional finding is that the relationships built during networking are mutually beneficial. In networking, both parties may benefit from the interaction. This finding was perceived by four participants. The following quotations support this finding: “... *to make a connection with various people that you would not normally do on a day-to-day basis but to*

the benefit of both parties.” and “[Interacting with] *people that have something that can potentially help you and being that person to somebody else.*” This finding is supported in the literature. Networking is viewed as the process of building relationships that are mutually beneficial (Boe, 1994:9; Tullier, 2004:9, 30; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13).

Regarding this finding, three participants also mentioned that networking needs to be a reciprocal process; both parties need to work at the relationship and help each other to benefit from that relationship. The following quotation illustrates this finding: *“I think it has to be a two-way network as well, that you are not just doing everything yourself all the time.”* This finding is supported in the literature. According to Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:75) reciprocity is a basic principle of networking and entails both parties being willing to give and receive.

The third additional finding is that networking should only entail helping other people. The following quotation supports this finding: *“Networking should be about serving other people.”* No networking literature was found that supports this unique finding.

Regarding this finding, one participant felt that networking does not entail using people in order to gain something. The following quotation supports this finding: *“... so I guess most people see networking as building relationships in order to get business or to learn something from it. I guess networking is about the relationships, but it is about the purpose of that relationship. You are not just running around and trying to see what you can get from people.”* This finding is supported in the literature. Networking does not involve asking people for jobs or using them to gain additional business customers. Asking a network contact directly for a job is seen as an obstacle in the way of successful networking (Tullier, 2004:8-9; Yeung, 2006:168).

Three participants also mentioned that networking entails an individual giving to the people in his or her network. The following quotations support this finding: *“... [Networking is] a situation where you are in to also give to other people. It is a wonderful opportunity to also provide people and to assist people.”* and *“I do not think that you can, in your personal life, go out and ask people for help if you have not provided assistance to those people before. I have conditioned myself not to ask for help if I have not given my help.”* This finding is supported in the literature. In networking, it is important to remember that the other person also has needs that need to be fulfilled (Tullier, 2004:289). Individuals should give to the people they network with and remember that he or she will not always instantly receive when

they give, but they should give with the knowledge that the exchange will be mutually beneficial at some point in the future (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:75).

2.5.2 Reasons and motivations for networking

Six participants implied that the networking efforts of individuals are motivated. Networking has an underlying objective to achieve the desired networking outcomes. The following quotations illustrate this finding: *“I see networking as a form of interaction, but with a goal.”* and *“A more structured way of networking or interacting [is important] so that one can achieve outcomes; whether it is through knowing the right people and forming connections with them that later may give right to a partnership or business deal.”* This finding is supported in the literature. Networking should be done with an objective in mind in order for the networker to achieve his or her desired outcomes (Nierenberg, 2005:1; Yeung, 2006:19).

2.5.2.1 Networking must be focused

The participants (three participants) stated that networking must be focused in order to gain from the interaction. If the interaction is too vague (for example, if there is no clear objective to networking), nothing will be gained from the interaction. The following quotation supports this finding: *“So there is benefit that you gain out of networking, but it must be a bit focused, if it is too vague nothing tends to happen.”* This finding is supported in the literature. Networkers need to have a goal in mind when networking (Yeung, 2006:19).

2.5.2.2 Networking is a marketing tool

The participants perceived networking as a marketing tool. The following quotation supports this finding: *“I see networking as a marketing tool.”* This is supported in the literature. Networking is a marketing tool (White, 2004:68; Rezac, 2005:120; Bannerman, 2006:17).

The first additional finding is that the participants use networking to market themselves. Networking is a means by which to gain opportunities related to their careers and/or businesses aspirations. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations support this finding: *“To me networking is interacting with various individuals who would possible be in the same industry or across industries. It is meeting on a social level with key individuals either internally or externally in order to market oneself, because that is the object of networking.”* and *“Your networking is also to do with personal marketing, where you go to a particular event and make or create opportunities to meet individuals completely*

outside your sphere that is related to your career and career aspirations.” This finding is supported in the literature. Kay (2004:34) suggests that networking provides the opportunity for individuals to market themselves. If individuals are honest regarding their strengths, talents, skills, creative ideas and successes (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:25), networking can be a proactive form of self-marketing that holds benefits for all of those involved (White, 2004:6).

The second additional finding is that the participants (two participants) use networking to market their products or services; they do not make use of advertising but rather use people to inform other individuals about their products or services. The following quotations illustrate this finding: “... *the definition for me is where you have a specific product or service that you want to provide and where you then make use of people to tell other people about [your product or service], not necessarily making use of advertising.*” and “... *here you use people to firstly use your service and then to advertise it for you without having the cost of marketing [your product or service] yourself.*” This finding is supported in the literature. White (2004:6) suggests that when networking is conducted in the right environment, it offers the opportunity to sell products or services to other people.

2.5.2.3 Business motivations behind networking

Participants perceived various business motivations behind their networking efforts. These motivations are discussed below.

According to three participants, networking lends assistance and support. Networkers can assist each other by providing business leads and support (for example, work support). The following quotations support this finding: “[Networking is] *a process where the formality of business is removed and the intention clear at the same time that business is the priority and where one party can assist the other directly or indirectly through support or leads.*” and “... *getting a core group of people that look out for your interest and you look out for their interests and providing leads to one another.*” This finding is supported in the literature. Boe (1994:14) suggests that networking establishes relationships that are mutually supportive and empowering and that networking serves as a support system. Strong personal networks can be used to gain support for challenges experienced by individuals within the business environment (Misner & Morgan, 2000:21).

Four participants mentioned that they utilise networking to make new business contacts. The following quotations illustrate the finding: “*I see networking as a vehicle to extend my*

contacts, especially business contacts.” and “I think the one critical thing I always tell people is to speak to the people around you, because you will never know who your next customer could be. It could be the person sitting right next to you, or you will never know who your next business associate or potential investor in your business could be, [it could be] the person right next to you. But if you do not network, you will miss out on these opportunities.” This finding is supported in the literature. Yeung (2006:11) suggests that networking is a tool that can assist individuals in building contacts.

One participant mentioned that networking creates synergy and encourages business creation. The following quotation illustrates this finding: “[Networking] *encourages synergy and business creation.*” This finding is supported in the literature. Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:24–26) state that networking is used when an individual wishes to launch a new business or charitable project, search for new investors or a new partner for forming strategic alliances, or expand a business’s customer base.

Three participants indicated that networking is a way in which potential business is gained. The following quotations support this finding: “... *in networking your aim will be to gain knowledge, possible new contacts, and potential business.*” and “*I will not be able to survive without networking, whether it is in terms of my religion or on a personal level, I will not enjoy life without it. On a business level, it is crucial to network as it is how one gets business.*” This finding is supported in the literature. Kay (2004:34) suggests that networking is a process of building relationships with a diverse group of people with the intention to increase business opportunities.

2.5.2.4 Personal motivations behind networking

Participants perceived various personal motivations behind networking. These motivations are discussed below.

The participants (two participants) perceived networking as a means by which information can be gained. The following quotations illustrate this finding: “*Networking is obviously using the people or the resources that you have to get to know people or get information that you do not necessarily have currently.*” and “*I think networking is holding up a network of different people and different things [that] come into contact with you for instance, if you have questions, if you need help, reverencing of their experience and also you provide them with the same back, in order to establish a business network.*” This finding is supported in

the literature. Rezac (2005:143) states that networking entails exchanging knowledge and information. Good networkers are both seekers and sources of knowledge.

Two participants mentioned that networking facilitates learning and growth through interaction. The following quotations support this finding: “[Networking involves] *any opportunity to learn, grow and influence [that is] created by direct or indirect contact with other people that you can relate to.*” and “... *being able to interact in a manner whereby you learn or draw something from others, because I believe that every interaction has lessons in it and that you can learn from the next person.*” This finding is supported in the literature. Networking facilitates the mutual exchange of information, support and advice that lead to the growth, success and happiness of networkers (Tullier, 2004:30).

2.5.3 Conceptualisation and characteristics of *social networking*

Various perceptions of *social networking* were concluded. These are discussed below.

2.5.3.1 Social networking takes place in an informal environment

Nine participants indicated that social networking takes place in a more relaxed, informal environment than business networking. The following quotations support this finding: “*Social networking is more in a social environment, getting to know people in a more relaxed atmosphere and it is obviously got to do with more than one person. I do not think it is as intentional as your more formal networking.*” and “*It is mingling and interacting with people socially or less formally and focus more on personal interests rather than professional.*” This is supported in the literature. According to Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:13), relationships are built through social interaction. Individuals build lifelong friendships through opportunities created by meeting with others in social environments (Nierenberg, 2005:27).

The first additional finding is that social networking takes place when people are having a drink or dinner together. This finding was perceived by three participants. The following quotations illustrate this finding: “[Social networking takes place] *in a social setting such as dinner or drinks where business may not necessarily be the aim but dating for instance.*” and “... *just in a social setting where you go for a cocktail.*” This finding is supported in the literature. Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:230) state that having meals (for example, lunch and dinner) with colleagues and clients is an informal way of building relationships.

The second additional finding is that social networking takes place in a social setting in which people are having a braai (barbeque). This finding was perceived by one participant. The following quotation illustrates this finding: "*Social networking is when you are sitting at a braai or having a dinner or you have been invited as a guest to somebody else's event.*" No literature was found to support this unique finding.

The third additional finding is that social networking refers to the activity in which individuals engage in seeking a date. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations illustrate this finding: "*Social networking for me is more where you are looking for dates.*" and "*Social networking – fortunately I am not in the dating game anymore ...*". This finding is supported in online social networking literature. Social networking allows individuals to connect with others for various purposes, including dating, discussing music or films, conducting business or developing affiliate and business partners (Power *et al.*, 2006:58).

2.5.3.2 Social networking is a way to make new friends

Seven participants indicated that social networking is a way to build new friendships. The following quotations illustrate this finding: "*... you are looking for friends; you are not there to do any form of business. So it is about creating friendships.*" and "*[Social networking] is a good way to make new friends and also just being able to let down and party a little.*" This finding is supported in the literature. Developing new friendships is seen as a social motivation behind networking (Bannerman, 2006:29; Boe, 1994:9). Being a networker necessarily entails being sociable and this cannot be achieved in the absence of friends (Bannerman, 2006:29).

2.5.3.3 Social networking is a gathering place for people with similar interests

Two participants mentioned that social networking takes place in a location or event at which people with similar interests gather. The following quotations support this finding: "*It is about sharing common values, especially trust and integrity and off course a sense of humour helps.*" and "*A common goal with strangers to support and encourage the commonalities.*" This is supported in the literature. Van Emmerik *et al.* (2006:56) state that informal social network activities require sharing common social interests with other people. These social interests facilitate socialising with other people.

Additional to this finding, it was firstly concluded that *social networking* refers to people pursuing similar interests, including community projects. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotation supports this finding: “*Social networking just extends your context, for example business networking would be just within the business context, but social networking may be where you meet people that you can get involved in community projects [with] or you can get involved in clubs.*” This finding is supported in the literature. Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:233) suggest that local community involvement is viewed as a good way to make career connections. Strong connections are built when people do charitable work. Involvement in these activities displays characteristics (for example, trust) that render individuals attractive candidates for networking.

The second additional finding is that clubs, including book clubs, form part of the participants’ social networking. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations support this finding: “*I believe [social networks] are like clubs.*” and “... [for example] *book clubs.*” This is supported in the literature. Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:232–233) suggest that clubs (for example, sports clubs and health clubs) are good ways for an individual to extend their social network.

2.5.3.4 The subject matter and intention of social and business networking differ

One participant indicated that there is a difference between social networking and business networking in that the subject matter and the intention of the interactions differ. The following quotation supports this finding: “*The intention and content of the conversation is different though the outcomes are very much the same.*” This is supported in the literature. White (2004:14) posits that the intention of networking differs when individuals have different objectives. For example, the intention and thus subject matter of the networking of a networker wishing to enhance their profile will differ to that of a networker starting a new business.

The first additional finding concluded that business networks are more structured than social networks. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations illustrate this finding: “*With business networks you get to be much more structured.*” and “... *with business networks you tend to take it much more serious.*” This is supported in the literature. Business networking or strategic networking takes place when individuals are focused in the way they network. They purposefully seek out individuals with whom they wish to build relationships (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:15–17).

The second additional finding is that social and business networking are similar. Three participants perceived business and social networking to be similar. When individuals network effectively, relationships are built, whether these are personal relationships or work-related relationships. The following quotations illustrate this finding: *“Well nowadays in business I think [business networking and social networking] is very similar.”* and *“From my point of view I think it is very similar, I am sure there a difference [between business networking and social networking], but I do not see much of a difference.”* This finding is disputed in the literature by Ibarra (1993:58). She suggests that within organisational research, a distinction between formal (business) and informal (social) networks is commonly made. A formal network includes a set of formal relationships between superiors and subordinates who interact to accomplish organisational tasks, whereas informal networks include relationships that are at a more discretionary level. Within informal networks, the topics can be social, work-related or a combination of both.

2.5.3.5 Social networking is informal and business networking is formal

Two participants mentioned that the difference between business networking and social networking lies in the structure of the networks. Business networking is formal and social networking is informal. The following quotations illustrate this finding: *“... when I am away from work I might be more relaxed, more at ease, but I am not going to be a totally different person [when networking].”* and *“... business networking would be a more formal and targeted situation.”* This is supported in the literature. According to Ibarra (1993:58), formal networks are sets of formally specified relationships, and informal networks involve more flexible and social interactions. Business networking is more focused and strategic (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:15–16).

An additional finding, that two participants perceived, is that business networking is goal-orientated and social networking is entertainment-focused. The following quotations illustrate this finding: *“One is business goal-orientated and the other entertainment.”* and *“... the aim of social networking is to unwind and relax with friends in an informal setting.”* This is supported in the literature. Lindenfield and Lindenfield (2005:183) state that networking in business is seen as a business activity and not an activity done for pleasure. Within informal networks, the interaction between individuals is more flexible (Ibarra, 1993:58).

2.5.4 Contents of social networks

Participants perceived supportive people and those with similar values as part of their social network. It was also concluded that business contacts can be found in social environments.

2.5.4.1 Supportive people

Four participants mentioned that social networks include supportive people. In the face of personal challenges, an individual's social network supports him or her. The following quotations support this finding: *"... I think that particularly in your social network it is really people that care about you and that kind of love and support you."* and *"I think in my social network, it is more people being there for you when something goes wrong, being there for them [when] something goes wrong. It is just being there for people ..."*. This is supported in the literature. Social networks include people that are supportive (Walker *et al.*, 1993:71), such as friends, colleagues and acquaintances (Rezac, 2005:24).

2.5.4.2 Individuals with similar values

One participant indicated that people with the same values are included in social networks. The following quotation illustrates this finding: *"... I think that it is important that they are genuine, that they have a kind of value system that I can relate to. I am not saying that all their values have to be the same as my values, but they [must] have other values that I can relate to."* This finding is supported in the literature. White (2004:66) suggests that it is important for individuals to include people in their network who share the same values. If there is no common ground between the individuals within the network, the contacts will not be sustainable in the long-term.

2.5.4.3 Business contacts can be found in social environments

Three participants indicated that business contacts can be made in social environments. The following quotations support this finding: *"A lot of my business networking actually relates to my social circle. You start with your social circle and network and it is not good if your social circle does not know what business you do because there is a lot of business to be done in your social networking circle."* and *"... sometimes you could go to a social networking event and you find some business contacts there."* This finding is supported in the literature. Valuable contacts can be developed in social settings, such as health clubs, cocktail parties and neighbourhood meetings (Tullier, 2004:36). An individual's network of

social relationships can potentially be utilised for commercial exchanges, working alliances and career advice (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:14).

2.6 CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the networking practices of businesswomen in Gauteng. In order to attain to this primary objective, secondary objectives were developed, as presented in Section 2.3.

The first secondary objective is concerned with the conceptualisation and characteristics of *networking*. In order to attain this objective it was essential to investigate the businesswomen's perceptions of networking. The main finding is that businesswomen perceive various perceptions of the concept of *networking*. These perceptions can provide businesswomen with background on the concept of *networking* and what it entails. Businesswomen are responsible for the energy they put into their network relationships and they need to be aware of these networking perceptions and incorporate these into their networking practices at networking events or in any other networking situation. This is because businesswomen are responsible for the success of their own networking efforts. It is vital for businesswomen to network effectively (for example, maintain their relationships), in order to ensure a balanced network of relationships that can potentially lead to long-term mutual beneficial interactions. In-line with the additional finding of networking involving leveraging relationships without making an emotive connection (which the literature disputed), it is recommended that businesswomen first establish a relationship before leveraging the network relationship. In-line with the additional finding of networking entailing helping other people (on which no networking literature was found) it is recommended that businesswomen first assist the individuals with whom they network before attempting to gain from the relationship.

The second secondary objective is concerned with the reasons and motivation behind the Gauteng businesswomen's networking. It was concluded that networking is initiated by a specific motivation. The motivation can be personal or business-related. In order for businesswomen to ensure that their networking outcomes are reached, their networking efforts must be focused. This conclusion implies that each businesswoman is responsible for her own networking efforts in that she determines her own need to network. Businesswomen are also responsible for the energy they put into their networking efforts to achieve their desired networking outcomes. Businesswomen may be motivated to network

owing to personal or business-related goals. It is thus recommended that businesswomen observe these motivations and establish the networking outcomes that they wish to achieve.

The third secondary objective is concerned with the conceptualisation and characteristics of *social networking*. To attain this objective it was necessary to investigate the businesswomen's perceptions of social networking. The main finding is that there are various perceptions of the concept of *social networking*. These perceptions are: social networking takes place in an informal environment, social networking is a way to make new friends, social networking is a gathering place for people with similar interests, the subject matter and intention of social and business networking differ, and social networking is informal and business networking is formal. Additional to the first finding of social networking takes place in informal environments it was concluded that social networking also takes place when people are having a braai (barbeque). No literature was found to support this unique finding. Another additional finding, for which no social networking literature was found, included social networking as a mean to look for a date. Literature that focused on online social networking was supportive of this finding. Additional to the finding of social- and business networking differs in terms of their subject matter and intent it was concluded that social- and business networking is similar. This was disputed in the literature. The implication of these findings is that it provides businesswomen with background information on the concept of social networking. Businesswomen are given background on when to social network and for what their social networking efforts can be utilised for. The finding further implies that each individual are responsible for their own social networking efforts and how effectively they utilise those opportunities. Various perceptions on the concept of social networking exist. It is thus recommended that businesswomen become aware of these perceptions and incorporate these into their social networking practices, in order to ensure that their social networking efforts are successful. Businesswomen should also clearly establish the goal for their social networking and put energy into those networking efforts in order to reach their specific social networking goal. In terms of the findings that social networking takes place when people are having a braai and social networking as a mean to look for a date, it is recommended that businesswomen view braais as social networking opportunities and recognise that social networking can be a means to seek dates, and utilise such opportunities to assist them in attaining their social networking goals. In terms of the additional finding that social and business networking is similar it is recommended that businesswomen take note of the differences that exist between these two networking forms and bear these in mind when networking in order to achieve the desired networking outcomes.

The fourth secondary objective is concerned with the contents of businesswomen's social networks. It was concluded that social networks consist of supportive people and individuals with similar values and that business contacts can be found in social environments. This finding provides businesswomen with a starting point of the people to include in their social networks. It further provides businesswomen with background information on the social settings in which business connections can be established. The people included in a businesswoman's social network can influence the success of her social networking efforts. Therefore, it is important to be connected in the right way and with the right people. It is thus recommended that businesswomen include the right combination of individuals in their social networks. The individuals included in social networks should be in-line with the businesswoman's desired social networking outcomes.

2.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings indicate that there are various perceptions of the concepts of *networking* and *social networking*. It was further found that businesswomen have specific motivations behind their networking efforts and that their social networks consist of supportive people and individuals with similar interests. It was also found that business contacts are found in social environments. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Networking should become part of school programmes. Students should be made aware of the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* as part of their business study outcomes. When students are exposed to these concepts from an early age, they are likely to form part of their daily living, which may lead to success in their lives (for example, utilising networking to market their profile in order to become employed or gain a business opportunity).
- Networking should be taught at business schools and should form part of business modules at universities, as the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* are vital for students in entrepreneurship, marketing and business studies. If students are familiar with these concepts, they will be able to successfully integrate these into their personal and professional lives. The teaching of networking skills can for example assist students in decreasing stress that they might experience in their personal and professional lives and enable them to live more balanced lives.

- Training initiatives should be established within organisations. Organisations should recognise the importance of businesswomen networking and assist businesswomen in becoming more aware of the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* and the way in which they can be utilised to achieve their personal or professional goals. Organisations could accomplish this through establishing training courses. Training initiatives should focus on:
 - 1 the interactive aspect of networking;
 - 2 the importance of maintaining network relationships;
 - 3 networking as a means of sharing information that is mutually beneficial;
 - 4 networking as a learnable skill and how these skills can be acquired;
 - 5 openness towards networking opportunities in any environment;
 - 6 the importance of establishing clear networking goals.
 - 7 establishing valuable connections within social environments;
 - 8 the importance of social networking objectives; and
 - 9 providing businesswomen with a basis of knowledge on where to socially network and the types of people to include in their social network.

2.8 LIMITATIONS

Various limitations were noted during the research process. These limitations might have influenced the research outcomes and are thus discussed below.

Owing to their involvement in their personal and professional lives, the businesswomen found it difficult to fit the interviews into their busy schedules and had limited time to participate in the interviews. It appeared that the interviews were not highly prioritised by the participants.

Most of the interviews took place at a central coffee shop. During the interviews, the shop was noisy at times, which made the recording of the interviews difficult. There were additional disturbances during some recordings, including the waiter bringing the account, loud music playing at times and a noisy parking lot.

Although a heterogeneous sample was sought for this study, the population mostly consisted of white women who had no children under the age of twelve. Furthermore, the sample only included businesswomen in the Gauteng Province.

The research conducted in this study is qualitative in nature and reflects the views and perceptions of businesswomen in Gauteng. The qualitative nature of the research allows other researchers to use the research as the basis of a quantitative study in which the identified themes can be developed into a measuring instrument (questionnaire) to further investigate the social network practices of businesswomen. This could result in a questionnaire that organisations could utilise to assess the maintained work-home balance between the female employees.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH ARTICLE 2

PERCEPTIONS OF BUSINESSWOMEN ON SOCIAL NETWORKING PRACTICES

ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the perceived experiences of social networking practices of businesswomen in the Gauteng Province. This study was conducted to determine the challenges businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts, and the manner in which they cope with these challenges. A non-probability purposive voluntary sample was used to select Gauteng businesswomen ($n = 31$) for in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted because of the personal and complex nature of an individual's perceptions of social networking. The findings identified various perceptions of social networking practices. Networking challenges that businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts, such as women not networking well in business and working mothers who miss out on networking opportunities as a result of their diverse responsibilities, were identified. Various elements that are needed to ensure successful social networking behaviour, such as respect, integrity and reciprocity, were also identified. Further findings suggested that women utilise their social networks to provide them with much-needed support. These findings provide a better understanding of the specific perceptions and expectations of businesswomen with respect to social networks. This information can provide insight into the specific approach of women towards social network building, as well as insight into achieving work-home balance through the utilisation of social networks.

KEYWORDS: Women networking, Social networks, Social networking, Social support, Businesswomen, South Africa, Qualitative research.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The role that women have played in society has changed greatly from the Middle Age perspective that limited women in terms of what they could do, how much they could do and have access to (Bellamy & Moorse, 1996:2, 12). At that time typical female activities included caring for the children, running the household (Bellamy & Moorse, 1996:8; McDonald, 2004:307) and in some instances managing agricultural tasks, such as milking and making butter and cheese (McDonald, 2004:307). Obtaining a formal education was unheard of, such as to attend a university, become a lawyer, judge, priest, a Member of Parliament or join the army (Bellamy & Moorse, 1996:12).

The role of women remained the same during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Bellamy & Moorse, 1996:26) and only began to change during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Bellamy & Moorse, 1996:42). In pre-industrial times, women often had to manage businesses in the absence of male relatives at their homes (McDonald,

2004:310). At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the home was no longer the centre of work (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:43; Beddoe, 1998:23) and women could earn a higher income outside their homes (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:43). As women, particularly married women with children (McDonald, 2004:311), began to enter the labour force, they were seen as a threat in society by men (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:45; Cardinali, 2002:130). The liberated woman was seen as being incapable of caring for her family and working at the same time (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:45) and therefore was viewed as undermining her traditional role (Cardinali, 2002:130). As a result, laws were instated to restrict the type of work that was made available to women (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:46). Various typically female professions began to emerge, including teaching and nursing (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:51). By the 1900s, women had achieved many improvements in their education, legal rights and job opportunities (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:62) with campaigners for independence who challenged the conservative female role, such as Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:54).

Further challenges took place during the First World War. While men were off fighting in the war, women had to assume their work roles, such as working in shipyards and collieries. It was now acceptable for women to perform their husbands' jobs (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:66; Beddoe, 1998:33; Cardinali, 2002:121). During the Second World War, women were expected to fulfil many of the same duties and roles as they did in the First World War (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:73; Beddoe, 1998:39) and at the end of the Second World War, women have demonstrated that they could manage on their own and achieve the necessary quite self-sufficiently in the absence of men (Cardinali, 2002:133). By the 1960s further changes had taken place (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:73) in that women could attend university, reliably decide upon whether and when to have children and could therefore plan their careers more systematically. Despite the changes occurring, many women were frustrated that the best jobs remained closed to them. This resulted in the women's liberation movement, which lobbied to make it illegal to pay women less than men for the same position. In 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act outlawed discrimination in areas such as jobs and housing (Bellamy & Moore, 1996:73). At the beginning of the twentieth century, women continued managing businesses (McDonald, 2004:313).

Today's modern businesswoman demonstrate clear links with women from the earlier century, as sketched above, and still experience similar challenges (McDonald, 2004:307, 317). These challenges include women still being paid less than men (McDonald, 2004:316) and still being underrepresented in management, despite equality legislation (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:90; McDonald, 2004:307).

South African women still occupy an underappreciated place in society (Mathur-Helm, 2005:56). The situation only began to change in the post-election period (1994), which forced South African managers to address human resources in the organisation differently (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:84). The Commission of Gender Equality was established to monitor the gender equality practices in South African organisations (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:90). Research conducted by the Businesswomen's Association found that women in South Africa constitute 19.8% of executive manager positions and 10.7% of director positions, compared to figures in 2004 that indicated these as 14.7% and 7.1%, respectively (Businesswomen's Association, 2005). This indicates that it remains difficult for South African women to reach senior level positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005:68). More recent figures indicated that 28% of senior management positions are currently held by women in South Africa and that South African private businesses are employing more women in senior management positions than the United States, United Kingdom, Japan and the Netherlands (Grant Thornton, 2009).

Gender discrimination is still a reality in the corporate world (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003:90) and perceptions of the role of women are still limited in many cases to women as housewives (Beddoe, 1998:132; Lips, 2006:291). Women therefore experience stress as the perception of their typical role increases demands on aspects such as their time and level of involvement in their careers (Moen, 1992:47). The high stress levels that women experience while balancing their dual responsibilities of career and childcare also affect the overall health of women (Gill & Davidson, 2001:385).

Internationally, Crowell (2004:15) investigated the social networks of women with regard to the ability of women to expand their social connections and increase their opportunities, resources and jobs. Much research has also been conducted on the work-home balance (work-life balance) of working women (for example, Doherty, 2004; Woodward, 2007; Eikhof, Warhurst & Haunschild, 2007), the networking practices of women and women networks (for example, Ehrich, 1994; Travers, Pemberton & Stevens, 1997; Pini, Brown & Ryan, 2004; Singh, Vinnicombe & Kumra, 2006), the role of women in society (for example, Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994), the barriers that women experience in organisations (for example, Jackson, 2001; Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Ogden, McTavish & McKean, 2006; Tonge, 2008), the differences between the networks of men and women (for example, Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1992; Ibarra, 1993; Burke, Bristor & Rothstein, 1995; Rothstein & Davey, 1995; Linehan, 2001; Neergaard, Shaw & Carter, 2005; Bastani, 2007; Waldstrøm & Madsen, 2007), the business networking practices of women (for example, Farr-Wharton & Brunetto, 2007) and online networking for women (for example, Knouse & Webb, 2001).

In a South African context, the research that has been conducted has focused mainly on issues such as discrimination within the workplace, equal opportunities and affirmative action of women in organisations (for example, Human, 1996; McFarlin, Coster & Mogale-Pretorius, 1999; Mathur-Helm, 2002; Thomas, 2002; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; McEwan, 2005; Mathur-Helm, 2005); the glass-ceiling effect (Mathur-Helm, 2006); women entrepreneurs and discrimination in employment (Ndhlovu & Springs, 2009); coping strategies (for example, seeking social support) that working mothers utilise (Brink & De la Rey, 2001); and the changing role of men in the family (taking care of children and household responsibilities; Smit, 2002).

Research focusing on the social networks of businesswomen in South Africa and the supportive nature thereof has not been conducted. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the perceived experiences of social networking of businesswomen in the Gauteng Province. The findings of this study can contribute to social network literature through the provision of an improved understanding of social networks and the utilisation thereof. This information can further be utilised to ensure successful social network development amongst businesswomen. On a personal level, the information can contribute to the achievement of work–home balance in the lives of businesswomen.

3.2 LITERATURE BACKGROUND

The literature background is divided into two main sections. These sections investigate the networking behaviour of businesswomen and successful networking behaviour, and are discussed below.

3.2.1 NETWORKING BEHAVIOUR OF BUSINESSWOMEN

Networking is considered a powerful tool that assists women in becoming more visible in the community and organisation; it allows women to build relationships that are mutually supportive and empowering (Boe, 1994:14) and it provides them with the confidence required for promotion (Ehrich, 1994:7). Networking further provides women with learning opportunities as well as opportunities to develop personal skills, expand social contacts and increase self-confidence (Travers *et al.*, 1997:63), which is necessary in leadership roles (Pini *et al.*, 2004:286).

While women are supportive of one another in the provision of business opportunities (Nierenberg, 2005:97), they experience various networking challenges that impede their

career progression (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994:16) that appear to be related to the issue of long-working hour cultures within organisations and the lack of available networking opportunities (Ogden *et al.*, 2006:40). Women experience three main challenges. The first challenge is their passiveness in terms of their own perceptions of their remuneration as marginal and temporary, and the perception of their traditional role that dictates that women's domestic commitments will take precedence (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994:16–17). In examining occupational segregation, it is clear that a large number of women have been and still can be found in occupations that are in accordance with these traditionally prescribed roles (McDonald, 2004:316). The second challenge is lack of support in terms of financial resources, education and training, childcare arrangements, networks, role models, mentors and domestic constraints. The third challenge is the attitudinal barriers such as employer biases, negative perceptions of women, sex-segregated jobs, sexual harassment and pay inequalities. Limited advancement due to the glass-ceiling effect also poses a challenge to businesswomen (Jackson, 2001:30; Mathur-Helm, 2006:324), and explains the lack of women advanced to top positions within organisations (Ehrich, 1994:4).

An additional challenge experienced by businesswomen is that women and men network differently. This includes women utilising their networks less effectively than men and this leads to men experiencing more career satisfaction than women (Van Emmerik, Euwema, Geschiere & Schouten, 2006:62). Women are also less likely than men to engage in networking activities when searching for a new job (Zikic, Burke & Fiksenbaum, 2008:255). Furthermore, in terms of accessibility and the power of specific networks, women do not find it easy to rely on contacts for job search support (Zikic *et al.*, 2008:256).

From an organisational perspective, men are still viewed as the dominant group (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994:16; Linehan, 2001:828) and old-boy networks are still evident within organisations (Jackson, 2001:32). As men maintain their dominance within an organisation it leads to the exclusion of women from male networks (Linehan, 2001:828; Linehan *et al.*, 2001:15). Women also tend to be excluded from social networks that are the most significant component of successful power acquisition (Timberlake, 2005:38), as informal networks (social networks) provide benefits such as information exchange, career planning and strategising, professional support and encouragement, and increased visibility within organisations (Jackson, 2001:32; Timberlake, 2005:38). The result of exclusion from business and social networks leads to the isolation of women managers, which can impede their building of valuable networking relationships (Linehan *et al.*, 2001:15). As a result of exclusion from men networks, women established women-only networks within and outside the organisation (Travers *et al.*, 1997:61). These include professional and occupational

networks, in-company networks and training networks. Professional and occupational networks are those that bring together women with the same professional qualifications and interests (for example, women in business). The advantages that women gain from these networks include career guidance, sharing valuable information with each other and gaining learning experience of their profession, occupation and industry. In-company networks include formal or informal women groups within an organisation. Some of these networks are only open to women at a certain level and others are open to all women within the organisation. Training networks include support groups that have a specific, general or professional training focus (Travers *et al.*, 1997:62).

The practice of women-only networks is discouraged (Linehan *et al.*, 2001:15), as women's networks cannot operate in isolation (Pini *et al.*, 2004:291). In order to become more successful it is necessary for women to join more mainstream and male-dominated networks. This will broaden their access to power and assist in gaining psychosocial support through the extension of their networks (Ehrich, 1994:9). Linehan (2001:827) found that women in her study gained more benefits when networking in men-dominated groups.

3.2.1.1 The specific challenges experienced by working mothers

In Tonge's (2008:495) study, women identified the responsibility of children or partners as a barrier to their networking participation. Time pressures in terms of work or personal commitments were also mentioned as networking challenges (Brush, Carter, Gatewood, Greene & Hart, 2004:81; Tonge, 2008:494). Women still have more responsibilities than men in terms of caring for their families and children (Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2004:260). This leads to women spending less time networking after work hours than men (Linehan, 2001:826). Another challenge experienced by working mothers is that they have constant anxiety and stress as they are the ones who need to take care of their sick children (for example, taking them to the doctor) and they experience the challenge of deciding whether their child is sick enough for them to be kept home, which implies the woman taking leave for the day (Ray, 1991:75–76).

Being a working woman takes perseverance as it involves fostering a loving relationship, caring for children, managing a career and being a housewife and a mother; therefore it is critical for working women to utilise their awake-time effectively and to their best advantage in order to gain a balance between their household, work and social activities (Ray, 1991:28). Work-home balance poses a particular challenge to women employed in management positions who have family responsibilities, as they may have to work long

hours (Ogden *et al.*, 2006:47). A positive choice made by women with children in order to have a reasonable work-home balance is to self-limit their careers and as a result their progress in organisations is then limited (Ogden *et al.*, 2006:48).

3.2.2 SUCCESSFUL NETWORKING BEHAVIOUR

Essential elements that influence an individual's networking success include trust, integrity, generosity, honesty, mutual respect and credibility (Boe, 1994:186; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:48-49, 54, 75-76; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer *et al.*, 1998:399). Trust is viewed as a key principle of networking, as it is based on mutually beneficial exchanges (Boe, 1994:186) between similar or dissimilar people (Travers *et al.*, 1997:61). Trust is a relationship that a person has with someone in which the contractual terms are incompletely specified and a person commits to a relationship before knowing the way the other person will behave (Burt, 2005:93). When people trust each other they will provide the same networking benefits that they have received (Rousseau, *et al.*, 1998:399).

Integrity is vital to any networking relationship, as the strength of a network is directly related to the perceived level of integrity of the involved networkers (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:48). Should a person in a network act without integrity, feelings of disgust and betrayal will result (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:49) that lead to a weaker network, as the potential of the network to assist someone will have been undermined (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:50).

Generosity is considered another important element of successful networks. It is important to firstly focus on the person with whom an individual is building a relationship, establish his or her needs and determine the manner in which to assist them (Bannerman, 2006:8). Networkers do not always instantly receive when they give, but they give with the knowledge that the exchange will be mutually beneficial (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:75). A person in a network should always be willing to give without expecting the exchange to be mutual (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:75, 76), as reciprocity is a basic principle of networking.

Honesty is another critical element of successful networking behaviour. People enjoy conducting business with honest people, as there is no need for networkers to misrepresent themselves or their businesses (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:54). In networking, respect amongst networkers is important in order to act with professional maturity (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:54). In order to establish a strong business relationship, sufficient trust

and mutual respect is required (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:131). Respect needs to be earned in order to gain the trust of people (Bannerman, 2006:36).

Credibility is viewed as the characteristic of being reliable and involves the process by which the involved networkers form expectations of each other. When a person has been reliable and dependable in previous interactions, it leads to a positive expectation of that person's intentions (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998:399). A person that keeps appointments and acts upon promises is viewed as credible. Should expectations not be fulfilled or promises not be kept, a weakened network results (Misner & Morgan, 2000:165).

Moreover, successful networking practices require that when meeting people for the first time, the only focus should be on becoming acquainted with one another, building a relationship and establishing common ground (White, 2004:7). Furthermore, networking requires daily effort (Bannerman, 2006:95). Setting goals is another component of successful networking behaviour, as it is important to have objectives in mind when networking (Kay, 2004:21). To this end, a networker should have a clear objective regarding the reasons he or she is attending a networking event and building relationships (for example, what they need from that relationship), and should be open-minded and not afraid to ask for assistance (Boe & Youngs, 1989:9, 14; Kay, 2004:21, 35). In attending a networking event, a networker should reflect confidence, as this attribute highlights the confident person above others attending the same event (Kay, 2004:22).

In order to be successful in networking, individuals should also attend all available networking opportunities (Kay, 2004:33). This could assist them in meeting people that are not part of their daily working environment, for example individuals can communicate with people that are above them in the chain of command in an organisation (Bannerman, 2006:110). In order to achieve networking success, it is important to avoid poor networking behaviour, such as being impolite, not honouring meetings, disrespecting and taking advantage of other people and negativity (Misner & Morgan, 2000:165; Kay, 2004:28, 29; Tullier, 2004:8–9; Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13, 47, 50; Bannerman, 2006:35, 40, 102).

3.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the perceived experiences of social networking practices of Gauteng businesswomen. In order to attain this objective, the following secondary objectives were formulated:

- 1 to identify the businesswomen's perceived experiences of social networking;

- 2 to determine the networking challenges that businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts;
- 3 to determine the networking challenges that businesswomen with children experience in their social networking efforts; and
- 4 to investigate successful social networking behaviour of businesswomen.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology consists of the following elements: the research design, participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.4.1 Research design

Explorative research in the form of in-depth interviews was used to gain insight into the social networking practices of businesswomen in the Gauteng Province. An explorative research design was chosen as limited prior knowledge existed on the topic under investigation (Struwig & Stead, 2001:7; Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk, 2005:84) and insight into the general nature of the topic under investigation was needed (Tustin *et al.*, 2005:84). In-depth interviews are considered a resource-intensive method (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003:44) and were used to obtain detailed information about the topic under investigation (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003:43).

3.4.2 Participants, sampling strategy and interview procedure

The population in this study consisted of businesswomen in the Gauteng Province ($n = 31$). A non-probability purposive voluntary sample was used to sample the participants. The research focused on the Gauteng province, as it is considered the economic centre of South Africa. It reached a growth rate of 5.7% in the fourth quarter of 2007 (SA, 2008; SA, 2009). A well-known networker in the Gauteng Province was contacted in order to assist the researcher in gaining the names of businesswomen to invite to the interviews. Inclusion criteria for choosing the networker were:

- 1 a woman who works in business;
- 2 a woman who is well-known under the businesspeople in Gauteng;
- 3 a woman who has knowledge on the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* and
- 4 a woman who is willing to share valuable networking contacts.

Inclusion criteria for participants were as follows:

- 1 women who work in business;
- 2 women who live and work in the Gauteng Province;
- 3 women who would be willing to share their personal networking experience;
- 4 women who would be available to contact afterwards for cross-member checking; and
- 5 women who are English- and/or Afrikaans-speaking.

The interviews were conducted between November 2008 and January 2009. Although participants found this a difficult time of the year to schedule interviews, owing to personal and work-related deadlines, five participants were able to attend interviews. Snowball sampling was used as participants were not easily accessible (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:162). The five original participants were asked to identify other Gauteng businesswomen who would possibly be interested to participate in the study.

The majority of the participants (73.7%) were white women, 20% were black women and 6.7% were Indian women. Most of the participants (43.3%) were between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four, 26.7% were between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four, 26.7% between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four and 3.3% under the age of twenty-five. Most of the participants held a diploma or certificate (38.71%) or a postgraduate qualification (38.71%). The remainder of the participants held a Bachelor degree (19.35%) or a Grade Twelve certificate (3.23%). Most of the participants were single (35.5%), divorced and 22.6% were married and had no children under the age of twelve (67.74%). A smaller percentage of the participants were engaged (3.23%), widowed (3.23%) or in a long-term relationship (9.7%) and had children under the age of 12 years (32.26%). The participants were representative of various industries. The majority of the participants worked in the financial industry (45.16%). Other industries included business services (12.9%), education/training (9.68%), human resource consulting (9.68%), information technology (6.45%), property (3.23%), law (3.23%), construction (3.23%), fashion (3.23%) and tourism (3.23%), and 6.45% of the participants were representative of all industries. During the interviews, one participant felt uncomfortable indicating her ethnicity and another participant felt uncomfortable revealing her age.

3.4.3 Data collection

Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews and field notes. The aim of the interviews was to gain great depth and rich data on the networking experiences of businesswomen (Webb, 2002:124–125) through face-to-face interaction (Kumar, 2005:124). The duration of

the interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour. Most of the interviews took place at a coffee shop in a central location. A relaxed environment was ensured by giving attention to the atmosphere of the room (such as the lighting) and setting up dividers to ensure privacy during the interviews. The researcher offered the participants refreshments in order to ensure that both the researcher and participants were at ease. The researcher then introduced herself, gave background on the study and gave the participants the opportunity to introduce themselves. The participants were asked to sign consent forms prior to the interviews. The same agenda was used in every interview. The following questions were asked:

- 1 How do you perceive social networking?
- 2 What challenges have you experienced in your social networking efforts?
- 3 As a working mother, what networking challenges have you experienced in your social networking efforts?
- 4 Which behavioural elements do you feel are necessary to ensure successful social networking?

The in-depth interviews were audio-taped with the permission of the participants. During the interviews, probing questions, minimal verbal and paralinguistic responses, summarising and paraphrasing were used to encourage participants to elaborate on what they were saying (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003:55). Field notes were taken during and directly after the interviews, including observational and personal notes on the feelings of the researcher and the reactions of the participants when answering the questions. Field notes were completed after each interview in order to facilitate management of the data and compiling the research results (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:258). After the completion of a short biographical questionnaire, the participants were thanked for their contribution. Thereafter the audio-tapes were labelled to ensure the anonymity of each participant.

Data saturation was reached after the twenty-third interview. Data saturation is reached when no new information is gained from further interviews (Kumar, 2005:165). More interviews were conducted to ensure that no new information could be gained and to gain additional rich direct quotations for the themes identified in analysis. At a later date, e-mails were sent out to thank participants again for their contribution and to report on the progress of the study.

3.4.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted after the completion of all interviews. Several steps were followed in analysing the data. These steps are illustrated in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Steps in data analysis

Step	Description
Step 1	In the first step, the data was organised and prepared for analysis. The researcher and an independent transcriber transcribed the interviews from oral language to written text (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:345). The textual data from the different interviews was analysed separately by making use of the theme approach and open coding (Creswell, 1994:153).
Step 2	In the second step, the data was explored. This involved reading through the transcripts several times to gain a general insight of the interviews (Creswell, 2003:191) and highlighting the most important parts thereof (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:347).
Step 3	The third step entailed the researcher grouping the data into perceptions, experiences and recommendations, in order to assist the coding of the data.
Step 4	In the fourth step, the data was coded, using open coding. The researcher assigned codes to each section of the text that appeared the most important (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:350).
Step 5	In the fifth step, major themes were identified (Creswell, 2003:193; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:349).
Step 6	In step six, sub-themes and additional themes were identified and relationships were sought amongst the identified themes (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:237). The identified sub-themes and additional themes were then grouped under the main themes. A co-coder was used to ensure that there was correspondence between all the identified themes and sub-themes. The direct quotations of participants were then used to support the major themes (Creswell, 2003: 194).
Step 7	Lastly, member checking was used. This entailed presenting the participants' views and perceptions to them in order for them to correct any misinterpretations or errors (Daymon & Holloway, 2002:96).

3.4.5 Trustworthiness

Alternative models appropriate to qualitative designs are needed to establish rigor in qualitative research without sacrificing the relevance thereof (Krefting, 1991:215). An application of Guba's model for qualitative research was used to ensure the trustworthiness of these research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991). Criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, were used to ensure that the

research findings are trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:219; Krefting, 1991:217–221). Strategies used to ensure the credibility of the findings included data triangulation (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002:146) and peer examination. Various interview techniques (such as summarising and paraphrasing) and detailed descriptions were used to ensure the transferability of the findings. A nominated sample was also selected in order to ensure that the findings are transferable. Strategies used to ensure the dependability of the finding included a co-coder and auditing, in which all interviews were recorded and field notes were taken. Confirmability auditing, which includes making transcriptions and field notes available for auditing, were used to ensure the confirmability of the findings.

3.4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations within qualitative research are important. Before the research was conducted, the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (NWU) approved the nature and approach of this study. After consent was received the researcher launched the research process. The interviewing process was conducted in a respectful manner and the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of each participant were respected at all times. The confidentiality of the sources and the settings was not compromised (Shank, 2006:119) in that only the researcher, supervisor and an independent transcriber were allowed access to the audio recordings and no names were connected to any quotations documented during the interviews. Before each interview was conducted, the researcher informed the participants about the study, its objectives and the process that would be followed during the interviews. Participants were asked to sign consent forms that gave the researcher the consent to use the collected data and also stated that the participation is voluntary, that the participants could withdraw from the study at any point and that all collected data would be handled with confidentiality. The researcher was honest and fair at all times during the interviews. The researcher did not knowingly discriminate against the participants on the basis of their age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion or language (Struwig & Stead, 2001:67).

3.5 THEMES AND FINDINGS

Four main themes were identified in terms of the perceived experiences of businesswomen of social networking. Table 3.2 presents an overview of the identified themes and sub-themes. The findings are reported according to the main themes and sub-themes identified during data analysis. A discussion of the verbatim responses (direct quotations) of the participants is also included as support.

Table 3.2: Participants’ perceived experiences of social networking practices

Main themes	Sub-themes
3.5.1 Businesswomen’s perceived experiences of social networking	3.5.1.1 Women network differently to men 3.5.1.2 Networking is a valuable tool 3.5.1.3 Social networks provide support
3.5.2 Networking challenges that businesswomen experience	3.5.2.1 Women do not network well in business 3.5.2.2 Women do not give as much network support as they are able to
3.5.3 Networking challenges that working mothers experience	3.5.3.1 Working mothers miss out on networking opportunities
3.5.4 Successful social networking behaviour	3.5.4.1 Networking should be conducted with respect, integrity and love for other people 3.5.4.2 Networking is work-in-progress 3.5.4.3 Networking includes reciprocation 3.5.4.4 Clear networking goals must be set 3.5.4.5 Confidence must be portrayed 3.5.4.6 All available networking opportunities can be utilised 3.5.4.7 Networking behaviour to avoid

3.5.1 Perceived social networking experiences

Various social networking experiences were perceived. These perceptions are discussed below.

3.5.1.1 Women network differently to men

Three participants appeared to feel that there is a difference in the networking behaviour of women and men. This is supported by the following quotation: *“I do think that men and women network slightly differently.”* This is supported in the literature. Various studies have indicated that the networking practices and the networks of women and men differ (for example, Ehrich, 1994:7; Rothstein & Davey, 1995:23; Knouse & Webb, 2001: 226; Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006:62; Bastani, 2007:310).

The first additional finding concluded that women perceive themselves to be better networkers than men. The following quotation is included to enrich this finding: *“... I think in general, women are much better networkers than men.”* This is disputed in the literature. Men are more effective than women in that they use their networking activities more

effectively. Men are more motivated to use their networking instrumentally to achieve career goals (Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006:62).

The second additional finding is that women perceive themselves to be more willing than men to share contacts and to offer their assistance to each other. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations support this finding: *"I have noticed throughout my career that women are generally much more forthcoming about sharing contacts and helping other people, especially other women, than men are."* and *"... better than men, who always seem to be thinking what's in it for them."* This is supported in the literature. Women like helping each other when trust has developed (Nierenberg, 2005:97), as they tend to have a more positive attitude towards the importance of networking in their careers (Rothstein & Davey, 1995:23), whereas men view their networks in terms of what can be gained from their membership (exchange of favours and obligations) within the network (Brush *et al.*, 2004:185).

The third additional finding concluded that women felt that they share too much information when they network opposed to men who know which level to share. This finding was perceived by two participants. This is supported by the following quotations: *"... where women tend to talk too much, they go beyond."* and *"... men tend to do that a lot better than women tend to do. They know which level of information to discuss."* This is supported in the literature. When women socialise before talking business they share much personal information with each other; for example when socialising they know each other's life story before refreshments have been served (Nierenberg, 2005:97) as they have the tendency to incorporate personal information (such as information about their families) into business conversations (Brush *et al.*, 2004:78). Whereas men tend to focus more on brief small talk when they network (Nierenberg, 2005:97).

The fourth additional finding concluded that there is a difference in the networking approach of women and men. Women perceive themselves to be more emotional in their networking approach and men are more directed. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations support this finding: *"I think women can get a bit more emotional, [they] draw on a person because they like this person and not because that person will have the best service. I definitely think that once women trust each other, relationships become quite long and quite deep."* and *"... but I do think men have a more targeted approach to networking and a less of a fluffy approach."* This finding is supported in the literature. In networking, women value emotion highly when networking decisions must be made, whereas men feel that good decisions are rational, logical and dispassionate and should be

governed by an objective and consistent rules. Men are therefore more targeted in most situations and believe that emotions can distort and negatively affect the quality of an individual's decisions (Nierenberg, 2005:98–99).

The fifth additional finding concluded that women perceive themselves to be more supportive and open than men in networking. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations support this finding: “... *I think that women are more open and we are more sociable, [than men]. Women see each other as very much supportive and we know that we can be open towards each other and we are not too proud to open up.*” and “... *I think men are more shallow and do not get emotionally attached to each other. Men are very proud [and] they do not easily open up towards each other.*” This is supported in the literature. Women provide support in the form of business opportunities. Women are more open and supportive in networking in that they tend to interact, bond over a cup of coffee and recount their life stories before talking business (Nierenberg, 2005:97). Men are less open in that they only get to know each other once a deal has been made and mutual respect has been gained, then only might they offer support in recommending each other to their network contacts for business opportunities (Nierenberg, 2005:97–98).

The sixth additional finding concluded that women perceive men to be more ego-driven than women. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations support this finding: “... *women are less proud and ego-driven. We are more nurturing and we support each other on all levels. Women do not want to burn their bridges, while men are too proud and that leads them to burn their bridges.*” and “[Men] *are very ego-driven.*” This is supported in the literature. Brush *et al.* (2004:77) suggest that women are less ego-driven, as they are less likely to brag about their achievements. They tend to keep quiet about it or share the credit. Men are more willing than women to brag about their achievements and the credible part they play in, for example a growing business. Men are also quick to nominate their companies or themselves for local competitions (Brush *et al.*, 2004:78).

The seventh additional finding is that women perceive men to have strong networks. The following quotation is used to enrich this finding: “*Men have a very good network. It is still very strong in the corporate world today and I doubt that it would really disappear.*” This is supported in the literature. Men networks tend to be more powerful than women networks. Men tend to use their networks more successfully, as they promote their businesses and themselves to a greater extent than women (Ehrich, 1994:7).

Regarding this finding, it was further concluded that men have strong networks that they have built from school days and that arise from old-boy networks. The following quotation enriches this finding: *"... and that comes from school days and the old boys club."* This is supported in the literature. Men have realised that networks are important to gain career success and started to build men-only networks. This is termed the old-boy network or the good-old boys networks developed through school ties, fraternity contacts and social organisations, such as country clubs (Knouse & Webb, 2001:226).

3.5.1.2 Networking is a valuable tool

One participant perceived networking as a valuable tool that working women utilise. The following quotation illustrates this finding: *"So I think women are starting to recognise the value of networking."* This is supported in the literature. Ehrich (1994:7) suggests that networking is a powerful tool for women, as it assists them in becoming more visible in both the community and organisations. It further provides women with confidence and the opportunity to learn, develop personal skills and to grow their social contacts (Travers *et al.*, 1997:63).

An additional finding is that networking connects and empowers women. This finding is supported by the following quotation: *"I see [networking] as something that can connect women and empower them."* This is supported in the literature. Boe (1994:14) suggests that networking allows individuals to build relationships that are mutually supportive and empowering.

3.5.1.3 Social networks provide support

Five participants concluded that when businesswomen need support, they utilise their social networks to gain this needed support. The following quotation illustrates this finding: *"... there is a great level of support that you require and I think with children, support is always required and this is where I suppose social networks come in pretty handy. I mentioned my networking with parents, other parents and the school, you get a lot of support, you get certain benefits [and] you get additional help through that."* This is supported in the literature. It is suggested that social networks (such as family, friends and neighbours) provide individuals with the much-needed social support (Walker, Wasserman & Wellman, 1993:71; Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry & Gordon, 2007:90).

The first additional finding concluded that all women (for example businesswomen with children, businesswomen without children and non-working women) need support. This finding was perceived by two participants. This finding is supported by the following quotations: *"I think women generally do need more support."* and *"I am one person that believes that a woman is a woman and [at] one point or another all of us goes through certain things. Sometimes it is maybe hard on you as a working mother, but I think it is an individual choice to say what balance do I have in my life? There are single people that do not have balance in their lives. And you find that you as a working mother have balance in your life. It is about what creates balance in your life."* This is supported in the literature. All women in whatever role they fulfil, including mothers, employees, bosses and housewives, need support, as it is difficult to fulfil all of these individual roles (Ray, 1991:35).

The second additional finding concluded that working mothers need a support network. This was supported by nineteen participants. This finding is supported by the following quotations: *"So especially working moms needs someone that understands. So that when you start throwing your toys out of the cot you need the support structure to say, I know what you are going through and I can give you this advice in terms of what you need for performance."* and *"Working women with children obviously need a support network to help look after their kids while they are at the office and I imagine it cannot be easy to juggle the demands that both worlds would place on them simultaneously."* This is supported in the literature. The most important objective of a working woman, once they have children, is to coordinate the activities of the household and office in order to ensure a good lifestyle for themselves and their family. As a result working mothers need a support system (Ray, 1991:34). A working woman's support network (for example partners, family or friends) provides the needed support that serves as a buffer against the stresses that these women experience (McLean, 2002:16).

The third additional finding concluded that working mothers need support from the businesses at which they are employed. This finding was perceived by seven participants. This finding is supported by the following quotations: *"I think to be a working woman with children nowadays you need support in your family life as well as in your business life. Children do have demands on people's lives and I think it needs to be taken into account and so if the children is sick the workplace or work network needs to be supportive to that person..."* and *"... the responsibilities are more when you are a working woman with children, because obviously it is not just focusing on work. As much as you need to focus on work, meet deadlines [and] the bottom lines, you also have a family. You tend to wear more hats. So you need more support. You need support at work in terms of understanding."* This is

supported in the literature. Women's lives involve trade-offs between home and work (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994:19) and as a result it is important for organisations to facilitate working mothers' advancement in management through improving institutional arrangements, such as childcare arrangements, flexible working hours and family leave (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994:19).

The fourth additional finding is that working mothers need support in their personal lives. This finding was perceived by eleven participants. The following quotations support this finding: *"Support at work and support at home [is critical] as well as the sharing of household responsibilities."* and *"... you need support at home, because you now need to strike a balance."* This is supported in the literature. With the entrance of women into the labour force, the need for domestic employment has increased in order to provide women with personal support such as assistance with childcare and household responsibilities (Tayo, 2007:1229, 1234). A support system for working mothers at home (such as a supportive husband and a housekeeper) means that they can be comfortable in knowing that everyone is working together to make life easier (Ray, 1991:38, 45). Women are more likely to benefit psychologically when they receive assistance, for example from their husband, in their household responsibilities (Moen, 1992:49).

The fifth additional finding is that working mothers require additional support when their children are young. This finding was perceived by three participants. This finding is enriched by the following quotations: *"Women with children have more on their shoulders than their counterparts especially if the children are younger and still need more support from their mothers."* and *"I think when children are smaller [you need more support]. When my children were smaller and I first got divorced I needed a friend to help me with the children when I could not be there."* This is supported in the literature. The majority of married women with children under the age of twelve years are employed (Tayo, 2007:1235). Combining family responsibilities with young children is difficult and as a result working women need additional support, including equal parenting and responsibilities. This could assist women in their career development (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994:19).

Regarding this finding, three businesswomen perceived childminders as the source of additional support that working mothers require. The following quotations are used to illustrate this finding: *"Working mothers who have full-time stay-in childminders have less stress in terms of fetching and carrying kids or necessarily having to stay at home when kids are not well as opposed to a mom who does not have family support and has children in day-care."* and *"I think it is difficult being, let's say for example if you work for a company and*

you have to work for nine hours then it is a problem, because in terms of nursery, the crèches and all of those things, you still need to pick up your kids after hours, you need some sort of helper or a nanny you can rely on. A reliable person who can assist with [your] kids." This is supported in the literature. A working woman has various responsibilities (for example, work and childcare responsibilities). Ray (1991:28) states that working mothers need to have a housekeeper or childcare provider who can be there every day in order to help with these responsibilities. It is also suggested that domestic employment advantages women in that it provides them with childcare and help with domestic chores (Tayo, 2007:1234).

It was also concluded that women perceive car pools as another way in which working mothers can gain additional support. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations are used to support this finding: *"... it is very difficult for a working woman if they do not have flexibility in their jobs, because I just think that if the organisation does not offer them any kind of flexibility then that is a problem. So the support structure there would revolve around things like lift clubs..."* and *"Sometimes you are called on at work to do things at odd hours. You never know when you are going to need someone to help you with a lift club."* This is supported in the literature. When a working mother's children need to be driven around and there is nobody to assist with this, it is seen as a challenge. Working mothers need to find facilities such as day-care centres that provide this function (Ray, 1990:79).

3.5.2 Networking challenges that businesswomen experience

Various networking challenges that businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts were concluded. These are discussed below.

3.5.2.1 Women do not network well in business

It was perceived by two participants that women do not network well in business. The following quotations support this finding: *"I do not think women network, from a business point of view well."* and *"... my sense is that I think that women are a little behind in networking."* This is supported in the literature. Women are less likely than men to effectively utilise their networks (for example, in organisations). This leads to men experiencing more career satisfaction in this regard (Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006:62).

3.5.2.2 Women do not give as much network support as they are able to

It was perceived by the participants that in terms of networking, women are not as supportive to each other as they could be. The following quotation illustrates this finding: *"I do not think women help women in the work place and give network support as much as they could."* This is disputed in the literature. In terms of networking, women help other women in business in that they provide business opportunities to women above others (Nierenberg, 2005:97).

3.5.3 Networking challenges that working mothers experience

Various networking challenges that working mothers experience in their social networking were concluded and are discussed below.

3.5.3.1 Working mothers miss out on networking opportunities

Two participants felt that working mothers miss out on networking opportunities as a result of their family obligations. The following quotation is used to enrich this finding: *"... I think specifically women with children do not always have the opportunity to network so much at work, because sometimes you will tend to find that women with children will have to come in early and they have to go again to chase back home to go and look after their families, whereby working women who are single will be [able to] work in sessions after work or drinks after work."* This is supported in the literature. Working mothers are disadvantaged in terms of networking opportunities as they have less time than men to network, owing to home and family commitments (Linehan, 2001:826; Linehan *et al.*, 2001:14).

The first additional finding concluded that women perceive themselves to be responsible for caring for their children. This was perceived by two participants. The following quotation supports this finding: *"I think the responsibility nine out of ten times falls on the woman [for example] when the children are sick, school work, homework, activities."* This is supported in the literature. Women still have more responsibilities than men in terms of home, family life and childcare (Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2004:260). The responsibility brought on by children is seen as a challenge that prevents networking participation (Tonge, 2008:495), as women spent less time networking after work hours than men, owing to their additional responsibilities (Linehan, 2001:826).

The second additional finding concluded that working mothers experience time constraints. This finding was perceived by three participants. The following quotations are used to support this finding: *"... if you are a working woman and [you have] no children, you have enough time and when you are a working mother you do not have enough time, because when you arrive at home you need to look at their homework."* and *"I think when you are a stay-at-home mom, although you are not less than a women that is working, you can plan your time accordingly. So you can choose to go and fetch your kids or not. Sometimes as a working mom you cannot do that, it is not your choice. When somebody says to you they want an appointment set up then, although that is the time to go and fetch the kids, that is the only time that people got."* This is supported in the literature. Time pressures in terms of work or personal commitments are seen as a networking challenge for women (Tonge, 2008:494). In order for working women to establish a balance between their household, work and social activities, they must utilise their awake-time efficiently and to their best advantage (Ray, 1991:28).

The third additional finding concluded that the stress levels of working mothers are higher than those of stay-at-home mothers. This finding is supported by the following quotation: *"... in terms of a stay-at-home mom, you do not have the stress levels that a working woman has, so you might be busy with everything else that you do but you might not have the stress levels. I think a stay-at-home mom, do not know anything else. So as a working mom you have two levels that you are trying to work on. One is success of your business and one is the success of being a mom."* This is supported in the literature. Working mothers tend to experience stress as a result of work-home conflict. Working mothers experience great domestic burdens (McLean, 2002:13) and they have constant anxiety and stress, as they are the primary caretakers of their children (Ray, 1991:75–76) although they are employed outside the household.

3.5.4 Successful social networking behaviour

Participants perceived the following as successful networking behaviour: respect, integrity, love for other people, hard work, reciprocity, clear networking goals, portraying confidence, leveraging available networking mechanisms and avoiding poor networking behaviour such as being impolite, not honouring meetings, disrespecting and taking advantage of other people and negativity.

3.5.4.1 Networking should be conducted with respect, integrity and love for other people

One participant perceived respect as an important element in networking. Individuals should also act with integrity and love for the people they network with. The following quotation illustrates this finding: *"Networking, business and socially, should be operated [with] respect and love of people. If you are trustworthy, people feel it and they want to do more with you and for you. So integrity is very important when you create networking relationships."* This is supported in the literature. Mutual respect and integrity are essential elements of successful networks (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:47–48). Friendship, trust, respect and regard for other people are central to networking (White, 2004:6). In networking, respect amongst networkers is important in order to act with professional maturity (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:54).

The first additional finding is that in networking, individuals must build a relationship with the role-players involved before selling his or her products or services to them. This finding was perceived by three participants. This is supported by the following quotations: *"... you need to build a relationship with someone before you can sell something to them."* and *"The first thing is that when you go to a networking event, people are not going to talk to you on that first time basis. You cannot go to a networking event and think that you are going to sell your product. You are building relationships first before you actually start [selling]."* This is supported in the literature. The only focus that individuals must have when meeting someone for the first time is to get to know that person, build a relationship and find common ground. When individuals are attending a networking event, they are there to find and develop contacts and not to sell their products or services (White, 2004:7, 33).

The second additional finding is that trust needs to be build before the networking relationship can be utilised. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotations enriches this finding: *"... you need to gain the trust of the person that you want to do business with and that just does not come the first second you meet someone, that comes with the relationship with that person and you can only do that by engaging in dialogue and collaborating with them."* and *"... there needs to be a personal relationship where trust is build with somebody."* This is supported in the literature. Trust is a key component of networking (Travers *et al.*, 1997:61). Networking can only take place once individuals have established enough trust and rapport (White, 2004:5). Therefore it is important to earn trust (Bannerman, 2006:34), as the establishment of trust leads to reciprocation (for example, giving the same benefits as received; Boe, 1994:14).

3.5.4.2 Networking is work-in-progress

Two participants mentioned that continuous attempts and participation in a network makes individuals visible and facilitates continuous development of the network. The following quotations support this finding: *"I think you need to take ownership of your own networking. No one does it for you, so you got to work at it yourself."* and *"I think at the end of the day you should spend 80% of the time doing your job and 20% of the time selling yourself and that is the only way that you are going to get noticed and the only way that you are going to get recognised. Networking does not happen by accident. It is hard work."* This is supported in the literature. Bannerman (2006:95) suggests that individuals need to make networking a way of life and it is not something done while waiting for something to happen. Individuals need to be pro-active in networking and ensure that their networks do not stagnate (Nierenberg, 2005:96; Bannerman, 2006:96).

3.5.4.3 Networking includes reciprocation

Four participants perceived reciprocity as an important element. An individual's networking efforts must include the possibility for reciprocation. The following quotations illustrate this finding: *"People should go into networking relationships to give and not really expect anything. The result is that what you give definitely comes back to you."* and *"you take what you need from [the network] as long as you give back and then people reciprocate."* This is supported in the literature. In networking, individuals may not instantly receive when they give, but they can give with the expectation that the exchange will be mutual at some point in the future as reciprocity is a basic principle of networking (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:75).

The first additional finding is that when individuals meet each other, they should concentrate on the people themselves (for example, what their needs are and the manner in which they can be assisted). The following quotation supports this finding: *"It is not about grabbing; it is not asking for deals when you first meet them, you are talking to people to find out what you can do, what their needs are because you need to feed into their needs. You need to feed the people for them to trust you."* This is supported in the literature. Networking involves meeting people, talking to them and learning about them. It further involves telling them about oneself. Achieving this means that many people are familiar with the individual and know the manner in which the individual can assist them (Bannerman, 2006:8).

The second additional finding is that individuals need to give to the people in their network without expecting anything in return as it will be reciprocated in the future. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotation enriches this finding: *"I believe in the pay-it-forward concept, to do something for someone else without expecting anything in return. You need to do something for someone else without expecting any payment for it, because in the future it definitely comes back to you and that is where your network starts."* This is supported in the literature. Networking is about paying it forward and reaping the success of helping others (Bannerman, 2006:18). In a typical networking situation, the individual gives generously with the expectation that the receiver will respond in some future point (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:76). Therefore, individuals should share information and not question the benefit it holds for him or her (Boe & Youngs, 1989:17).

3.5.4.4 Clear networking goals must be set

Participants felt that individuals need to set clear networking goals. Goals need to be set in relationships and when individuals are attending networking events. These are discussed below.

The first additional finding is that individuals need to have clear networking goals in relationships. This finding was perceived by three participants. This is supported by the following quotations: *"... you need to put your pride in your pocket and ask people and tell people what you are about and ask people for help."* and *"So you need to open up and let people into your life, so that they can understand your life in order to support you."* This is supported in the literature. Boe and Youngs (1989:9) suggest that people have always used their network contacts to gain what they need. Networkers need to be open-minded and not be afraid to ask for something (Boe & Youngs, 1989:9, 14).

The second additional finding is that when individuals attend a networking event, it is important to have a clear goal in mind. The following quotation is used to enrich this finding: *"... at a networking event you need to make it very clear why you are there."* This is supported in the literature. When attending an event, it is critical that a networker have a plan and know their motivations for attending the specific event. If a networker is not clear as to his or her objectives in attending an event, he or she will not achieve networking success (Kay, 2004:21).

3.5.4.5 Confidence must be portrayed

Confidence was perceived as another important element of networking. Participants concluded that when individuals are attending networking events, they must be confident. The following quotation supports this finding: *"... so if you are going to something like that, you first need to be confident."* This is supported in the literature. Individuals need to be positive and outwardly confident when attending a networking event, as it will make them stand out above the other people attending the event (Kay, 2004:22).

3.5.4.6 All available networking opportunities can be utilised

Two participants concluded that when there are networking organisations available to women within their organisations it is important to leverage them. The following quotations are used to illustrate this finding: *"I would say they need to leverage whatever mechanism that is available. So work hard at it and leverage any mechanism that is available to you to develop your network"* and *"Within business the training initiatives that we have, utilise that."* This is supported in the literature. Individuals need to take advantage of every networking opportunity, as it is important to make connections with colleagues on every occasion (Kay, 2004:33, 125). Within the work setting, individuals need to connect with key individuals such as human resource managers (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:229) and therefore ways to socialise with them (coffee breaks within organisations) need to be found (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:230).

An additional finding is that individuals should leverage available networking mechanisms as it allows them to meet people outside their sphere of reference. This finding was perceived by two participants. The following quotation is used to support this finding: *"... and I would say that every women in this organisation should join [the internal networking organisation], because that is how you are going to build relationships, there are too many women that sit at their desk that do not know what the person in the next department does day-to-day. There is no appreciation for what people from out their sphere of reference do."* This is supported in the literature. Socialising with colleagues (for example, during coffee breaks) is an informal way of building relationships (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:230). It is important for businesswomen to network within their organisation, as it allows them to communicate with the individuals above them in the chain of command. It also allows them to communicate with the people who will assist them in performing their job successfully (Bannerman, 2006:110).

3.5.4.7 Networking behaviour to avoid

One participant perceived various behaviours that hinder successful networking efforts. These include being impolite, not honouring meetings, disrespecting and taking advantage of other people and negativity. The following quotation is used to support this finding: *"Killers of network relationships, socially and business-wise, include being impolite, not honouring meetings and not apologising for being late, disrespect for others, laziness and taking advantage of others and negativity, for example racial jokes."*

Being impolite is a poor networking behaviour that is detrimental to successful networking efforts. This is supported in the literature. It is important to be polite at all times when networking (Kay, 2004:28; Bannerman, 2006:102). Participants felt that being late for meetings is also a poor networking behaviour that hinders successful networking. This is supported in the literature. Bannerman (2006:35) suggests that punctual people do not make excuses for being late (for example, traffic jams). They allow time for unforeseen difficulties. A person who honours networking meetings is considered credible (Misner & Morgan, 2000:165). Disrespect for other people was also perceived as a poor networking behaviour in the way of successful networking efforts. This is supported in the literature. Mutual respect is an important element in networks (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:47).

Taking advantage of the people with whom an individual networks hinders successful networking efforts. This is supported in literature. Individuals bothering, pestering and using others to further their career, or gain more customers for their business is a challenge in the way of successful networking (Tullier, 2004:8–9). In networking, an individual must not take advantage of the other networkers (Lindenfield & Lindenfield, 2005:13, 50). Participants felt that negativity is a poor networking behaviour in the way of successful networking. This is supported in the literature. Bannerman (2006:40) suggests that in networking it is important to be positive all the time.

3.6 CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the perceived experiences of businesswomen on social networking. Secondary objectives, as presented in Section 3.3, were formulated to attain this objective.

The first secondary objective was concerned with the perceived experiences of businesswomen on social networking. This objective was achieved through finding 1 that

concluded various perceived experiences on social networking. These perceived experiences included that the networking behaviour of women and men differs, networking is an important tool that businesswomen utilise and that social networks provide businesswomen, particularly working mothers with small children, with the needed support. Businesswomen felt that they need support including a support network, business support and personal support. Working mothers felt that they need additional support to help them establish balance between their home and work responsibilities, and mentioned childminders and car pools as support networks that they utilise to gain this support.

This finding provides a background to the social networking perceptions, expectations and needs of businesswomen. It further provides businesswomen with a background on the differences that exist between women and men in networking, the types of support women need, as well as the sources of support that they can utilise in order to gain support. The implication for businesswomen is that they can take note of the differences that exist in the networking approach of women and men and apply these differences accordingly in order for them to achieve the same networking benefits as men. Regarding the finding of women perceiving themselves as better networkers than men, which was not supported in the literature, it is recommended that women take note of this difference that exists and improve their networking efforts in order to network more effectively. It is also recommended that businesswomen recognise the support they need in their lives and utilise their social network to gain this needed support.

The second secondary objective was concerned with the networking challenges that businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts. This was achieved through finding 2 which concluded various challenges such as women not networking well in business and women not giving as much network support as they were able to give. This finding implies that businesswomen are responsible for the way in which they network (for example, whether they network effectively and provide network support). This finding further provides businesswomen with a background on the challenges they could experience in the business environment. It is therefore recommended that businesswomen utilise this information on challenges and assess their own lives in order to identify the challenges they need to overcome. It is also important to utilise this information in order for businesswomen to determine which social to look out for in order to achieve network success. Regarding the finding of women not offering sufficient support, which was disputed in the literature, it is recommended that businesswomen analyse their personal networking approach in order to establish whether they indeed provide support when they network. Being supportive is critical and businesswomen should remember that giving support to the people with whom

they network establishes important elements (such as trust) that lead to various future and mutually beneficial interactions.

The third secondary objective was concerned with the challenges that working mothers experience in their social networking efforts. This objective was achieved through finding 3 that determined various challenges that working mothers experience, including working mothers that miss out on networking opportunities as a result of their family obligations and involvement in childcare. The implication for working mothers is that they experience many challenges within the business environment. Therefore, they should take note of these identified challenges and evaluate the challenges that they experience in their own lives in order to determine the support necessary (such as support from family, nannies, domestic workers, childcare facilities and work policies including flexible working hours). Once support is achieved, working mothers can participate more in networking opportunities (for example, networking after work). Support can also be utilised in order to minimise their stress levels and reduce the time constraints they experience.

The fourth secondary objective was concerned with investigation the businesswomen's successful social networking behaviour. This was achieved through finding 4 that concluded that businesswomen need to accord attention to elements such as respect, integrity, reciprocation and confidence in their networking efforts in order to ensure successful networking. The implication of this finding is that businesswomen are responsible for their personal networking approach (for example, the way they network and they way they treat the people with whom they network). The finding also provides businesswomen with a background on what they should do to ensure successful networking, as well as poor networking behaviours that they should avoid in order to ensure network success. It is recommended that businesswomen take note of these successful behaviours and incorporate them into their networking approach in order to ensure successful networking.

3.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, various recommendations are made. These recommendations are intended to assist businesswomen in their social networking practices and to encourage organisations to develop various initiatives and/or support programmes within the organisation that will assist businesswomen in social networking.

- Organisations should develop social network training initiatives that focus on social networking and the benefits the utilisation thereof holds. Therefore, the initiatives should focus on:
 - 1 the concept of *social networking* (this would include the supportive aspect of social networks and the way in which the utilisation thereof can assist individuals in overcoming networking challenges through the support it provides); and
 - 2 providing businesswomen with a platform on successful social network development in the business environment (this would include the insight into successful networking behaviours. Businesswomen should clearly define such behaviours for themselves and take responsibility to incorporate these into their social networking efforts).

- A variety of networking challenges prevent businesswomen from becoming successful in their professional lives. Businesswomen, including working mothers, should take note of the given background on networking challenges and measure the challenges they experience within their own lives. Once businesswomen have identified their networking challenges, they can determine the support they require to overcome their specific challenges.

- The importance of businesswomen's participation in networking mechanisms within organisations is evident from this study. Organisations should establish internal networking organisations with the objective to assist businesswomen in their social networking practices. These networking organisations should be operated in such a manner that businesswomen gain work support and become more visible within the organisation and in the business environment. A further focus should be on supporting women to become more effective networkers, for example making them aware of the differences that exist between women and men in networking and providing them with the opportunity to apply these differences accordingly in order to achieve similar networking benefits as men.

3.8 LIMITATIONS

This study has demonstrated promising results; however, some limitations were noted. These limitations are discussed below.

As a result of personal and work deadlines, it was difficult to recruit many businesswomen to participate in the study. It was difficult for the businesswomen to fit the interviews into their schedule and they had limited time to take part in the interviews.

The interviews were conducted during busy and noisy times in a coffee shop and these disturbances made the recording of the interviews difficult. Additional disturbances included the waiter bringing the account, loud music playing at times and a noisy parking lot.

It is difficult to ensure representation of the population when using snowball sampling (De Klerk, 2006:331) but care were taken to include as much of a representative sample as possible. The sample consisted of mostly white women that had no children under the age of 12 and only included businesswomen in the Gauteng Province.

As a result of the qualitative nature of this study, it could be used as a basis for a quantitative study in which the identified themes can be used to develop a measuring instrument (questionnaire) that can be used to further investigate the social networking practices of businesswomen.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this research project was to investigate the social network practices of businesswomen in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. This was conducted through an investigation into the views and perceptions of Gauteng businesswomen regarding the concept of *social networking*. Businesswomen in the Gauteng Province were sampled because the Gauteng Province is considered the heart of South Africa's commercial business and industrial sectors (SA, 2009). In addition, businesswomen from the Gauteng Province were sampled as it is a typical cosmopolitan city with a variety of businesswomen from various backgrounds and cultures.

Chapter 1 provided the framework of the research project. This included an overview of the problem statement, research questions, research objectives and the research methodology. It lastly provided a brief layout of the chapters in this dissertation. Chapter 2 reported on the investigation into the networking practices of Gauteng businesswomen. Various perceptions regarding the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* were found. Furthermore, it was concluded that the participants have specific motivations (business and/or personal) for networking and therefore their networking is focused. It was also concluded that the participants include certain types of people in their social networks, such as supportive people and those with similar interests. Chapter 3 reported on the investigation into the social networking practices of Gauteng businesswomen. Various perceptions on social networking experiences were concluded, such as women perceiving themselves to be better networkers than men and women perceiving networking as a valuable tool. It was further concluded that businesswomen, including businesswomen with children, experience various networking challenges in their social networking efforts. These challenges include women not networking well in business, women not giving as much network support as they were able and working mothers missing out on networking opportunities as a result of their diverse responsibilities. It was also concluded that businesswomen utilise their social networks to gain support. Furthermore, networking behaviour that the participants perceived as having a negative or positive effect on their social networking success were detailed. In this chapter, conclusions regarding the results of the empirical study are given according to the primary and secondary objectives. Recommendations for organisations, businesswomen, schools, business schools and universities are given and the limitations of the study are then discussed.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

A qualitative research approach was adopted and thus in-depth interviews were used to investigate the social network practices of Gauteng businesswomen. In order to achieve the research objectives of this study it was necessary to investigate the following:

- 1 the concept of *networking* and the characteristics thereof;
- 2 the reasons and motivations behind the networking efforts of businesswomen;
- 3 the concept of *social networking* and the characteristics thereof;
- 4 the contents of businesswomen's social networks;
- 5 the perceived experiences of businesswomen regarding social networking;
- 6 the networking challenges that businesswomen experience in their social networking efforts;
- 7 the networking challenges that businesswomen with children experience in their social networking efforts; and
- 8 successful social networking behaviours.

The research objectives and their fulfilment according to the main themes are provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Research objectives and the main themes

Research objectives	Themes
1 To investigate the concept of <i>networking</i> through qualitative research	Theme 1: Conceptualisation and characteristics of <i>networking</i> (§2.5.1)
2 To determine the motivations behind the networking efforts of Gauteng businesswomen	Theme 2: Reasons and motivations for networking (§2.5.2)
3 To investigate the concept of <i>social networking</i> through qualitative research	Theme 3: Conceptualisation and characteristics of <i>social networking</i> (§2.5.3)
4 To investigate the contents of Gauteng businesswomen's social networks	Theme 4: Contents of social networks (§2.5.4)
5 To investigate the businesswomen's perceived experiences of social networking	Theme 5: Businesswomen's perceived experiences of social networking (§3.5.1)
6 To determine the networking challenges experienced by Gauteng businesswomen in their social networking efforts	Theme 6: Networking challenges that businesswomen experience (§3.5.2)
7 To determine what businesswomen with children experience as networking	Theme 7: Networking challenges that working mothers experience (§3.5.3)

Research objectives	Themes
challenges in their social networking efforts	
8 To investigate the successful social networking behaviours of businesswomen	Theme 8: Successful social networking behaviours (§3.5.4)

The findings are reported according to each main theme and sub-themes. Each discussion provides the connection between the literature and the verbatim responses (direct quotations) extracted from the interviews. The main conclusion of each finding is then discussed.

Theme 1: Conceptualisation and characteristics of networking

Various perceptions on *networking* were identified. These perceptions indicated that networking entails interacting with people and sharing information. Furthermore, it was concluded that networking is a learnable skill and that networking can be conducted anywhere. It was also concluded that networking entails building and maintaining relationships. A discussion of each perception as it was found in the literature and interviews follows below.

The first perception on networking involves networking as an interaction with people. This finding suggests that networkers meet each other and interact with one another in order to establish networking relationships. Table 4.2 provides the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.2: Networking is interacting with people

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking involves meeting with individuals, interacting with them and building strong relationships (§2.2.1).	<i>"I think networking is being able to interact with other people whether it is a social or business environment."</i> (§2.5.1.1).

An additional finding is that individuals interact with each other in order to benefit from the interaction. This finding suggests that individuals interact with one another in order to gain value from the networking interaction. This can include gaining knowledge, resources, support and business contacts. Table 4.3 provides the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.3: Networking is about adding value

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Elements that are beneficial to all of the involved individuals are critical during the process of relationship-building. When interacting, people are sharing information, ideas, advice, resources and support that are beneficial to all of the involved role-players (§2.2.1).	<i>"So networking for me is not just like attending a party, but it is being around other people, actively interacting and speaking with them with the intention of being able to gain some knowledge, some new information or even making new contacts."</i> (§2.5.1.1).

The second perception on networking is concerned with networking as a means through which information is shared. This finding implies that when individuals network, they share information with each other, and that has the potential to be beneficial to the people sharing information with one another (such as establishing new relationships). Table 4.4 provides the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.4: Networking entails sharing information

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
When individuals network, they share information that has the potential of being mutually beneficial (§2.2.1).	<i>"Networking is an informal means of getting information [and] sharing information that has also got a key role in generating new relationships [and] maintaining new relationships."</i> (§2.5.1.2).

The third perception involves networking as a learnable skill. This finding implies that networking is a learnable skill. Individuals who are willing to work hard can gain these skills and apply them to their networking efforts in order to ensure successful networking. Table 4.5 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.5: Networking is a learnable skill

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking consists of learnable skills that can be acquired by individuals who are willing to gain these skills (§2.2.1).	<i>"Networking is something that can be learned."</i> (§2.5.1.3).

The fourth perception is that networking can be conducted anywhere. This finding implies that networking can take place at any time and in any environment. Networkers need to note that a networking opportunity can arise from any situation and should therefore be open

to any opportunity that presents itself. Table 4.6 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.6: Networking can be conducted anywhere

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
The skill of networking can be adapted to any situation and any time at which people meet each other (§2.2.1).	<i>"I see networking as something that can be done in all environments all the time."</i> (§2.5.1.4).

An additional finding is that networking can take place in formal or informal situations. This finding implies that networking opportunities arise in formal or informal situations, such as a planned or unplanned conversation with someone. Therefore, individuals need to be open to any opportunity that might arise in any type of situation. Table 4.7 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.7: Networking can take place in formal or informal situations

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking opportunities can arise in formal or informal situations. Formal networking situations involve a scheduled networking appointment with someone and an informal situation involves an unplanned conversation with someone on, for example, a airplane (§2.2.1).	<i>"Networking can be on a formal basis or informal basis."</i> (§2.5.1.4).

The fifth perception on networking is that networking is the process of building and maintaining relationships. This finding implies that individuals must not only establish relationships in networking, but must also maintain such networking relationships in order to express appreciation towards those in the network. Table 4.8 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.8: Networking involves building and maintaining relationships

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking involves not only building relationships but also maintaining networking relationships, as it is critical to networking success (§2.2.1.1).	<i>"And I see networking more as being about building relationships, not just initiating [relationships, but] building relationships and maintaining those relationships, making sure that it is sustainable so that the network does not dry up."</i> (§2.5.1.5).

The first additional finding is that networking involves leveraging the networking relationships and not establishing any emotive connection with the involved individuals. This was disputed in literature. With this finding it is implied that individuals must not take advantage of networking relationships. Individuals must first establish a relationship with their fellow networkers before utilising such a network. Table 4.9 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.9: Networking is about leveraging relationships

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
When networking, individuals should focus on the relationships foremost and not on what can potentially be gained from the networking relationship. People need to establish an emotional attachment with one another before utilising the relationship (§2.2.1.1).	"[Networking] <i>is leveraging relationships, it is not making an emotional attachment to someone, it is leveraging an acquaintance.</i> " (§2.5.1.5).

Additional to this finding is that in networking individuals build long-term relationships and that these relationships are established over time. This finding implies that networking results in long-term relationships. Networks are established over time and once the relationship has been established it evolves into a long-term relationship. Table 4.10 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.10: Networking involves building long-term relationships

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Individuals network with the intent to build long-term relationships that can be potentially mutually beneficial (§2.2.1).	" <i>It is more like a long-term relationship.</i> " and " <i>I think networking is meeting with people with a view of building relationships. It is not something that is a quick thing; you cannot meet somebody and say I am really networking.</i> " (§2.5.1.5).

It was further mentioned that networking offers like-minded people the opportunity to pursue common interests and gain support. This finding suggests that networks are built of like-minded people. This implies that individuals are presented with the opportunity to pursue common interests and gain support from each other, when they network. Table 4.11 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.11: Like-minded people pursue common interests in networking

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
When networking, individuals meet and share experiences with like-minded people (§2.2.1.1).	<i>"They allow a space for like-minded people to pursue a common interest and gain support and understanding as well as camaraderie through this medium."</i> (§2.5.1.5).

The second additional finding is that networking relationships are mutually beneficial. This finding implies that the relationships built during networking are mutually beneficial. Therefore, in networking, individuals need to offer and gain benefits from the networking interaction. Table 4.12 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.12: Networking entails mutually beneficial relationships

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking is not an unselfish practice. It involves mutual beneficial interactions during which individuals should be willing to offer and receive various resources (§2.1.1).	<i>"... to make a connection with various people that you would not normally do on a day-to-day basis, but to the benefit of both parties."</i> (§2.5.1.5).

Additional to this finding is that networking is a reciprocal process. This finding suggests that individuals' networking efforts should be reciprocal. This implies that individuals need to be willing to also give when they receive various resources, such as information and support from the individuals with whom they network. Table 4.13 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.13: Networking is a reciprocal network

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking should be a two-way process, as reciprocity is an important element within strong networks. When individuals network, they should be willing to offer and receive resources, such as information (§2.2.1.1).	<i>"I think it has to be a two-way network as well, that you are not just doing everything yourself all the time."</i> (§2.5.1.5).

The third additional finding is that networking should only entail helping the people with whom an individual networks. This implies that individuals need to assist the people in their network before utilising that networking relationship. No networking literature was found to

support this finding. Table 4.14 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.14: Networking entails helping other people

Literature background	Verbatim responses of participants
No networking literature was found to support this finding.	<i>"Networking should be about serving other people." (§2.5.1.5).</i>

Additional to this finding is that networking does not involve using the people with whom an individual networks to gain something from the interaction. This finding implies that networking does not entail using the people with whom an individual networks to determine the benefits that can be gained from them or the networking interaction. This will lead those in the network feeling used or burnt out. Table 4.15 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.15: Networking does not entail using people to gain something

Literature background	Verbatim responses of participants
Utilising network relationships (such as asking people directly for a job and using them to gain what is needed) is seen as an obstacle that hinders successful networking (§2.2.1.1).	<i>"... so I guess most people see networking as building relationships in order to get business or to learn something from it. I guess networking is about the relationships, but it is about the purpose of that relationship. You are not just running around and trying to see what you can get from people." (§2.5.1.5).</i>

It was further mentioned that networking entails giving to the people in an individual's network. This finding suggests that networking is an interaction through which people provide resources to and assist other people. Therefore, individuals need to identify the needs (such as advice or business contacts) of the person they are networking with and assist him or her in gaining what they require. Table 4.16 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.16: Networking entails giving to the people with whom an individual networks

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
In networking, individuals should be willing to also give to the people in their networks, as generosity is an important element within strong networks (§2.2.1.1).	<i>"[Networking is] a situation where you are in to also give to other people. It is a wonderful opportunity to also provide people and to assist people." (§2.5.1.5).</i>

The **main conclusion** of this theme is that businesswomen have various perceptions on the concept of *networking*. This finding provides businesswomen with a background on networking and what it entails. Awareness of these perceptions and the ability to measure them in their own lives is critical for businesswomen as they are responsible for their networking efforts. The efforts that businesswomen put into networking directly influence the success of their networking outcomes. Therefore, it is vital that businesswomen network effectively (for example, maintaining and utilising networks correctly) in any networking situation. A balanced network of relationships that can potentially lead to long-term mutual beneficial interactions can then be ensured. It is recommended that businesswomen consider these perceptions and develop their ability to apply them during any networking situation. It is further recommended that businesswomen take note of these perceptions (such as the reciprocity entailed in networking) and bear these in mind in building networks. Balance of the building, maintaining and utilisation of networks can lead to various future interactions. In accordance with the finding that networking entails leveraging relationships and not establishing any emotive connection with the involved role-players, it is recommended that businesswomen realise the importance of first establishing a relationship before utilising it. Treating network relationships underhandedly can negatively impact on an individual's networking outcomes. Businesswomen should first focus on establishing strong relationships and once such relationships have been established, they can begin utilising these relationships. In accordance with the finding that networking entails helping other people, it is recommended that businesswomen first assist and give to the people they network with before attempting to benefit from the networking relationship.

Theme 2: Reasons and motivations for networking

An individual's networking efforts are initiated by a specific goal or motivation. This finding suggests that individuals network with a purpose. In networking, their networking efforts are motivated by a specific goal, for example to gain support or new business contacts. Table 4.17 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.17: Networking is motivated

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Individuals need to have a goal in mind in networking in order to achieve their networking outcomes (§2.2.1.2).	<i>"I see networking as a form of interaction, but with a goal."</i> (§2.5.2).

The first finding concluded is that networking should be focused in order to achieve the desired networking outcome. This finding implies that individuals need to be focused in their networking efforts. Individuals need to have a networking goal in mind and work hard and remain focused in achieving that specific goal. Table 4.18 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.18: Networking must be focused

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
An individual's networking must be focused in order to achieve his or her desired networking outcomes (§2.2.1.2).	<i>"So there is benefit that you gain out of networking, but it must be a bit focused, if it is too vague nothing tends to happen."</i> (§2.5.2.1).

The second finding is that networking is utilised as a marketing tool. This finding suggests that individuals utilise networking as a marketing tool. Table 4.19 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.19: Networking is a marketing tool

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking is a marketing tool (§2.2.1.2)	<i>"I see networking as a marketing tool."</i> (§2.5.2.2).

Additional to this finding is that networking can be utilised by a businesswoman to market herself. This finding suggests that individuals utilise networking to market themselves, for example they market their personal profiles in order to gain promotion or a better job. Table 4.20 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.20: Networking as a means to market yourself

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking is a pro-active form of self-marketing. When an individual utilises networking to market himself or herself it is important to be open and honest regarding who he or she is and what his or her skills and abilities are (§2.2.1.2).	<i>"To me networking is interacting with various individuals who would possible be in the same industry or across industries. It is meeting on a social level with key individuals either internally or externally in order to market oneself, because that is the object of networking."</i> (§2.5.2.2).

It was further mentioned that networking can be utilised by an individual to market his or her products and services. This finding suggests that networking can be utilised by individuals to market their products or services. If the networking opportunity is created at the right time and in the right environment, individuals can utilise that opportunity to market their products

or services. Table 4.21 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.21: Networking as a means to sell products or services

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
When networking is created in the right environment, it can serve as a means through which individuals can sell their products or services (§2.2.1.2).	“... the definition for me is where you have a specific product or service that you want to provide and where you then make use of people to tell other people about [your product or service], not necessarily making use of advertising.” (§2.5.2.2).

The third finding concluded is that there are various business reasons behind networking. These reasons include gaining assistance and support, making business contacts, gaining potential business and networking as a tool that encourages synergy and business creation. This finding suggests that individuals have various business motivations for networking. Networking provides individuals with assistance and support. Networking can also be utilised to make new business contacts, to gain potential business and to create synergy and encourage business creation. This implies that individuals can utilise networking to gain the above-mentioned benefits. Table 4.22 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

The fourth finding concluded is that there are personal motivations behind networking. These include gaining information and learning and growing from the networking interaction. This finding suggests that individuals have various personal reasons for networking. Therefore, in networking individuals can receive valuable information, learn and develop from the networking interaction. Table 4.23 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

The **main conclusion** of this theme is that the networking efforts of businesswomen are initiated by a specific motivation that might be personal or business-related. In order to ensure that networking outcomes are reached, businesswomen must be focused in their networking efforts. The implication of this conclusion is that each businesswoman is responsible for her own networking efforts and the effort she puts into her networking.

Table 4.22: Business motivations behind networking

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
<p>1 Assistance and support: Networking serves as a support system and can be utilised to gain support and assistance for all challenges that individuals experience (§2.2.1.2).</p>	<p>"[Networking is] a process where the formality of business is removed and the intention clear at the same time that business is the priority and where one party can assist the other directly or indirectly through support or leads." (§2.5.2.3).</p>
<p>2 Building new contacts: Individuals can utilise networking to build new contacts (§2.2.1.2).</p>	<p>"I see networking as a vehicle to extend my contacts, especially business contacts." (§2.5.2.3).</p>
<p>3 Encouragement of synergy and business creation: Individuals can utilise networking when they wish to start a new business or search for new investors (§2.2.1.2).</p>	<p>"[Networking] encourages synergy and business creation." (§2.5.2.3).</p>
<p>4 Gaining potential business: Networking can be utilised in order to assist individuals to increase their business (§2.2.1.2).</p>	<p>"... in networking your aim will be to gain knowledge, possible new contacts, and potential business." (§2.5.2.3).</p>

Table 4.23: Personal motivations for networking

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
<p>1 Gaining information: In networking, individuals share information with each other that benefits all involved. Good networkers are seekers and sources of information (§2.2.1.2).</p>	<p>"Networking is obviously using the people or the resources that you have to get to know people or get information that you do not necessarily have currently." (§2.5.2.4).</p>
<p>2 Learning and development: While networking, individuals share information that benefits the involved role-players, as the exchange of information leads to the growth and happiness (§2.2.1.2).</p>	<p>"[Networking involves] any opportunity to learn, grow and influence [that is] created by direct or indirect contact with other people that you can relate to." (§2.5.2.4).</p>

Therefore, businesswomen are responsible for determining their own reasons for networking and the level of effort they place into their networking in order to ensure their desired networking outcomes is reached. Businesswomen may be motivated to network for personal or professional gain. It is thus recommended that businesswomen take note of the identified motivations behind networking and establish the networking outcomes that they

wish to achieve. Thereafter, clear networking goals must be established and businesswomen should work hard and remain focused in order to achieve these networking goals.

Theme 3: Conceptualisation and characteristics of social networking

Various perceptions on social networking were found through the interviews. These included that social networking takes place in informal environments, social networking is a means to make new friends and social networking is a gathering place for individuals with similar interests. It was further concluded that the subject matter and intention of social and business networking differs, that social networking is informal and business networking is formal.

Social networking takes place in informal environments. This finding suggests that social networking takes place in informal or non-business environments. Therefore, individuals need to be open to any networking opportunity that can arise from informal situations. Table 4.24 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.24: Social networking takes place in informal environments

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Social networking takes place in non-business or informal environments (§2.2.2).	<i>“Social networking is more in a social environment, getting to know people in a more relaxed atmosphere and it is obviously got to do with more than one person. I do not think it is as intentional as you more formal networking.”</i> (§2.5.3.1).

The first additional finding is that social networking takes place when people are having a drink or dinner with each other. This finding suggests that social networking takes place in social environments. It further implies that by having a drink or dinner together, individuals are networking socially. Table 4.25 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.25: Social networking takes place when people are having a drink or dinner

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
People can meet and social network during wine-tasting events or when having dinner at a friend's house (§2.2.2).	"[Social networking takes place] <i>in a social setting such as dinner or drinks where business may not necessarily be the aim but dating for instance.</i> " (§2.5.3.1).

The second additional finding is that having a braai (barbeque) with other individuals constitutes social networking. No literature was found to support this finding. This finding suggests that having a braai is part of individuals' social networking. Therefore, individuals need to look out for and be open to any social networking opportunity that might arise when having a braai with, for example friends. Table 4.26 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.26: Having a barbeque constitutes social networking

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
No literature was found to support this finding.	" <i>Social networking is when you are sitting at a braai or having a dinner or you have been invited as a guest to somebody else's event.</i> " (§2.5.3.1).

The third additional finding is that social networking entails looking for a date. This finding implies that social networking takes place through individuals looking for a date and therefore, individuals can utilise their social networking in order to find dates. Table 4.27 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.27: Social networking entails looking for dates

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Looking for dates is seen as one of the motivations behind online social networking (§2.2.2).	" <i>Social networking for me is more where you are looking for dates.</i> " (§2.5.3.1).

The second conclusion is that social networking is utilised to develop new friendships. This finding implies that social networking is a means through which new friendships can be developed. This implies that individuals can utilise their social networks in order to attain new friendships. Table 4.28 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.28: Social networking as a means to build new friendships

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
In networking, individuals can make new friends and build lifelong friendships (§2.2.2).	"[Social networking] is a good way to make new friends and also just being able to let down and party a little." (§2.5.3.2).

The third conclusion is that social networking is a gathering place for people pursuing similar interests. This finding suggests that social networking is a gathering place for people with common interests. This is seen as a means through which valuable contacts and relationships can be established. Table 4.29 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.29: Social networking is a gathering place for people pursuing similar interests

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
When individuals interact socially (for example, participating in community projects or being part of a health club) they can build valuable connections (§2.2.2).	"It is about sharing common values, especially trust and integrity and off course a sense of humour helps." and "A common goal with strangers to support and encourage the commonalities." (§2.5.3.3).

The first additional finding is that people with similar interests pursue various projects, including community projects. This finding suggests that social networking takes place when individuals are pursuing similar interests, such as taking part in community projects. Participation in community projects is viewed as a good way to establish strong networking relationships. Table 4.30 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.30: People with similar interests participate in community projects

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Strong networking connections are made when people are doing charitable work. Being involved in these activities demonstrates characteristics, such as trust, that make people attractive candidates with whom to network (§2.2.2).	"Social networking just extends your context, for example business networking would be just within the business context, but social networking may be where you meet people that you can get involved in community projects [with] or you can get involved in clubs." (§2.5.3.3)

The second additional finding is that social networking includes participation in clubs (for example book clubs). This finding suggests that participation in clubs including book clubs, is part of an individual's social networking. Participating in such clubs leads to individuals extending their social contacts. Table 4.31 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.31: People with similar interests participate in clubs

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Participating in clubs such as health clubs and sport clubs is a good way to extent social networking contacts (§2.2.2).	"I believe (social networks) are like clubs." and "[for example] book clubs" (§2.5.3.3).

The fourth conclusion is that social and business networking differs in terms of subject matter and intention. This finding suggests that social and business networking have differences regarding subject matter and intention. Therefore, individuals who network to enhance or market their personal profile will use a different networking approach to individuals who network to gain new business opportunities or contacts. Table 4.32 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.32: The subject matter and intention of social and business networking differs

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
The intention of networking differs when individuals have different objectives. The networking approach of an individual who is networking to enhance his or her profile differs to that of an individual who is networking to start a new business (§2.2.2).	"The intention and content of the conversation is different though the outcomes are very much the same." (§2.5.3.4).

The first additional finding is that business networks are more structured than social networks. This finding suggests that business networks are more structured than social networks. This implies that in business networking, the approach of individuals will be more focused and strategic. Table 4.33 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.33: Business networks are more structured than social networks

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Business networking is more strategic and serious in that key individuals with whom to network are purposefully sought (§2.2.2).	<i>"With business networks you get to be much more structured."</i> (§2.5.3.4).

The second additional finding is that social and business networking are similar. This was disputed in literature. This finding suggests that there is a difference between business and social networking. As a result of the difference individuals need to know which type of networking they want to do as this will influence their networking outcomes. Table 4.34 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.34: Social and business networking are similar

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Within organisational research, a distinction is commonly made between formal (business) and informal (social) networks (§2.2.2).	<i>"Well nowadays in business I think [business networking and social networking] is very similar."</i> (§2.5.3.4).

The fifth conclusion is that social networking is formal and business networking is informal. This finding suggests that business and social networks differ, in that business networks are more formal and structured and social networks are more informal and flexible. This implies that when individuals decide to network socially, this will be a more informal and social approach than business networking, which will be more formal and structured. Table 4.35 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.35: Social networking is formal and business networking is informal

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Formal or business networks are more formal whereas informal or social networks are more social and flexible (§2.2.2).	<i>"... business networking would be a more formal and targeted situation."</i> (§2.5.3.5).

Additional to this finding it that social networking is entertainment-focused and business networking is goal-orientated. This finding suggests that business networking is goal-orientated and social networking entails entertainment. This implies that when individuals decide to social network, their goal will be to socialise. In business networking, individuals will be more focused on achieving a certain goal, such as achieving new business

opportunities. Table 4.36 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.36: Social networking is entertainment-focused and business networking is goal-orientated

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Social networking is more flexible and social, whereas business networking takes place with business in mind and is not conducted for social purposes (§2.2.2).	“One is business goal-orientated and the other entertainment.” and “... the aim of social networking is to unwind and relax with friends in an informal setting.” (§2.5.3.5).

The **main conclusion** of this theme is that businesswomen have various perceptions regarding the concept of *social networking*. This provides businesswomen with background information on social networking. Information is given regarding when businesswomen can network socially and what their social networking efforts can be utilised for. A further implication is that businesswomen are responsible for their own social networking efforts and the extent to which they utilise their social networking skills in various environments to effectively utilise social networking opportunities. Therefore, it is recommended that businesswomen become aware of the various perceptions of social networking and apply it when they network socially in order to ensure successful social networking. Businesswomen should also clearly establish what their social networking goals are and work hard at achieving these. In terms of the findings that social networking takes place when individuals are having a braai and social networking entails looking for dates, it is recommended that businesswomen view these as social networking opportunities and utilise them to reach their desired social networking goals. In accordance with the additional finding that social and business networking are similar, it is recommended that businesswomen bear these differences in mind and apply them during networking opportunities in order to assist them in reaching their desired networking outcomes.

Theme 4: Contents of social networks

It was concluded that social networks consists of supportive people and those with similar values and that business contacts are found in social environments. This finding suggests that individuals include various kinds of people (such as supportive people and those with similar values) into their social networks. It is also suggested that individuals can make valuable business contacts when they network socially. This implies that when individuals network socially, they consciously include a certain kind of individual into their social network

and they establish valuable business contacts in the social environment. Table 4.37 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.37: Contents of social networks

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
<p>1 Supportive people: Social networks include friends, colleagues and acquaintances that are supportive (§2.2.2; §2.2.2.1).</p>	<p>"... I think that particularly in your social network it is really people that care about you and that kind of love and support you." (§2.5.4.1).</p>
<p>2 Individuals with similar values: It is important that people with similar values are included into networks. This leads to establishing common ground within the network, making the network sustainable (§2.2.2.1).</p>	<p>"... I think that it is important that they are genuine, that they have a kind of value system that I can relate to. I am not saying that all their values have to be the same as my values, but they [must] have other values that I can relate to." (§2.5.4.2).</p>
<p>3 Business contacts can be found in social environments: Valuable networking contacts can be found within social settings, such as buffet dinners and wine-tasting events (§2.2.2.1).</p>	<p>"... sometimes you could go to a social networking event and you find some business contacts there." (§2.5.4.3).</p>

The **main conclusion** of this theme is that the social networks of businesswomen include supportive people and those with similar interests and that business contacts can be found in social environments. This finding provides businesswomen with a background of who to include in their social networks and the settings in which valuable business contacts can be established. The success of an individual's social networking efforts is influenced by the people that are included in social networks. Therefore, in order to gain what is needed from a social network, it is important to include and be connected to the right combination of people. It is recommended that businesswomen utilise this background on social networks as a starting point of who to include in their social networks. It is also recommended that businesswomen keep their social networking objectives in mind when including individuals in their social networks, as it is critical for these individuals to be in accordance with the businesswomen's desired social networking outcomes, as well as able to assist the businesswomen in attaining these desired social networking outcomes, whether the social networking goals are personal or work related.

Theme 5: Businesswomen’s perceived experiences on social networking

The first conclusion drawn is that the networking practices of women and men differ. This finding suggests that differences exist in the networking practices of women and men. Table 4.38 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.38: Women and men network differently

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Various differences exist between the networking practices of women and men, for example the way in which women and men utilise their networks. Men use their networking activities more effectively than women (§3.2.1).	<i>"I do think that men and women network slightly differently."</i> (§3.5.2.1).

The first additional finding is that women perceive themselves to be better networkers than men. This was disputed in the literature. This finding suggests that women are not better networkers than men. Men are able to utilise their network more effectively than women, thus making men more effective in networking than women. Table 4.39 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.39: Women are better at networking than men

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Men utilise their networks more effectively than women (§3.2.1).	<i>"... I think in general, women are much better networkers than men."</i> (§3.5.2.1).

The second additional finding is that women perceive themselves to be more willing than men to share contacts and to offer assistance to the people with whom they network. This finding suggests that women are more willing than men to share contacts and help the people they network with. Table 4.40 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

The third additional finding is that women perceive themselves to share too much information when they network, whereas men know which level of information to share. This finding suggests that women tend to share too much information when they network and men tend to maintain a balance. It is implied that women need to gain balance regarding the level of information that they share in networking. Table 4.41 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.40: Women are more willing to share contacts and offer assistance

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
In networking, women are more open and sharing than men. Women enjoy providing assistance and men are only focused on what can be gained from their networking efforts (§3.5.2.1).	<i>"I have noticed throughout my career that women are generally much more forthcoming about sharing contacts and helping others, especially other women, than men are." and "... better than men, who always seem to be thinking what's in it for them."</i> (§3.5.2.1).

Table 4.41: Women share too much information when networking

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
In networking, women share much information, whereas men tend to focus more on brief small talk (§3.5.2.1).	<i>"... where women tend to talk too much, they go beyond." and "... men tend to do that a lot better than women tend to do. They know which level of information to discuss."</i> (§3.5.2.1).

The fourth additional finding is that the networking approaches of women and men differ. Women are more emotional and men are more targeted in their approach. This finding suggests that men and women adopt different approaches to networking. Women have a more emotional approach to networking and men are more targeted. Table 4.42 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.42: Women adopt a networking approach that is emotional, while men adopt a networking approach that is targeted

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Men and women communicate differently when they network. Women value their emotions when they network and make decisions based on their emotions, whereas men find that emotions will negatively influence the quality of the decisions they make (§3.5.2.1).	<i>"I think women can get a bit more emotional, (they) draw on this person because they like this person and not because that person will have the best service. I definitely think that once women trust each other, relationships become quite long and quite deep." and "... but I do think men have a more targeted approach to networking and a less of a fluffy approach."</i> (§3.5.2.1).

The fifth additional finding is that women are more supportive and open than men. This finding suggests that women are more supportive and open than men towards the people with whom they network. Table 4.43 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.43: Women are more supportive and open than men

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
<p>Women are more supportive and open towards the people with whom they network than men (§3.5.2.1).</p>	<p><i>"... I think that women are more open and we are more sociable [than men]. Women see each other as very much supportive and we know that we can be open towards each other and we are not too proud to open up." and "... I think men are more shallow and do not get emotionally attached to each other. Men are very proud [and] they do not easily open up towards each other."</i> (§3.5.2.1).</p>

The sixth additional finding is that men are more driven by ego than women. This finding suggests that men are more ego-driven than women. Men are more likely to brag about their achievements than women. Table 4.44 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.44: Men are more ego-driven than women

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
<p>Women are less proud than men. Women do not always take the credit for their work, whereas men tend to brag more about their achievements (§3.5.2.1).</p>	<p><i>"... women are less proud and ego-driven. We are more nurturing and we support each other on all levels. Women do not want to burn their bridges, while men are too proud and that leads them to burn their bridges. Women are more careful." and "[Men] are very ego-driven."</i> (§3.5.2.1).</p>

The seventh additional finding is that men have strong networks. This finding suggests that men have strong and powerful networks. It is implied that women need to focus more on their networking efforts in order for them to establish strong networks. Table 4.45 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.45: Men have stronger networks than women

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
<p>Men have more powerful networks than women (§3.5.2.1).</p>	<p><i>"Men have a very good network. It is still very strong in the corporate world today and I doubt that it would really disappear."</i> (§3.5.2.1).</p>

Additional to this finding is that men have strong networks as a result of building networks from school days, such as old-boy networks. This finding implies that men have strong networks owing to networks built from school days. It implies that women should be building women networks from an early age in order to become as powerful networkers as men. Table 4.46 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.46: Men have strong networks as a result of networks built from school days

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
As a result of the importance of networking, men started to build their networks (old-boys networks) from school days (§3.5.2.1).	<i>"... and that comes from school days and the old boys club."</i> (§3.5.2.1).

The second conclusion is that networking is a valuable tool. This finding suggests that women view networking as a valuable tool. Women utilise networking in order to gain value (such as advice or support) from the interaction. Table 4.47 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.47: Networking is a valuable tool

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking is a powerful tool for women (§3.2.1).	<i>"So I think that women are starting to recognise the value of networking."</i> (§3.5.2.2).

Additional to this finding is that networking connects and empowers women. This finding implies that networking adds value to women in that it connects and empowers them. Women network in order to become connected to other women and be empowered by such network relationships and interactions. Table 4.48 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.48: Networking connects and empowers women

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking assists women in becoming more visible in the community and organisation and allows women to build relationships that are empowering and supportive (§3.2.1).	<i>"I see [networking] as something that can connect women and empower them."</i> (§3.5.2.2).

The third conclusion is that social networks provide support. This finding suggests that social networks provide women with the support they need. Therefore, women should utilise their social networks when they need support. Table 4.49 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.49: Social networks provide support

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Social networks provide women with the needed support, including social support (§3.5.2.3).	<i>"... there is a great level of support that you require and I think with children, support is always required and this is where I suppose social networks come in pretty handy. I mentioned my networking with parents, other parents and the school, you get a lot of support, you get certain benefits [and] you get additional help through that."</i> (§3.5.2.3).

The first additional finding is that all women need support. This finding suggests that all women, including mothers, employees and housewives, require support. Table 4.50 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.50: All women need support

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
All women need support as all of their individual roles (for example being a mother, employee, boss or housewife) are difficult to fulfil (§3.5.2.3).	<i>"I think women generally do need more support."</i> (§3.5.2.3).

The second additional finding is that working mothers need a support network. This finding suggests that working mothers have additional responsibilities (caring for the household and their children in addition to work responsibilities). As a result, working mothers require a support structure or support network in order for them to gain a balance between these responsibilities. Table 4.51 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.51: Working mothers need a support network

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Working mothers need additional support (such as a support system) as they also take care of their children apart from their work responsibilities (§3.5.2.3).	<i>"Working women with children obviously need a support network to help look after their kids while they are at the office and I imagine it cannot be easy to juggle the demands that both worlds would place on them simultaneously."</i> (§3.5.2.3).

The third additional finding is that working mothers need business support. This finding suggests that working mothers need business support. The businesses at which women are employed need to comprehend the pressures that working mothers experience and be supportive towards them in terms of policy from which working mothers can benefit such as flexible working hours. Table 4.52 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.52: Working mothers need business support

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Organisations need to assist working mothers to advance in management through providing institutional arrangements such as flexible working hours (§3.5.2.3).	<i>"I think to be a working woman with children nowadays you need support in your family life as well as in your business life. Children do have demands on people's lives and I think it needs to be taken into account and so if the children are sick the workplace or work network needs to be supportive to that person..."</i> (§3.5.2.3).

The fourth additional finding is that working mothers need personal support. This finding suggests that working mothers not only need support at work, but also personal support. Personal support can include a husband who helps with household and childcare responsibilities. This is needed in order for working mothers to gain a balance between their diverse responsibilities. Table 4.53 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

The fifth additional finding is that working mothers need support when their children are young. This finding implies that working mothers find it difficult to combine their professional responsibilities with raising young children. Therefore, they need additional support when their children are young. Table 4.54 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.53: Working mothers need personal support

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
The need for personal support has increased since women started to enter the labour force. Support from personal sources such as their husband benefits women psychologically (§3.5.2.3).	"... you need support at home, because you now need to strike a balance." (§3.5.2.3).

Table 4.54: Working mothers need support when their children are young

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
The combination of family responsibilities with young children is difficult. Therefore, working mothers need additional support (§3.5.2.3).	"I think when children are smaller [you need more support]. When my children were smaller and I first got divorced I needed a friend to help me with the children when I could not be there." (§3.5.2.3).

Additional to this finding is that that working mothers can utilise child minders as a source of additional support. This finding suggests that childcare providers are a source of additional support. Working mothers can therefore utilise childcare providers to gain the needed additional support. Table 4.55 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.55: Child minders are a source of additional support

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Businesswomen can gain additional support from support systems such as through childcare providers or housekeepers (§3.5.2.3).	"Working mothers who have full-time stay-in childminders have less stress in terms of fetching and carrying kids or necessarily having to stay at home when kids are not well as opposed to a mom who does not have family support and has children in day-care care." (§3.5.2.3).

It was further mentioned that businesswomen can utilise car pools as a source of additional support. This finding suggests that car pools are another source of additional support that working mothers can utilise in order to gain the needed support. Table 4.56 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.56: Car pools are a source of additional support

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Businesswomen can gain additional support from support systems such as those of childcare providers who fulfil various functions, such as driving children around when their mothers are at work (§3.5.2.3).	" <i>... it is very difficult for a working woman if they do not have flexibility in their jobs, because I just think that if the organisation does not offer them any kind of flexibility then that is a problem. So the support structure there would revolve around things like lift clubs...</i> " (§3.5.2.3).

The **main conclusion** of this theme is that businesswomen have various perceived experiences regarding social networking. This finding provides a background to the social networking perceptions, expectations and needs of businesswomen. It further provides businesswomen with a source of knowledge regarding the differences between women and men networking, the value of networking, the support that businesswomen require and the resources (social networks) that they can utilise to gain the needed support. It is recommended that businesswomen take note of these perceived experiences and apply them accordingly to their networking approach. Businesswomen can, for example, assess their networking approach in order to become as effective networkers as men. Businesswomen should also take note of the kinds of support identified and assess the type of support they require in their lives in order to gain such support. Working mothers should take note of the kinds of support they require and the support sources (such as car pools) that they can utilise in order to gain work-home balance. In accordance with the finding that women are better networkers than men, it is recommended that businesswomen take note of this difference and work on their networking efforts in order to become as effective in networking as men.

Theme 6: Networking challenges that businesswomen experience

Businesswomen experience various networking challenges in their social networking efforts that affect their networking success. The first conclusion is that businesswomen do not network well in business. This finding implies that women do not network well in business. Therefore, women need to work hard at networking and utilise their networks more effectively in order to become better networkers and to gain more networking benefits (such as becoming more satisfied with their careers). Table 4.57 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.57: Women do not network well in business

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Men use their networks more effectively and successfully than women. This leads to men's increased career success (§3.2.1).	<i>"I do not think women network, from a business point of view well."</i> (§3.5.3.1).

The second finding is that women do not give as much network support as they are able to. This was disputed in the literature. This finding suggests that women are supportive in networking. Women, for example provide each other with business opportunities before providing it to someone else. Table 4.58 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.58: Women do not give as much network support as they are able to

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Businesswomen are supportive to each other through providing business opportunities to one other (§3.2.1).	<i>"I do not think women help women in the work place and give network support as much as they could."</i> (§3.5.3.2).

The **main conclusion** of this finding is that businesswomen experience various networking challenges in their social networking efforts. The finding implies that businesswomen are responsible for the way in which they network. It provides businesswomen with a background on the challenges they can experience in social networking. In order for individuals to reach networking success, it is critical for them to network effectively and provide support to the people with whom they network. Therefore, it is recommended that businesswomen take note of these challenges and measure them in their own lives in order to assess whether they are networking effectively and providing network support. It is further recommended that businesswomen keep this background on challenges in mind in order for them to determine which challenges might hinder them from establishing effective social networking relationships and gaining business and personal support. In accordance with the finding that businesswomen do not offer network support, it is recommended that they assess their social networking practices in order to establish whether they do support other individuals in networking. Being supportive is a basic principle of networking. In order to gain support from their network, businesswomen need to offer support. When individuals provide resources such as support to one another, trust and respect are established. Once trust has been built in a networking relationship, future beneficial interactions are likely to results between the networkers involved.

Theme 7: Networking challenges that working mothers experience

Businesswomen with children experience various networking challenges in their social networking efforts. It was concluded that working mothers miss out on networking opportunities. This finding suggests that businesswomen miss out on networking opportunities as a result of their diverse responsibilities of taking care of their children and having a career. The implication for businesswomen is that they have less time to network after work hours as a result of these responsibilities. Table 4.59 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.59: Working mothers miss out on networking opportunities

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Women are the primary caretakers of their children. This influences the time they have to network after working hours. As a result, women miss out on networking opportunities (§3.2.1.1).	<i>"... I think specifically women with children do not always have the opportunity to network so much at work, because sometimes you will tend to find that women with children will have to come in early and they have to go again to chase back home to go and look after their families, whereby working women who are single will be [able to] work in sessions after work or drinks after work."</i> (§3.5.4.1).

The first additional finding concluded is that working mothers have the responsibility to attend to their children. This implies that women still have the responsibility of attending to their children, although they are employed outside the household. This influences the time they have available to network. Table 4.60 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.60: Businesswomen need to attend to their children

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Women have the responsibilities of caring for their families, children and household, although they are employed outside their home environment (§3.2.1.1).	<i>"I think the responsibility nine out of ten times falls on the woman [for example] when the children are sick, school work, homework, activities."</i> (§3.5.4.1).

The second additional finding is that working mothers experience time constraints. This finding implies that women have diverse responsibilities to which they need to attend and

this leads to time constraints. Table 4.61 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.61: Working mothers experience time constraints

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Businesswomen need to attend to their children although they have other household and work responsibilities. This leads to time constraints (§3.2.1.1).	<i>"... if you are a working woman and [you have] no children, you have enough time and when you are a working mother you do not have enough time, because when you arrive at home you need to look at their homework."</i> (§3.5.4.1).

The third additional finding is that businesswomen experience stress. This finding suggests that businesswomen experience stress as a result of their diverse responsibilities. Table 4.62 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.62: Businesswomen experience stress

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
As a result of a woman's diverse responsibilities, they have high stress levels (§3.2.1.1).	<i>"... in terms of a stay-at-home mom, you do not have the stress levels that a working woman has, so you might be busy with everything else that you do but you might not have the stress levels. I think a stay-at-home mom, do not know anything else. So as a working mom you have two levels that you are trying to work on. One is success of your business and one is the success of being a mom."</i> (§3.5.4.1).

The **main conclusion** is that businesswomen with children experience various networking challenges in their social networking efforts. This finding provides working mothers with a source of knowledge on challenges that they might experience. In order for working mothers to find a balance between their personal and professional responsibilities, it is recommended that they take note of these networking challenges and assess whether they experience these in their own lives. Once businesswomen have identified the networking challenges that they experience, they can find support (such as childcare facilities, a housekeeper, a nanny, a husband that is sharing in the household responsibilities) to overcome these challenges. Once support sources are utilised working mothers can achieve network success in that they can start networking after work hours and find a work-home balance that will positively influence their stress levels and the time constraints they experience.

Theme 8: Successful social networking behaviour

Various elements of successful social networking behaviour were identified from the interviews. The first conclusion is that networking should be done with respect, integrity and love for other people. This finding implies that when individuals network, they need to be respectful towards the people with whom they network, they need to act with integrity and love for the other people. This is needed to ensure successful social networking. Table 4.63 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.63: Networking should be done with respect, integrity and love for other people

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Respect and integrity are essential elements in successful networks (§3.2.2).	<i>"Networking, business and socially, should be operated [with] respect and love of people. If you are trustworthy, people feel it and they want to do more with you and for you. So integrity is very important when you create networking relationships."</i> (§3.5.5.1)

The first additional finding is that in networking individuals should foremost build a relationship with the people with whom they are networking. This finding suggests that individuals need to first establish a relationship with the people they network with before they can start utilising that network, for example to sell their products or services to them. Table 4.64 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.64: Individuals first need to build a relationship with the person with whom they are networking

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
When individuals are meeting with one another, they first need to become familiarised with each other and build a relationship (§3.2.2).	<i>"... you need to build a relationship with someone before you can sell something to them."</i> (§3.5.5.1)

The second additional finding is that individuals should develop trust with the people they network with before they can leverage the networking relationship. This finding implies that trust is an essential component of successful networks. Therefore, it is suggested that individuals need to build trust with their fellow networkers before they can start utilising the

networking relationships. Table 4.65 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.65: Trust needs to be established before the network can be utilised

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Trust is a key component of strong networks. Networking only takes place when trust has been developed between the role-players involved (§ 3.2.2).	<i>"... you need to gain the trust of the person that you want to do business with and that just does not come the first second you meet someone, that comes with the relationship with that person and you can only do that by engaging in dialogue and collaborating with them."</i> and <i>"... there needs to be a personal relationship where trust is build with somebody."</i> (§3.5.5.1).

The second finding is that networking is work-in-progress. Individuals should continuously work hard at networking in order to become more visible and be included in other individuals' networks. This finding suggests that individuals need to work continuously at networking. In order to achieve what is needed from networking, individuals need to be pro-active in their networking efforts. Table 4.66 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.66: Networking is work-in-progress

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Individuals should be pro-active when networking and make it part of everyday living (§3.2.2).	<i>"I think you need to take ownership of your own networking. No one does it for you, so you got to work at it yourself."</i> (§3.5.5.2)

The third finding is that networking is reciprocal. This finding suggests that reciprocity is an important element of successful networking. It is implied that in networking, individuals need to be willing to offer and receive various networking benefits. Table 4.67 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

The first additional finding is an individual should first identify the value proposition of the person with whom he or she is networking; that is determine the networking needs of this person. This finding suggests that once individuals meet other people for networking purposes, they need to become familiarised with those individuals and consider their networking needs. Table 4.68 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.67: Networking is reciprocal

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
In networking, individuals need to reciprocate, as reciprocity is a basic principle of successful networking (§3.2.2).	<i>"People should go into networking relationships to give and not really expect anything. The result is that what you give definitely comes back to you." and "you take what you need from (the network) as long as you give back and then people reciprocate." (§3.5.5.3).</i>

Table 4.68: Individuals need to determine the needs of the person with whom they are networking

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Networking involves interacting with people and becoming familiarised with them and their needs (§3.2.2).	<i>"It is not about grabbing, it is not asking for deals when you first meet them, you are talking to people to find out what you can do, what their needs are because you need to feed into their needs. You need to feed the people for them to trust you." (§3.5.5.3).</i>

The second additional finding is that individuals need to give to the people in their network before expecting anything in return, as the action will reciprocate in the future. This finding suggests that individuals need to give to the people they network with before expecting something in return. Table 4.69 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.69: Individuals need to give to the people with whom they network

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Being generous is important when networking. Individuals should assist other individuals without expecting anything in return (§3.2.2).	<i>"I believe in the pay-it-forward concept. To do something for someone else without expecting anything in return. You need to do something for someone else without expecting any payment for it, because in the future it definitely comes back to and that is where your network starts." (§3.5.5.3).</i>

The fourth finding is that successful networking behaviour involves setting clear networking goals. The first additional finding is that individuals need to have networking goals in relationships. This finding suggests that individuals need to set clear networking goals when

building relationships. An individual should be open towards the people with whom he or she networks and ask for their assistance. Table 4.70 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.70: Individuals need to have networking goals in relationships

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
An individual should be open with the people in his or her network and should not be afraid to ask for assistance (§3.5).	<i>"... you need to put your pride in your pocket and ask people and tell people what you are about and ask people for help."</i> and <i>"So you need to open up and let people into your life, so that they can understand your life in order to support you."</i> (§3.5.5.4).

The second additional finding is that individuals need to have clear goals when they are attending a networking event. This finding suggests that individuals need to have clear goals when they are attending a networking event. Individuals need to know the reason they are attending the specific networking event and be strategic in order to achieve the desired outcome. Table 4.71 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.71: Individuals need to have networking goals when attending a networking event

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
When attending a networking event an individual should be strategic. He or she needs to know the reason he or she is attending the event and have a plan in mind in order to be successful (§3.5).	<i>"... at a networking event you need to make it very clear why you are there."</i> (§3.5.5.4).

The fifth finding is that an individual needs to be confident during networking events. This finding suggests that having confidence is an essential element to successful networking. Therefore, individuals need to portray confidence when attending a networking event. Table 4.72 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

The sixth finding is that an individual needs to leverage all the available networking events. This finding suggests that individuals need to utilise the networking mechanisms that are available to them at the organisation at which they are employed. Table 4.73 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants

Table 4.72: An individual should portray confidence

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Individuals need to be positive and confident in order to stand out from the people that are attending the same networking event (§3.2.2).	When attending a networking event one needs to be confident. <i>"... so if you are going to something like that, you first need to be confident."</i> (§3.5.5.5).

Table 4.73: An individual needs to leverage all the available networking mechanisms

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Taking advantage of any networking opportunity is critical (§3.2.2).	<i>"I would say they need to leverage whatever mechanism that is available [to them in the organisation]. So work hard at it and leverage any mechanism that is available to you to develop your network."</i> (§3.5.5.6).

Additional to this finding is that individuals need to leverage available networking mechanisms as these allows them to meet people outside their sphere of reference. This finding suggests that individuals need to utilise the networking mechanisms that are available to them in the organisation, as it leads them to meet people that are not part of their daily working environment. This can lead to individuals becoming more visible in the organisation at which they are employed. Table 4.74 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.74: Individuals need to meet people outside their sphere of reference

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Utilising the networking opportunities that are available to them, can assist individuals in meeting the people that are above them in the chain of command within the organisation (§3.2.2).	<i>"... and I would say that every women in this organisation should join (the internal networking organisation), because that is how you are going to build relationships, there are too many women that sit at their desk that do not know what the person in the next department does day-to-day. There is no appreciation for what people from out their sphere of reference do."</i> (§3.5.5.6).

The seventh finding is that there are various behaviours that individuals need to avoid when networking. These include being impolite, not honouring meetings, disrespect for others, taking advantage of others and negativity. This finding suggests various networking behaviours that networkers need to avoid. In order for individuals to be successful in their

networking efforts they need to polite and positive, honour meetings, respect and help the individuals they network with and not use them to gain what they need. Table 4.75 indicates the link between the literature and the verbatim responses of the participants.

Table 4.75: Poor networking behaviour to avoid

Literature study	Verbatim responses of participants
Being polite, honouring meetings, respecting and helping individuals, not using individuals to gain what is needed and being positive are important behaviours to consider when networking (§3.2.2).	<i>“Killers of network relationships, socially and business-wise, include being impolite, not honouring meetings and not apologising for being late, disrespect for others, laziness and taking advantage of others and negativity, for example racial jokes.” (§3.5.5.7).</i>

The **main conclusion** of this theme is that there are various behaviours key to successful social networking behaviour. This finding provides businesswomen with a background regarding positive and negative networking behaviours in order to ensure successful networking. Businesswomen are responsible for the way in which they social network and treat the people with whom they network. Therefore, it is recommended that businesswomen take note of these behaviours and incorporate them into their social networking practices, in order to ensure that they achieve networking success.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are made in this section regarding the findings of this study. These recommendations are directed at organisations, businesswomen, schools, business schools and universities. These recommendations are discussed below.

Recommendations for organisations

- Organisations should establish internal training initiatives. Once the business world realises the value of networking and the importance of networking skills (Boe & Youngs, 1989:23), it will become part of various training initiatives. Courses and seminars regarding networking and social networking should be established. Many organisations have team-building days during which people are asked what they would do in certain situations. Internal networking initiatives should be similar, in that they should focus on asking employees to whom they would go to gain certain kind of information (Boe & Youngs, 1989:23) or what they would do to attain to a specific objective.

- As women are vital to any organisation, the networking training initiatives should also focus on making businesswomen more aware of the concepts of *networking* and *social networking* and the way in which they can be utilised to their advantage. In order to ensure that businesswomen benefit from these training initiatives, they should focus on:
 - 1 the interactive aspect of networking;
 - 2 networking as a means of sharing information that is beneficial to all of the involved role-players;
 - 3 networking as a learnable skill and the way these skills can be acquired by individuals;
 - 4 openness towards networking opportunities in any environment and at any time;
 - 5 the importance of maintaining networking relationships and finding balance in developing, maintaining and utilisation network relationships; and
 - 6 the importance of establishing clear networking goals (including personal and professional goals) and being focused in achieving these goals.
 - 7 what social networking entails and what it can be utilised for (the initiative should emphasise the supportive aspect of social networks and the utilisation thereof by businesswomen in order to become more successful in networking);
 - 8 establishing valuable connections within social environments;
 - 9 the importance of social networking objectives;
 - 10 providing businesswomen with a background regarding where they should network socially and which types of people to include in their social network; and
 - 11 providing businesswomen with a source of knowledge on social network development (the focus should be on successful network behaviour, which could assist businesswomen in building successful social networks).

- The importance of internal networking mechanisms was emphasised in this study. Therefore, it is recommended that internal networking organisations be established in organisations. These organisations should strive to assist businesswomen in their social networking efforts in order to assist them in becoming more visible in the organisation and gaining work support. A further objective of the internal networking organisation should be supporting women to become more effective networkers. This can be achieved through making businesswomen aware of the value that networking holds and the differences between women and men in networking. Once businesswomen are aware of these differences, they will be able to apply their networking with the view of becoming as effective networkers as men. It can also assist businesswomen in building strong networks.

Recommendations for businesswomen

- A variety of networking challenges that businesswomen experience was identified in this research. These challenges hinder businesswomen in developing professionally and becoming more visible in society and the organisation at which they are employed. Therefore, it is recommended that businesswomen take note of these challenges, measure the extent to which they experience these in their own lives and seek support sources (such as social networks, childminders, car pools) that can assist them in overcoming these challenges.

Recommendations for schools, business schools and universities

- The concepts of *networking* and *social networking* should be incorporated into school programmes in that students must be made aware of these concepts and the importance thereof as part of their business study outcomes. Students should be exposed to these concepts from an early age in order to benefit from them in their networking. Once students are familiarised with these concepts and utilisation of such networking, they will be able to benefit in that they can utilise networking to market their personal profile in order to gain employment after the completion of their high school education or to gain university admission. The teaching of networking skills can also assist students in decreasing stress that they might experience in their personal and professional lives. This will enable them to live more balanced lives.
- The concepts of *networking* and *social networking* are vital for students in entrepreneurship, marketing and business studies. Therefore, networking should be incorporated into modules at business schools and universities. Training initiatives should focus on familiarising students with these concepts in order for them to integrate them into their personal and professional lives. When students are exposed to networking and social networking, they can utilise this in order to gain opportunities for employment at international companies or to gain support in order to start a business after the completion of their tertiary education.

4.4 LIMITATIONS

Various study limitations were identified. These limitations might have influenced the research findings and are thus discussed below.

4.4.1 Access to research participants

In-depth interviews are viewed as a time-consuming method of collecting data. It was difficult to contact potential participants and those contacted had limited time to participate in the interviews owing to their personal and professional obligations. Although the participants were supportive of the research, it appeared that the interviews were not prioritised by them because of their busy schedules and involvement in their businesses or work.

4.4.2 Interviewing environment

Most of the interviews took place at a coffee shop that was noisy at some points during the interviews. This made the recording of the interviews difficult. Such disturbances included the waiter bringing the account, loud music playing at some point and a noisy parking lot.

4.4.3 Sample population

The aim of the study was to include a mixture of participants in terms of age, ethnicity and parental and marital status. Representation is difficult to ensure when using snowball sampling (De Klerk, 2006:331). As a result the sample consisted of mostly white women who had no children under the age of twelve. Furthermore, the sample only included businesswomen from the Gauteng Province.

4.4.4 Nature of the study

This research was qualitative in nature and reflected the participants' views and perceptions on social networking. Owing to the study's qualitative nature, it can serve as the basis for a quantitative study. This provides researchers with the opportunity to use the identified themes and findings to develop a questionnaire in order to investigate the social network practices of businesswomen further. This could result in an assessment tool that an organisation could utilise to assess the maintained work-home balance between the female employees.

4.5 REFERENCES

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Date of access: 25 March 2009.

APPENDIX A

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW E-MAIL INVITATION

Tel: 079 704 9241

E-mail: 13104802@nwu.ac.za

Dear Kate*

I am currently an M-degree student in Business Management at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus). My study focuses on the social network practices of businesswomen in Gauteng. It investigates how businesswomen perceive social networking in their personal and professional lives.

Women have only realised the importance of networking in the last few years. It is said that men network more effectively than women and that they gain more business opportunities than women as a result of their networking activities. With this study I aim to make working women (including working mothers) more aware of the concept of *social networking* in order for them to utilise this network to their advantage. By sharing your unique perceptions and experiences on social networking, you will help me to attain this objective. Your contribution will be of great value as it will assist in supporting and empowering businesswomen.

Method of interviewing

What better way exist to share experiences than talking about it? In-depth interviews will be conducted – a great method to use as us women love talking about something that can make a difference in our lives. This will include a discussion on your personal perceptions and experiences on *social networking*. The results of the interviews will be handled with confidentiality.

I know that us as women have so much to offer in life and therefore your contribution to my study will be greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Marlene Bogaards (née Petersen)

If you have any questions regarding my research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor, Dr. Saskia de Klerk at:

Marlene Bogaards (née Petersen)

E-Mail: 13104802@nwu.ac.za

Tel: (018) 299 1440

Cell: 079 704 9241

Dr. Saskia de Klerk

E-Mail: Saskia.deKlerk@nwu.ac.za

Tel: (018) 299 1463

Cell: 083 234 8661

* Name used to ensure anonymity of participants

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION

Tel: 079 704 9241

E-mail: 13104802@nwu.ac.za

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT IN THE SOCIAL NETWORKING STUDY: SOCIAL NETWORK PRACTICES: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PERCEPTIONS OF GAUTENG BUSINESSWOMEN

A PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Marlene Bogaards (née Petersen) is conducting a research project on the social network practices of businesswomen in Gauteng. She formulated a few basic questions for discussion. Your responses will help in understanding the social network practices of businesswomen in Gauteng. Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated.

B PROCEDURE

If you agree to be in this study the following will occur:

- 1 You will respond and take part in an in-depth interview about social networking and the practice thereof.
- 2 After the interview you will be required to complete a questionnaire.
- 3 Your participation will take no more than an hour for the interview and approximately 5 minutes for the completion of the questionnaire.

C RISKS / DISCOMFORTS

- 1 The interview will take time from you daily schedule.
- 2 Confidentiality: All records will be handled as confidential as possible. Marlene Bogaards (née Petersen), Dr. Saskia de Klerk and an independent transcriber will have access to your study records (recorded interviews). No individual identifiers will

be used in any reports or publications resulting from the survey and in-depth interview.

D BENEFITS

Participation in the interview holds the advantage of gaining knowledge of the social networking value. The awareness of social networking will help you to develop and/or grow your social network. Your participation in the research will help the researcher to analyse the social network practices of businesswomen in Gauteng. This will contribute to improving the existing social network practices of businesswomen and will contribute to the social networking literature.

E COSTS / PAYMENT

There will be no costs to you as a result of participating in this study. You will receive no payment for your participation. You will only receive a report on the findings at the end of the study in 2009.

F QUESTIONS

You are welcome to contact: Marlene Bogaards (née Petersen) at 079 704 9241 / 13104802@nwu.ac.za or Dr. Saskia de Klerk at 082 234 8661 / Saskia.deKlerk@nwu.ac.za if you have any questions.

G CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status.

DATE

Signature of this study participant

DATE

Signature of person obtaining consent

APPENDIX C

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW AGENDA

Tel: 079 704 9241

E-mail: 13104802@nwu.ac.za

This in-depth interview forms part of a research project by Marlene Bogaards (née Petersen) of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The goal of conducting this interview is to find out more about the social network practices of businesswomen in Gauteng.

Interview questions:

1. How do you conceptualise *networking* and what are the main characteristics of networking?
2. Why do you network? What are your motivations for networking?
3. How do you conceptualise *social networking* and what are the main characteristics thereof?
4. Describe the contents of your social network.
5. How do you perceive social networking?
6. What challenges have you experienced in your social networking efforts?
7. As a working mother, what networking challenges have you experienced in your social networking challenges?
8. Which behavioural elements do you feel are necessary to ensure successful social networking?

APPENDIX D

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Please follow the instructions at the beginning of each section. For statistical purposes, it is important that you complete all the questions. Results gathered from this questionnaire will be held strictly confidential.

GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- Please answer **all** the questions.
- Unless specified otherwise, only choose **one** option at all the questions.

SECTION 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1.1 Complete the following:

Name	
Company	
E-mail address	
Telephone number	
Industry	
Location	

1.2 Indicate your age group.

Under 25	1
25 - 34	2
35 - 44	3
45 - 54	4
55 and older	5

1.3 Indicate your racial classification.

Black	1
Coloured	2
White	3
Other (Specify) _____	4

1.4 Identify your highest level of education completed.

Grade 10	1
Grade 12	2
Diploma / Certificate	3
B-degree (Specify) _____	4
Postgraduate education	5

1.5 Do you have children under the age of 12 living at home?

Yes	1
No	2

If answered yes at question 1.5, please answer question 1.6.

1.6 How many children under the age of 12 are living at home?

1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5 or more	5

1.7 What is your marital status?

Single	1
In a long-term relationship	2
Engaged	3
Married	4
Divorced	5
Widowed	6

1.8 Indicate the primary industry that your business forms part of. (Choose only one).

Agriculture	1
Mining	2
Manufacturing	3
Construction	4
Wholesale and Retail Services	5
Transport, Shipping, Storage and Communications	6
Finance, Insurance, Property, Law, Consulting, Engineering and Business Services	7
Health, Community, Social and Personal Services	8
Security Services	9
Education/Training	10
Private households	11
Other (Specify)	12

SECTION 2: Please answer the following questions:

1.9 Do you see yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

1.10 Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I am the life of the party.	Agree	Disagree
I enjoy being the centre of attention.	Agree	Disagree
I am skilled in handling social situations.	Agree	Disagree
I like to be where the action is.	Agree	Disagree
I make new friends easily.	Agree	Disagree
I am quiet around strangers.	Agree	Disagree
I do not like to draw attention to myself.	Agree	Disagree
I do not like to party on the weekends.	Agree	Disagree
I like to work independently.	Agree	Disagree
I often enjoy spending time by myself.	Agree	Disagree

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPT FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Keys:

R – Researcher

P – Participant

R – Okay, if you are ready we can start.

P – Okay.

R – Okay. How do you conceptualise *networking* and what are the main characteristics of networking?

P – I think networking is meeting with people with a view to build relationships, it is not something that is a quick thing, you cannot meet somebody and say I am really networking. Networking only works when you actually build a relationships out of it, so your networking is not a once of ad hoc thing, it is ongoing, you do it in every single part of your life. So it is meeting people with the view of building long-term relationships.

R – And social networking, how do you conceptualise *social networking* and what would you say is the main characteristics of social networking?

P – Social networking - I think we do social networking every single day. We believe that networking is purely aligned with forming business relationships, but every contact that you make is a level of building your network. So social networking I think is more in the line of... I think we do that ultimately as women and only after we met and we socialised and we build our own social network that we actually turn that into a business network. So as women I think we do more social networking and finding out a little more about the people and then forming that relationship.

R – What are your motivations for networking?

P – From a professional point of view, it is the actual business deals that you manage to strike. I think nowadays people are doing more business with people that they enjoy working with, so if you have not build up your relevant networks, you are not going to get the business, you are not going to get the referrals, and so I think networking does play a very big role.

R – You now mentioned your work-related motivations for networking. Do you have any motivations relating to your personal life?

P – If I look at it [from a personal point of view] my kids are fifteen and twelve and the way I network with my kids and although you could probably look at it and say that as a mom you cannot network with your kids, but if you are going to become a dictatorial mom and hope that in this day and age to get your kids to do anything it aren't going to work. So, networking in my personal life is very critical, even as far as getting your husband to buy into some of the goals and desires that you have. If you do not network with your husband, well then he is not going to support you through that, so definitely, it is an important aspect in your life. In every single factor in your life networking plays a very important role.

R – You mentioned that networking helps you to gain support from your husband. Can you please elaborate on that?

P – Yes, definitely. [In terms of business] in South Africa many people believe that when I am talking to you I am networking with you and my business relationship has to be with you. And that is not normally the case. I like to network with you, building a relationship with you and because of that relationship you are going to refer me to somebody else with whom I can actually do business with and because of the network that we have developed that person treats me as part of their network as well. So networking is about supporting one another.

APPENDIX F

FIELD NOTES FOR THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW DISCUSSION

In-depth Interview

Personal Notes

Date: 6 November 2008.

Time: 12h15 – 13h15.

Place: A coffee shop in Woodmead, Johannesburg. The researcher waited for the participant at the reserved table an hour before she arrived.

Research Settings: The facilities were quiet. Dividers were set up in the coffee shop to ensure privacy during the interview. The interview was conducted at a rectangular table. The room was suitable in terms of lighting and temperature. A cool wind was blowing through the open door where we sat and there were fans strategically placed to provide a cool environment. There was a noisy parking lot, but during the interview one became accustomed to the outside sounds.

Researcher's notes: I arrived early at the Coffee Shop, but this gave me time to put the necessary documentation on the conference table and to set up the two recorders as well as the documentation I needed. The Coffee Shop provided all of the refreshments.

I was relaxed before the interview. As the participant arrived I felt excited and motivated to start the interview

After the interview I felt satisfied as the participant answered all questions to the best of her ability. After the recorders were stopped she started talking confidently about her job and the networking events that she helps to coordinate. She also talked about launching a networking platform in Africa.

Observation Notes

The participant was warm and friendly when she arrived. She sat down and after refreshments were ordered the participant looked very relaxed and comfortable.

To get the process started, and as we waited for the refreshments, I asked the participant to tell me about herself, what she does and how networking fits into her life. She sat back into the chair with her arms folded. The participant showed no hesitation while answering the research questions. The participant was at all times direct and confident and took a sip of water every now and then while answering.

After all questions were asked, the participant shared other unique social networking experience. When she was done, she packed up her things and left.

APPENDIX G

FOLLOW-UP E-MAIL AFTER IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Tel: 079 704 9241
E-mail: 13104802@nwu.ac.za

Dear Kate*

I hope that everything is going well with you in this new year.

I am currently analysing the collected data from all the interviews that I have conducted. If everything goes according to plan I will be sending you the research report at the end of 2009.

Thank you again for your participation.

Best regards,
Marlene Bogaards (née Petersen)

* Name used to ensure anonymity of participants