The impact of e-marketing on business performance: A case study of the Midlands Meander Association members

This work is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Technology: Marketing in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology

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DECLARATION

I, Elizabeth Wisdom, hereby declare that the work in this dissertation represents my own work and findings except where indicated, and that all references, to the best of my knowledge, are accurately reported. I also declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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Elizabeth Wisdom	Date

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- My family and friends who always supported me in prayer and with the right words of encouragement.
- My Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for His power and strength to undertake and finish this study.

"Let us not become weary in doing good,
For at the proper time we will reap a harvest,
If we do not give up"
Galatians 6:9

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, the late Reverend Herbert Jones, who always encouraged me to further my studies and never give up.

ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken to establish to what extent the use of e-marketing has impacted on the Midlands Meander Association (MMA) members relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance (during the period August 2013 to January 2014). As stated in the literature review, the utilisation of technology and e-marketing are important areas of future research. The literature review incorporates various studies such as Mathfield (2000), Lourens (2007) and McLaren (2011) which focus on the MMA members and their customers. Moreover, the literature review includes a discussion of several definitions of e-marketing, while the importance of a number of e-marketing techniques was examined. The study was an empirical, descriptive investigation which applied a mixed methods approach. The study utilised three types of data collection methods: online survey, telephone interviews and the analysis of public domain documentation. The research found an extensive difference between how the various MMA members implemented e-marketing within their businesses. The research showed that e-marketing was not utilised or exploited by the majority of the MMA members to its full potential. Also, the study revealed the need for the MMA members to increase their utilisation of social media, search engine optimiser and complementary links to other websites in order to realise the advantages which may be gained. The study found that over half of the MMA members held a moderately positive perception of e-marketing and that the members' ages might impact on their perceptions of e-marketing. The research suggested that the majority of the respondents recognised that their business performance had increased due to the use of e-marketing. Furthermore, the research found that two thirds of the MMA members acknowledged the importance of e-marketing to connect and build relationships with their customers. Finally, the research highlighted the need for future research to be undertaken to incorporate other tourism routes within South Africa in order to examine the use of e-marketing and its effect on both customer relationships and business performance.

Keywords: e-marketing, customer relationships, business performance, tourism

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

CRM	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
ECRM	ONLINE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
EWOM	ONLINE WORD OF MOUTH
IDT	INNOVATION DIFFUSION THEORY
IEMF	INTERNATIONAL E-MARKETING FRAMEWORK
IT	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
KPI'S	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
MMA	MIDLANDS MEANDER ASSOCIATION
SCRM	SOCIAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
SEO	SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISER
TAM	TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL
WOM	WORD OF MOUTH

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The terms e-marketing and internet marketing are often used by individuals to carry the same meaning. At the inception of this research, it was evident that both the owners of companies and their customers interpreted e-marketing and internet marketing as the same activity. In their discussion, Hooda and Aggarwal (2012:107) note that the terms e-marketing and internet marketing are often used to imply the same concept. Initial investigations of the literature indicated the existence of a number of definitions for e-marketing. As a result, the following definition was applied within the context of this study. "E-marketing explains company endeavours to notify buyers, communicate, promote and sell its offerings through means of the Internet" (Kotler and Keller 2009:785).

The idea to investigate the impact of e-marketing on business performance and the motivation to focus on a local tourism route, was developed through the preliminary reading of existing literature, and informal discussions with local business managers within the field of tourism. Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:537) identify e-marketing and the use of new technologies as vital areas of future research within tourism marketing. They propose that due to the gaps in the literature, the focus of future research should examine the role of e-marketing on the business performance of tourism. In their research project, Coetzee, Oldham, Schroenn, and Tang (2008:7) suggest that firms should endeavour to embrace new opportunities created by the development of new technology or face the threat of a decline in business. Alford (2010:1) discusses the research carried out in Bournemouth, England on rural accommodation businesses and their online marketing activities. He notes how important it was to utilise online marketing while competing to seek and retain customers.

Founded in 1985 by a group of crafters and artists, the Midlands Meander, which is situated in KwaZulu-Natal, has developed into a popular tourist route. Scattered along the route are the various association members whose businesses include accommodation, conference and wedding facilities, restaurants, adventure sports, outdoor activities and historic landmarks, while wildlife conservation groups, artists

and crafters are also members (Midlands Meander Association website 2012). The Midlands Meander Association provides a vital network for business owners within the area. The diverse range of businesses which form the membership of the association extends the value of the group. The research by Lourens (2007:90) states that one of the major reasons for the ongoing success of the Midlands Meander Association is the changes undertaken within the association's strategic planning which encourages original and diverse businesses to become part of the Association.

Lourens (2007:90) further states that the development of a tourism route is 'process-driven' and requires time to establish confidence and trust. An ethos of community and support continues to develop and reinforce the strength of the association. According to the previous Marketing Manager for the Midlands Meander Association, Ms Alison Kelly (2012, pers. comm. 20 February) the Midlands Meander is currently a leading tourism route, used as a benchmark for other routes in South Africa and around the world. The General Manager and staff within the Midlands Meander Association have provided additional motivation and an invaluable platform from which to undertake the current investigation.

The research focuses on how the perceptions of the members of the Midlands Meander Association towards e-marketing have influenced their business performance. In addition, the study considers how the perceptions of the members of the Midlands Meander Association towards e-marketing have impacted on their relationship with their customers. Therefore, the study aims to establish the degree to which the Midlands Meander Association members have embraced e-marketing and what effect this has had on customer relations and business performance.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

To what extent have the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had an impact on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance?

The intention of the research is to achieve a greater understanding of the use of e-marketing by the members of the Midlands Meander Association. In addition, the

study seeks to ascertain how e-marketing has impacted on the Midlands Meander Association Members' business performance as well as on their relationship with their customers.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research aimed to investigate and answer the following questions:

- How do the Midlands Meander Association members implement e-marketing within their businesses?
- What are the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing?
- How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance?
- How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers?

1.4 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The research endeavoured to achieve feedback on the above questions so that problems and benefits associated with the use of e-marketing were identified, discussed and recommendations provided. Furthermore, the study has attempted to identify new ideas, trends, and future opportunities associated with the use of e-marketing by the members and their customers.

The research was considered useful since it provided up to date information on the current use of e-marketing by customers and members along the Midlands Meander Route. The study has presented valuable feedback on the changing needs of both the members and customers. It has highlighted both the benefits and problems associated with the use of e-marketing along the route.

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.5.1 "Perception is the process by which people select, organise and interpret information from the outside world" (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart, Barnes and Mitchell 2013:160).

1.5.2 Customer Satisfaction: "a customer's positive evaluation of the performance of a product or service when compared to his or her expectations" (du Plessis, Strydom and Jooste 2012:539).

1.5.3 Customer Relationship Management (CRM): "The systems and processes used by an organisation to integrate all sources of information about a customer so that the organisation can meet each individual customer's needs more effectively and efficiently" (Palmer 2011:210).

1.5.4 Technology acceptance model (TAM): "A theory that models how users come to accept and use new technology. The model suggests that acceptance is influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use" (Palmer 2011:109).

1.5.5 Route Tourism: "the tourism route concept is seen as a very effective method of tourism distribution, especially of tourists travelling by road (driving, hiking and cycling) within a given geographic area" (Lourens 2007:7).

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study undertook to clarify to what extent the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had an impact on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance. Thus, this study focuses on the members of the Midlands Meander Association only and does not include other businesses (non-members) along the route. For the purpose of this investigation, the gathering of data which relates to the members' customers has been limited to an analysis of customer comments, obtained from public domain documentation.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study is an empirical, descriptive investigation which applied a mixed methodology approach. The mixed methods research used for this study involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:7) suggest that a clearer view of the issue can be reached with the

combining of both quantitative and qualitative data, than if either where applied on their own.

The research was a 'case study', of the members of the Midlands Meander Association and their customers. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2008:25) explain how through case studies we can understand 'the *uniqueness* and the *idiosyncrasy* of a particular case in all its complexity.' The target population was all (149) Midlands Meander Association registered members.

The study used three types of data collection methods: online survey, telephone interviews and an analysis of public domain documents. The online survey utilised a large purposive sample in which all 149 registered members of the Midlands Meander Association were included and provided with the opportunity to respond. Welman *et al.* (2008:69) state that purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling method whereby the researcher ensures that the sub-groups chosen within the population accurately reflect the whole population. An electronic questionnaire in the form of a structured questionnaire, was emailed using Lime Survey, (a server based electronic survey) to all Midlands Meander Association members (see Appendix A).

A purposive judgement sample of 30 members was used for the purpose of the telephone interviews. All were representative of the sub-groups of members within the Midlands Meander Association. A semi-structured questionnaire was utilised for the 30 telephonic interviews. All participants' consents (including date and time) were documented in writing. An interview guide was used (see Appendix B) listing topics and themes, not specific questions, which related to the research questions. An analysis framework was used to assess supplementary documents from social media feedback, visitor books and comments from members' websites and blogs. All comments sourced were accessed from open sources or the public domain. A check list was used as a guide (see Appendix C). The size of the sample was 24 comments taken from the review of the chosen sub-groups' websites.

Mixed data collection methods were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the study findings. According to Golafshani (2003:604) by using various methods, the

study will allow for more valid, reliable, and varied results. Salehi and Golafshani (2010) reinforce the value of mixed methods use in research stating that triangulation links different means in collecting data to validate results within one study. Golafshani (2003:604) suggests the utilisation of triangulation to reduce bias and increase truthfulness. A pre-test of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) was piloted to evaluate the usefulness and clarity of the questions, thus ensuring that the final questionnaire was capable of yielding sufficient data to answer the research questions. Aaker, Kumar, Day and Leone (2011:276) suggest that the questionnaire may require more than one pre-test to correct all problems, vagueness or exclusions.

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 2 Literature Review:

Chapter two includes a discussion of the significant literature on e-marketing and use of new technologies within tourism marketing. It discusses how e-marketing relates to business performance and customer satisfaction.

Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011:149) state in their findings, that the use of e-marketing increases tourism business performance. Swanepoel (2007:13) suggests that when correctly used, e-marketing can enhance the contact between the business and the consumer and support business success.

The research will attempt to link the productive use of e-marketing to increased business performance and enhanced relationships between the Midland Meander Association members and their customers.

A discussion and explanation of all key concepts and theories which relate to the research questions will be provided. The key concepts and theories include web-based customer relationship management (eCRM); perceptions; social networks; online word of mouth (eWOM); the technology acceptance model (TAM); route tourism; customer satisfaction; business performance; customer retention; social media; search engine optimiser (SEO) and websites.

Earlier studies and potential future research are discussed and reviewed. The chapter will close with a summary of the most applicable issues found within the literature review.

Chapter 3 Research design and methodology:

This chapter will offer a complete explanation on the choice of a mixed methods research approach used within this investigation. Quantitative and qualitative information will be examined and the inspiration behind the selection of the design discussed. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:9) advise that the mixed methods design offers the researcher clear systems and measures to attend to the various research questions. Various issues will be explained and discussed including: choice of research design and methodology, the target population, sampling size and methods, validity and reliability, data collection methods, questionnaire design and the review of additional documentation; data capturing and editing. A discussion on the reasons why various procedures were undertaken, the quality of data, the gaps in the data and the limitations of the research will conclude this chapter.

Chapter 4 Analysis and discussion:

This chapter will undertake to analyse, discuss and present the results of the research as they relate to the research questions. The data will be analysed by means of the SPSS statistical programme. The presentation and explanation of the results will use tables, pie-charts and graphs to provide a clear understanding of the analysis. The analysis will also employ some bivariate inferential analysis (correlation and Chi-Square analysis). Visual diagrams will highlight the progression involved in the mixed methods design as suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:63).

Chapter 5 Conclusions and recommendations:

Chapter Five will discuss the main findings of the research study as they relate to the research questions, drawing on the results presented within the preceding chapter. The significance of the findings will be explained and linked to the four research questions. Directions for further research will be discussed and any limitations experienced within the research study will be included. Both conclusions and recommendations will be provided and examined. A summary of the importance and

worth of the research findings, current trends and possible opportunities will bring this chapter to a close.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review will undertake to draw attention to the relevant literature which has been used to inform and assist in building a foundation on which the study has been developed. A discussion of the core literature and its findings as it relates to the research problem will be presented. The discussion of the literature will be organised and structured according to the key concepts, themes and theory highlighted within the study.

2.1.1 THE MIDLANDS MEANDER ROUTE AND ROUTE TOURISM

Route tourism is a concept that encourages tourists travelling by road to visit different tourism services such as: restaurants, curio shops and museums, along a particular geographic route (Lourens 2007:7). The current study focuses on the Midlands Meander, a selection of various routes, which collectively form the tourism route known as the Midlands Meander (Midlands Meander Association website 2014).

An early work, undertaken by Mathfield (2000:47) states that one of the main reasons suggested by the Midland Meander Association members, for the success of their businesses was the strategic marketing undertaken by the association. Moreover, a key success factor was the unique location on the map and the support network of the Midlands Meander Association along the route. Mathfield (2000:47) suggests that the perceptions of the members in relation to business performance was subjective and based on the members' individual expectations, not on actual income generated.

In their research project, Coetzee, Oldham, Schroenn and Tang (2008:1) assert that the way of life within the Meander has altered: that instead of support between members, the Association is at times envisaged as a platform where certain members now compete for business. Consequently, this has resulted in a change of outlook towards the growth of the Midlands Meander route and has had an adverse impact on the financial achievement of the community. Coetzee *et al.* (2008:7) note that although competition between members has developed, fifty-nine percent of all the members work together to promote each others' offerings. In addition, Coetzee *et al.*

(2008:7) observe the transformations which information technology is generating amongst businesses within the Midlands, creating strategic opportunities for the various firms to pursue.

Another study on the Midlands Meander by Lourens (2007:480), points out that the Midlands Meander Association is one of only a few South African productive "private sector driven and funded" tourism organisations. The study notes that more than forty percent of the Midlands Meander Association members depend exclusively on the Association to undertake marketing on their behalf. Moreover, Lourens (2007:485) reports that the success of the Midlands Meander is based on several critical success factors: a unique selling point, good product mix, clear brand identity, ability to attract members, transparency, keeping up to date with current trends, ongoing re-evaluation of the offering, and fostering a tourism ambassadorship. Also, Lourens (2007:486) states that the Midlands Meander clearly illustrates how a successful tourism route is possible to develop within the private sector, an economic development which also supports almost thirty-three percent of the local population.

In a recent study, McLaren (2011:1) defines the significant factors that can result in marketing effectiveness and the establishment of future competitiveness within the rural tourism routes of KwaZulu-Natal. His study makes several recommendations, which should enable the productive marketing of the route. These include establishing a secure, distinctive brand, making available a unique event, checking that the route product mix is well thought out, all stakeholders promoting the route, and ensuring that electronic media are utilised efficiently.

McLaren (2011:213) argues that although the Midlands Meander Association advertises all members' businesses on their websites, the members do not all display the Meander's logo and branding on the members' websites. McLaren (2011:213) concludes that the members do not "promote the route brand"; thereby, they fail to receive the advantages which come from the branding of the Midlands Meander. The study revealed that few members' websites had links to the Midlands Meander website, while those that did have links, chose not to place the links on their home pages. McLaren (2011:254) notes that the members did not mention social media and

that no blogs (web logs) or social media links appeared on the members' websites. Strauss and Frost (2014:25) explain that blogs (web logs) are online journals often updated on websites. Stokes (2011:556) defines social media as media which are produced, distributed and made available by persons on the internet: these can include blogs, pictures and videos.

The current study examines how the members of the Midlands Meander Association implement e-marketing within their businesses. In addition, it explores the findings of McLaren (2011) with regards to electronic media and it also examines whether, and how, e-marketing enhances the productive marketing of the Midlands Meander route. Furthermore, the study examines the link between previous studies in relation to the members of the Midlands Meander Association and their utilisation of e-marketing, and business performance and their relationships with their customers.

2.2 MARKETING ORIENTATION AND E-MARKETING

Over the years, marketing has continually developed and moved through several stages. Companies' attitudes towards marketing have evolved as new ideas and concepts have taken shape. The 'production' point of reference was assumed by the majority of businesses from the mid 18th to the early 20th centuries. The 'production concept' states that products which are low in cost and readily accessible to purchase are preferred by consumers (Cant, 2010:7).

The next stage which developed was the 'product concept'. Kotler and Keller (2009:58) explain that a company's orientation focused on new innovation and the quality of their products. Followers of the product concept in an organisation believed that customers would purchase their products due to their unique and superior features. At this point managers pursued and emphasised the development of quality products rather than identifying products which satisfied the needs of the customer.

From the product concept, the idea evolved that a product needed to be sold and consequently the 'selling concept' with a strong emphasis placed on forceful selling, evolved. Solomon, Marshall, Stuart, Barnes and Mitchell (2013:14) explain how

businesses focus on the supply and demand requirements of the company and ignore the needs of the customer. According to this approach, the emphasis within the company is to move products through the warehouse quickly so that stock does not accumulate. In turn, the companies encourage their salespeople to carry out a 'one-time' sale rather than building repeat sales.

The 'marketing concept' began to develop during the 1950s and rather than concentrating on just selling any product to the customer, a new philosophy emerged. Management shifted its focus. Cant, (2010:8) states that the marketing concept aims to provide the right product or service which satisfies the customers' particular needs more successfully and productively than competitors, while simultaneously achieving the organisation's goals. The marketing concept identifies four main beliefs that a company should achieve that is, satisfaction of the needs and wants of the customer, to achieve all goals set by the business, and coordinate all business activities while ensuring that the business acts in a socially responsible manner.

Due to dynamic changes within the environments in which business is undertaken, a new marketing concept has developed called the "holistic marketing concept", outlined by Kotler and Keller (2012:18). This method is founded on the growth, operation, and planning of marketing actions, procedures and initiatives that identify their joint reliance and scope. Holistic marketing comprises four areas: "internal marketing, integrated marketing, relationship marketing and performance marketing". Moreover, Kotler and Keller (2009:70) state that, in 'holistic marketing' it is important to evaluate, from an extensive view, all the issues involved which are related to the undertaking of the diverse pursuits in marketing.

The individual businesses which make up the Midlands Meander Association membership are each guided by different orientations towards marketing. Molenaar (2012:216) states that regardless of the marketing orientation undertaken or followed by an organisation, it is critical for e-marketing to be an essential part of all possible marketing strategies.

Furthermore, Molenaar (2012:19) highlights the difference between traditional marketing and e-marketing. He suggests that within the traditional marketing process, the 4 P's (price, product, promotion and place) are changed according to the circumstances of the market, whereas in e-marketing the 4 P's are changed according to each separate customer relationship. He explains that in e-marketing the emphasis is on the recognised relationship and not on the market, allowing the 4 P's to be applied in a customised or customer based way. Stokes (2011:21) suggests that digital marketing prompts and propels the production of demand, created through marketing. Moreover, du Plessis, Strydom and Jooste (2012:5) maintain that both marketing orientation and customer-centricity are comparable as both centre on the needs and actions of the customers and not internally on the organisation. An organisation which is customer-centric not only listens to its customers but also responds quickly to their views and suggestions.

Stokes (2011:10) maintains that "*marketing is about conversations, and the internet has become a hub of conversations*", supporting the idea that through the interactive use of the internet, an organisation is able to follow and track the conversations between itself and its customers. This assists the organisation to keep up to date with new trends and create an awareness of the changing needs of its customers. In their research, Theodosiou and Katsikea (2012:258) found that organisations which attained higher-level electronic business performance expansively utilised the internet to complete various actions to add value to the product or service. Also, Woon Kian, Shafaghi, Woollaston and Lui (2010:1) in their study, reinforce the growing awareness of the value of e-marketing and its impact on changes within the relationship between the consumer marketers and the consumer. Their findings support the belief that e-marketing improves business processes while strengthening the awareness in new markets of the organisation.

Strauss and Frost (2014:53) identify several strategic areas in which e-marketing can assist an organisation. Firstly, e-marketing can increase benefits such as online mass customisation, personalisation, twenty-four hour expediency, self-service requests and tracking, shopping in one place only, and educating, connecting and corresponding

with consumers through social networking. Secondly, e-marketing can reduce the costs within several areas: these areas include customer service, communication, processing of operations, research and customer responses. E-marketing also generates well-organised supply chains. Thirdly, e-marketing boosts revenues through online transactions, adds worth to products and services, enlarges client base through reaching different markets, builds customer relationships and increases current customer spending.

2.2.1 DEFINITION OF E-MARKETING

Several different definitions of e-marketing are recorded in the literature. Stokes (2011:20) describes e-marketing as utilising digital channels to undertake brand marketing. Moreover, Molenaar (2012:24) explains e-marketing as "an integral strategy based on customer behaviour". However, Gilmore, Gallagher and Henry (2007:2) in their study define e-marketing as utilising both the internet and those technologies which are associated with the internet to assist in the achievement of marketing objectives in combination with other marketing communication techniques. The current research employs the following definition: "e-marketing explains company endeavours to notify buyers, communicate, promote and sell its offerings through means of the Internet" (Kotler and Keller 2009:785).

Several phrases such as digital marketing, internet marketing and e-commerce are applied throughout the literature to include and often expand on the concept of internet and e-marketing. Bharadwaj and Soni (2007:4) in their study offer the following definition: numerous business actions through the use of the internet including selling, purchasing, advertising services and products, are incorporated within e-commerce. However, du Plessis, Strydom and Jooste (2012:423) relate how information technology digital channels including mobile phone, the internet and e-mails have changed how businesses communicate. Through these means, an organisation can interact in an individual way with the consumer. Two-way communication is established through "social media channels", for example, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter further creating, plus building excellent relationship opportunities within businesses. A recent study undertaken by Xiaoming (2010:546)

suggests that the definitions for "e-commerce and e-marketing" be combined and this "new concept e-commerce e-marketing" be defined, examined and considered. The study further asserts that "e-commerce e-marketing" should be developed so that they are gradually integrated.

An early study by Harridge-March (2004:297), asserts that e-marketing will not substitute conventional marketing but observes that it is a helpful and supportive activity. Harridge-March (2004:297) further suggests that the new technology must be included by managers with the intention that customers will then receive superior value. In a recent study, Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:537) argue that due to the ever changing growth of new technologies, economic recession and extreme competition within the tourism industry, tourism companies continually face change. Furthermore, despite the nature of the tourism industry, as it relates to the customer, supplier and middlemen within the distribution channel, research on new technologies in the field of tourism reveals that e-marketing is not utilised or exploited to its full potential. The current study aims to establish to what extent e-marketing is utilised by the members of the Midlands Meander Association.

A previous study by de Klerk and Kroon (2007:89) investigated the use of new technologies and business structures in South African businesses. An empirical survey of over 700 online businesses was targeted, through the use of a convenience sample. The study findings revealed several advantages of utilising e-commerce which included: increased profits, access to strategic markets and the establishment of international association. The research recommends that South African businesses should not only share knowledge but through the use of networks, create strategic relationships. Moreover, a competitive advantage could be achieved through the implementation of management that is proactive and through incorporating additional value in business processes.

In their study, Maguire, Koh and Magrys (2007:37) report that the use of information and communications technology can provide a competitive advantage to small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, if a firm uses an integrated and strategic

approach to the use of information and communications technology, they would further increase the company's competitive advantage.

Similarly, Hamidi and Safabakhsh (2010:365) investigated the "effect of information technology" within "e-marketing". The collection of information was accumulated in various ways including a questionnaire to suppliers, designers and users of e-marketing. Financial statements were analysed from companies and government agencies, and information was also gathered from the various related literature. The findings confirm that information technology has bought about the following effects. Firstly, information technology creates an opportunity for advertisements to be directed at any time of the day or location. Secondly, it enhances possible advertising opportunities and, thirdly, it boosts the firm's income and reduces pollution and energy consumption.

According to El-Gohary (2010:216) e-marketing is a recent innovation and a current business practice concerned with marketing products, services, facts and concepts by the use of the internet and other additional electronic measures such as mobile phones, intranets and extranets. A small company implementing e-marketing can adapt the shape and nature of their business worldwide. The increased use of the internet might not only enhance opportunities for the small business but could also remove various threats. El-Gohary (2010:227) illustrates the distribution (from 2003 to 2010), of electronic marketing published articles through the different countries. Great Britain had 59 studies, Australia 16 studies and South Africa had 3 studies related to electronic marketing. Clearly these figures highlight an opportunity to build on this foundation of knowledge within South Africa. Based on the literature researched within the field of e-marketing and performance, there are clear research opportunities to be investigated.

A previous study by Krishnamurthy and Singh (2005:605) discusses the "international e-marketing framework (IEMF)" and explains how it may be utilised to assist and guide researchers within "international e-marketing" so that researchers are able to recognise any gaps in the current research on global e-marketing. Krishnamurthy and Singh (2005:606) clearly outline the seven components which constitute the

framework of the IEMF: “actors, spaces, technology form factors, country-level cultural factors, access to information technologies and, actions and outcomes”. The “framework” allows for possible connections between the various framework components to be addressed and understood. Therefore, the International e-marketing framework allows researchers to analyse research papers and motivate questions “for future research” within the area of “international e-marketing”.

An early investigation by Fillis, Johansson and Wagner (2003:336) discusses certain ideas found in various research papers concerning “opportunities and barriers to e-business” growth in minor businesses. Differing thoughts are shared amongst the business community with regards to acceptance of new technology. Fillis *et al.* (2003:336) report that companies can gain a competitive benefit through implementing new technology. The paper focuses on administrative attitudes, offerings and industry issues which might affect a manager’s resolution to utilise new technology within the company. While the internet may present a company with new opportunities, it can also be seen as a perceived risk. The manager’s understanding of the internet may also obstruct the company progressing and adopting innovative technology. Further difficulties include: aversion to risk, insufficient information and supposed uncertainties with recent technology (Fillis *et al.* 2003:338).

In their study, Pestek and Cicic (2010:1) investigate the application of e-marketing through managers of tourism companies within Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study sought to establish to what extent the firm’s marketing managers perceive and utilise the internet as a marketing tool. Pestek and Cicic (2010:2) suggest that several companies do not set strategic goals before developing their websites and other e-marketing activities. The findings showed that managers deemed a website a prerequisite and believed that internet marketing provided their companies with a competitive advantage. The study found that the firms that did not have a marketing or strategic plan were less successful than those which did have marketing or strategic plans.

2.2.2 PERCEPTION

"Perception is the process by which people select, organise and interpret information from the outside world", (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart, Barnes and Mitchell, 2013:160).

This current investigation seeks to answer three questions which relate to '*perception*'. What are the *perceptions* of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing? How have the Midlands Meander Association members' *perceptions* towards e-marketing influenced their business performance? How have the Midlands Meander Association members' *perceptions* towards e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers?

An empirical study was undertaken by Bharadwaj and Soni (2007:1) to investigate the perceptions and usage of e-commerce concerns among small firms. The researchers undertook both a mail survey and interviews of owners who were successfully utilising e-commerce within their small businesses. The results highlighted that e-commerce was composed of different prominent sections: reaction of business to the changing needs of consumers, movement of information, the representation of the business, entry into other markets and escalation in sales. The study showed that the reasons why businesses did not undertake e-commerce was due to the view that e-commerce activities were thought not to be essential to a company's strategies. The study supports the results of a previous study carried out by Levy and Powell, (2003 cited in Bharadwaj and Soni 2007: 2), which proposed that the attitude of the business owner towards the value of the internet is vital to whether the company adopts e-commerce.

Kokash (2012:80) undertook to determine both the experts and the tourists' perceptions of travel agencies' websites and the association of these perceptions with clients' satisfaction. The study findings established a disparity between what the tourists perceived as important and experts' assessment of the websites' performances. The main areas of difference were in the provision of basic information to users of the website. Also noted were the various standards of marketing, proficiency of procedures and forms of communication provided to individuals. The study noted the need to enhance the interaction of the website

between the business and the customer, to improve the relationship with the client and encourage the business to search out new techniques to achieve faster interaction.

In a previous study, Su, Li, Song and Chen (2008:372) argue that their study revealed and corroborated the notion that the contact an online customer has with an organisation's website continues to be significant to his (or her) perceptions of the quality of e-commerce. The current study examines the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards their own company website and also investigates various forms of feedback from their customers. Thereby, the study may establish any difference in the perception and use of the website or social media site undertaken by the members.

An early study by Lee and Lin (2005:161) investigated the "perceptions" of online shopping consumers towards e-service quality. In their findings they noted that several areas affect customer satisfaction and service quality: these include reliability, website design, responsiveness and trust. The findings suggest that the website's design should not be disregarded. Furthermore, to increase consumers' intention to buy, companies should develop strategies which deal with trust, reliability and responsiveness. Namamian and Kamari (2012:78) reinforce the importance of online trust as an essential aspect of every e-commerce activity. Stokes (2011:107) argues that excellent web development and design should begin with communicating with the individuals who will be utilising and working together on the website. The website design should not divert the user, but should improve his or her experience. In short, the emphasis of website development should be placed on functionality and usability, confirming the findings of Kokash (2012:80).

2.2.3 BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

The current research will discuss the review of the literature as it relates to *business performance*. Also, the study will attempt to link the application of e-marketing to enhanced business performance in considering the research question: How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their *business performance*?

According to Strauss and Frost (2014:60) "key performance indicators (KPI's), are specific measures designed to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of an organisation's operations, both online and offline". Molenaar (2012:161) states that these success factors or KPI's can be determined from a 'financial perspective' (such as profitability), 'customer perspective' (such as retention of customers), 'website perspective' (such as ease of use) or from the 'organisational perspective' (such as processes). This current study will undertake to measure business performance using the following measurements 'new or repeat business', 'success of businesses' and 'growth of businesses'. In addition, 'gross profit', 'bookings or sales' and 'visitor numbers' will be used as KPI's to determine a firm's achievement in reaching their goals or objectives.

In their study, Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011:141) examine how e-marketing and market orientation have an effect on the performance of services within the tourism industry. From a sample of over two hundred tourism firms, the study notes that by both direct and indirect means, through e-marketing, "the relationship between market orientation and performance" has an effect. The outcome highlights the necessity for managers and individuals within the academic field to examine the links and relationships which connect several areas of competitive advantages to service performance within the tourism industry. Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011:143) show a growing recognition that "market orientation" is related to innovation. They argue that it is uncertain whether innovation promotes the link between business performance and marketing orientation.

Furthermore, Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011:146) state that data was gathered using an online survey of tourism service organizations within Greece. The questionnaire measured fourteen items using a Likert scale measurement of 5 points relating to features incorporating performance and usage of e-marketing activities, within tourism firms. The study verified that market orientation establishes the performance of service. Hence, Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011:150) substantiate the contention that e-marketing affects tourism business performance in a constructive way. The findings of the study suggest that tourism companies need to ensure that the

marketing concept is performed and that a way of thinking is encouraged within the company to place the customers' needs first. The company should also build an awareness of their competitors and create a platform where the resources of the different functions within the company are managed simultaneously. In their study, Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011:149) maintain that the use of e-marketing increases tourism business performance.

In their study, Lee and Lin (2005:71) note a positive relationship between a customer's intention to buy online, customer satisfaction and service quality. Dubilhela and Grobler (2013:72) note in their study that the manner in which electronic retailing is undertaken has a constructive effect on the recognition of the branding of the company. This consecutively has a positive effect on how the business functions and hence its performance.

A recent study, by Eid and El-Gohary (2013:46) examines the utilisation of "e-marketing" and its influence "on the marketing success of small business enterprises". The study highlights the constructive influence gained from embracing and utilising of e-marketing and the positive effect it has as to the success of a small company. Moreover, Brodie, Winklhofer, Coviello and Johnston (2007:1) found that the use of e-marketing by the company is positively related to performance and how companies seek and retain consumers.

In their research Trainor, Rapp, Beitelspacher and Schillewaert (2011:1) examine how combining information technology with marketing potential and the resources of the firm affect the performance of a company. Their investigation is based on a model which examines the concept of e-marketing as a means of harnessing the company's resources (including technology) to boost business performance. In their study Trainor *et al*. (2011:1) focus on the process of growing e-marketing potential through market and technology orientation. They find that this mechanism positively impacts on the company's performance as it enhances consumer satisfaction and encourages repeat customers.

2.2.4 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

The current study will focus on the relationships of the Midlands Meander Association members with customers. du Plessis, Strydom and Jooste (2012:533) define "Customer Relationship Management (CRM)" as a policy central to the organisation which uses IT (Information Technology) to supply an organisation with information that is clear and accurate in order to guarantee that all internal activities, procedures and contacts with the customer assist in retaining relationships which are beneficial to both the company and the customer, and in so doing, create increased profits.

According to du Plessis *et al.* (2012:535) it is important to view CRM as an 'interactive system' which centres on the progress and organisation of the relationship with the customer. They suggest that to attain success a framework of five central activities: expansion of strategy, the creation of value, integration of channels, managing of information and performance evaluation, should be implemented. All five key processes within the organisation are vital and require that they are continually integrated.

du Plessis, Jooste and Strydom (2005:449) point out that to facilitate the retention of customers over a long period of time, an organisation must focus on gaining and keeping customers through confidence, teamwork and shared information. du Plessis *et al.* (2005:93) also recommend that the organisation use Web-based customer relationship management (eCRM) to manage and develop procedures through the internet. In their study, Hurst, Niehm and Littrell (2009:535) suggest a need for an all-inclusive service action plan, which underlines the importance of relationship management over the long-term. In this way, loyalty develops through the relationships formed and positive service provided, to local customers.

In their study Dimitriadis and Stevens (2008:496) suggest that an integrated framework, based on a gap analysis be utilised to measure, plan and apply a CRM system. Their study aimed to establish links between how the customers react to the CRM strategy and how the service company plans and applies the CRM strategy. Dimitriadis and Stevens (2008:506) conclude that service companies interact with

their consumers through multi-channels and this creates opportunities for positive customer relationships to develop.

Furthermore, Dimitriadis and Stevens (2008:498) observe that CRM is not just about technology alone, but it combines information strategic systems that direct the organisation's attention towards the customer, thereby increasing the service experience. As stated by Dimitriadis and Stevens (2008:499) there are five areas which lead to and influence the successful CRM system. One of these is technology which is vital within the context of the supporting activities that connect to CRM and assist to enhance the performance of the business towards its relationship with its customers.

Whitaker (2008:1) supports the use of current technology to build positive awareness of a business and improve customer relationships. He suggests that a well-written, regular company e-newsletter (online newsletter) could enhance and build the credibility of the organisation. In addition, the e-newsletter can reveal the unique features of a business and clearly exhibit the company's capabilities. The positive factor regarding e-newsletters is that the company can analyse the results, as well as articles read and the individual who opens the e-newsletter can be tracked and solicited for marketing information or data. The website is an ideal platform from which to encourage clients to sign-up for an e-newsletter. Finally, the e-newsletter can be an excellent and affordable way through which to build awareness of a business.

Godson (2009:43) indicates there are three areas in which value is added by means of customer relationships: meeting customer requirements through providing a customised product, confidence and acceptance through "personal and social networks", and the individual contact through the communication with customers. According to Godson (2009:161) CRM is a way of thinking that can be packaged and sold as computer software. Consequently, it is vital that CRM is fully integrated within the whole business, and that the data is used strategically to ensure efficient and first rate service.

Dutot (2013:56) discusses social customer relationship management (SCRM) which includes the main beliefs of customer relationship management using digital channels, namely social networks. Dutot (2013:56) states that SCRM does not substitute traditional customer relationship management but enriches CRM. Moreover, SCRM creates true transparency among firms, building trust and a platform for valuable customer engagement to be practised and measured. In the study, Dutot (2013:54) concludes that select firms from France do not consider "SCRM" as much as their customers (within the age group 15 to 25 years) want them to.

2.2.4.1 CUSTOMER RETENTION

According to Godson (2009:72) customer retention means maintaining the majority of the customers' business over constant sequences of procurements. Long-term customers add value due to the fact that they purchase regularly if satisfied, are less price sensitive, allow a business to plan strategically, offer positive word of mouth and in turn, long-term customers are easier to manage with regards to mistakes. Furthermore, Godson (2009:95) notes that a company's profitability is related to its capacity to retain customers for an extended time period.

du Plessis *et al.* (2012:552) suggest two broad benefits (economic and customer behaviour) to the company of customer retention. The economic benefits include increases in sales and revenues, a decrease in costs and thus enhanced profits. The customer behaviour benefits include affirmative word of mouth undertaken by the customer, and customers mentoring other customers on how the company's processes work. In terms of improving customer retention, du Plessis *et al.* (2012:555) conclude that a company should continually gauge customer retention, classify the reasons why a customer decides to move on to another company, and institute techniques to improve customer retention.

2.2.4.2 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Carlson and O'Cass (2010:127) suggest that a satisfied consumer produces positive attitudes towards the website, thereby influencing consumer behaviour. Such consumers tend to return to the website to buy offerings; they generate encouraging

word of mouth and thus cut the number of consumers switching sites. Carlson and O'Cass (2011:282) further argue that consumers' experiences and attitudes towards e-service quality change as new and improved technologies develop and become increasingly accessible to all. They recommend that individual attitudes towards e-marketing be noted and that any new developments should be regularly investigated. In agreement, Su *et al*. (2008:372) state that quality consumer service has a considerable influence on consumer satisfaction. They argue that the consumers contact with websites is essential to the perceptions consumers have of e-commerce quality.

In their study, Carlson and O'Cass (2010:127) investigate connections which exist among "e-service quality, satisfaction, attitudes and behaviours within content-driven e-service websites". They developed a "conceptual framework" which linked "e-service quality" to consumer satisfaction, the consumers' mind-set towards the website and consumers' behavioural intentions. Using this framework, the study undertook an online survey of sports consumers to evaluate e-service quality. The survey comprised two sub-samples of sports fans. The questionnaire included seven-point Likert-type scales to measure each component. A convenience sampling method was chosen and utilised to collect data. The findings noted that consumer satisfaction is influenced by constructive evaluations of "e-service quality". They observe that satisfaction of the service provided will follow if quality e-service is conveyed and positively rated by the consumer. Carlson and O'Cass (2010:124) suggest future research could be undertaken in other fields of business such as tourism, and not merely limited to the sports industry.

2.2.5 WEBSITES

The current study examines the Midlands Meander Association members' websites and how the members rate and utilise their own websites. The study also examines the development of websites as they relate to customers' interaction and feedback. Early work by Hudson and Lang (2002:155) focuses on the online marketing of tourism companies and posits that increasing numbers of travel and tourism businesses are developing their internet potential and the content of their websites.

The allocation of financial resources for an online presence is increasing and online promotions are becoming more complex. Companies are attempting to make available quality information regarding the facilities and services offered on their websites. The emphasis is now on access to comprehensive information and prompt communication, rather than on just 'entertaining' their customers.

Loda, Teichmann and Zins (2009:70) note that trustworthiness of the sources of information on a website were found to significantly influence a person's choice and utilisation of that source. The study reveals that website factors such as 'customer comments' and 'web cams' do not bring about the number of changes to the website as expected by the company. The study found that information in respect of facilities such as tourist attractions and accommodation, affected message credibility and a customer's decision to visit a destination to a far greater extent.

Loda *et al.* (2009:78) recommend that resources such as time and finances should be utilised and spent on the 'basic website factors' namely, dependable information regarding tourist attractions and accommodation. Moreover, instead of utilising resources to implement new website factors such as web cams, comment facilities and e-cards, the researchers note that these may not be profitable in that they may not increase the number of bookings the website attracts. Therefore, Loda *et al.* (2009:78) state that, due to the diversity of websites and their capacity to persuade a visitor, companies should consider the 'basic factors' of a website as they influence an individual's decision to visit or search the website further.

2.2.5.1 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO)

According to Stokes (2011:21-32), a search engine optimiser is utilised to make certain that a company's website is located at the top of the search engine through the use of particular keywords. Within a marketing context it performs an important role as it makes sure that the product or offering is displayed towards the top of the page. Furthermore, it enables an organisation to influence specific consumers creating an enhanced experience that might lead to improved retention of customers.

A study by Alford (2010:1) argues that successful online marketing is indispensable due to the extremely competitive tourism market. Small rural businesses need to improve their online presence through effective search engine optimisation. He argues that a business owner should know which keywords to include so that they are able to improve the company's search engine results. He suggests that internal and external links are vital and that data should be kept up to date as a website is a customer's first impression of a company.

McLaren (2011:274) recommends that the Midlands Meander Association and its members should utilise electronic media more effectively by establishing shared links to assist with marketing between members. The study also proposes the use of a search engine optimiser to increase the number of responses from customers. In addition, the study notes the value of social media and how the members could boost word of mouth through connections with tourists on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

2.2.6 SOCIAL MEDIA, THE SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ONLINE WORD OF MOUTH (eWOM)

The current study will explore how tourists not only receive details about tourism suppliers and destinations, as suggested by Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:537), but also actively create news through social networks with information concerning their trips and experiences of different suppliers. Also, Bronner and De Hoog (2011:1) point out that a tourist will both seek information online and post reviews or comments. Zhu and Zhang (2010:133) argue that tourists use several online word of mouth (eWOM) channels (online reviews and blogs), to seek for information and share experiences.

In their study, Lorenzo-Romero, Constantinides and Alarcon-del-Amo (2011:170) discuss several practical and social implications of social networking sites. The researchers note the value of social networking sites as a form of communication to connect and engage with customers and other businesses. In addition, social networking sites have the capability to be utilised as a strategic tool and as a technique to further develop management processes. Lorenzo-Romero *et al.* (2011:171) investigated consumers' "adoption of social networking sites",

consumers' behaviour and the degree of acceptance. The research utilised an "extended technology acceptance model (TAM)" to investigate the influence, use and acceptance of social networking sites. An online survey was undertaken within the Netherlands of social networking users. The study built and improved on the traditional TAM by including other personal variables: trust and perceived risk.

Dann and Dann (2011:344) perceive that social media are the link connecting content, consumers or individuals and technologies which communicate messages. Social media are centred on an online service such as Twitter, a website (for example Facebook), or the wider aspects of the Internet (for instance Google). The belief supporting social media as a growing approach to the Internet is the conviction that to connect with others is of value and important in this online era.

In addition, Dann and Dann (2011:360) recommend that when setting up for e-marketing within a business, it is important to choose one or maybe two complementary systems. They state that a company should be exclusive when choosing channels to utilise for social media marketing. Rather than attempting to maintain numerous sites inadequately, it should rather choose a few and undertake to manage them well. There are several different social media sites which may be utilised by individuals and companies to form part of their e-marketing efforts. This literature review will investigate a number of these key social media sites namely Facebook, YouTube, and Blogger.

Swanepoel and Bothma (2013:133) maintain that the word "blog" originates from the terms "web" and "log". It is an online place which allows for video clips, pictures, views, events and information to be placed. According to Stokes (2011:533) a blog is a form of website which allows readers to comment on the articles written by the user (called a blogger). The blogger posts news with regards to various themes and topics on which people are encouraged to leave a comment.

As Godson (2009:194) observes, electronic relationships such as blogging can have several impacts for a business: dissatisfied customers may voice their complaints; a brand may be hijacked leading to the owner experiencing less control, and power

being designated to the customer. Moreover, Kotler and Keller (2012:549) suggest that viral marketing creates WOM through the utilisation of the internet to maintain the aims and endeavours of marketing, while Buzz marketing creates excitement and often generates publicity through unanticipated means. Luo and Zhang (2013:214) in their study support the strong and active link of consumer buzz and web traffic with a firm's value. The study highlights that Web traffic has an express connection with the performance of a firm, while it also forms a platform for consumer buzz to impact on firm performance. Also, Godson (2009:196) states that viral marketing produces both benefits and risks, thereby creating a multitude of opportunities and challenges for the organisation to manage and capitalise on.

As highlighted by Grensing-Pophal (2012:20) producing and utilising short videos to connect and communicate with consumers can have the effect of improving the firm's search engine ranking if managed in accordance with search engine optimisation rules. Through online videos, companies are able to increase traffic, communicate with clients and meet their strategic goals to talk to their customers and hear what a customer wants to see. YouTube allows businesses to become innovative in the way in which they use this tool. Grensing-Pophal (2012:21) discusses several different examples where video technology is used well. For instance, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis videos focus on generating excitement and interest in the current exhibits of the museum. The videos are posted on Facebook and Twitter and other social platforms, as well as YouTube. On the museum's YouTube channel, the museum has experienced a two hundred and forty-six per cent boost in its video views. Grensing-Pophal (2012:21) also mentions the success of the Olay site on which videos are utilised to encourage reviews from consumers, exhibit different products and answer questions on their product range. The key element in online videos is that the videos are real, transparent and valid and reveal a sincere approach.

In relation to e-marketing through social networking sites, Dehkordi, Rezvani, Rahman, Fouladivanda, Nahid and Jouya (2012:114) discuss various tools which are utilised to assist with e-marketing promotion, and understand their control on the "perception" of the consumer. A previous study carried out by Kim and Ko (2011

cited in Dehkordi *et al.* (2012:121) suggests that the use of social media may have a powerful effect on the "reputation" of a firm's branding. They note that one third of the research regarding posted opinions on a product or brand, when posted in a blog is viewed by far more readers. Thirty-six percent of respondents believe that a brand in a blog is regarded more positively in the mind of a consumer than a brand which is not mentioned in a blog.

A study by Durkin, McGowen and McKeown (2013:716) explored the adoption of social media in Ireland within "small to medium sized" businesses. The study findings clearly highlighted several diverse ways in which social media could be adopted. These approaches are often determined by the abilities of the staff and the various situations of an organisation. All firms within the study shared a similar motivation when pursuing the implementation of social media. The firms were all anxious with regards to not implementing social media because it was perceived as an essential tool to encourage the growth of their business. Little evidence was found to show that any of the companies surveyed had adopted social media after implementing careful planning and consideration as to how these ICT's might add value or add to the customer experience. Durkin *et al.* (2013:730) reported a strategic opportunity for small to medium-sized enterprises to control and expand "resource-based" approaches to social media which added significance to the consumer, while creating a competitive advantage for the firm.

A study by Munoz-Leiva, Hernandez-Mendez and Sanchez-Fernandez (2012:879) investigated the "behaviour" of tourists as they related "to the new Web 2.0 based sites". The researchers undertook a study of 3 websites by means of a "structural equation model" to examine the behaviour of the tourist. Their study findings revealed that when using the internet, trust was a major issue. Furthermore, trust was found to include an affirmative outcome on an individual's thoughts and intent as to whether they utilised a blog. Munoz-Leiva *et al.* (2012:894) suggested that a firm should produce objective blogs which would encourage individuals who are not connected to the company to post on the company blog. The researchers stated that

greater trust would lead to a positive change in an individual's awareness of and thoughts towards, a blog.

The current study examines social networking sites which are utilised by both the members of the Midlands Meander Association and their customers. The current study will also endeavour to assess the importance and usefulness of these sites as they relate to e-marketing and further support the engagement between the consumer and the member's business.

2.3 TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM)

According to El-Gohary (2011:1256) several studies have utilised differing theories to examine the implementation of new technology used by business organisations. In the study, the author corroborates a conceptual outline by increasing "the technology acceptance model (TAM) and innovation diffusion theory (IDT)" model to explain the acceptance and implementation of e-marketing. The study examines different factors (such as owner skills and support, and market trends) which affect businesses implementing e-marketing.

The study results show that the implementation of e-marketing is impacted positively by internal aspects, for instance, "perceived ease of use" and adoption costs. Factors such as competitive pressure and market trends were also found to impact the adoption of new technology. At the same time, El-Gohary (2011:1265) confirmed that the use of "TAM and IDT" be well-founded in the way in which they demonstrate the implementation of e-marketing.

Before investing in new technology, a company needs to continually appraise the value of such technology to the firm given the cost consideration of ongoing technological advances. Ford (2013:1) suggests that the business needs a 'technology radar' that will assess the risks associated with each new technology. The radar highlights whether to hold off on a new technology for now, or explore the new technology, try out a new technology or adopt a particular new technology.

Also, Weinstein (2008:1) notes how expensive software (such as CRM) is purchased to increase sales, improve customer satisfaction and lead to improved business performance. Weinstein argues that it is not the adoption of technology that impacts performance but how the technology is used which impacts performance. Voola, Casimir, Carlson and Agnihotri (2012:142) observe the effect on a business's levels of performance of the implementation of market orientation, new technology, and e-business. The results imply that it is essential to create and build up the company's capabilities within the organisation to sustain and encourage the implementation of e-business technologies.

According to Brodie *et al.* (2007:1) the implementation of e-marketing is positively associated with business performance and offers the company a competitive advantage. The study stated that successful e-marketing developed as current marketing activities supported and enhanced the adoption of the new technology. Thus e-marketing's success is linked to its incorporation into the current marketing practices utilised within the business.

2.4 PREVIOUS STUDIES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Various studies were previously carried out by Mathfield (2000), Lourens (2007) and McLaren (2011) in relation to the Midlands Meander Association and their customers. Mathfield (2000:54) suggested members' confidence in their positive business achievement was due to the successful marketing efforts of the Midlands Meander Association. Furthermore, Lourens (2007:80) in a study of tourism routes notes that forty percent of the Midlands Meander Association members depended on the Association to carry out marketing on their behalf. McLaren (2011:274) recommends that the efficient use of electronic media by tourism businesses in KwaZulu-Natal be extended to promote effective marketing of tourism routes. McLaren (2011:278) also recommends that further research on rural tourism routes be undertaken.

El-Gohary (2010: 214) undertook a literature review on e-marketing, conducted from the perspective of small businesses. The literature review of articles (from 2003 to 2010), incorporated several different areas: these included, mobile marketing, e-

business, e-marketplace, electronic commerce and others. El-Gohary (2010:232) mentions several gaps in the literature such as the "performance" and the implementation of e-marketing as they relate to a small-scale company.

El-Gohary (2010:233) strongly recommends that a triangulation approach be utilised when undertaking an investigation into e-marketing. He also explains the logic of triangulation, stressing the idea that, by using various methods to investigate a problem, the research should lead to improved validity and reliability, rather than if the study only used one particular methodology, the argument being that any bias would be lessened when applied in combination with other methods. This study, in accordance with El-Gohary's recommendation, employs triangulation and a mixed method approach is used (see Chapter 3).

Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:534) reveal several research needs within tourism marketing such as investigating demand models or pricing, brand management, market segmentation, targeting and positioning, service performance, strategic marketing or marketing concept, consumer behaviour and e-marketing. This study is a response to the call to examine the impacts and roles of e-marketing tools such as social media, mobile services, user-generated content, and Web 2.0 promotion and transactions.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has covered the relevant literature on which the study has been developed. A clear pattern has emerged from the literature supporting the undertaking of the current investigation. Chapter Two includes a discussion on some of the earlier studies undertaken by Mathfield (2000), Lourens (2007), Coetzee *et al.* (2008) and McLaren (2011) which have all incorporated the Midlands Meander route as part of their investigations. These studies examine the significance of changing technology, the unique location of the Meander route, the value of networking and the importance of keeping up to date with current trends. This chapter also included a discussion of the various definitions of e-marketing and internet marketing proposed by Stokes (2011), Kotler and Keller (2009) and Gilmor *et al.* (2007), while the

importance of social media channels were examined and discussed (Tsiotsou and Ratten, 2010 and Maguire *et al.* 2007).

Furthermore, discussions of several of the findings within the various studies were incorporated, which argue that e-marketing affects business performance in a positive way (Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou, 2011:150; Dubilhela and Grobler, 2013:72; Eid and El-Gohary, 2011:46; Trainor *et al.* 2011:1; Dimitriadis and Stevens, 2008:498; Hamidi and Safabakhsh, 2010:365; Lee and Lin, 2005:7). Moreover, a number of studies were discussed which suggest that e-marketing has a positive impact on customer relationships (Harridge-March, 2004:297; Brodie *et al.* 2007:1; Trainor *et al.* 2011:1). In addition, a discussion including several studies which noted that a strategic use of new technology assists a firm to build an ongoing competitive advantage, was undertaken (de Klerk and Kroon, 2007:89; Maguire *et al.* 2007:37; Pestek and Cicic, 2010:2). Finally, various studies were examined and discussed regarding future opportunities for further research to be considered within the scope of e-marketing, (El-Gohary, 2010:227; McLaren, 2011:278; Tsiotsou and Ratten, 2010:534).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will describe and explain this study's research design and methodology. The chapter is divided into sections which highlight the key reasons for the decisions which were made while undertaking this study. The first section explains the methodology and assumptions of the research. Section 2 illustrates the plan of action and explains the reasons for using each particular method. Section 3 discusses the procedures utilised for the gathering and analysis of the data. The final section discusses the statistical procedures employed to analyse the data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:4).

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The way we manage our investigation will be shaped by the assumptions we employ in our research and the manner in which we clarify the research questions (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2008:13).

The research aimed to investigate and answer the following questions:

- How do the Midlands Meander Association members implement e-marketing within their businesses?
- What are the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing?
- How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance?
- How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers?

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is an empirical, descriptive investigation which applied a mixed methodology approach, within the framework of a 'case study of the Midlands Meander Association members'. According to Gerring (2007:10) a 'case study' can be used effectively in a mixed methodology procedure where qualitative and

quantitative techniques are combined. The case study allows for the concentrated study of one case whereby the distinctiveness and peculiarity of the case is identified and investigated (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2008:25).

Graziano and Raulin (2013:12) state that an empirical study is based on acquiring data or knowledge through observation. This knowledge requires that time be assigned to rational thought and organisation of meaning, in a logical manner. The integration of both rational thinking and the observation of facts both work together to generate ideas and enable predictions.

The underlying philosophy of the research involved a critical evaluation and organisation of the various principles and methods other researchers had used to carry out prior studies which linked similar topics and questions. Graziano and Raulin (2013:35) argue that through observation and acquiring facts, the deductive and inductive processes are fuelled within science. Both inductive and deductive research approaches are often used within an investigation to guide the research, as counselled and proposed by Horn (2012:102). Within this mixed methods research study an inductive approach was applied to search, observe and gather data that enabled patterns to be identified and analysis to be undertaken: thus facilitating a response to the research questions.

Salehi and Golafshani (2010:186) state that using mixed methods in research studies creates both opportunities and challenges and that by using both qualitative and quantitative methods in combination allows for an integration of the data collected and their analysis. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004:770) propose that mixed methods research may be utilised to improve the understanding and evaluation of important findings (such as: statistical, clinical, practical and economic) in the research study. They argue that by using qualitative and quantitative methods together to gather and analyse the data, interpretation of the data is improved.

Andrew and Halcomb (2007:145) suggest that for the utilisation of a mixed methods design, there are "six purposes"; these include: "triangulation, complementarity,

development, initiation, expansion and to enhance significant findings". All six purposes were considered and utilised for this investigation.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a "research method" which gathers information by utilising more than two separate methods. It is used as a means of "improving the validity of qualitative research, and to a lesser extent of quantitative research". A multi-method approach assists to strengthen the assurance within the results of the research (Horn, 2012:128). In addition, triangulation links together the different methods in data collection and is used in one study to confirm the results (Salehi and Golafshani, 2010:187).

This study undertook the concurrent triangulation design mentioned by Harrison and Reilly (2011:18) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:64). The concurrent triangulation plan enables researchers to assemble both qualitative and quantitative information simultaneously. The data is analysed independently and then the data is mixed, compared and results are obtained. The concurrent triangulation will contrast and confirm the results through the strong points of both the qualitative and quantitative data.

Complementarity

By using triangulation in research the different methods can complement each other leading to greater understanding within the study.

Development

One method will shape or inform the use and development of other methods within the same study.

Initiation

Within the mixed methods approach of this study, an initiation was launched which highlighted new research questions and challenges within the analysis of the results.

Expansion

Through the utilisation of mixed methods, the investigation was expanded creating new ideas and leading to an extension of the range and extent of the study.

Enhance significant findings

Furthermore, through the utilisation of mixed methods the data collected from qualitative and quantitative methods may enhance the findings of each method as they relate and compare to the other method.

As proposed by Salehi and Golafshani (2010:188), the current study implemented the above six purposes for using a mixed methods research approach founded on the questions of the research and its design.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:18) support the idea that a mixed method research will produce a superior appreciation of the research problem through combining both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. By utilising mixed methods, it is easier to answer questions, thus providing the study with additional comprehensive data; the use of multiple world views is also promoted. The advantages of a mixed method research approach reinforce the decision to undertake combined method research as it allows a freedom to use several methods to address the complexity of the research problem.

While undertaking a mixed method design for this study, a rigorous effort was made to collect both types of data in a timely way and to make certain that the data was integrated in a correct and accurate way. Bahl and Milne (2006 cited in Harrison and Reilly 2011:22) conclude that in using a mixed methods research design the methods counterbalance each other and result in a more "trustworthy" outcome.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.5.1 TARGET POPULATION

Graziano and Raulin (2013:405) define a target population as a population by which the researcher of a study hopes to take a broad view of the findings. Welman *et al.*

(2008:52) describe a population as comprising of a collection of components such as persons, associations, administrations, individual offerings, occasions or circumstances. It is from the population that the sample is obtained. All (149) Midlands Meander Association registered members made up the target population.

Written permission was sought and gained from both the General Manager and Board Members of the Midlands Meander to undertake this investigation. A letter of intent was emailed to all members within the Midlands Meander Association, prior to the start of the study. In addition, the General Manager of the Midlands Meander Association informed its members via electronic mail that each member's participation was voluntary and that the information obtained would be considered confidential. A list of all registered members was sourced from the official Midlands Meander Association registered members list provided by the General Manager. This document included all contact names, email addresses, names of businesses, and telephone and cell phone numbers.

3.5.2 SAMPLING METHOD

Three types of data collection methods were undertaken for this mixed methods research study: an online survey, telephone interviews and an analysis of public domain and open access documents.

3.5.2.1 ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey utilised a large purposive sample in which all 149 registered members of the Midlands Meander Association were included and provided with the opportunity to respond. Welman *et al.* (2008:69) state that purposive sampling is an extremely significant type of non-probability sampling method in which the skill and creativity of the researcher is utilised to ensure that the sub-groups chosen within the population, do accurately reflect the whole population. A cross-sectional survey design was undertaken which entailed carrying out the survey on one occasion to a specific sample and gathering the relevant data, as it was determined at the specific time of the survey (Russell Bernard, 2013:234).

3.5.2.2 TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

A sample is any group or selection chosen and taken from the population (Graziano and Raulin, 2013:403). A purposive judgement sample of 30 members was used for the purpose of the telephone interviews. Aaker, Kumar, Day and Leone (2011:350) state that judgemental sampling undertakes to establish from within the sample, relevant characteristics which accurately reflect and are representative of the group. Consequently this type of sampling is considered to be reliable and to work well when the size of the sample is small.

3.5.2.3 DOCUMENTS

An analysis framework was constructed and applied to evaluate supplementary open source documents collected from social media feedback, and on-line visitor remarks sourced from a sample of the members' websites and blogs.

3.5.3 SAMPLING SIZE

Cresswell and Plano Clark (2007:119) suggest that for mixed methods research approach the samples used for the quantitative and qualitative approaches are not required to be the same size. They propose that within a triangulation design the following options are available:

- To increase in numbers the qualitative selected group,
- To weight the qualitative cases to assist with a comparison,
- To declare the constraints that occur; due to the difference in the sample size when comparing the various databases.

3.5.3.1 ONLINE SURVEY

A structured electronic questionnaire was emailed to all 149 registered Midlands Meander Association members and a final sample size of 98 respondents was achieved once data cleansing had been done.

3.5.3.2 TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

The size of the sample was 30 Midlands Meander Association registered members. The 30 members that formed the sample were representative of the various sub-

groups (taken from the Midlands Meander 2011/12 brochure) which form the Midlands Meander Association. The sample was divided into accommodation; hospitality and restaurants; arts, crafts and decor; leisure and activities; events; weddings; conservancies; museums; nature reserves & natural areas; conservation groups; places of worship; tour guides; and tour operators.

3.5.3.3 DOCUMENTS

The size of the sample for the supplementary open source documents was 24 comments. These comments were collected from social media feedback, on-line visitor remarks sourced from a sample of the members' websites and blogs. The sample was representative of all the sub-groups (as listed above), taken from the Midlands Meander 2011/12 brochure.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND FIELDWORK PRACTICE

3.6.1 ONLINE SURVEY

According to Horn (2012:107) there are several factors which have to be reviewed when choosing to use a questionnaire for gathering relevant information: administration, type of data, and a way to inspire a larger response ratio, confidentiality, timing, reliability, pre-testing and analysing data. These questions will affect how the research is conducted, and also the quality and reliability of the data collected.

Before commencing the data collection process, several meetings were organised with the General Manager of the Midlands Meander, members and various employees within the Association. A discussion was held regarding the optimum way that data could acceptably be collected from the members of the Midlands Meander Association. Various instruments were assessed as to their disadvantages and advantages. An online survey in the form of an electronic questionnaire was agreed upon as the most cost effective and suitable instrument to use as it is relatively simple to construct and administer (Horn, 2012:110).

A structured electronic questionnaire was designed by means of Lime Survey (see Appendix A), a server based electronic survey. The two main disadvantages of the online survey were the high attrition rate and the inability of the respondents to ask questions regarding their understanding of a particular question (Horn, 2012:108). To cope with the high attrition rate, the General Manager suggested that a prize be offered and provided by the association itself since this might motivate a higher response rate. A covering letter was sent to each respondent's email address (see Appendix D) providing a link to the online survey and an individual 'token number', so that the individual members could access the online survey and respond.

Prior to implementing the structured electronic questionnaire, it was pre-tested by several key people including the General Manager of the Midlands Meander Association and internal staff members. Aaker *et al.* (2011:292) state that pre-testing the questionnaire will determine how successful it will be at providing the right information to answer the research questions. A number of suggestions were examined and the essential adjustments to the questionnaire completed. According to Welman *et al* (2008:148) a pilot study should be carried out after the pre-testing of the questionnaire, if the questionnaire required several amendments to the format and content.

A pilot study of ten questionnaires was sent out by means of electronic mail, to a selected trial sample group, with the intention that the mechanics of the electronic questionnaire be assessed and reported on. The pilot study tested the online questionnaire for correct understanding and ease of use (Russell Bernard, 2013:165). During August 2013, after feedback had been received and considered, the approved electronic questionnaire was emailed to all 149 registered Midlands Meander Association members. In addition, a letter (containing information about the study) was sent electronically to all 149 registered members (see Appendix E). This letter clearly outlined all measures and ethical requirements of the investigation such as had been approved by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. After two weeks, a further 'reminder letter' was sent electronically to those members who had not completed the survey to promote an improved response rate.

Due to the high attrition rate (only 41 out of 149 completed the survey online), it was necessary for all members to be telephoned individually and encouraged to answer the structured survey questionnaire, telephonically. Oral consent was obtained and noted: the name, date and time of each telephonic interview was recorded in writing and diarised. All members were telephoned (between the months of September and December 2013) and provided with an opportunity to participate in the online survey. A considerable effort was made to make contact with all the members of the association. Frequently, two or three telephone calls were made to a business owner or manager. The survey interviews were all carried out by the same person (this researcher), thereby ensuring uniformity and dependability of the information that was gathered. Each interview took approximately twenty-five minutes, the time it took for a respondent to answer all the questions. After the information was procured telephonically from the members, the data was captured manually (by this researcher). This resulted in the number of completed online questionnaires to increase to eighty-one out of a population of one hundred and forty-nine registered Midlands Meander Members.

3.6.2 TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

A semi-structured questionnaire was constructed in the form of an interview guide (see Appendix B) and employed. The interview guide is designed to include listed themes and topics. Specific questions are not usually included in the interview guide. The interview guide is utilised to discuss subjects, which are related to the research questions and to encourage the respondent to discuss various relevant issues pertaining to the study (Welman *et al*. 2008:166). The semi-structured interview guide was pre-tested to ensure that the relevant topics and questions were easily understood and discussed.

Due to time and business constraints of the members, only twenty-one respondents out of a sample of 30 completed the semi-structured interview (see Appendix B). All dates, times and names of the respondents interviewed were recorded in writing and diarised. In addition to the semi-structured interview, the twenty-one respondents completed the online structured questionnaire. This allowed for a final sample size

for the online structured survey (see Appendix A) to attain a concluding count of 102 members out of the 149 registered members.

3.6.3 OPEN SOURCED DOCUMENTS

An analysis framework was constructed (see Appendix C) and applied to assess supplementary open sourced documents from social media feedback, and on-line visitor remarks sourced from a sample of the members' websites and blogs. The size of the sample was 24 comments taken from the review of the chosen sub-groups' websites during the month of January 2014. The check list was used as a guideline to obtain sufficient information relating to the research questions.

3.6.4 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Graziano and Raulin (2013:320) state that when constructing a questionnaire, all instructions and questions should be succinct and clear, while the focus of the questionnaire should be apparent and outlined by the research questions. Horn (2012:111) offers various suggestions for designing a questionnaire which comprise of the introduction, wording, types of questions, Likert scales and the number of questions incorporated within the questionnaire.

The electronic survey questionnaire used for this study included a short introduction explaining what was to be researched, why and by whom. It informed the respondent that the survey was completely voluntary and confidential and that the information obtained would only be used for research purposes. Once the respondent had agreed to participate, only then were they able to continue with the questionnaire.

The wording of each of the questions within the questionnaire was checked for clarity of understanding. In addition, it was important to check that the respondents were able to appreciate the value provided by their answers, to the current investigation. This was assessed during the pre-testing of the questionnaire. The length of the questionnaire was kept comparatively short, thereby ensuring that it was straightforward to administer as well as to undertake the coding of the responses (Horn, 2012:115).

Several different formats and types of questions were incorporated into the online survey. These included lists, categories, closed and open ended questions, and Likert scales. The Likert scale questions allow attitudes to be rated and measured with regards to various ideas, topics, issues or situations (Welman *et al*. 2008:159). Two Likert scale type questions (sixteen and seventeen) were used to rate attitudes of the respondents towards various factors. A response was chosen by the respondent for each question, from a scale of 1 (strongly agree) through to 5 (strongly disagree). This method of gauging the respondent's views on a subject or topic, created a solid support for the study, from which to answer the research questions.

The online questionnaire comprised of twenty-three questions that were divided into various sections.

- Question one (consent): allowed the respondent to acknowledge they had read all information regarding their participation and provide their consent.
- Questions two to five (biographical): created a background from which the history of each business and its business procedures were noted.
- Questions six to ten (marketing): related to the marketing of each business and their website usage.
- Questions eleven to fifteen (e-marketing): for the researcher's evaluation of how the use of e-marketing had increased certain factors (such as bookings or sales; gross profit; visitor or customer numbers) within their business was queried.
- Questions sixteen to seventeen (website and growth of business): formed the backbone of the questionnaire and provided a solid foundation from which the researcher could begin to answer the research questions.
- Questions eighteen to twenty (website): determined compatibility, use of applications and links between websites.
- Question twenty-one (website assistance): related to the Midlands Meander Association's assistance offered to and involvement with their members.
- Question twenty-two (social media): undertook to determine social media feedback received by the members.

- Question twenty-three (open comment): provided an opportunity for the members to comment freely on the investigation and provide suggestions and further information.

The questionnaire provided several opportunities to comment within an 'open format', as seventeen out of the twenty-three questions were structured to allow open comments regarding the study. Once completed and submitted, the survey generated a message to the respondent which simply stated, "Thank you for completing the survey."

3.6.5 SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Welman *et al.* (2008:166) state that a semi-structured interview guide is a flexible method by which to collect information using groupings of various topics and themes. The semi-structured telephonic questionnaire comprised two parts: an introduction and the body of the questionnaire. It was used as a guide to encourage discussion relating to the research problems (see Appendix B).

Each interview guide was individually coded into relevant themes and topics. The data was then consigned into a tabular format so that all the data might be carefully and systematically analysed together. All the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews helped to form a foundation from which the research questions were answered and recommendations developed.

Welman *et al.* (2008:204) suggest that it is important to write up notes immediately after the semi-structured interview has been undertaken so that the real meaning of the repeated topics and themes are recorded accurately. This suggestion was rigorously adhered to for this investigation. Ryan and Bernard (no date) state that there are several ways to recognise themes when coding the qualitative data. These include some of the following: word repetition analysis, comparisons, identifying verbal connectors, physically cutting and sorting text and reading through secondary data on the same topic. For this study, a number of the above methods were used to identify the frequency of themes and topics and these were graphically represented in bar diagrams and pie charts as recommended by Welman *et al.* (2008:217).

3.6.6 ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK FOR OPEN SOURCE DOCUMENTS DESIGN

An analysis framework was designed and utilised to record the relevant data collected from open sources. This form was divided into sections meant for recording the twenty-four comments, which were obtained from the supplementary open source documents. The relevant comments were gathered from social media feedback and on-line visitor remarks sourced from a sample of the members' websites and blogs. The sample was representative of all the sub-groups (as listed above), taken from the Midlands Meander 2011/12 brochure. All 24 comments were coded and analysed using the frequency of words and themes.

3.7 DATA CAPTURING AND DATA EDITING

To undertake the statistical analysis for this study, both SPSS a statistical programme and Microsoft Excel software were employed. The data was downloaded from Lime Survey into an Excel spreadsheet, where it was organised, checked for errors and stored. The various 'other' options within the questions were coded and the data was transformed into a numerical format. At this stage, all 'comments' remained as words and full sentences, in order that they might be analysed with the qualitative data obtained through the semi-structured telephonic interviews. All the revised data was then transferred from Excel into the SPSS software: where further data cleansing, coding and labelling was undertaken.

3.7.1 DATA CLEANSING

According to Aaker *et al.* (2011:385) 'data cleansing' will assist in identifying the extent of exclusions, lack of clarity, response errors and reckoning of cases within the range of groupings.

After data cleansing was undertaken in SPSS, the final sample size was reduced to 98 out of the 149 registered members due to some incomplete survey questionnaires.

Several concerns connected to the incomplete data can be addressed by Roderick Little's 'missing completely at random' (MCAR) test (Little, 1988:1198 and Coakes,

2013:43). This test was carried out within SPSS, to discover whether the data which was missing was significant and is shown in Table 1 in Appendix F.

Little's MCAR test: Chi-Square=2033.996, DF=2606, Sig. = 1.000

Little's MCAR test showed that the data was randomly missing as the significance at p=1.000 was greater than 0.05.

3.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

To check the reliability of the study, the Cronbach's Alpha test was carried out on two Likert scale questions (16 and 17) within the questionnaire to measure internal consistency. Table 2 shows the alpha coefficient for 17 items is .773. This is higher than the reliability coefficient of .70 which indicates that the statistics are relatively reliable and consistent in their measurement of these questions (Coakes, 2013:127).

Table 2: Reliability statistics for Likert scale questions 16 & 17 (17 sub items)

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.773	.773	17

Horn (2012:194) suggests that the validity of a study is increased with the use of triangulation where several different types of data collection are used and compared. Within this study three different forms of instruments were used: online survey questionnaire, a semi-structured questionnaire and an analysis framework for the recording of open source documents. Gerring (2007:217) explains the meaning behind both internal and external validity. He states that internal validity compares the research questions as they relate to the sample or cases. External validity is built on the representativeness of the sample. Aaker *et al.* (2011:686) state that validity is how well the instrument of measurement performs the act of gauging that which is actually aimed at being measured.

In this study, all three instruments were pre-tested before they were used to assess the validity and reliability of how accurately they answered the four research questions (Aaker *et al.* 2011:272). To attain validity and high-quality research, it is important that at all stages of an investigation every effort is made to circumvent errors (Mouton, 2005:110). Such efforts were made throughout the study to ensure that the information gathered and captured in writing was accurate.

Cresswell and Plano Clark (2007:146) suggest five ways in which validity should be managed within a mixed methods study. They argue that validity should not be minimised within a mixed methods investigation and that throughout the mixed methods research the expression "inference quality" should be applied to refer to validity measures. They add that gathering data through triangulation (using both quantitative and qualitative datasets), can often produce superior results. Finally, they suggest that validity within mixed methods research could be improved by recognising and addressing any threats that may possibly develop throughout the research process. To reduce any feasible threats in this research, all respondents were selected from the same sample. To examine the same questions and themes qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques were utilised.

To check reliability and validity when undertaking a qualitative study, Golafshani (2003:597) suggests characteristics such as trustworthiness, credibility and transferability should be observed and checked. He states that an important factor that should be tested within qualitative research is judging the quality of the study (in terms of credibility, consistency and dependability). Seale (1999 cited in Golafshani 2003:601) states that the inspection of trustworthiness to ensure reliability is vital in qualitative research. To differentiate between excellent or inferior research, it is imperative that reliability, validity, trustworthiness, quality and rigour are assessed and increased throughout the study (Golafshani, 2003:602).

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003 cited in Onwuegbuzie and Johnson 2006:55) also propose that within mixed method research the term "*inference quality"* be employed for validity. They state that the term "*inference quality*" has an association with the following elements of research: "*design quality and interpretive rigour*". These terms

look at both the methodology and the validity of the conclusions and the way (using quality and rigour) in which they are evaluated.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006:60) argue that mixed methods research captures both the subsequent "strengths" and the diverse "weaknesses" of qualitative and quantitative research methods. They suggest that the word "legitimation" be used when discussing the validity within mixed methods research, while noting that legitimation represents an ongoing process. For the current mixed methods research study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were combined and the corresponding strengths and the various weaknesses of each method considered and approached through a frame of trustworthiness, quality and rigour.

3.9 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

3.9.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Coakes (2013:58) states that descriptive statistics are applied to investigate, review and illustrate the data gathered. Similarly Graziano and Raulin (2013:105) assert that descriptive statistics allow the data to be described and then to be analysed shortly afterwards using inferential statistics. Within the current study, all the data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS. Simultaneously, frequency tables and graphs were generated, which also displayed various measures of central tendency and variability. These will be included and discussed in the fourth chapter.

3.9.2 PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS

To identify the key variables related to the four research questions, a factor analysis was carried out. Coakes (2013:128) explains that a factor analysis is a method in which a greater numbers of variables are condensed into a lesser number of variables. This revised smaller group of variables highlight the essential factors that form the crucial information within the variables. SPSS performs factor analysis through several different means: for this study, the principal components analysis was undertaken and will be discussed in Chapter Four.

3.9.3 BIVARIATE CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

The relationship between two variables was analysed using various tests including Chi Square tests for nominal variables and Spearman's rank order correlation test for ordinal variables (Welman *et al.* 2008:229).

Kerr, Hall and Kozub (2004:205) clarify that Chi-Square Tests compare the relationship between nominal level variables, noting the difference between the observed and the expected outcomes. Coakes (2013:89) explains that Spearman's rank order correlation is undertaken to determine how strongly the variables being measured are correlated and how significant the association is. In Chapter Four both Chi-Square tests and Spearman's rank order correlations will be discussed and analysed as they relate to the research questions.

3.9.4 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Within the current study, all qualitative data and open questions were analysed using "content analysis". This technique, content analysis is a recognised and organised research procedure which is used to verify the occurrence of particular concepts and words (Horn, 2012:150). The units that were to be analysed were established by means of relating the qualitative data to the research questions. All open questions and qualitative data were coded and categorised, then analysed. Horn (2012:151) refers to this method as 'conceptual analysis', whereby words, themes and sentences are all coded or placed into categories and then analysed. Onwuegbuzie and Dickinson (2008:204) suggest graphical methods (such as crossover graphical displays) that improve the visual illustration of mixed methods research by combining the quantitative and qualitative data within a framework, and in so doing, enhance the comprehension of the findings.

3.10 SHORTCOMINGS AND SOURCES OF ERROR

An important shortcoming within the current study was the high attrition rate originally experienced within the online survey. This led to several revisions within the data collection approaches. The foremost change affected the timeframe in which the interviews were planned and undertaken. The timeframe was greatly extended to

allow all outstanding members, who had not completed the online survey, to be contacted through telephonic means. Increased difficulties resulted, especially regarding the time allowed for interviews to be undertaken; higher expenses were incurred since a large proportion of the respondents were only accessible through their cellular telephones. A careful effort was made to ensure that the foundational questions (16 and 17) were completed in an efficient and error free manner, allowing for an increase in reliability and validity.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the manner in which the research design and methodology were selected and practised during the investigation. Chapter Four will further discuss, explain and illustrate using diagrams, graphs and tables, all the data analysis that was carried out within this current study.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the analysis, discussion and presentation of the findings in the current study, as they pertain to the research questions. The chapter comprises five sections, beginning with the descriptive analysis of the data. Section 2 examines and discusses the qualitative data, while Section 3 explains the Principal Components analysis as it relates to the key variables. Section 4 examines and discusses the results of various bivariate correlation analyses and Chi-Square tests. The final section offers some concluding thoughts.

4.2.1 SAMPLE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

All 149 registered members of the Midlands Meander Association were approached by means of an electronic survey, to participate in this study. A final sample size of 98 members (66 percent of the population) completed the survey questionnaire either online or telephonically (see Appendix A).

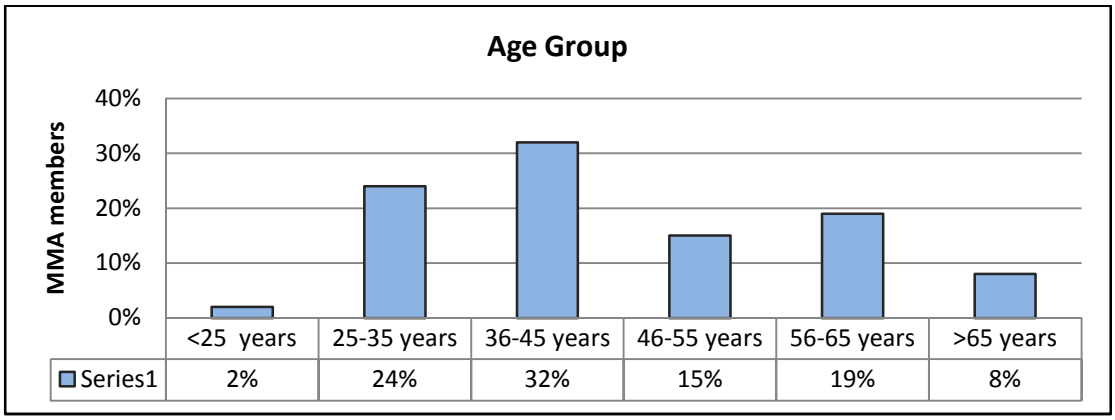


Figure 4.1: Age Group of Respondents

According to Figure 4.1, nearly one third of the respondents indicated that they were between 36 and 45 years of age, while 24 percent of the respondents indicated that they were between 25 and 35 years of age. The graph draws attention to the trend of individuals working beyond retirement age with 27 percent of all respondents aged 56 years and older. The research conducted by Mathfield (2000) and Lourens (2007:65) both note similar results: that the average age of all respondents was 40 years of age.

Note – Respondents were permitted to indicate multiple positions held in company

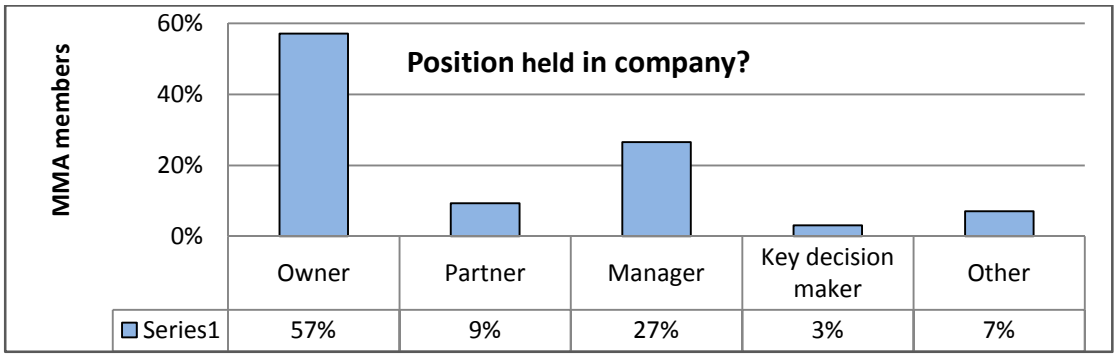


Figure 4.2: Position held in company by the respondent

In terms of the position that the respondents held within each company, Figure 4.2 shows that 57 percent were owners, 27 percent were managers, 9 percent were partners, 3 percent key decision makers and 7 percent 'others', who comprised of marketing directors, executives and personal assistants. Over 50 percent of the respondents who were owners were between the ages of 36 to 55 years of age and 29 percent of the owners were over 56 years of age.

Note – Respondents were permitted to indicate multiple types of businesses

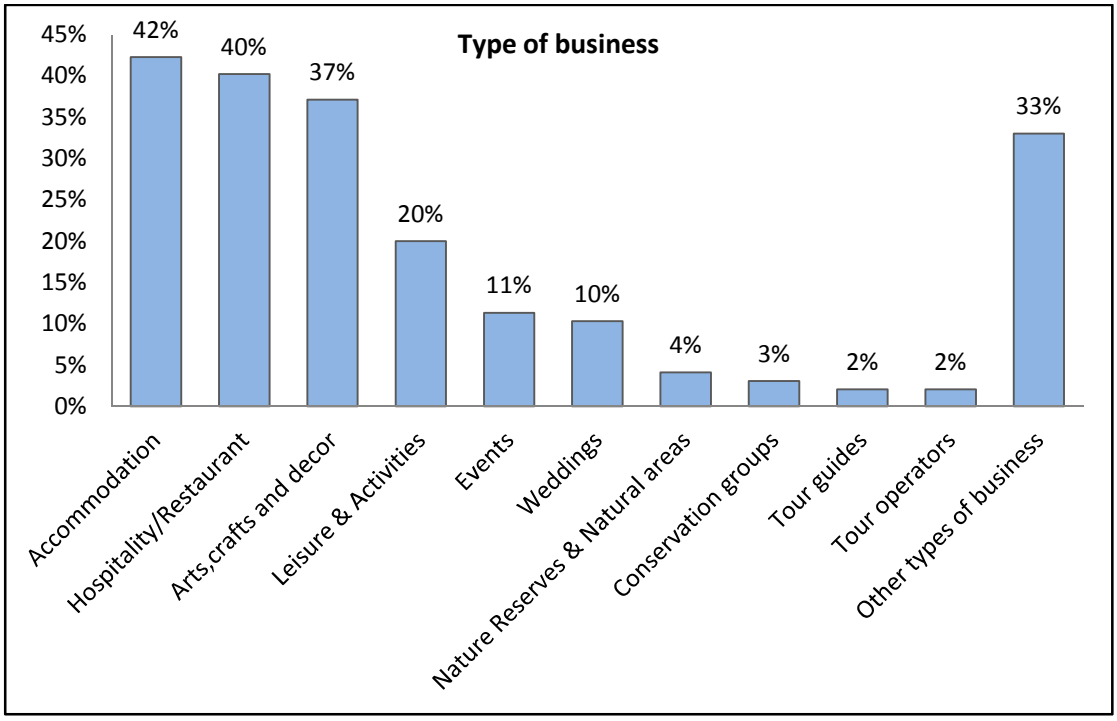


Figure 4.3: Type of business

The respondents operated in a diversity of businesses within the Midlands Meander. All respondents were permitted (when applicable) to select a number of business

categories, which described their company. Figure 4.3 draws attention to the various types of businesses administered by the respondents.

The majority of businesses occur within three main categories: accommodation (42 percent), hospitality and restaurants (40 percent), arts, crafts and decor (37 percent). These figures are consistent with the study undertaken by Lourens (2007:81) which noted the breakdown of the offerings within the Midlands Meander. Furthermore, thirty-three percent of the respondents, within the current study selected "other" when indicating an additional business category.

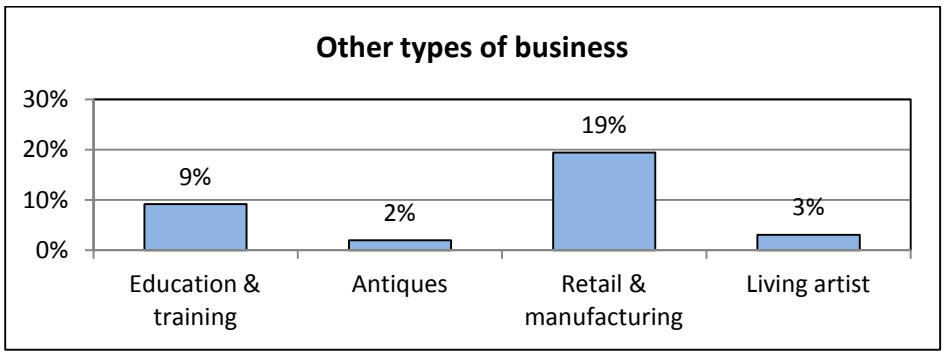


Figure 4.4: Other types of business

Figure 4.4 indicates that 19 percent of respondents described their businesses as retail and manufacturing concerns, 9 percent as education and training facilities, while both artists and antique establishments were also mentioned. The trend to diversify into several types of businesses was evident throughout this study. A large majority of companies were required to incorporate several types of businesses to survive during the current challenging business climate.

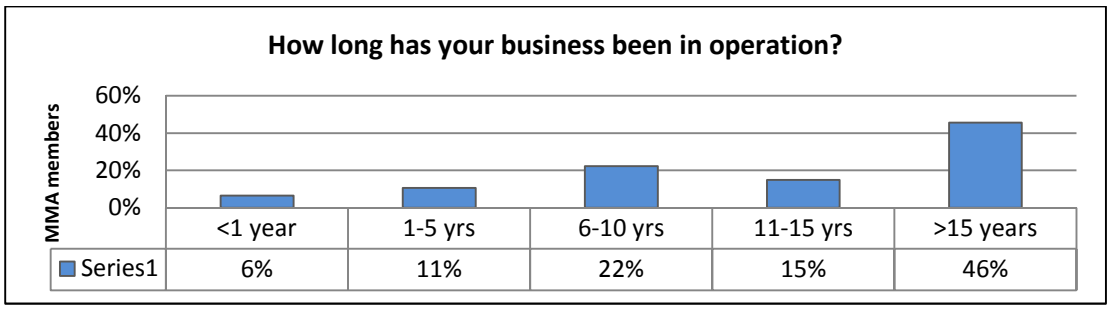


Figure 4.5: The length of time the MMA member's business has been in operation

In relation to the length of time each of the respondents' businesses had been operational, 46 percent specified more than fifteen years and 22 percent specified between six and ten years. The study highlighted that 6 percent of companies had only been in operation for one year or less, while 17 percent had been in operation for five years and under. The study clearly identifies the generally long-established nature of the various businesses, which form part of the Midlands Meander Association as indicated by Figure 4.5.

4.2.2 MARKETING UNDERTAKEN BY RESPONDENTS AND WEBSITE USAGE

Note – Respondents were permitted to indicate multiple target markets

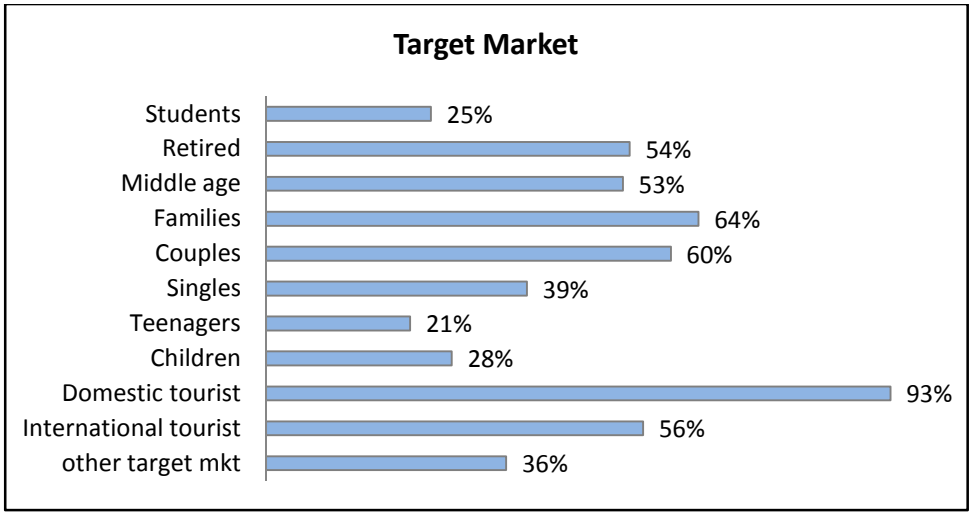


Figure 4.6: Target Market indicated by respondent

It was established that 93 percent of the respondents targeted the domestic market but this was not to the exclusion of the international market. More than half the respondents (56 percent) indicated that they also targeted the international market. An important segment of this market was noted to be families (64 percent) and couples at 60 percent. Clearly many respondents would be targeting various market segments simultaneously thus accounting for percentages that do not add up to 100. Figure 4.6 highlights the trend by respondents to target families and couples, rather than focusing exclusively on children, teenagers, students or singles. This confirms the study carried out by Lourens (2007:484), which stated that the Midlands Meander

is for the most part, a family holiday destination where 78 percent of visitors are domestic and 22 percent are international.

Table 3: Other target markets provided by the respondents

other					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	everyone	12	12.2	12.2	12.2
	locals	3	3.1	3.1	15.3
	Sport tourists	2	2.0	2.0	17.3
	business	4	4.1	4.1	21.4
	parents & school children	4	4.1	4.1	25.5
	Government	1	1.0	1.0	26.5
	women	1	1.0	1.0	27.6
	Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban	9	9.2	9.2	36.7
	not selected	62	63.3	63.3	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

Over 50 percent of respondents indicated that their company targets retired and middle aged markets, while 36 percent selected the 'other' target market option as indicated by Table 3. Of the 36 percent of respondents who selected 'other', 12 percent indicated that they did not segment their market but targeted everyone (mass marketing). A small proportion (9 percent) of respondents stated that their target market was visitors from Johannesburg, Cape Town or Durban. The respondents also mentioned locals (3 percent), sports tourists (2 percent), business travellers (4 percent), parents and school children (4 percent), government and women (1 percent) each.

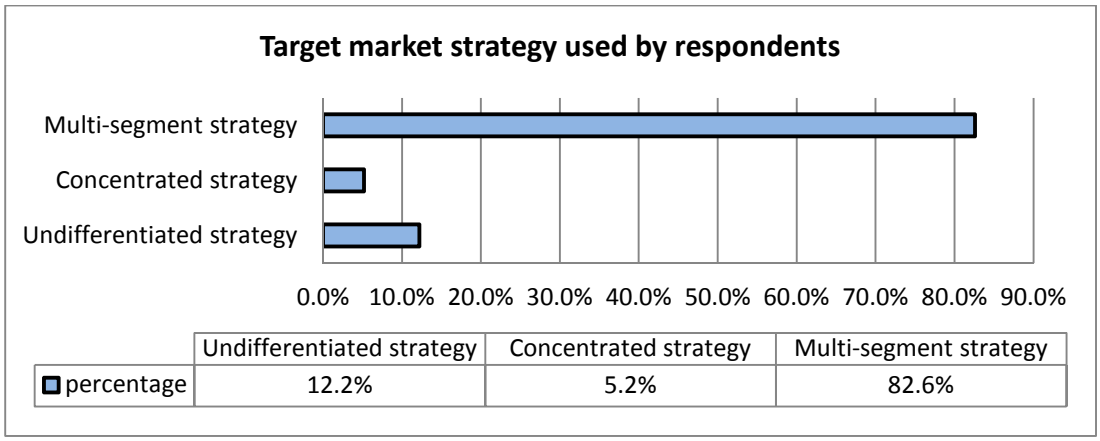


Figure 4.7: The target marketing strategies utilised by the respondents' businesses

In terms of segmenting and target marketing, Figure 4.7 shows that 83 percent of the respondents employed a multi-segment strategy, where several variables were targeted by one business to segment their markets. Only 5 percent of respondents indicated that their firms undertook a concentrated strategy where only one segment of the market was selected. An undifferentiated strategy was undertaken by 12 percent of respondents in which the firm targeted a mass market and did not segment the market (Lamb *et al.* 2006:166).

The findings show a clear trend of firms within the Midlands Meander Association employing a multi-segment strategy. Of the 83 percent of respondents who employed the multi-segment strategy, the majority used more rather than fewer variables to segment their market. The study showed that 33 respondents (41 percent) indicated they used four or less variables to segment their markets and 48 respondents (59 percent) indicated that they used five or more variables to segment their markets.

Note – Respondents were permitted to indicate multiple forms of marketing

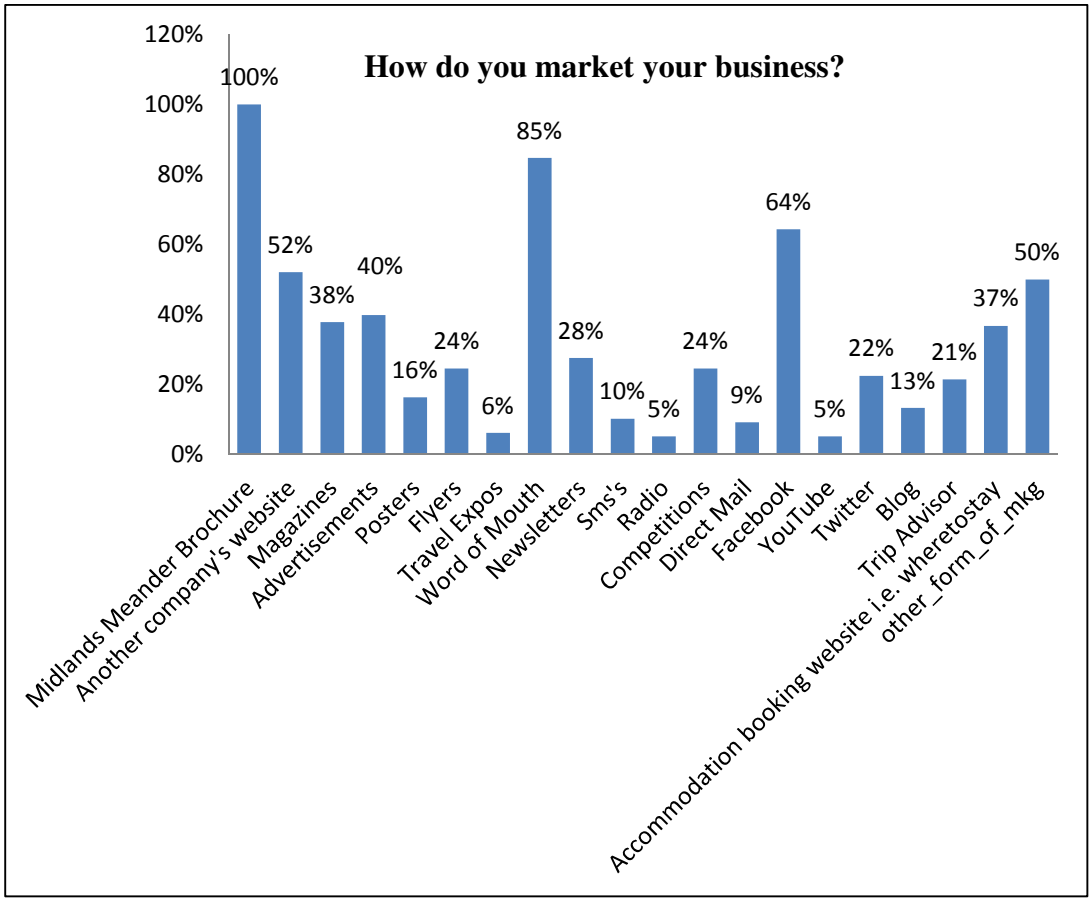


Figure 4.8: Marketing methods utilised by the MMA members

In terms of how each respondent marketed their businesses, Figure 4.8 highlights a number of methods utilised by the members. All 98 respondents indicated the Midlands Meander brochure was an important source of marketing. The majority of respondents (85 percent) identified word-of-mouth (WOM) to be a vital form of marketing, which confirmed the value of both traditional channels and the growing trend of online (eWOM) channels. Lorenzo-Romero, Constantinides and Alarcon-del-Amo (2011:170) in their study observed the value of social networking sites as a form of contact to connect and converse with consumers and other companies (see Section 2.2.6, p28). Facebook (an online networking service) was selected by 64 percent of the respondents as a method of marketing their businesses. This confirmed the studies of Alford (2010:1), Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:537) and McLaren (2011:274) which all argued the indispensable value of online marketing and social media to promote tourism organisations. Figure 4.8 also indicated, that over half of the respondents (52 percent) stated that they utilised another company's website to market their businesses. This corroborates Coetzee, Oldham, Schroenn and Tang's (2008:7) findings that fifty-nine percent of all Midlands Meander members assisted one another to promote each other's offerings (see Section 2.1.1, p9).

Table 4: Other forms of marketing utilised by the MMA members

Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Own website	13	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Email/direct mail	3	3.1	3.1	16.3
	Networking	1	1.0	1.0	17.3
	Virtual magazines	6	6.1	6.1	23.5
	Sponsorship	2	2.0	2.0	25.5
	Craft markets	1	1.0	1.0	26.5
	Pinterest	1	1.0	1.0	27.6
	Expos and shows	9	9.2	9.2	36.7
	Wheretostay, Safari, NightsBridge	8	8.2	8.2	44.9
	Instagram	2	2.0	2.0	46.9
	Social media	3	3.1	3.1	50.0
	Not selected	49	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

The current study indicates the emergence of a new trend, which shows that the members do not rely exclusively on the Midlands Meander Association to undertake their marketing, but are becoming more proactive in utilising various techniques to market their own businesses. The study by Lourens (2007:480) showed that 40 percent of all the Midlands Meander members relied solely on the Association to carry out marketing on their behalf. The results of this current study highlighted a change in how the Midlands Meander members have evolved in the development and undertaking of their own marketing efforts (including e-marketing).

Figure 4.8 also reflects the degree to which the respondents were utilising electronic media (such as Facebook 64 percent, YouTube 5 percent, Twitter 22 percent and Blog 13 percent) to market their businesses. In addition, 37 percent of the respondents who chose 'other' used various forms of electronic media illustrated in Table 4. This corresponds with the findings of McLaren (2011:1) who suggested that members should ensure that the electronic media were utilised efficiently in order that productive marketing of the route be established (see Section 2.1, p11).

As indicated by Table 4, the respondents also noted a wide selection of other forms of marketing which were undertaken to reach their individual target markets. This confirmed the suggestions of Molenaar (2012:19), that the emphasis within e-marketing should be on the recognised relationship and that it should be applied in a customised way (see Section 2.1.1, p13). The graph (see Figure 4.8) indicates the relatively low usage rate of YouTube (5 percent), Twitter (22 percent) and Blogs (13 percent). These figures are consistent with the study undertaken by Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:537) which states that research on the new technologies in the field of tourism reveals that e-marketing is not being fully utilised (see Section 2.2.1, p15). Figure 4.8 illustrates that over 38 percent of the respondents utilised magazines as a form of marketing, while 6 percent utilised virtual magazines (see Table 4) to market their businesses. This figure correlates with the research of Lourens (2007:76) which stated that over one third (34 percent) of respondents within the Meander utilised the Getaway magazine to market their tourism businesses.

It was revealed in Figure 4.8 that almost one third of the respondents made use of newsletters (28 percent) to communicate with their target market, thereby highlighting the importance of keeping customers informed, as well as building key relationships with customers. This trend was found to be consistent with an article by Whitaker (2008:3) which suggested that a well written, regular company e-newsletter could improve customer relationships (see Section 2.2.4, p23). The survey indicated in Figure 4.8 that although only a small percentage (6 percent) marketed their businesses at travel expositions, other forms of expositions and shows (such as educational, garden, wedding and agricultural) were employed by (9 percent) of the respondents to market their businesses (see Table 4).

Figure 4.8 showed that only a small percentage (10 percent) of respondents used the short message service (sms) to market their businesses. The study revealed that several respondents incorporated the confirmation of bookings and orders in addition to the notification of special offers, (within this figure).

The survey showed that a quarter of the respondents utilised both competitions and flyers to market their businesses, while 16 percent used posters as a means of marketing as shown in Figure 4.8. It was found that only one percent mentioned networking as a form of marketing (see Table 4), while one fifth of the respondents (21 percent) utilised Trip Advisor (an online travel website that provides travel reviews and travel information) as a form of marketing. In their research de Klerk and Kroon (2007:89) recommended that businesses should not only share knowledge but, also create strategic relationships through networking (see Section 2.2.1, p15). In terms of accommodation booking websites (such as Safari, NightsBridge and Wheretostay), 45 percent of the respondents used these to market their businesses (see Figure 4.8 and Table 4).

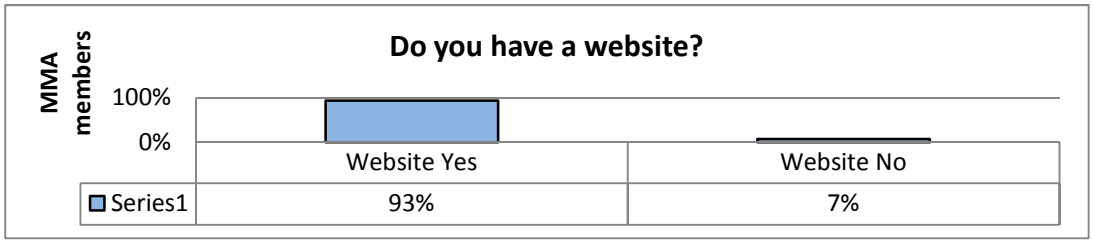


Figure 4.9: Percentage of MMA members who had their own websites

The survey showed in Figure 4.9 that 91 respondents (93 percent) had their own websites, while 7 respondents (7 percent) did not have their own websites.

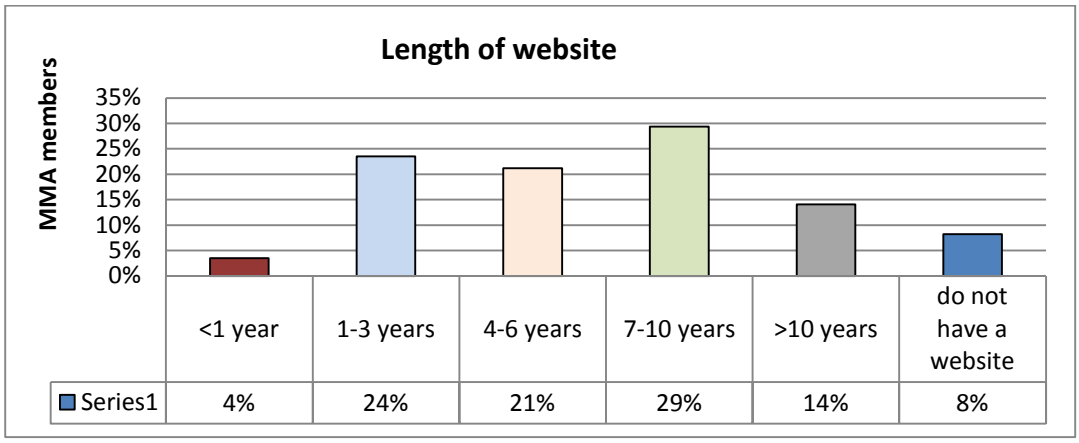


Figure 4.10: Length of time a respondent's website had been in operation

In terms of the length of time a website had been in operation Figure 4.10 indicated that half the respondents (50 percent) had been using their own websites for between four to ten years. In addition, over a quarter of the respondents (28 percent) had only had their website for three years or less, while 14 percent have had a website for over ten years. This is consistent with the early work into online marketing of Hudson and Lang (2002:155) which stated that increasing numbers of tourism businesses are developing their internet potential and the content of their own websites (see Section 2.2.5, p25).

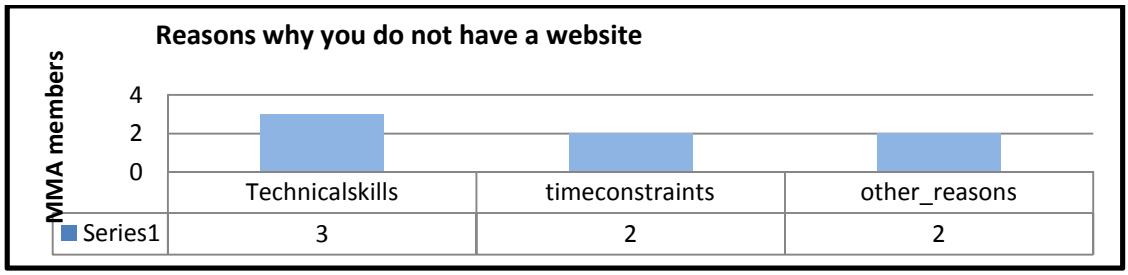


Figure 4.11: Reasons why 8 percent of the respondents did not have a website

Figure 4.11 indicated that out of the seven respondents (8 percent) who did not have a website, three respondents stated the reasons as being lack of technical skills, two respondents stated time constraints, while two stated that they made use of SA-Venues (an online booking site) and referrals from existing clients.

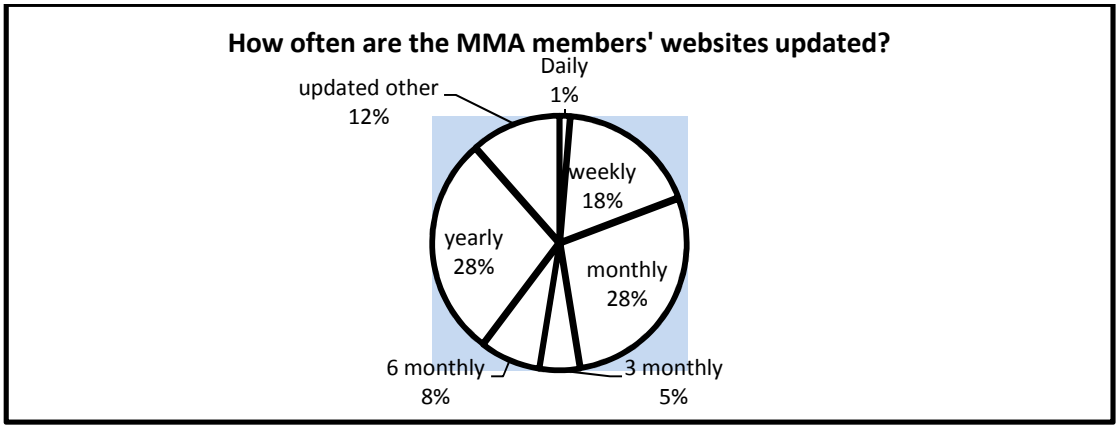


Figure 4.12: Updating of the MMA members' websites

Concerning how often the respondents' websites were updated, Figure 4.12 shows that of the 91 respondents with websites, only 1 percent indicated that they updated their website daily, while 18 percent indicated that they updated their websites weekly. Over a quarter (28 percent) stated that their websites were updated monthly, with 5 percent updating their websites every three months and 8 percent every six months. Under a third of the respondents (28 percent) updated their websites once a year. A small portion (12 percent) indicated that they were unsure how often their websites were updated. Alford (2010:2) draws attention to the issue regarding the necessity for websites to be updated regularly (see Section 2.2.5.1, p27).

4.2.3 THE LINK BETWEEN E-MARKETING AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

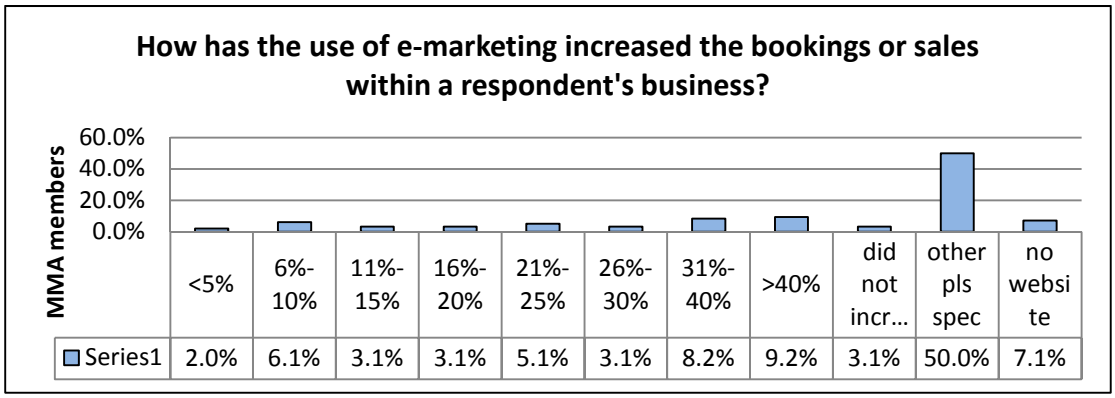


Figure 4.13: Perceptions of the increase in bookings or sales due to e-marketing

Pertaining to the question of how the use of e-marketing increased the bookings or sales within a respondent's business, of the 98 responses received, 49 respondents (50

percent) indicated increased benefits 'other' for increased bookings or sales, while 7 respondents indicated that they had no website. Three percent indicated that their bookings or sales did not increase, over 21 percent of respondents indicated an increase greater than 25 percent, while 19 percent indicated an increase of below 25 percent (see Figure 4.13).

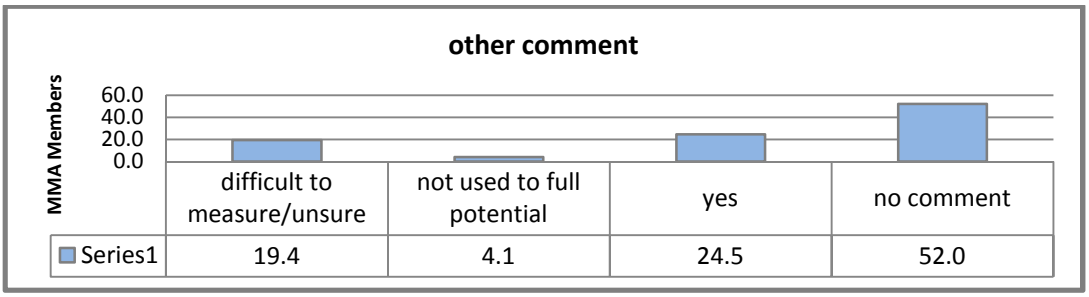


Figure 4.14: Breakdown of 'Other comment' for how the use of e-marketing has increased the bookings or sales

Of the 50 percent who selected 'other', 19 percent specified that it was difficult to measure or they were unsure of actual figures, 4 percent indicated that the use of e-marketing had not been utilised to its full potential and 25 respondents did not provide a comment (see Figure 4.14).

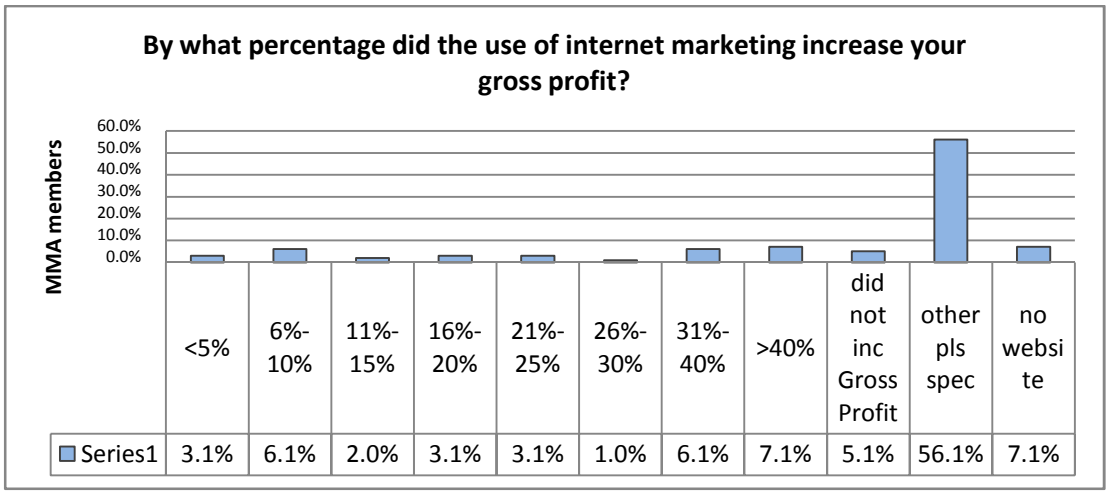


Figure 4.15: Perceptions of the increase in gross profit due to the use of internet marketing

Figure 4.15 showed that of the 98 respondents, over 31 percent indicated that their gross profit had increased (with 13 percent of respondents selecting an increase of over 31percent) while 5 percent indicated that their gross profit had not increased. Over half (56 percent) selected 'other' and 7 percent stated that they had no website.

Of the 56 percent who selected 'other', 23 percent specified that they were unsure of actual figures, 2 percent indicated that the figures varied, while 32 respondents (74 percent) did not provide a comment.

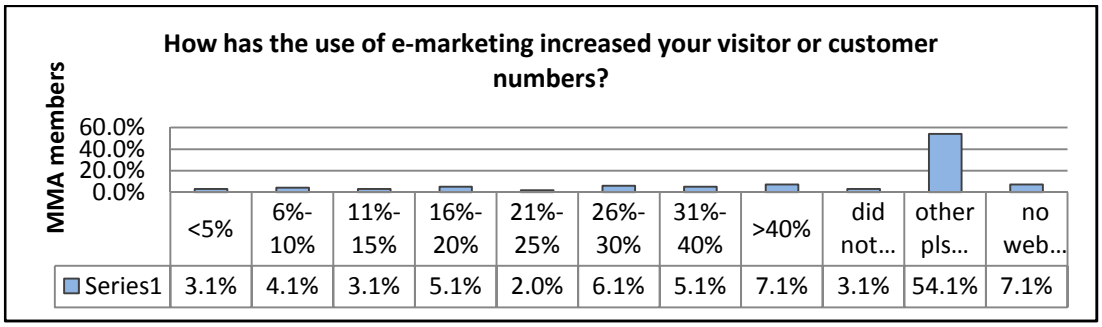


Figure 4.16: Perceptions of the increase in respondents' visitor or customer numbers due to e-marketing

In relation to how the use of e-marketing increased the visitor or customer numbers for each respondent's business, of the 98 responses received, 53 respondents (54 percent) selected 'other', while 7 respondents indicated that they had no website. Three percent indicated that their visitor or customer numbers did not increase, over 18 percent of respondents indicated an increase greater than 25 percent, while 17 percent indicated an increase of below 25 percent as shown in Figure 4.16. Of the 54 percent who selected 'other', 15 percent specified that they were unsure of actual figures, 8 percent indicated that the use of e-marketing had increased their visitor numbers, while 31respondents (75 percent) did not provide a comment.

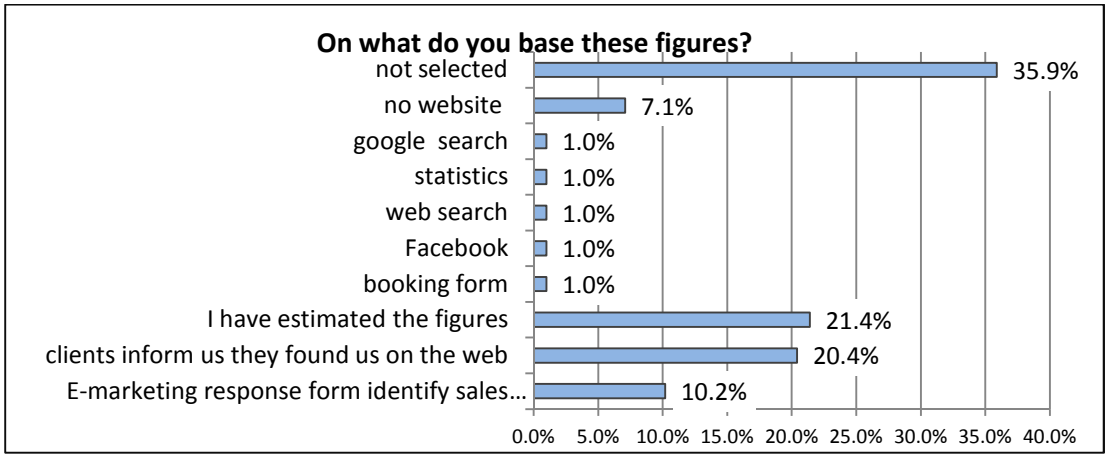
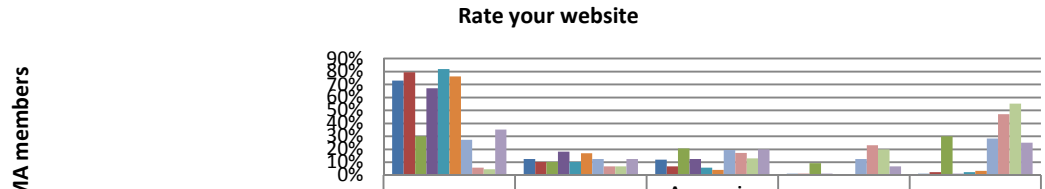


Figure 4.17: What the respondents based their figures on for questions 11-13

The respondents were asked on what data they based their figures for bookings or sales, gross profit and visitor and customer numbers. Over 21 percent stated that they

had estimated the figures, 20 percent stated that the client had found the company on the internet and had informed the respondent, while 10 percent indicated that sales bookings were identified on an e-marketing response form as shown in Figure 4.17.

4.2.4 RATE YOUR WEBSITE AND GROWTH OF BUSINESS



	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree in some cases	Do not agree	Strongly disagree
Usefulness is an important attribute to you of your website	73%	13%	12%	1%	1%
Ease of use is an important attribute to you of your website	80%	10%	7%	1%	2%
Booking/Payment facilities are important attributes to you of your website	30%	10%	21%	9%	30%
Map/Directions are important attributes to you of your website	67%	18%	13%	1%	1%
Images (photos) are important attributes to you of your website	82%	10%	6%	0%	2%
Product information is an important attribute to you of your website	76%	17%	4%	0%	3%
Links to other websites are important attributes to you of your website	27%	13%	19%	13%	28%
Blogs are an important attribute to you of your website	6%	7%	17%	23%	47%
YouTube clips are important attributes to you of your website	5%	7%	13%	20%	55%
Customer comments are important attributes to you of your website	35%	13%	20%	7%	25%

Figure 4.18: Rate your website (Question sixteen)

Questions sixteen and seventeen formed the backbone of the questionnaire, while providing a solid foundation from which to begin to answer the four research questions. The respondents were asked to rate their own websites using a Likert scale format (from 1- "strongly agree", 2 – "agree", 3 – "agree in some cases", 4 – "do not agree", 5 – "strongly disagree").

As illustrated in Figure 4.18, the majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' with the statement that images and photos (82 percent), ease of use (80 percent), product information (76 percent), usefulness (73percent) and map and directions (67 percent) were all important attributes of their websites. A far smaller percentage of the respondents indicated that they 'strongly agreed' with the statement that customer comments (35 percent), payment and booking facilities (30 percent), links to other websites (27 percent), blogs (6 percent) and YouTube clips (5 percent) were all important attributes of their websites.

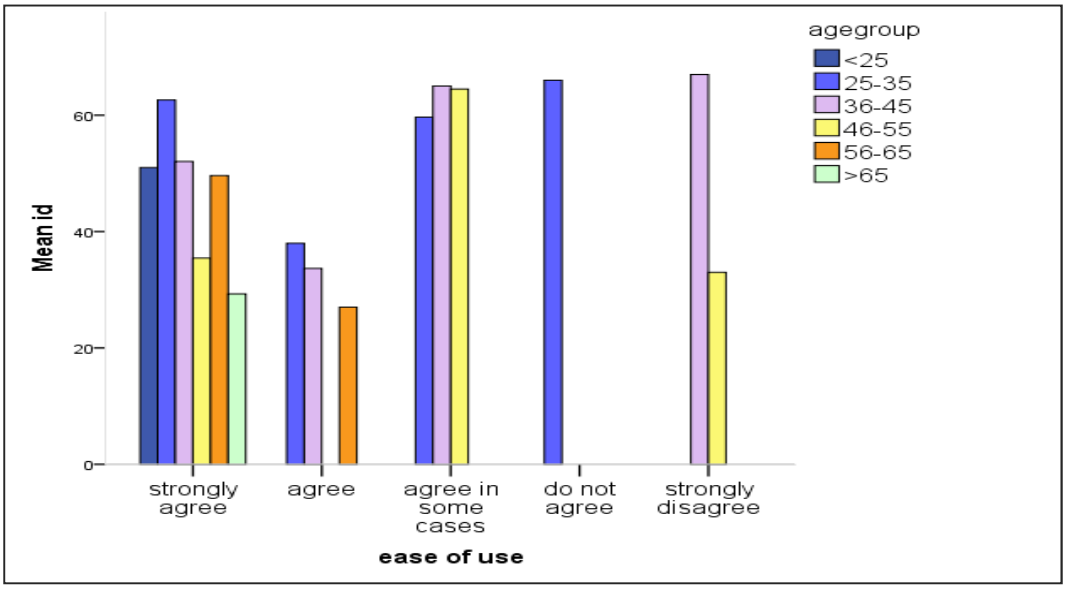


Figure 4.19: Ease of use is an important attribute of a respondent's website by age group

It was found that with regards to age groups, all mature respondents (65 years and older) indicated that they 'strongly agreed' that 'ease of use' was an important attribute to them of their website as indicated in Figure 4.19. In addition, all respondents between 56 and 65 years of age indicated that they also 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', that 'ease of use' was an important attribute to them of their

website. This correlates with the results of a study by El-Gohary (2011:1265) which suggested that the implementation of e-marketing is impacted positively by "perceived ease of use" (see Section 2.3, p31).

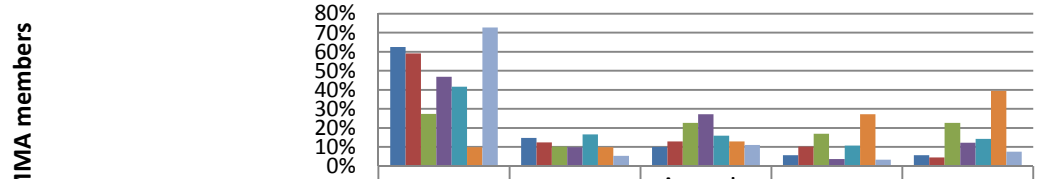
It was found that less than a third (27 percent) of the respondents indicated that links to other websites were an important attribute to them of their website, while over 40 percent 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed' with the importance of links to other websites. This finding supports one of the recommendations of McLaren (2011:274), which states that the members of the Midlands Meander Association should establish shared links between the members to assist with their marketing. The finding suggests that the respondents need to be informed about the importance and value of shared links. This will further develop relationships with their customers and other members within the Midlands Meander Association.

In terms of YouTube clips and blogs as important attributes of the website, over half (55 percent) and (47 percent) respectively, of the respondents indicated that they 'strongly disagreed', while 20 percent and 23 percent indicated that they did not agree (see Figure 4.18). A recent study undertaken by Grensing-Pophal (2012:20) stated that YouTube enables businesses to become innovative and simultaneously increases the number of visitors to the website, while enabling improved communication between the company and the customer (see Section 2.2.6, p29). Godson (2009:194) cautions that electronic relationships such as blogging can have potential negative impacts for a business such as a loss of control (see Section 2.2.6, p28). Godson (2009:195) notes that to counteract any negative impacts, some companies have organised their own chat sites where discussions regarding "controversial issues" are covered and resolutions sought. The current results clearly show a possible opportunity to develop these lesser used online marketing tools such as YouTube and blogs so that the respondents' interaction with their customers and potential customers is enhanced.

According to the survey (see Figure 4.18) almost half (48 percent) of the respondents indicated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the suggestion that customer comments were important attributes to them of their website. This is consistent with a

recent study by Dutot (2013:56) which states that SCRM can build trust, while creating a platform to communicate with the company's customers (see Section 2.2.4, p24).

The respondents were also asked to rate aspects related to the growth of their business and their relationship with customers. A Likert scale format (from 1- "strongly agree", 2- "agree", 3- "agree in some cases", 4- "do not agree", 5- "strongly disagree") was used.



	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree in some cases	Do not agree	Strongly disagree
Your company's website is important to the growth of your business	63%	15%	10%	6%	6%
Your company's website is important to building your relationship with your customers/potential customers	59%	13%	13%	10%	5%
Your website is the primary introducer of business	27%	10%	23%	17%	23%
Search Engine Optimiser is important to the success of your business	47%	10%	27%	4%	12%
Social media channels (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) are important to building relationships with your customers	42%	17%	16%	11%	14%
YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business	10%	10%	13%	27%	40%
The mobile phone is an important platform to engage with your customers and facilitate consumer-to-consumer interaction	73%	5%	11%	3%	8%

Figure 4.20: Growth of business

According to Figure 4.20 over three quarters of the respondents (78 percent) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement that their company's website was important to the growth of their business, while 10 percent of the respondents 'agreed in some cases'. In addition, 72 percent of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement that their company's website was important to building relationships with their customers or potential customers, while 13 percent of the respondents 'agree in some cases'. This supports the recent study of Luo and Zhang (2013:214) which highlights that visitors to websites impact on the performance of a firm and create interaction between the firm and its online visitors (see Section 2.2.6, p29).

Although the respondents noted the importance of their website to the growth of their business and to building relationships with their customers or potential customers, only 37 percent indicated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement that their website was the primary introducer of business. Godson (2009:95) stated that the company's profitability is linked to its ability to retain customers (see Section 2.2.4.1, p25). Clearly, the respondents' answers indicated that a large majority (over 70 percent) believed in the value of their websites, but did not perceive their websites as being their primary introducer of business (new or repeat).

According to the survey as shown in Figure 4.20, over three quarters of the respondents (78 percent) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the suggestion that the mobile phone was an important platform to engage with their customers and facilitate consumer-to-consumer interaction. Stokes (2011:537) defines consumer-to-consumer interaction as being when a consumer sells an offering to another consumer. Furthermore, Stokes (2011:440) states that an essential factor with regards to a positive mobile marketing outcome was to know and value your target market. Whilst undertaking this current study, it was established through discussions with the respondents that a high percentage of respondents relied on their mobile phones to perform their daily business functions. This was owing to the fact that there were no landlines in several of the business locations due to an ongoing problem within the Midlands area of telephone cable thefts.

The survey indicated that more than half of the respondents (57 percent) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that Search Engine Optimiser (SEO) was important to the success of their business, while over a quarter of the respondents (27 percent) 'agreed in some cases'. This was comparable to the findings from a study by McLaren (2011:274) which proposed that the Midlands Meander Association and its members developed their use of SEO to increase the number of responses from potential consumers (see Section 2.2.5.1, p27). A study undertaken by Alford (2010:1) reinforced the importance of SEO to know which key words to include, thereby leading to an improvement in the online existence of rural businesses (see Section 2.2.5.1, p27). The findings highlight a possible future opportunity for MMA members to grasp the importance of and then use of Search Engine Optimiser (SEO).

It was found that more than half of the respondents (59 percent) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that social media channels were important to building relationships with their customers, while 16 percent 'agreed in some cases'. A quarter of the respondents 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement that social media channels were important to building relationships with their customers. This was consistent with the previous results regarding how the respondents marketed their businesses, which indicated that 64 percent utilised Facebook, 22 percent utilised Twitter and 6 percent utilised other forms of social media (see Figure 4.8 and Table 4). Dann and Dann (2011:344) discuss the belief that connecting with others through social media is important and adds value (see Section 2.2.6, p28). These findings suggest that there is a possible opportunity for MMA members to apply social media to connect with consumers.

The study indicated that a small proportion (5 percent) of respondents utilised YouTube to market their businesses (see Figure 4.8). A similarly small percentage (10 percent) agreed with the statement: YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business. Over 67 percent either 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement, 13 percent 'agreed in some cases', while 10 percent 'agreed' and 10 percent 'strongly agreed'. These findings suggest a possible opportunity regarding the use of YouTube. Molenaar (2012:149) states a growing

importance for businesses to develop a "presence on YouTube", whereby the company can provide information to prospective customers and manage positive interactions between the firm and its customers through the utilisation of YouTube videos.

4.2.5 DETERMINE COMPATIBILITY, USE OF APPLICATIONS AND LINKS BETWEEN WEBSITES

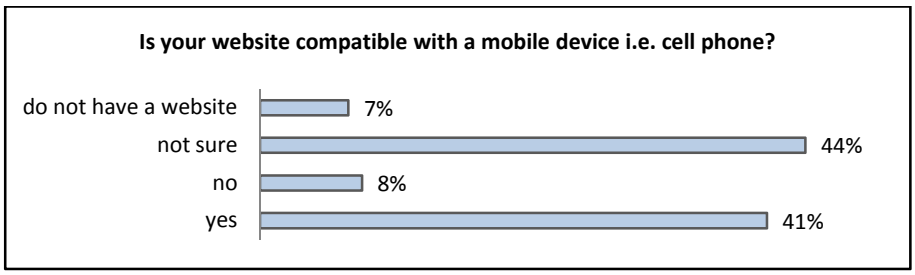


Figure 4.21: Compatibility of website with a mobile device such as a cell phone

According to the respondents, when asked: 'Is your website compatible with a mobile device such as a cell phone?' nearly half (44 percent) stated that they were not sure, while 41 percent indicated 'yes'. A small proportion (8 percent) selected 'no' and 7 percent specified that they did not have a website (see Figure 4.21).

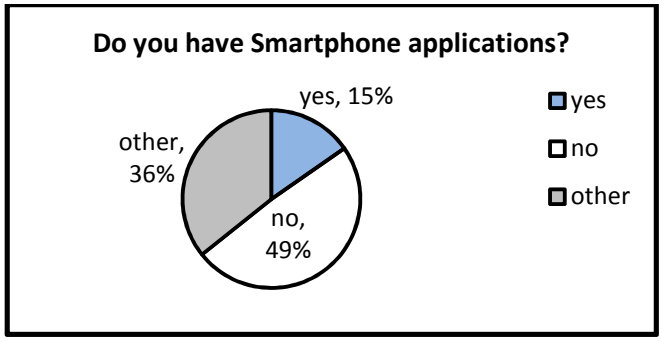


Figure 4.22: The number of respondents who have Smartphone applications

Figure 4.22 shows that 15 percent of the respondents indicated that they have Smartphone applications (such as Facebook and WhatsApp), while nearly half (49 percent) indicated that they had no Smartphone applications. Just over a third (36 percent) of the respondents selected 'other' and of these, nine respondents indicated that they were not sure whether they had Smartphone applications.

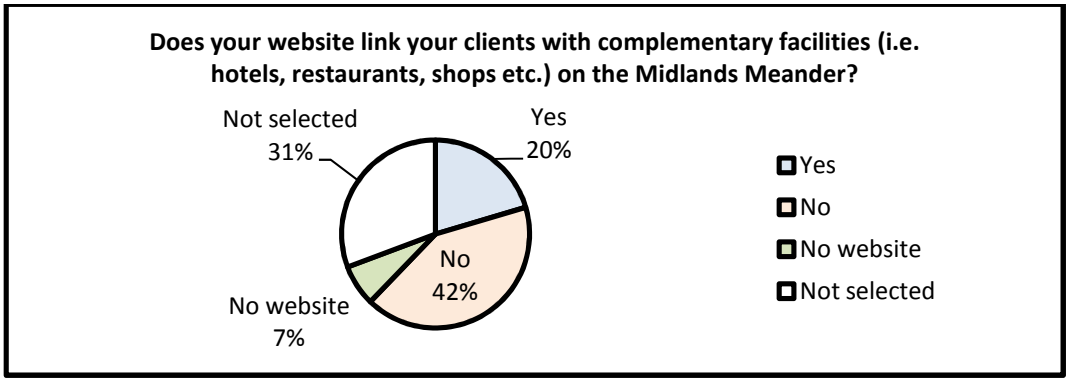


Figure 4.23: Percentage of websites with links to complementary facilities

Concerning the question 'does your website link your clients with complementary facilities (such as hotels, restaurants and shops) within the Midlands Meander?' a small segment (20 percent) indicated 'yes', and listed accommodation, suppliers and local activities as examples. Almost one third (31 percent) did not select an answer, while 42 percent indicated 'no'. Seven percent stated that they had no website (see Figure 4.23). This is consistent with the study undertaken by McLaren (2011:213) which suggested that few members' websites had links to the Midlands Meander website (see Section 2.1.1, p11). These findings suggest that there is a possible opportunity for MMA members to begin using applications and links between websites.

4.2.6 HOW THE MIDLANDS MEANDER ASSOCIATION MIGHT BE OF ASSISTANCE TO THE MEMBER

Note – Respondents were permitted to indicate multiple responses

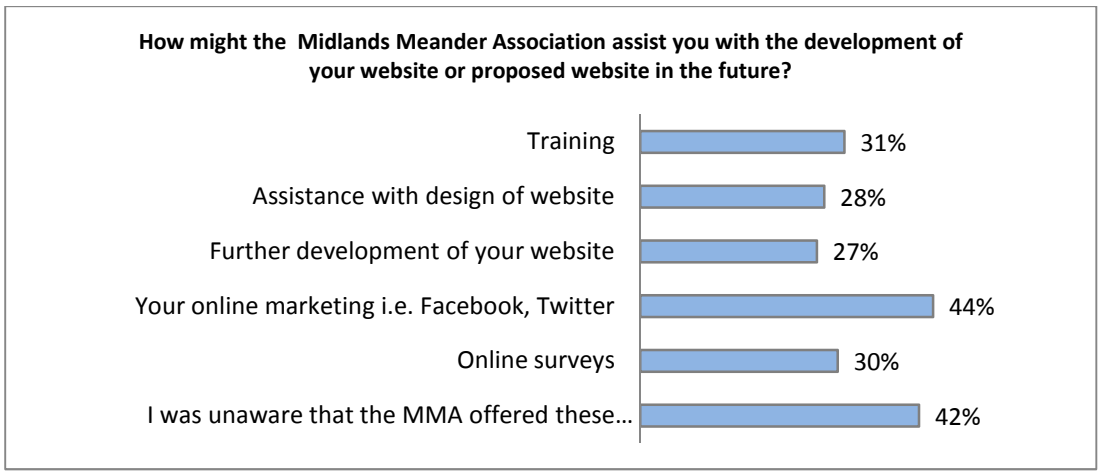


Figure 4.24: Percentage of respondents who required assistance from the MMA

The current study asked the respondents how the Midlands Meander Association might be of assistance to the member (see Figure 4.24). Respondents were permitted to select multiple options. Almost half (44 percent) indicated that they required assistance with their online marketing, while 28 percent indicated that they required assistance with the design of their website. Nearly a third (31 percent) stated that they required help with training and 30 percent with online surveys. A further 27 percent of respondents indicated that they required assistance with further development of their website. Weinstein (2008:1) argues that it is not sufficient to have the new technology available for businesses but it is how the new technology is utilised that will determine the performance of a company (see Section 2.3, p32). This view is consistent with the ideas of the Midlands Meander Association, that the training in the use of new technology has a vital impact on the performance of each of its members' businesses.

It was found that 41 of the respondents (42 percent) were unaware that the Midlands Meander Association offered the above services to their members. Amongst those respondents who did not require the above assistance (see Figure 4.24) from the Midlands Meander Association staff, reasons provided included that they had already outsourced their website development and training to Information Technology (IT) companies and for others, that time constraints were a factor.

4.2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDBACK

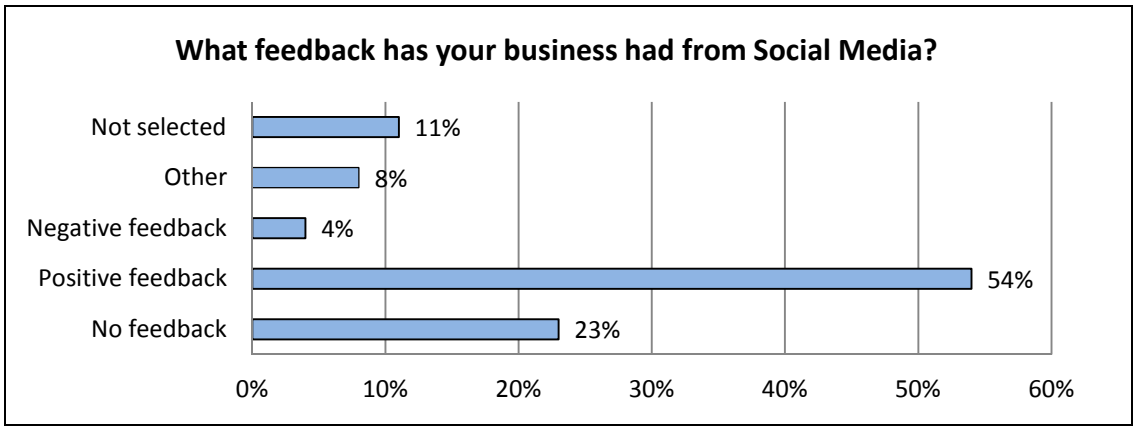


Figure 4.25: Social media feedback received by the respondent's business

According to the respondents, over half (54 percent) had indicated that they had received positive feedback from social media (see Figure 4.25). This included 32 respondents (54 percent) who stated that they had received positive comments on Facebook. Six respondents had received compliments on their pictures, events and competitions from their social media. One respondent noted very minimal numbers of responses, and another respondent indicated orders and sales received on social media. Concerning the 4 percent who had received negative feedback (see Figure 4.25) one respondent stated that the negative feedback was due to out of date rates, while another respondent indicated that they had received a complaint. The 8 percent of the respondents who selected 'other' indicated that they were not using social media. Nearly a quarter (23 percent) had received no feedback, while 11 percent did not select a response. These results are consistent with the idea suggested by Strauss and Frost (2014:404) that through the use of social media customers share with friends and participate in ratings and reviews on various businesses. Also, referral programmes such as Groupon encourage online customers to participate by offering discounts and rewards

4.2.8 OPEN QUESTIONS

At the conclusion of the survey, an option was provided for the respondents within an 'open format' to add any comments, suggestions or observations regarding the investigation (see Appendix A). All comments received from the respondents were coded and included into the 'content analysis' section. All open questions and qualitative data were coded and categorised, then analysed as suggested by Horn (2012:151).

4.3 CONTENT ANALYSIS

A sample of thirty Midlands Meander Association members (who were representative of the members), were contacted telephonically to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Due to the members' 'time and business constraints', only twenty-one respondents ultimately participated. A selection of words, themes and sentences were all placed into ten different categories and then analysed by means of the Microsoft Office Excel software programme (Horn, 2012:151).

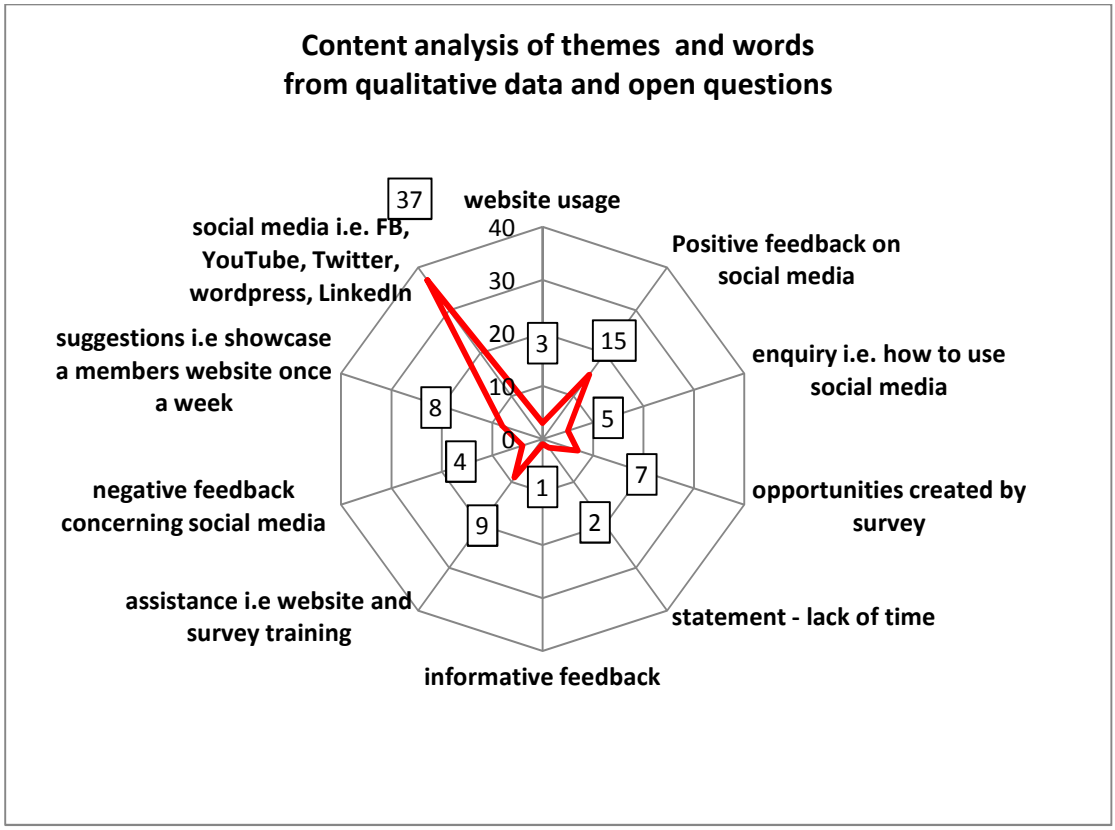


Figure 4.26: Content analysis from qualitative data and open questions

The graph (see Figure 4.26) depicts the ten categories that the data was divided into. The largest category was 'social media' with 37 counts; this was linked to 'positive feedback from social media' with 15 counts. 'Negative feedback from social media' had 4 counts, while 'enquiry' such as 'how to use social media' had 5 counts. 'Assistance' such as 'website and survey training' had 9 counts, whereas 'statement' such as 'lack of time' had 2 counts. 'Website usage' had 2 counts; while 'information feedback' had 1 count, 'suggestions' such as 'showcase of a members website one a week' had 8 counts and 'opportunities created by survey' had 7 counts.

The development of certain themes and topics during the semi-structured interviews with the respondents became evident as the interviews progressed. Not all of the respondents thought that social media was an important factor within their businesses. A small percentage of respondents (3 percent) stated that "*Social media, Facebook, LinkedIn and the rest are a waste of valuable time*", that '*Twitter, Facebook etc., have*

caused too many problems all over the world" and that "*too much time will be taken keeping up with Tweets..... I would rather spend time with clients personally*".

A number of respondents (5 percent) believed in "*the value of personal contact with the clients, and immediate response to internet and telephone enquiries*". A number of respondents (3 percent) noted "*the importance of the unique experience and great service*", while others (10 percent) sought "*assistance with social media*" and assistance with "*how to market their website?*" The respondents' comments are consistent with the study by Brodie *et al.* (2007:1) which states that productive e-marketing is positively associated with sound business performance (see Section 2.3, p32).

4.3.1 ANALYSIS OF OPEN SOURCE DOCUMENTS

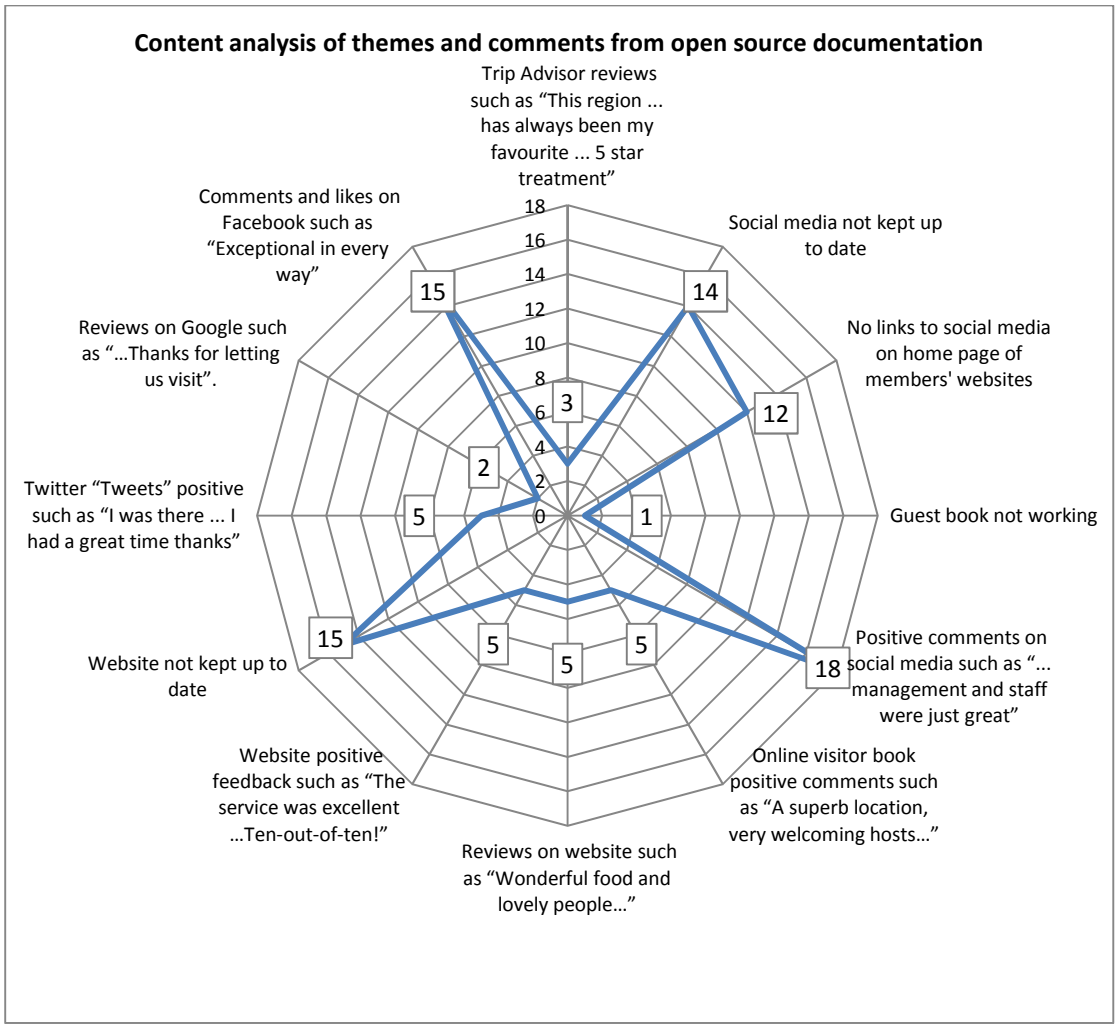


Figure 4.27: Content analysis of themes and comments from open source documentation

Twenty-six of the members' websites (representative of the MMA membership) were viewed and their corresponding 'links' to social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WordPress, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google were examined. Online visitors' books, newsletters, and blogs linked to the websites were also viewed. From these open sources 24 comments were collected, coded and analysed using the frequency of words and themes, then graphically represented within a visual model as recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:129).

The data collected from the 24 comments taken from the websites was analysed and then categorised into twelve themes as shown in Figure 4.27. The results indicate 3 counts of 'websites with links to reviews on Trip Advisor such as "*This region ... has always been my favourite ... 5 star treatment*", 18 counts of 'positive comments on social media' such as *"... management and staff were just great"* and 5 counts of 'positive comments on Twitter' such as "*I was there ... I had a great time thanks"*.

Also, there were 15 counts of 'positive comments and likes on Facebook', 5 counts of 'reviews on websites' such as "*Wonderful food and lovely people…"* and 5 counts of 'positive feedback on website' such as *"The service was excellent …Ten-out-of-ten!"* With regards to 'online visitors' books', there were 5 counts of positive comments such as "*A superb location, very welcoming hosts…"* and 2 counts of 'positive reviews on Google' such as "*…Thanks for letting us visit*".

It was found that even though a business utilised social media, there were 12 counts of 'no links to social media on the home page of the member's website'. Also, 15 counts of 'websites were not kept up to date', 14 counts of 'social media were not kept up to date', plus 1 count of 'an online guest book not working'. These findings support the results of the online survey shown in Figure 4.12 which indicates the low percentage of respondents who updated their websites daily or weekly.

4.4 PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY KEY VARIABLES RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two principal components factor analyses were conducted on both sets of variables for Questions 16 and 17, (listed in Figures 4.18 and 4.20), to reduce the original

number of variables into smaller groupings, using all the variances in the diverse variables. Before the principal components factor analyses were performed, the suitability of the data for analysis was assessed. The "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value" should be 0.6 or above, the KMO values were 0.67 and 0.66 in that order (see Table 5 in Appendix G), while both the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity values were significant ($x^2(45) = 190.29$, $p < 0.01$ and x^2 $(21)= 139.70$, $p < 0.01$ respectively). These values indicated that it was suitable to perform the factor analysis on the 17 items within Questions 16 and 17. All communalities were above 0.3; this verified that each item shared some common variance with the other items. The average score of communalities (see Table 6 in Appendix G) was 0.587 for items in Question 16, and 0.577 for items in Question 17.

Initially, a number of principal components factor analyses were conducted, and several factor solutions (four and five solutions) were examined, in which the use of a Varimax rotation as opposed to direct Oblimin rotation were compared. It was found that the 17 variables or units, within Questions 16 and 17, were not significantly correlated; therefore a Varimax rotation was utilised.

Table 8: Rotated Component Matrix for Question 16

Rotated Component Matrix[a]			
	Component		
	1	2	3
Usefulness	.793		
Ease of use	.792		
Images photos	.771		
Map directions	.603		
Product information	.516		
Booking payment facilities		.805	
Customer comments		.790	
YouTube clips		.503	.495
Blogs			.840
Links to other websites			.658
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.			
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.			

Table 9: Rotated Component Matrix for Question 17

Rotated Component Matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
Website important to building relationships with customers	.824	
Website important to growth of business	.801	
Website is the primary introducer of business	.587	
The mobile phone is important	-.572	
Social media channels are important		.750
YouTube as a form of information		.747
SEO is important		.686
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.		
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

A Varimax rotation (see Tables 8 and 9) provided the best defined factor structure for both Questions 16 and 17, while all loadings were above 0.4, with only one "cross-loading" for YouTube clips (Costello and Osborne, 2005:3).

The principal components factor analysis undertaken for the 10 variables within Question 16 indicated (see Table 7 in Appendix H) that there were three components with eigenvalues greater than 1. Factor 1 of 1 'website information' explained the 30.1 percentage of variance, the second Factor 2 of 1 'customer relationship' explained 17.2 percent of variance, while the third Factor 3 of 1 'communication' explained 11.3 percent of variance. The screeplot showed a change in the contour of the plots after the third component (see Figure 4.28 in Appendix H). Using the scree test suggested by Pallant (2010:199), three components were retained for further enquiry.

The rotated Component Matrix (see Table 8) for question 16 showed that Factor 2 of 1 'customer relationship' and Factor 3 of 1 'communication' shared one variable (YouTube clips), whereas all the other variables within the rotated component matrix had a "clean" factor structure (Costello and Osborne, 2005:3). It was therefore decided that all three factors would be retained due to the strength of the other two variables in component 3.

The principal components factor analysis undertaken for the 7 variables within Question 17 indicated that there were two components (with eigenvalues greater than 1). Factor 1 of 2 'website growth of business' explained the 38.9 percentage of variance, the second Factor 2 of 2 'social media channels' explained 18.8 percent of variance (See Table 10 in Appendix I). The scree plot showed a change in the contour of the plots after the second component (see Figure 4.29 in Appendix I). Using the scree test suggested by Pallant (2010:199), two components were retained for further enquiry. The rotated Component Matrix (see Table 9) for question 17 showed that both the factors (Factor 1 of 2 'website growth of business' and Factor 2 of 2 'social media channels') had a "clean" and relatively strong factor structure (Costello and Osborne, 2005:3).

4.5 BIVARIATE CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS AND CHI-SQUARE TESTS

A number of bivariate correlation analyses and Chi Square tests were undertaken to enable and support the responses, in answer to the research problem.

To what extent have the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had an impact on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance?

These correlations and tests will be examined, discussed and together with the descriptive analysis and content analysis, seek to answer the four research questions. How do the Midlands Meander Association members implement e-marketing within their businesses? What are the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing? How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance? How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers?

Question 1: How do the Midlands Meander Association members implement e-marketing within their businesses?

Note – Respondents were permitted to indicate multiple forms of e-marketing

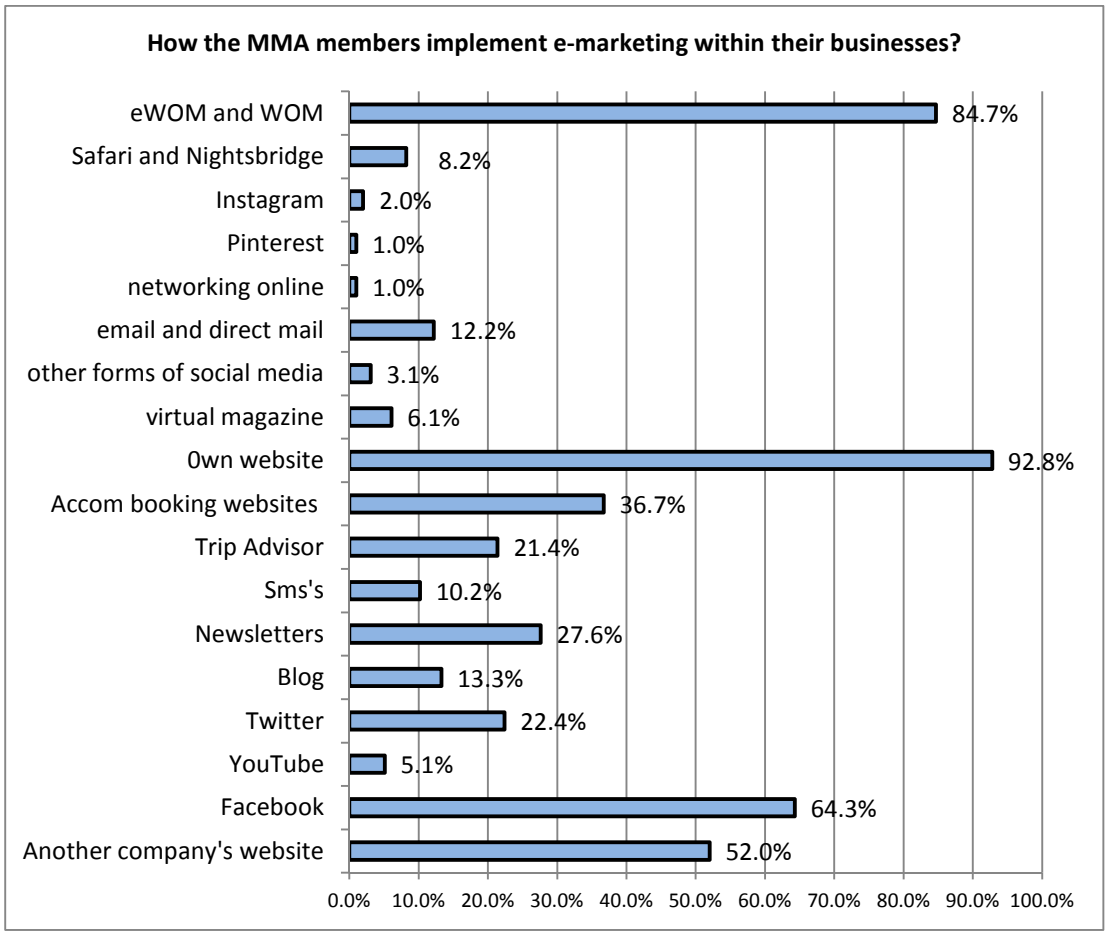


Figure 4.30: E-marketing implemented within the members' businesses

The survey shows that the Midlands Meander Association members implement several forms of e-marketing within their businesses. The graph above (Figure 4.30) combines the e-marketing techniques (within Figure 4.8 and Table 4), that the respondents employ as part of their marketing strategies. The four main forms of e-marketing undertaken by the respondents are their own website (93 percent), online word-of-mouth (eWOM) and word-of-mouth (WOM) (85 percent), Facebook (64 percent) and another company's website (52 percent). These are followed by accommodation booking websites (37 percent), online newsletters (28 percent), Twitter (22 percent), Trip Advisor (21 percent), Blogs (13 percent), direct mail/email

(22 percent) and short message service 'sms' (10 percent). The remaining forms of e-marketing, utilised by the respondents were all below 10 percent.

Table 11: Chi-Square tests for independence between nominal variables

Chi-Square test for independence between two nominal variables	
Facebook and WOM eWOM	$X^2(1, N = 98) = 15.129, p <.05$
Facebook and Twitter	$X^2(1, N = 98) = 15.760, p <.05$
Facebook and online newsletters	$X^2(1, N = 98) = 7.090, p <.05$
Facebook and Trip Advisor	$X^2(1, N = 98) = 5.345, p <.05$

A number of Chi-Square tests for independence (see Appendix J) were undertaken using the guidelines provided by Pallant (2010:217) and Coakes (2013:169) to investigate the associations between various nominal variables depicted in Figure 4.30. The following relationships (see Table 11) were explored using a "Chi-square test for independence" (Coakes, 2013:169).

In examining the relationship between the methods of e-marketing (Table 11), the Chi-square analysis shows that Facebook shares a significant association with online word-of-mouth (eWOM), Twitter, online newsletters and Trip Advisor. This might indicate that the respondents who utilise Facebook possibly also have a tendency to utilise other forms of e-marketing to communicate with their customers or prospective customers. The statistical association between these various forms of e-marketing appears to indicate that an involvement with one form of e-marketing could probably have the effect of drawing business owners into related forms of e-marketing such as Twitter, online newsletters, eWOM and WOM, Trip Advisor and other forms of social media. In so doing, they would increase their communication with their potential customers or tourists and generate online word-of-mouth. Swanepoel and Bothma (2013:114) suggest visitors utilise a number of social media channels to communicate and share information with friends and organisations. The top five social media channels during 2012 were Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Blogs.

The relationship between 'Facebook' and 'Another Company's Website' (see Appendix J) was also explored using a "Chi-square test for independence". The Pearson Chi-Square value is 0.263 with an associated "significance level" of .608. As this value is greater than 0.05, the result is not significant (Pallant, 2010:219). This result was surprising, as 52 percent of all respondents indicated that they used another company's website, while 64.3 percent also used Facebook. With over 50 percent of the respondents utilising these two forms of e-marketing (another company's website and Facebook), a desire to network and link with other companies and customers is evident. This is consistent with the findings of Lorenzo-Romero *et al*. (2011:171) that note the value of social networking sites as strategic tools to connect with customers and other businesses, whilst assisting with the development of management processes (see Section 2.2.6, p27). A possible opportunity exists for MMA members to develop management processes, which include strategic links, to encourage online networking between members of the Midlands Meander and their customers.

Table 12: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and Facebook	(rho = 0.478, n = 75, p <0.01)
Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and online newsletters	(rho = 0.364, n = 75, p < 0.01)
Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and another company's website	(rho = 0.363, n = 75, p <0.01)
Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and Blogs	(rho = 0.228, n = 75, p <0.05)
Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and WOM/eWOM	(rho = 0.262, n = 75, p <0.05)
Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and competitions	(rho = 0.252, n = 75, p <0.05)

The relationship between the ordinal variable: 'Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels' and various nominal variables were tested (see Appendix K) using Spearman's bivariate correlation analysis to determine the strength of the relationships (Pallant, 2010:135).

The results show (see Table 12) that the first three pairs of variables have medium, positive correlations between them, while the last three pairs of variables have a weak, positive correlation.

The above results indicate the importance of social media channels and their connection with the various forms of e-marketing (such as Facebook, online newsletters, another company's website, blogs, WOM and eWOM and competitions), undertaken between the respondents and their customers. Molenaar (2012:227) states that "social media uses 'word of mouth' with considerable impact". The significant value of two-way communication is reinforced, both company to consumer and between consumers and visitors.

The current study highlights the vital link between e-marketing methods in which the company can communicate with prospective clients and visitors by using current technology. The current results are consistent with the suggestions made by Godson (2009:325), which state that relationships need to be "monitored and controlled". Social media channels such as Facebook allow up to date relationships to be maintained between customers and the company. Even if you cannot control all aspects of the relationship, Godson suggests that you can "manage" the relationship. The results of this current investigation reinforce the importance of proactively managing, evaluating and updating each method of e-marketing which members have selected so that their business relationships with their customers or visitors are enhanced. Molenaar (2012:216) strengthens the findings of this current study as he suggests that despite the marketing orientation utilised by an organisation, e-marketing must be incorporated into all possible marketing strategies (see Section 2.2, p13).

The strength of the relationship between 'Factor 2 of 2 social media channels' and another company's website (see Table 12) is consistent with findings of McLaren (2011:213), which revealed that the MMA members social media logo's and links were not shown on the homepage of their websites (see Section 2.1.1, p11). This in turn corresponds with the results of the "content analysis" (see Figure 4.27) within this current study. It was found that, even though a business utilised social media, there were 12 counts of 'no links to social media on the home page of the member's website'. Also, 15 counts of 'websites were not kept up to date', 14 counts of 'social media were not kept up to date', plus 1 count of 'an online guest book not working'.

These findings support the results of the online survey (see Figure 4.12) which indicates that nearly a third of the respondents' websites were only updated annually.

It was evident throughout the current study, that a high proportion of the respondents' e-marketing efforts, were focused on social media. Facebook and Twitter were found to be the two main methods of social media employed by the respondents (see Figure 4.30). This was consistent with the results obtained from the content analysis of the qualitative data which indicated 37 counts regarding contact on social media and 15 counts for positive feedback on social media (see Figure 4.26). In addition, the results gathered from the content analysis of open source documentation indicated 18 counts of affirmative comments on social media, 15 counts of constructive comments and likes on Facebook, plus minor counts of between 2 and 5 for encouraging interaction on Twitter, Google, Trip Advisor and reviews on websites (see Figure 4.27).

The results of the study show (see Figure 4.30) that e-marketing is implemented through a number of different means by members of the Midlands Meander Association. However, only four methods of e-marketing are employed by over 50 percent of the respondents, while 14 methods are utilised from between 1 percent and 37 percent of the respondents (see Figure 4.30). This is consistent with the findings of Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:537) which suggest that e-marketing is not utilised to its full potential (see Section 2.2.1, p15). This result highlights a possible opportunity for the Midlands Meander Association members to further develop their e-marketing by implementing methods such as blogs, online competitions, virtual magazines, online loyalty programmes, YouTube clips, and links to complementary facilities.

In conclusion, it is important that as the members of the Midlands Meander further implement e-marketing within their businesses, that they plan and choose their e-marketing tools strategically. Dann and Dann (2011:360) suggest that a company only selects one or two complementary e-marketing tools and manage them properly (see Section 2.2.6, p28). The current study has found that websites and social media links have often not been managed well, leading to a negative impression of the company.

Question 2: What are the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing?

The study found that from the sample of 98 respondents, the majority of the respondents (92 percent) had their own websites while only 7 respondents (7 percent) indicated that they did not have a website. This result provides a foundation from which to discuss the question: What are the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing?

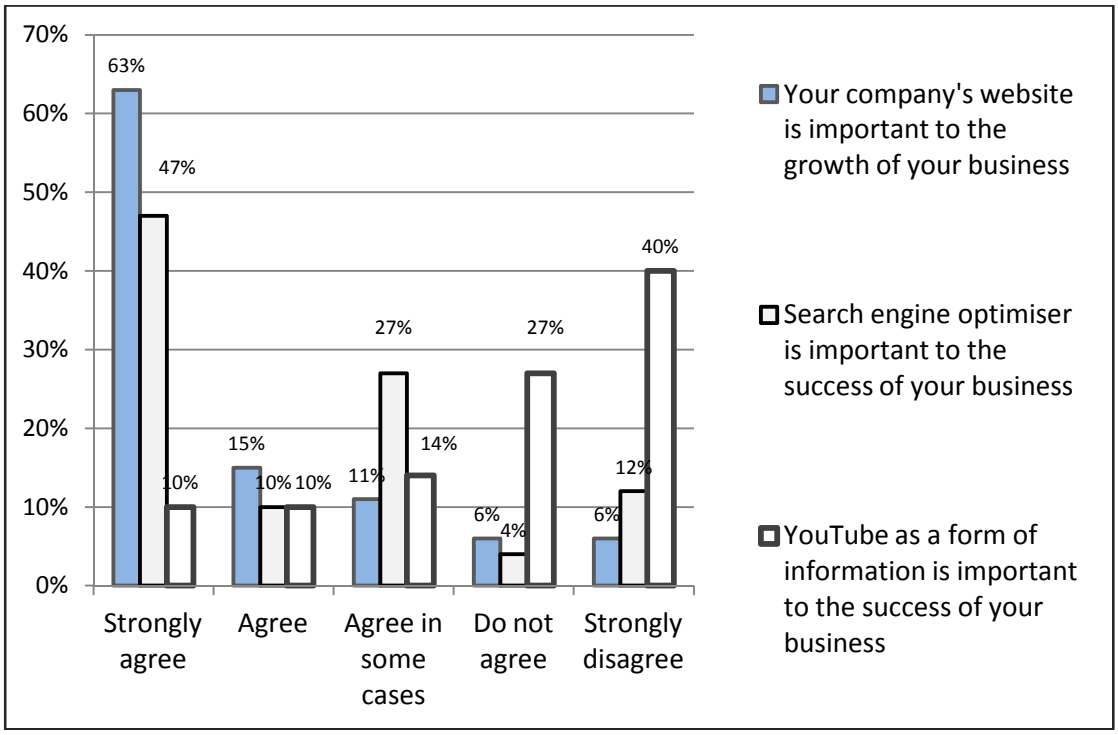


Figure 4.31: The importance of e-marketing for the growth of business

According to the survey, (see Figure 4.31) the perceptions of the respondents towards e-marketing indicated a moderately positive perception with 63 percent of all respondents selecting that they 'strongly agreed' that their company's website is important to the growth of their company. Over a quarter of the respondents either 'agreed' (15 percent) or 'agreed in some cases' (11 percent) with this view. It was noted that 6 percent of the respondents 'did not agree' and 6 percent 'strongly disagreed' with the statement.

In terms of Search Engine Optimiser being important to the success of their business, nearly half (47 percent) 'strongly agreed', while over a third (37 percent) 'agreed' or

‘agreed in some cases’. Only 16 percent ‘did not agree’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with the importance of Search Engine Optimiser (see Figure 4.31). The respondents’ perceptions about search engine optimiser indicate that they are not utilising the advantages of this technology to ensure that their websites are utilised efficiently and traffic to their website is increased (Swanepoel and Bothma, 2013:43).

In relation to YouTube as a form of information being important to the success of their business, only 10 percent ‘strongly agreed’, while nearly a quarter (10 and 14 percent) ‘agreed’ or ‘agreed in some cases’ (see Figure 4.31). The majority (67 percent) ‘did not agree’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with the importance of YouTube as a form of information to the success of their business. This result suggests that the majority of the respondents do not use YouTube to its full potential as a form of information and communication. Molenaar (2012:149) suggests that having a presence on YouTube will become increasingly important for businesses in the future. A link on the firm’s website will connect their consumers with a video placed on YouTube thus allowing potential customers to source added information.

The above results indicate that although 63 percent of the respondents ‘strongly agreed’ that their company’s website is important to the growth of their business and search engine optimiser is important to the success of their business, other aspects within e-marketing (see Figure 4.30) such as YouTube, blogs, Pinterest, Instagram and other forms of social media are not perceived by the majority of the respondents as key to the development of their businesses. The results of this current study indicate that not all respondents perceived social media to have such a core role to play.

Concerning how the respondents’ perceptions towards their own websites had an impact on their responses to question 16 (see Figure 4.18), a large percentage of respondents indicated that they ‘strongly agreed’ that usefulness (73 percent), ease of use (80 percent), maps and directions (67 percent), images (82 percent) and product information (76 percent) were important attributes of their websites. These results indicate a positive perception (mean 75.6 percent) towards the respondents’ websites

and the importance of utilising the website fully. This result is consistent with the findings of Woon Kian *et al.* (2010:1) which substantiate the idea that e-marketing supports and improves business processes (see Section 2.2, p14).

Table 13: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

Factor 1 of 2 Website growth of business and Factor 1 of 1 website information	(rho = 0.286, n = 74, p <0.05)
Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and age group	(rho = 0.250, n = 75, p <0.05)
Factor 2 of 1 customer relationship and Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business	(rho = 0.277, n = 75, p <0.05)
Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and Factor 3 of 1 communication	(rho = 0.373, n = 74, p < 0.01)

These findings are supported by the Spearman's bivariate correlation analysis (see Appendix L), which tested the strength of the relationship between various ordinal variables (see Table 13). The results show that the first three pairs of variables have weak, positive correlations between them, while the fourth pair of variables has a medium, positive correlation. The significant relationship between 'Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business' and 'Factor 1 of 1 website information' supports the results of this study, which indicates that over 63 percent of the respondents perceived their websites as both important to the growth of their businesses, while 73 percent perceived their websites as a vital and useful means of information. In addition, the results suggest that over 50 percent of the respondents perceived 'Factor 2 of 2 social media channels' as important techniques by which communication between the company and their consumers or visitors might be enhanced (Factor 3 of 1 communications).

The weak positive relationship between 'Factor 2 of 1 customer relationship' and 'Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business' highlights the low percentage of respondents (35 percent) who indicated that 'customer comments were an important attribute of their website', with the low percentage of respondents (27 percent), who 'perceived their website as the primary introducer of business' (see Figures 4.18 and 4.20). These results suggest that just over a third of respondents acknowledged the value of feedback from customers via their own website, while under a third of

respondents indicated the value of their website as the primary introducer of business. These findings correspond with an earlier study by Fillis *et al.*(2003:336) which suggests that the attitude and understanding of the manager with regards to the internet can affect the decision to utilise new technology within a company (see Section 2.2.1, p17).

In terms of how often the respondents' websites were updated (see Figure 4.12) there is a large discrepancy between the various responses provided by each respondent. The study shows that nearly half (47 percent) of the respondents who updated their websites monthly, weekly or daily perceived the value of keeping their websites regularly updated, while 28 percent of respondents only updated their websites annually, which suggests a lack of awareness of the importance of updating their websites. The results of this current study correlate with the findings of Pestek and Cicic (2010:2) which noted the importance of setting strategic goals before developing a website and embarking on other e-marketing activities (see Section 2.2.1, p17). The current researcher's respondents might not have set strategic goals if websites were not efficiently managed.

An interesting weak relationship is shown between the two variables 'Factor 2 of 2 social media channels' and 'age group' (see Table 12). This supports the inference that a respondent's age might affect their perception and usage of social media channels. du Plessis *et al.* (2012:70) state that "Generation Y" (born between 1979 and 1994) are a group of people who have grown up and developed with changing technology. This age group is more positive, self-assured and social than earlier generations. Therefore, this age group generally utilise social media channels and the internet to a greater extent than individuals born prior to this generation. It may be inferred that younger respondents are more prone to exploit social media channels than older respondents due to their confidence in the use of new technology. Furthermore, Dutot (2013:54) found that the younger customers wished that firms would utilise "SCRM" to a greater extent (see Section 2.2.4, p24).

According to the content analysis of themes and words from the qualitative data and open questions (Figure 4.26), not all of the respondents perceived social media as an

important factor within their businesses. A small percentage (5 percent) of respondents stated that "*Social media, Facebook, LinkedIn and the rest are a waste of valuable time*", while others stated that '*Twitter, Facebook etc., have caused too many problems all over the world*". Others stated that "*too much time will be taken keeping up with Tweets..... I would rather spend time with clients personally*".

The results indicated by the content analysis of open source documentation (Figure 4.27) suggest that even though a business utilised social media, there were 12 counts of 'no links to social media on the home page of the member's website'; also, there were 15 counts of 'websites were not kept up to date', 14 counts of 'social media were not kept up to date', plus 1 count of 'an online guest book not working'.

Table 14: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

e-marketing increased bookings or sales and Factor 3 of 1 communication	(rho = 0.225, n = 86, p < 0.01)
e-marketing increased visitor numbers and Factor 3 of 1 communication	(rho = 0.223, n = 86, p < 0.01)
Factor 1 of 2 Website growth of business and Factor 3 of 1 communication	(rho = 0.255, n = 74, p < 0.01)
e-marketing increased visitor numbers and age group	(rho = -.219, n = 97, p < 0.05)

The above table (Table 14) depicts additional Spearman's bivariate correlation analysis (see Appendix L), which tested the strength of the relationship between ordinal variables. The results show that the first three pairs of variables have a weak, positive correlation between them, while the fourth pair of variables has a weak, negative correlation.

The significant relationship between 'e-marketing increased bookings or sales' and 'Factor 3 of 1 communication' highlights the views of the respondents with regards to their perceptions towards e-marketing. The results of the current study indicate that 40 percent and 35 percent respectively, of the respondents indicated that 'e-marketing had increased their bookings or sales' and 'increased their visitor or customer numbers'. A similar percentage (40 percent) indicated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that links to other websites were important to their website. This result is

consistent with the findings of El-Gohary (2010:216) which suggests that through the implementation of e-marketing, a small company may expand their business worldwide, increase opportunities and remove various threats (see Section 2.2.1, p16). The significant relationship between 'Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business' and 'Factor 3 of 1 communication' also highlights the views of the respondents with regards to their perceptions of e-marketing. The value of the cell phone is clearly evident as 73 percent of respondents 'strongly agreed' about the importance of the mobile phone as a platform to engage with customers and facilitate consumer-to-consumer interaction, whereas only 59 percent 'strongly agreed' about the importance of the website as a way of building relationships with their customers or potential customers (see Figure 4.20). Furthermore, only 27 percent 'strongly agreed' about their website being a primary introducer of business and this perception of the value of e-marketing is reflected in the results (see Figure 4.18) which suggest that fewer respondents 'strongly agreed' with the statement that links to other websites (27 percent), blogs (6 percent) and YouTube clips (5 percent) were important attributes of the website to the respondent.

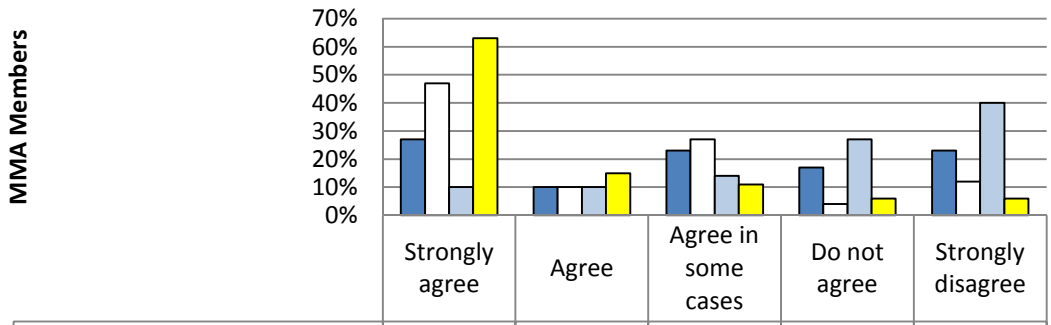
These current findings are consistent with the study of Bharadwaj and Soni (2007:1) which showed that the idea held by business owners that e-commerce is not essential to a company's strategies, is often why a company does not utilise e-marketing (see Section 2.2.2, p18). This reinforces the results within the current study that the business owners' attitudes or perceptions towards e-marketing will clearly influence the usage of e-marketing methods (listed in Figure 4.30) employed within their businesses. The value placed on e-marketing by the business owner or manager is evident in the results of this current study.

The significant weak, negative relationship between 'how has the use of e-marketing increased visitor numbers?' and 'age group' (see Table 14) suggests that the respondent's age may possibly influence his or her perception with regards to the use of e-marketing and its impact on visitor numbers. It may be inferred from this negative correlation that younger business owners perceive the use of e-marketing within their businesses as leading to an increase in visitor numbers. This is consistent

with the findings of this current study which showed that 35 percent of respondents perceived the use of e-marketing led to an increase in visitor numbers.

In conclusion, the results of the study show (see Figure 4.30) that the four main forms of e-marketing undertaken by the respondents were their own website (93 percent), online word-of-mouth (eWOM) or word-of-mouth (WOM) (85 percent), Facebook (64 percent) and another company's website (52 percent). In addition, the remaining forms of e-marketing undertaken by the respondents are each less than 37 percent. This suggests that over 60 percent of the respondents had formed a moderately positive perception towards e-marketing with regards to the methods which they were using at the time the data was collected for this study.

Question 3: How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance?



	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree in some cases	Do not agree	Strongly disagree
Your company's website is the primary introducer of business	27%	10%	23%	17%	23%
Search Engine Optimiser is important to the success of your business	47%	10%	27%	4%	12%
YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business	10%	10%	14%	27%	40%
Your company's website is important to the growth of your business	63%	15%	11%	6%	6%

Figure 4.32: How the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance.

The study measured business performance by employing perception based measurements such as 'new business', 'success of businesses' and 'growth of business', (see Figure 4.20). Furthermore, 'gross profit', 'bookings or sales' and 'visitor numbers' (see Figures 4.13, 4.15 and 4.16) were utilised as success factors to determine the respondents' perceptions with regards to e-marketing (see Section 2.2.3, p20).

In terms of 'how the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing have influenced their business performance', the results reveal that although 91 percent of the respondents had their own website, only 27 percent of respondents signified that they 'strongly agreed' that their company's website was the primary introducer of new business. A third of respondents (33 percent) indicated that they either 'agreed' or 'agreed in some cases', while 40 percent either 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement (see Figure 4.33).

Concerning, the statement 'Your Company's website is important to the growth of your business', 78 percent of respondents signified that they either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', while another 11 percent 'agreed in some cases'. These results indicate that although the respondents acknowledged the importance of their website to the operation of their business, 40 percent of the respondents indicated that their websites were not the primary introducer of new business.

In relation to the importance of search engine optimiser (SEO) to the success of the respondent's business, over half (57 percent) of the respondents signified that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', while just over a quarter (27 percent) of the respondents indicated that they 'agreed in some cases'. Only 16 percent of the respondents indicated that they either 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed' that SEO was important to the success of their business.

It was found that the majority of respondents (67 percent) 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed' with the assertion that YouTube as a form of information was important to the success of their business, whereas a small percentage (10 percent) 'strongly agreed' and (10 percent) 'agreed', while only 14 percent 'agreed in some cases'.

Table 15: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

1	'Your website is important to growth of your business' and 'Your website is the primary introducer of business'.	(rho = 0.384, n = 88, p < 0.01)
2	'YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business' and 'search engine optimiser is important to the success of your business'.	(rho = 0.377, n = 76, p <0.01)
3	'Your website is important to growth of your business' and 'search engine optimiser is important to the success of your business'.	(rho = 0.483, n = 81, p <0.01)
4	'Website is the primary introducer of business' and 'YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business'.	(rho = 0.313, n = 80, p <0.01)

The relationships between four ordinal variables (see Appendix N) were tested using Spearman's bivariate correlation analysis to establish the strength of the relationship between the variables (Pallant, 2010:135). Four sets of variables (see Table 15) all show a medium, positive correlation, while the results suggest that the relationships are all statistically significant.

The results as shown in Table 15 indicate that the statistically significant relationship between the first pair of variables (1) 'Your website is important to the growth of your business' and 'Your website is the primary introducer of business' may suggest that e-marketing, through the medium of websites can not only promote the growth of the business but also introduce new business. This correlates with the findings of Brodie *et al*, (2007:1) which found that how a company utilised e-marketing impacted on their performance and customer retention (see Section 2.2.3, p 21).

The statistically significant relationship between the second pair of variables (2) 'YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business' and 'search engine optimiser is important to the success of your business' suggests that some respondents were cognizant of the value of utilising search engine optimiser to increase their business. However, the respondents could also have realised the benefit received from placing links to YouTube clips onto their websites to increase their business performance. This is consistent with the study, by Eid and El-Gohary (2013:46) which shows the constructive influence a small company can gain by utilising e-marketing (see Section 2.2.3, p21).

The statistically significant relationship between the third pair of variables (3) 'Your website is important to the growth of your business' and 'search engine optimiser is important to the success of your business' reinforces the perception of the respondents who may view the utilisation of SEO as a technical consideration necessary to increase the number of visitors to their websites, which in turn could lead to the growth of their businesses. This is consistent with the view of Swanepoel and Bothma (2013:55) who suggest that to impact positively on the search engine rankings of a site, search engine techniques and tactics must be implemented and updated to improve a firm's general e-marketing performance.

The statistically significant weak positive relationship between the fourth pairs of variables, (4) 'Website is the primary introducer of new business' and 'YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business' may suggest a possible future opportunity for MMA members to employ new technology such as YouTube to support the increase in new business. Strauss and Frost (2014:331) suggest that marketers combine e-marketing methods such as a creative promotional YouTube videos linked to advertisements to increase sales and build customer relationships.

The relationship between 'YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business' and 'your website is important to the growth of your business' (see Appendix N) was tested (rho=0.167, n=80, p=.138). The result indicates that the relationship was both weak and not significant. This may suggest that the respondents did not perceive the value of YouTube as a form of information, which if linked to their website, might possibly increase the growth of their business. This result highlights a possible future opportunity for respondents to incorporate YouTube as a method of increasing both the performance and the growth of their businesses.

It was found (see Figure 4.13) that only 40 percent of the respondents indicated that e-marketing had increased their bookings or sales within their businesses, while 3 percent indicated that there was no increase. In terms of what percentage the use of internet marketing increased gross profit (see Figure 4.15) only 31 percent indicated

an increase, while 5 percent indicated that there was no increase. For both of these questions the proportion of indications of actual percentages was limited, as over 50 percent selected the 'other' options and either did not specify a reason or stated that they were unsure of the actual figures. When asked on what they had based their figures, over 21 percent stated that they had estimated the figures, while 20 percent stated that clients had found their company on the internet and 10 percent stated that their sales bookings identified figures. These results are founded on 'perception-based' data, as this research combines both a qualitative and quantitative study.

The relationship between the two ordinal variables: 'how has the use of e-marketing increased your bookings or sales within your business' and 'by what percentage did the use of internet marketing increase your gross profit?' was tested (see Appendix L) using Spearman's bivariate correlation analysis to determine the strength of the relationship (Pallant, 2010:135). The result shows that there is a strong, positive correlation (rho = 0.842, n = 98, p= 0.00). The results (see Appendix L) indicate that the correlation at 0.01 is significant; therefore, the results suggest that the relationship is statistically significant. These results suggest that the same respondents believed that the use of e-marketing increased their gross profit in addition to the bookings or sales within their businesses. This is consistent with the views of Strauss and Frost (2014:53) who suggest that e-marketing boosts revenues and enlarges the client base while current clients' spending increases (see Section 2.2, p13).

Table 16: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

1	'Website is important to the growth of your business' and 'usefulness is an important attribute to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.395, n = 88, p < 0.01)
2	'Website is important to the growth of your business' and 'ease of use is an important attribute to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.307, n = 88, p < 0.01)
3	'Website is important to the growth of your business' and 'booking payment facilities are important attributes to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.341, n = 87, p < 0.01)
4	'Website is important to the growth of your business' and 'product information is an important attribute to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.299, n = 88, p < 0.01)

The relationship between all the ordinal variables which incorporated both Questions 16 (Figure 4.18) and 17 (Figure 4.21) were tested (see Appendix M) using Spearman's bivariate correlation analysis: "to determine the strength of the relationship between" 'website is important to the growth of business' and five other variables, which were 'flagged' as significant (Pallant, 2010:135).

The above four correlations (see Table 16) were marked as "significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)". The results suggest that the first three pairs of variables have a medium, positive correlation, while the fourth pair has a weak, positive correlation: all the relationships are statistically significant.

The results (see Table 16) indicate that the statistically significant relationship between the first pair of variables (1) 'website is important to the growth of business' and 'usefulness is an important attribute to you of your website' may suggest that the respondents perceived the value of usefulness or efficiency as a process by which an organisational objective such as market share or sales within the business may be attained. This is consistent with the observation made by Cant (2010:25) which suggests that "all companies strive for efficiency" as a functional company objective.

The statistically significant relationship between the second pair of variables (2) 'website is important to the growth of business' and 'ease of use is an important attribute to you of your website' may suggest that the respondents perceived the value of ease of use or user-friendly processes to encourage prospective clients to use the website. Stokes (2011:107) suggests that the design of a company website should improve the participation of the user, as the processes within the website effortlessly direct a guest around the website without unwanted distractions so that the viewer's objective is achieved (see Section 2.2.2, p19).

Consequently, the statistically significant relationship between the third pair of variables (3) 'website is important to the growth of business' and 'booking payment facilities are important attributes to you of your website' could suggest that the respondents understood the benefit of having online booking and payment facilities available on their websites which in turn could be leading to a growth in business.

This is consistent with the findings noted by Voskresensky (2011 cited in Strauss and Frost 2014:231) which states that 27 percent of Smartphone users purchase on a mobile website, 81 percent the internet, while 90 percent of Smartphone users purchase an offering or book accommodation at a hotel after searching by means of a Smartphone.

The statistically significant relationship between the fourth pair of variables (4) 'website is important to the growth of business' and 'product information is an important attribute to you of your website' may suggest that consumers are more likely to purchase online if the product information is up to date and easily available on the company website. This is consistent with a study by Lee and Lin (2005:161) which states that reliability, website design, responsiveness and trust all affect customer satisfaction and service quality (see Section 2.2.2, p19).

There was a weak, positive correlation (rho = 0.243, n = 88, p = 0.023) between 'website is important to the growth of business' and 'images are an important attribute to you of your website'. The correlation was noted as significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The relationship was statistically significant (see Appendix M). This result could suggest that the respondents perceived images as an important method for customers of visualising the service such as a holiday destination, thereby creating an enhanced visual appeal, which subsequently encourages increased bookings and growth within the business.

The respondents indicated that 73 percent 'strongly agreed' that "usefulness" and 80 percent 'strongly agreed' that "ease of use" were both important attributes to a respondent of their website (see Figure 4.18). This result supports the perception of the respondents that e-marketing, especially their websites were considered a positive influence on their business performance.

Bivariate Spearman's correlations (see Appendix L) were undertaken between five extracted factors (Factor 1 of 1 website information; Factor 2 of 1 customer relationships; Factor 3 of 1 communication; Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business and Factor 2 of 2 social media channels) and the three measures of business

performance (gross profit, increased bookings and sales, increased visitor numbers), to determine the strength of the relationship (Table 17).

Table17: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

1	e-marketing increased bookings or sales and internet marketing increased gross profit	(rho = 0.842, n = 98, $p < 0.01$)
2	e-marketing increased visitor numbers and e-marketing increased bookings and sales	(rho = 0.816, n = 98, $p < 0.01$)
3	e-marketing increased visitor numbers and internet marketing increased gross profit	(rho = 0.868, n = 98, $p < 0.01$)
4	e-marketing increased bookings or sales and Factor 3 of 1 communication	(rho = 0.225, n = 86, $p < 0.05$)
5	e-marketing increased visitor numbers and Factor 3 of 1 communication	(rho = 0.223, n = 86, $p < 0.05$)
6	Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business and Factor 1 of 1 website information	(rho = 0.286, n = 74, $p < 0.05$)
7	Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business and Factor 2 of 1 customer relationship	(rho = 0.277, n = 74, $p < 0.05$)

The results show that the first three pairs of variables have a strong, positive correlation between them, which are marked as significant, while the last four pairs of variables all have a weak, positive correlation between them, which are all marked as significant. The results (see Table 17) indicate that the statistically significant relationship between the first three pairs of variables (1) 'e-marketing increased bookings or sales' and 'internet marketing increased gross profit' and (2) 'e-marketing increased visitor numbers' and 'e-marketing increased bookings or sales' and (3) 'e-marketing increased visitor numbers' and 'internet marketing increased gross profit' suggests that respondents recognised the importance of e-marketing in leading to greater business performance, with regards to the following three measurements: bookings or sales, gross profit, and increased visitor numbers. This is consistent with the study of Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011:150) that suggests that e-marketing can affect tourism business performance in a beneficial way (see Section 2.2.3, p20).

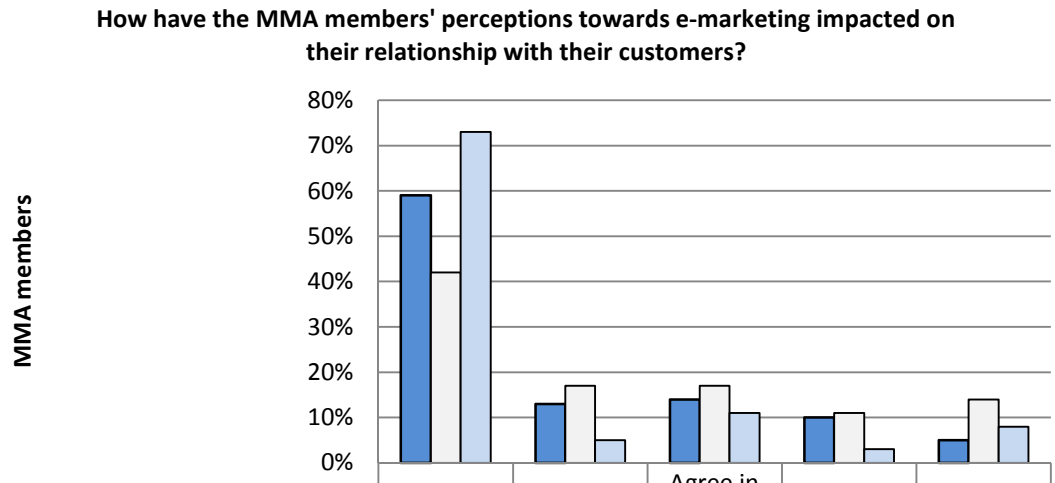
The statistically significant relationship between the fourth and the fifth pair of variables (4, 5) 'e-marketing increased bookings and sales and Factor 3 of 1

communication' and 'e-marketing increased visitor numbers and Factor 3 of 1 communication' suggests that the perception of the respondents towards increased bookings, sales and visitor numbers may be influenced by the action of communicating with potential customers through procedures such as links with other websites, blogs and YouTube clips. This connection corresponds with the findings of Trainor *et al,* (2011:1) that the potential of e-marketing, through market and technology orientation, impacts in a positive way on the company's performance as it encourages customer retention and satisfaction (see Section 2.2.3, p21).

The statistically significant relationship between the sixth and seventh pair of variables (6, 7) 'Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business and Factor 1 of 1 website information' and 'Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business and Factor 2 of 1 customer relationship' suggests that the perception of the respondents in relation to e-marketing and the firm's usage and design of their website could lead to improved business performance, if the needs of their customers and prospective customers are considered and their customers are involved in the design of the company's website as stated in the literature by Kokash (2012:80) and Stokes (2011:56) (see Section 2.2.2 p18).

In conclusion, in answer to how the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance, the results reveal that 91 percent of the respondents have their own website, of which 78 percent of respondents signified that they either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that their company's website was important to the growth of their business. The results of this study indicate that although the respondents acknowledged the importance of their websites to the operation of their business, conversely 40 percent of the respondents indicated that their websites were not the primary introducer of new business. In addition, 40 percent of respondents indicated that e-marketing had increased their bookings or sales, over 31 percent of respondents indicated that their gross profit had increased, while 35 percent of respondents indicated that e-marketing had increased their visitor numbers. These findings are consistent with the view of Weinstein (2008:1) that 'how technology is used' will impact on performance (see Section 2.3, p32).

Question 4: How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers?



	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree in some cases	Do not agree	Strongly disagree
Your company's website is important to building your relationship with your customers/potential customers	59%	13%	14%	10%	5%
Social media channels (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) are important to building relationships with your customers	42%	17%	17%	11%	14%
The mobile phone is an important platform to engage with your customers and facilitate consumer to consumer interaction	73%	5%	11%	3%	8%

Figure 4.33: Impacts of e-marketing on relationships with customers

The study shows (see Figure 4.33) that nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of the respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement that 'your company's website is important to building your relationship with your customers or potential customers', while 14 percent of respondents 'agreed in some cases'. A small percentage (15 percent) either 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed'. This result is consistent with the observation of Godson (2009:197) that although electronic relationships bring challenges, once they are controlled, a business can achieve a competitive advantage.

Concerning the statement that 'social media channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) are important to building relationships with customers', (see Figure 4.33) over half of the respondents (59 percent) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', while 17 percent of respondents 'agreed in some cases'. Over a quarter of the respondents (26 percent) either 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed'. This finding is consistent with Dimitriadis and Stevens (2008:506) on the positive opportunities created within customer relationships through multi-channels (see Section 2.2.4, p22).

It was found (see Figure 4.33) that the majority of the respondents (78 percent) indicated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement that 'the mobile phone was an important platform to engage with your customers and facilitate consumer-to-consumer interaction', while 11 percent 'agreed in some cases'. Over a tenth of the respondents (11 percent) either 'did not agree' or 'strongly disagreed'. This result is consistent with the study by du Plessis *et al*. (2012:423) that shows how mobile phones have changed how businesses communicate, and how social media channels can build and create relationship opportunities (see Section 2.2.1, p14).

Table 18: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

1	Factor 3 of 1 communication, and e-marketing increased visitor numbers	(rho = 0.223, n = 86, $p < 0.05$)
2	Factor 3 of 1 communication, and online newsletters	(rho = 0.215, n = 86, $p < 0.05$)
3	e-marketing increased bookings and sales, and Factor 3 of 1 communication	(rho = 0.225, n = 86, $p < 0.05$)
4	Factor 1 of 2 website growth of business, and Factor 2 of 1 customer relationship	(rho = 0.277, n = 74, $p < 0.05$)
5	Factor 2 of 2 social media channels, and eWOM WOM	(rho = 0.262, n = 75, $p < 0.05$)
6	Factor 2 of 2 social media channels, and age group	(rho = 0.250, n = 75, $p < 0.05$)
7	Factor 3 of 1 communication, and links on website	(rho = 0.299, n = 86, $p < 0.01$)
8	Factor 3 of 1 communication, and Factor 2 of 2 social media channels	(rho = 0.373, n = 74, $p < 0.01$)
9	Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels, and online newsletters	(rho = 0.364, n = 75, $p < 0.01$)
10	Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels, and Facebook	(rho = 0.478, n = 75, $p < 0.01$)

The relationships between certain ordinal variables (see Appendices K and L) were tested using Spearman's bivariate correlation analysis: "to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables" (Pallant, 2010:135).

The first seven sets of variables (see Table 18) all show a weak, positive correlation, while the last three pairs of variables all show a medium, positive correlation. The results suggest that the relationships are all statistically significant.

The results (see Table 18) indicate that the statistically significant relationship between the first pair of variables (1) 'Factor 3 of 1 communication and e-marketing increased visitor numbers' may suggest that communication between the firm and its customers can lead, through repeat business, to increased visitor numbers. This is consistent with the view of Molenaar (2012:224) that suggests that social media are utilised by "Active communicators" who use social media to share and discuss travel information and knowledge with experts or "Active users for connections and networking", who share personal pictures and comments with their own 'friends'. Often these comments promote such destinations, thereby leading to increased visitor numbers.

The statistically significant relationship between the second and ninth pairs of variables (2, 9) 'Factor 3 of 1 Communication and online newsletters' and 'Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and online newsletters' suggests that the use of an online newsletter may lead to increased communication between the company and their consumer or visitor. This is consistent with the observations of study Zhu and Zhang (2010:133) that stated that tourists use several online word-of-mouth channels to search for and share information (see Section 2.2.6, p27).

The statistically significant relationship between the third pair of variables (3) 'e-marketing increased bookings and sales and Factor 3 of 1 communication' may suggest that online Customer Relationship Management (eCRM) leads to increased bookings. This is consistent with the recommendation of du Plessis *et al*. (2012:555) which suggest that a firm should determine customer retention, recognise why

customers leave and introduce systems to improve customer retention (see Section 2.2.4.1, p24).

The statistically significant relationship between the fourth pair of variables (4) 'Factor 1 of 2 Website growth of business and Factor 2 of 1 customer relationship' suggests that through the interaction with customers through customers' comments on the website, the business might experience a significant growth. This is consistent with Godson's (2009:161) argument that an efficient service can be provided to customers if CRM is strategically integrated within a business (see Section 2.2.4, p23).

The statistically significant relationship between the fifth and tenth pair of variables (5, 10) 'Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and eWOM and WOM' and 'Factor 2 of 2 Social media channels and Facebook' suggests that interacting with customers through social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter may create positive online word-of-mouth. This is consistent with the findings of this current study which found that 54 percent of the respondents received positive feedback from social media (see Figure 4.25).

The statistically significant positive relationship between the sixth pair of variables (6) 'Social media channels Factor and age group' suggests that demographics such as age influence the use of and perceptions about, social media channels. This is consistent with observations of Strauss and Frost (2014:203) that demographics such as age influence internet use, "for example, 96 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds use the internet, as compared with about 85 percent of the general population and 58 percent of those over 65 (Pew Internet & American. . .,2012)". The current study shows that over 50 percent of the respondents, who were owners, were between the ages of 36 to 55 years of age and 29 percent of the owners were over 56 years of age (see Figure 4.1). The direct, positive relationship may suggest that an increasing number of older business owners are beginning to perceive social media as a helpful tool to encourage business and not just for 'social' interaction between friends and family members.

The statistically significant relationship between the seventh and eighth pair of variables (7, 8) 'Communication Factor and links on website' and 'Communication Factor and social media channels Factor' suggests that complementary links on company websites could possibly enhance communication between the visitor and the company, whereas no links on websites might produce negative perceptions towards the firm's website.

According to the survey, over half (54 percent) of the respondents indicated that they had received positive feedback from social media (see Figure 4.25). This is consistent with the content analysis of the qualitative data (see Figure 4.26), which noted 37 counts of social media and 15 counts of positive feedback on social media. Furthermore, the content analysis on open source documentation (see Figure 4.27) noted 15 counts of positive comments and likes on Facebook, while there were 18 counts of positive comments on social media.

The relationship between Facebook and online newsletters (see Appendix J) was explored using a "Chi-square test of independence. The "0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.64". "The Pearson Chi-Square" value is 7.090 with an association significance level of 0.015. As this figure is less than 0.05, the result is significant (Pallant, 2010:219). This result suggests that there is a "significant relationship between" online newsletters and Facebook as marketing tools which help to build trust between the company and the customer. This is consistent with the observations of Swanepoel and Bothma (2013:114) that suggest that "trust builds a solid foundation on which to build business relationships".

The survey shows (Figure 4.30) that the use of online newsletters (27 percent) and Facebook (64 percent) are not only utilised by the respondents, but are also perceived by the respondents to have impacted on their relationship with their customers, while creating a desire to learn more regarding social media. This was confirmed by the content analysis (Figure 4.26) which looked at the open questions and qualitative data which recorded 5 counts regarding enquiry such as how to use social media, and 15

counts of positive feedback from social media. In addition, a number of ordinal variables (see Appendix M) were tested using Spearman's bivariate analysis to "determine the strength of the relationship" between the variables (Pallant, 2010:135).

Table 19: Nonparametric correlations: Spearman's Rho correlations

1	'Your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'usefulness is an important attribute to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.293, n = 88, $p < 0.01$)
2	'Your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'product information is an important attribute to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.324, n = 88, $p < 0.01$)
3	'Your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'images are important attributes to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.235, n = 88, $p < 0.05$)
4	'Your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'booking payment facilities is an important attribute to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.292, n = 87, $p < 0.01$)
5	'Your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'customer comments are important attributes to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.452, n = 88, $p < 0.01$)
6	'Your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'links to other websites are important attributes to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.247, n = 88, $p < 0.05$)
7	'Your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'blogs are important attribute to you of your website'.	(rho = 0.237, n = 87, $p < 0.05$)

All the sets of variables (see Table 19) show a weak, positive correlation, except for the second and fifth pairs of variables which show medium, positive correlations. The results suggest that the relationships are all statistically significant.

The results (see Table 19) indicate that the statistically significant relationships between the first three pairs of variables: (1) 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'usefulness is an important attribute to you of your website' (2) 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'product information is an important attribute to you of your website', and (3) 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'images are important attributes to you of your website' may suggest that relationships with customers are built through high quality informative websites which encourage efficient interaction between customers and the company's website. The findings of

this current study, support the suggestion by Stokes (2011:10) that through the ongoing interaction between an organisation and the internet, it is possible to track discussions involving customers and potential customers, whilst keeping abreast of new trends and the changing needs of the organisation's target market (see Section 2.2, p13).

The results (see Table 19) indicate that the statistically significant relationships between the fourth and the fifth pair of variables (4, 5) 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'booking payment facilities is an important attribute to you of your website' and 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'customer comments are important attributes to you of your website' may suggest that listening to customer comments regarding the website design and facilities offered on the website may build stronger relationships between a customer and the company.

The results (see Table 19) indicate that statistically significant relationships between the sixth and seventh pair of variables (6, 7) ''your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'links to other websites are important attributes to you of your website' and 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'blogs are important attribute to you of your website' might suggest that building relationships with customers is improved through the use of an up to date website, which uses interactive links and trustworthy blogs to communicate with the company's clients and potential clients. This is consistent with the study by Munoz-Leiva *et al,* (2012:894) which suggests that a firm should produce objective blogs that encourage non company individuals to write on their blog, thereby creating greater trust (see Section 2.2.6, p30).

In conclusion, the research question how the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions of e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers, has been answered. According to the findings of the study, 54 percent (see figure 4.25) of respondents received positive feedback from clients; this, in turn, appears to lead to a positive improvement in the relationship between the respondents

and their customers. This correlates with the 'content analysis' findings from the qualitative data, that noted 15 counts of positive feedback on social media (see Figure 4.26). In addition, the content analysis of open source documentation (see Figure 27) revealed 15 counts of comments and likes on Facebook, 18 positive comments on social media, and 15 counts of positive reviews, comments and feedback from websites.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter four analysed and presented the findings and results of the current investigation. All areas within the study were examined in full through graphical and statistical means. A full analysis and discussion of the data was provided by means of the descriptive analysis as it related to the research problem. Both an examination and discussion, using content analysis, of the qualitative data and open source documentation were carried out. A number of statistical tests such as "Chi-Square tests for independence" and "Spearman's rank order correlations to determine the strength of the relationship" were discussed and analysed, as they related to the four research questions.

The findings within the study revealed results that were consistent with a number of previous studies undertaken. These included but were not limited to, Lourens (2000), Mathfield (2007), El-Gohary (2011), McLaren (2011), Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010), Weinstein (2008), Alford (2010) and Coetzee *et al*. (2008).

Firstly, over 50 percent of the respondents who were owners were between the ages of 36 to 55 years of age and 29 percent of the owners were over 56 years of age. All older respondents (56 years and above) indicated that ease of use was an important attribute to them of their websites. Secondly, the long established nature of the various businesses emerged as 46 percent of the respondents' businesses had been in operation for over 15 years. Thirdly, 83 percent of the respondents employed a multi-segment strategy, 5 percent of the respondents employed a concentrated strategy, while 12 percent of the respondents undertook an undifferentiated strategy.

Fourthly, 85 percent of the respondents identified word-of-mouth to be a vital form of marketing, which noted the value of both traditional and online word-of-mouth with the latter as a growing trend, while 64 percent of the respondents indicated that they utilised Facebook as a method of marketing their businesses. Over half of the respondents (52 percent) stated that they utilised another company's website to market their businesses. The study highlighted a new trend which showed that the members did not rely exclusively on the Midlands Meander Association to undertake their marketing, but were becoming more proactive in the utilisation of various techniques to market their own businesses (see Figure 4.8 and Table 4). Fifthly, the findings indicated the relatively low usage rate of YouTube (5 percent), Twitter (22 percent), and Blogs (13 percent) undertaken by the respondents. These figures revealed that e-marketing was not utilised or exploited by Midlands Meander business owners to its full potential.

Concerning the link between e-marketing and an increase in business performance: (such as an increase in bookings or sales, gross profit, and visitor or customer numbers), 46 percent of respondents indicated that e-marketing had increased their bookings or sales, 31 percent of respondents indicated that e-marketing had increased their gross profit, while 35 percent of respondents indicated that e-marketing had increased their visitor or customer numbers. The findings revealed a number of possible future marketing opportunities for the MMA members, which included the importance and use of Search Engine Optimiser, complementary links to other websites, networking and social media. It was found that 42 percent of the respondents were unaware that the Midlands Meander offered assistance with the training in and further development of the members' websites or with training in online marketing.

The content analysis of themes and words from qualitative data and open questions revealed the principal category of themes was social media with 37 counts, which was linked to positive feedback from social media with 15 counts, with only 4 counts of negative feedback from social media. These findings were consistent with the analysis of open source documents which indicated 15 counts of likes on Facebook

and 18 counts of positive comments on social media. In addition, the descriptive analysis found that 54 percent of respondents indicated that they had received positive feedback from social media, 4 percent had received negative feedback, while 23 percent had received no feedback from social media. These findings are consistent with the results from the analysis of open documentation which found 14 and 15 counts of social media and websites respectively that were not kept up to date, with 12 counts of no links to social media on the home page of the website. These findings correlated with the findings from the descriptive analysis which noted that 48 percent of the respondents only updated their websites once or twice a year.

This chapter has concluded with a discussion pertaining to the findings, possible opportunities, conclusions and recommendations related to the four research questions. Chapter Five will review and summarise the main findings, conclusions and recommendations as they relate to the problem statement and the four research questions. In addition, a discussion of the gaps and limitations of the study and the most significant results will be included.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the main findings linked to the results and explain their significance. Conclusions and recommendations for action and for further research will be provided. The limitations, gaps and directions for future research are examined and presented. This chapter will conclude with a final summary of the value of the research undertaken and how the recommendations relate to the research questions.

5.2 SUMMARY O F THE STUDY

The research study focused on how the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had influenced their business performance and impacted on their relationship with their customers. Also, the research study aimed to understand how the Midlands Meander Association members implemented e-marketing and what their perceptions towards e-marketing were during the period, August 2013 to January 2014. The research provided feedback associated with the use of e-marketing by the Midlands Meander Association members concerning current trends, future opportunities and recommendations for action.

The literature review was undertaken to draw attention to the relevant literature which had been used to inform and assist in building a foundation on which the study was developed. The discussion of the literature was organised and structured according to the key concepts and themes deduced from the research problem. Various studies, which focused on the Midlands Meander Association members and their customers and included (amongst others) Mathfield (2000), Lourens (2007), Coetzee *et al.* (2008) and McLaren (2011), were examined.

The literature review incorporated a discussion on the various definitions of e-marketing and internet marketing proposed by Stokes (2011:20), Kotler and Keller (2009:785) and Gilmor *et al.* (2007:12). The importance of social media channels was also interrogated (Tsiotsou and Ratten, 2010:537, Maguire *et al*. 2007:37 and Grensing-Pophal, 2012:21).

Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:534) revealed several research needs within tourism marketing which included business performance and e-marketing. Furthermore, El-Gohary (2010:232) revealed gaps in the literature such as "e-marketing performance and e-marketing adoption" as they related to a small business. The current research investigation aimed to fill the gap, through the exploration of the research problem and the four research questions.

To what extent have the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had an impact on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance?

1. How did the Midlands Meander Association members implement e-marketing within their businesses?
2. What were the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing?
3. How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance?
4. How have the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers?

The research study was an empirical, descriptive investigation which applied a mixed methods approach. A triangulation design was followed to confirm the results, as the study utilised three types of data collection methods: online survey, telephone interviews and the analysis of public domain documentation. The online survey utilised a purposive sample in which all 149 registered members of the Midlands Meander Association were included. The concluding sample size was reduced to 98 registered members (66 percent of the population). Due to time and business constraints of the members, only twenty-one respondents out of a sample of 30 completed the semi-structured interview. Furthermore, twenty-four comments were collected from the open source documentation. All three types of data collection methods were pre-tested and checked for reliability and validity. A Cronbach's Alpha test was carried out to measure internal consistency. The mixed methods research

study was undertaken with a consideration of the quality, trustworthiness and accuracy of the research data which was collected and then analysed.

All the data from the online survey was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Simultaneously, frequency tables and graphs were generated, which also displayed various measures of central tendency and variability. Two principal components factor analyses were carried out to reduce 17 variables to five components. A number of Chi-Square tests for nominal variables and Spearman's rank order correlation tests for ordinal variables were undertaken. All qualitative data and open questions were analysed using content analysis and the results were graphically represented.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In terms of how the Midlands Meander Association members implement e-marketing within their businesses, the current study found that there were four primary forms of e-marketing utilised by the respondents: the Midlands Meander Association members own websites, Facebook, word-of-mouth (including eWOM) and another company's website. These findings confirmed previous studies undertaken by Alford (2010:1) and McLaren (2011:274), which each observed the value of online marketing and social media to promote tourism organisations. In addition, the value of both conventional channels and the growing trend of eWOM were established.

The study showed that only a minority of respondents had employed other e-marketing methods such as blogs, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, virtual magazines and links to complementary facilities to promote their businesses. It was concluded from the study that the majority of the Midlands Meander Association members did not make use of e-marketing within their businesses, to a great extent – a conclusion which corresponded with the views of Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010:537).

There was a significant statistical association between Facebook and eWOM, Twitter, online newsletters and Trip Advisor from which the researcher inferred that the respondents who utilised Facebook, would tend to utilise other forms of e-marketing

to communicate with their consumers or potential consumers. Consequently, as the respondents' communication with customers increased, it enhanced eWOM, creating a greater impact. This was consistent with the views of Molenaar (2012:227).

With regards to the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing, the study confirmed from a sample of 98 respondents, that 93 percent of the respondents had their own websites, while 7 percent indicated that they did not have a website. A significant finding of the study revealed that the respondents' websites and social media links were not being updated on a regular basis, thereby creating the potential for a negative impression to be experienced by visitors to the Midlands Meander Association members' websites and social media sites.

A moderately positive perception of e-marketing was indicated by 63 percent of the respondents who "strongly agreed" that their company's website was important to the growth of their businesses, whereas only 47 percent agreed that SEO was important to the success of their businesses. From these statistically significant findings, it can be concluded that not all respondents appreciated the value of SEO to increase visitors to their website; nor did they understand the significant advantages that could be attained from this technology, as suggested by Swanepoel and Bothma (2013:43) and Alford (2010:1).

Furthermore, the study established that YouTube was not perceived as important to the success of the respondents' websites, as over two thirds (67 percent) of all respondents, stated that 'YouTube was not important as a form of information to the success of their business'. It was concluded that the majority of the respondents did not utilise YouTube to its full potential as a form of information and communication.

Another interesting result was the inference that the perception of e-marketing held by the respondents could be influenced by the respondent's age. This was consistent with the ideas of du Plessis *et al.* (2012:70) that age impacted a person's intention to utilise social media channels. In addition, from the results of the current study it can

be concluded that a business owner's attitude towards or perceptions about e-marketing influenced how the respondents employed e-marketing techniques within their businesses. This view was acknowledged in the study of Bharadwaj and Soni (2007:1).

In terms of how the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance, the study indicated a statistically significant relationship between 'Your website is important to the growth of your business' and 'Your website is the primary introducer of new business'. It can be concluded from these findings that while the respondents recognised the significance of their websites to the operation of their businesses, 40 percent of respondents still indicated that their websites were not the primary introducer of new business.

The following results (based on 'perception based data'), revealed that 31 percent of respondents indicated that the use of internet marketing had increased their gross profit, 40 percent of the respondents stated that e-marketing had increased their bookings or sales, and 35 percent of respondents suggested that through the use of e-marketing, their visitor numbers had increased. These results confirmed Strauss and Frost's (2014:53) suggestion that e-marketing boosted revenues and enlarged the client base, while current clients' spending increased. It can be concluded from these results that a third of the respondents perceived e-marketing to increase their business performance. In addition, the results from the Spearman's Rho correlations indicated that there was a strong, positive correlation between the three measures of business performance (gross profit, increased bookings or sales and increased visitor numbers). It can be concluded from this significant relationship that business performance can be affected by e-marketing in a positive way.

With regards to how the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing impacted on their relationship with their customers, from the research findings, it can be concluded that approximately two thirds of the respondents acknowledged the importance of e-marketing (such as the company website, mobile phone and social media channels) to engage with their consumers or

potential consumers, while at the same time building relationships with their customers or tourists.

Furthermore, from the statistically significant relationship between Factor 3 of 1 communication and Factor 2 of 2 social media, it can be concluded that respondents could improve their communication with website visitors with the right utilisation of links to social media from the company website.

From the significant relationship between online newsletters and Facebook, it can be concluded that the use of online newsletters and Facebook can impact the company's relationships with their customers in a positive way, leading to trust between the company and the customer. This finding was consistent with the observation of Swanepoel and Bothma (2013:114).

From the statistically significant relationships between 'your website is important to building relationships with your clients' and 'ease of use, usefulness, product information, images and booking payment facilities are important attributes to you of your website', it might be concluded that high quality informative websites can encourage efficient interaction between the firm and its customers, thereby building relationships with customers. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant relationship between 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'customer comments are important to you of your website'. It might be concluded from this result that listening to customer comments regarding the website design and facilities offered on the website, may build stronger relationships between a customer and the company.

There was a statistically significant relationship between 'your website is important to building relationships with customers' and 'links to other websites' and 'blogs are important attributes to you of your website'. From this finding it could be concluded that building relationships with customers is improved through the use of an updated website, which makes use of interactive links and reliable blogs to communicate and connect with potential and current customers.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are supported by the findings and conclusions of the current study.

The Midlands Meander Association members strategically plan and select a number of e-marketing tools based on their own company's goals, capabilities, time constraints and financial commitments and not withstanding experimentation with previously unused or underutilised e-marketing tools as discussed below (p120). The Midlands Meander Association members should set specific objectives, stating what they intend to achieve through the use of e-marketing and the target markets they aim to reach. It is suggested that the Midlands Meander Association members' e-marketing strategies are fully integrated into all marketing strategies which are undertaken or proposed by the firm.

Moreover, the members' websites, links to social media and the various forms of e-marketing utilised by each of the Midlands Meander Association members should be regularly updated. It is suggested that the owner or manager should set a timeframe wherein all the updating of the various forms of e-marketing should be performed. Controls (in the form of weekly reminders) should be established to verify that the regular updating of the company website, links and social media has been completed by the nominated department or staff member.

The SEO (Search Engine Optimiser) technology is utilised by the MMA members within their businesses so that the number of potential customers and visitors to the members' websites has opportunities to increase. At the same time, the members' websites should continually be monitored and developed so that the benefits of SEO technology have the chance to be fully realised.

The redesign or development of the Midlands Meander Association members own websites, including information and facilities provided on their websites, should receive attention. It is suggested that Midlands Meander Association members incorporate the action of proactively listening to their customers' comments so that stronger relationships may be formed between the business and their clients. In

addition, it is recommended that the Midlands Meander Association members monitor and manage their company's eWOM (online word of mouth) to ensure that the contact created between the Midlands Meander Association members' businesses, their customers and potential customers is enhanced.

The members of the Midlands Meander Association should incorporate their eCRM (online customer relationship management) into their e-marketing so that eCRM is fully integrated within the whole business. In this way, customer and visitor feedback could be used strategically, while ensuring that customer retention and positive eWOM are managed resourcefully. Furthermore, it is suggested that the MMA members fully realise the importance of feedback from clients via their own website. Also, it is crucial that respondents begin to understand the significance of their own website as a primary introducer of new or repeat business. Such understanding could be fostered by attendance at the training courses mentioned below.

In terms of training courses organised by the Midlands Meander Association, it is recommended that the Midlands Meander Association members, regardless of their age, and the type and size of their businesses, participate in the training and development workshops organised by the staff of the Midlands Meander Association (see Appendix A). Attendance at these workshops should increase the knowledge and skills of the Midlands Meander Association members and enable the sharing of further information and capabilities between the members themselves, thus resulting in the development of stronger as well as supportive relationships between the Midlands Meander Association members.

It is suggested that the respondents (through the training courses offered by the Midlands Meander Association), attain further information concerning the benefits of utilising other forms of social media (such as blogs, Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube). These benefits include, but are not limited to, connecting with clients, building customer relationships and increasing current customer spending.

Moreover, the Midlands Meander Association members must begin to utilise YouTube to its full potential, to support the increase in new business through creative

promotional YouTube video links, which can offer information to visitors, create interest or increase business performance. In this way, the company will not only gain advantages but also provide benefits to their customers and potential customers or visitors. Furthermore, it is recommended that Midlands Meander Association members attempt to improve relationships with their customers through the use of 'trustworthy blogs' to communicate with the company's clients and potential clients.

Finally, it is recommended that the MMA members extend their e-marketing within their businesses to include a few of the lesser used methods such as online newsletters, online competitions, virtual magazines, Pinterest, Instagram, and links to complementary facilities to increase business performance and improve their relationship with their customers and potential customers.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.5.1 The focus of the study was on the members of the Midlands Meander Association only.

5.5.2 Other businesses (non-members) along the route were not included in this study.

5.5.3 All data collected which related to the members' customers, was limited to an analysis of customer comments and only obtained from supplementary open source documents: sourced from a sample of the members' websites, social media and blogs.

5.5.4 The timeframe in which the online survey and interviews were planned and undertaken was greatly extended due to the high attrition rate originally experienced within the online survey (see Section 3.10, p51).

5.5.5 There was a difference in the sample sizes of the three types of data collection methods which was a constraint but acknowledged (see Section 3.6.2, p43) as suggested by Cresswell and Plano Clark (2007:119).

5.6 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

The current research provided valuable and up to date information on the use of e-marketing undertaken by the members of the Midlands Meander Association. The results of the research revealed a number of benefits and problems associated with the

use of e-marketing, whilst incorporating a number of recommendations to assist in these areas. The current research has created a foundation from which business owners can further build and develop their use and understanding of e-marketing, while enabling their businesses to further develop and grow.

This research has reiterated the value of listening to and communicating with customers and potential customers, in this online era. The current research has indicated a number of underutilised and innovative areas (such as YouTube and blogs) in which the Midlands Meander Association members can interact online with consumers and other businesses. The research has highlighted the potential that YouTube offers - not just to those businesses within the MMA, but to all businesses and entrepreneurs - the opportunity to provide online information, training and instruction.

It also highlighted the need for the Midlands Meander Association members to strategically incorporate various forms of e-marketing into their businesses. MMA members need to understand the important advantages that e-marketing can provide a company with (such as increased bookings or sales, increased gross profits, and increased visitor numbers), gained through the training workshops offered by the Midlands Meander Association.

Finally, the research has revealed the perceptions which the members of the Midlands Meander Association hold about e-marketing, confirming the findings of other researchers "in the field of e-marketing", that e-marketing supports and improves business processes (Woon Kian *et al.* 2010).

5.7 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research might be performed in the use of e-marketing as it relates to business performance and customer relationships of "other tourism routes" within KwaZulu-Natal or throughout South Africa, so that a comparison of the results may be obtained. Further research might also be undertaken on the use of e-marketing by non MMA members with businesses on the Midlands Meander. In addition, future research

could expand the scope of the study of e-marketing to incorporate other industries (such as the Financial Industry).

5.8 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The research set out to achieve an understanding of the extent to which the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had impacted on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance.

The research revealed that there was an extensive difference between how the various Midlands Meander Association members implemented e-marketing within their businesses. The research clearly showed that e-marketing was not utilised or exploited by the majority of the Midlands Meander Association members to its full potential. Furthermore, the research highlighted the need for the MMA members to increase their utilisation of YouTube, blogs, SEO, complementary links to other websites, networking and other forms of social media in order to realise the advantages which both the Midlands Meander Association members and their customers or potential customers might experience. The research established that a moderately positive perception of e-marketing was held by over half (63 percent) of the MMA members and that the members' age may have an impact on their perceptions of e-marketing.

Concerning how the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards e-marketing influenced their business performance, the research indicated that the majority of the respondents recognised that the use of e-marketing (in the form of their company's website) had increased their business performance, whereas over a third of the respondents were unsure whether e-marketing had increased their business performance. Pertaining to the Midlands Meander Association members' perceptions towards how e-marketing had impacted on their relationship with their customers, the research indicated that two thirds of the respondents acknowledge the importance of e-marketing (such as the company website, mobile phone and social media channels) to connect and build relationships with their customers.

The findings of this study have enabled the researcher to realise the objectives set out at the commencement of this research, to answer the four research questions and in so doing, establish to what extent the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had impacted on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance.

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The impact of e-marketing on business performance (2) APPENDIX A

Lime Survey – The impact of e-marketing on business performance (2)
Rsidemoodle.dut.ac.za/limesurvey/admin.php?action=showprintablesurvey&sid=86224

Good day, I am currently completing a research study for my MTech: Marketing, at Durban University of Technology.

The aim of the research is to investigate how the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing have had an impact on the relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance.

For this study, the definition of e-marketing used is based on that of Kotler and Keller (2009) "E-marketing describes company efforts to inform buyers, communicate and promote, and sell its products and services over the internet".

The answers provided by you will be used for this current research, as a mechanism to assess this study. The results will seek to provide vital information and feedback to the Midlands Meander Association members.

The research will aim to identify any new ideas, trends and future opportunities associated with the use of e-marketing by the members and their customers.
Please will you complete this online survey so that the current study may be carried out?
You may withdraw from the investigation at anytime during the research, as your involvement is **voluntary**. All responses provided by you within this online survey, will be considered **strictly confidential.** All information provided by you, will only be used for this current investigation.

Any questions relating to the research can be forwarded to me at eawisdom@mweb.co.za or by telephone (0717385886), or to my supervisors Dr Van Der Merwe (033 8458868) or Ms Veerasamy (0313735482).
Thank you for your contribution to this research study.
Kind regards
Lizzy Wisdom
Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:
I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, (Elizabeth Wisdom), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study – Research Ethics Clearance Number IREC 044/13. I have also received, read and understood the above written information regarding the study. I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details and diagnosis will be confidentially processed into a study report. In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collection during this study can be processed into a computerised system by the researcher. I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study. I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.
There are 23 questions in this survey

Consent
By clicking the yes box, I (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to take part in the study
1[1] by clicking the yes box, I (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to take part in the study.*
Please choose all that apply: Yes ☐

Contact details
Indicate your age-group
2[2] To be completed by the owner, partner, manager or key decision maker of the business
Indicate your age-group*
Please choose **only one** of the following:
O below 25
O 25 - 35
O 36 - 45
O 46 - 55
O 56 - 65
O above 65
Indicate your age-group

Questions
3 [B1] Position held in company? *
Please choose **all** that apply:
O Owner
O Partner
O Manager
O Key decision maker
O Other: ☐
Choose any that apply

4 [B2] Type of business? *
Please choose **all** that apply:
O Accommodation
O Hospitality/Restaurant
O Arts, crafts and decor
O Leisure & Activities
O Events
O Weddings
O Conservancies
O Museums
O Nature reserves & natural areas
O Conservation groups
O Places of worship
O Tour guides

O Tour operators
O Other:
Tick all that apply

5 [B3] How long has your business been in operation? *
Please choose **only one** of the following:
O Under 1 year
O 1 – 5 years
O 6 - 10 years
O 11 - 15 years
O More than 15 years

6 [B4] Which of the following is your target market? *
Please choose **all** that apply:

O International tourists	**O Domestic tourists**
O Children	**O Teenagers**
O Singles	**O Couples**
O Families	**O Middle aged people**
O Retired	**O Students**

O Other:
Select all that apply

7 [B5] How do you market your business? *
Please choose **all** that apply:

O Midlands Meander Brochure	**O Another Company's website**
O Magazines	**O Advertisements**
O Posters	**O Flyers**
O Travel Expos	**O Word of Mouth**
O Newsletters	**O SMS**
O Radio	**O Television**
O Competitions	**O Direct Mail**
O Facebook	**O YouTube**
O Twitter	**O Blog**
O Trip Advisor	**O Accommodation booking website i.e. Wheretostay**

O Other:
Please choose **all** that apply

8 [B6] Do you have a Website? *
Please choose **all** that apply and provide a comment:
O Yes, please specify how long you have had a website
O No
O Please specify your website address
O Other:
If yes, please specify website address

9 [B7] If no, please indicate the reason why you do not have a Website? *
Please choose **all** that apply and provide a comment:
O Technical skill constraints
O Time constraints
O Uncomfortable with the internet
O Other (please specify).
<u>Ignore if yes</u>

10 [B8] How often is your website updated? *
Please choose **all** that apply:
O not applicable – do not have a website
O Daily
O Weekly
O Monthly
O Other (please specify).

Marketing effects
Indicate how (if in anyway the use of e-marketing (internet) increased your business in the last year.

11 [C1] How has the use of e-marketing increased the bookings or sales within your business? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:
O under 5%
O 6% to 10%
O 11% to 15%
O 16% to 20%
O 21% to 25%
O 26% to 30%
O 31% to 40%
O more than 40%
O other (please specify)?
O Did not increase bookings/sales
Make a comment on your choice here:
12 [C2] by what percentage did the use of internet marketing increase your Gross Profit? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:
O under 5%
O 6% to 10%
O 11% to 15%
O 16% to 20%
O 21% to 25%
O 26% to 30%

O 31% to 40%
O more than 40%
O other (please specify)?
O Did not increase Gross Profit
Make a comment on your choice here:
Indicate the percentage

13 [C2] How has the use of e-marketing increased your visitor or customer numbers? *
Please choose **only one** of the following:
O under 5%
O 6% to 10%
O 11% to 15%
O 16% to 20%
O 21% to 25%
O 26% to 30%
O 31% to 40%
O more than 40%
O other (please specify)?
O Did not increase visitor/customer numbers
Make a comment on your choice here:
Indicate the percentage

14 [C4] of the above percentages – indicate how many were new or existing customers?
Please write your answer(s) here:
New clients
Existing clients
Example 10% new clients 90% existing clients
15 [C5] on what data do you base these figures? *
Please choose **all** that apply and provide a comment:
O E-marketing response form to identify sales/bookings
O Clients tell me that they have found me on the web
O I have estimated the above figures
O Other (please specify).

Rate Your Website

Rate the following statements from 1 – 5
1 (strongly agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Agree in some cases), 4 (Do not Agree), 5 (Strongly disagree)

16 [D1]
Indicate your choice of answer to the following questions by marking the preferred box
Rate from 1 (strongly agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Agree in some cases), 4 (Do not Agree), 5 (Strongly disagree)
Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

Usefulness is an important attribute to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Ease of use is an important attribute to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Booking/Payment facilities are important attributes to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Map/Directions are important attributes to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Images (photos) are important attributes to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Product information is an important attribute to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Links to other websites are important attributes to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Blogs are an important attribute to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
YouTube clips are important attributes to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5
Customer comments are important attributes to you of your website	1 2 3 4 5

Growth of business

Rate the following statements from 1 – 5

1 (strongly agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Agree in some cases), 4 (Do not Agree), 5 (Strongly disagree)

17 [E1]

Indicate your choice of answer to the following questions by marking the preferred box 1 (strongly agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Agree in some cases), 4 (Do not Agree), 5 (Strongly disagree)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

Your company's Website is important to the growth of your business	1 2 3 4 5
Your company's Website is important to building your relationship with your customers or potential customers.	1 2 3 4 5
Your Website is the primary introducer of business	1 2 3 4 5
Search Engine Optimiser is important to the success of your business	1 2 3 4 5
Social media channels (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) are important to building relationships with your customers.	1 2 3 4 5
YouTube as a form of information is important to the success of your business	1 2 3 4 5
The mobile phone is an important platform to engage with your customers and facilitate consumer-to-consumer interaction	1 2 3 4 5

Rate from 1 – 5

1 (strongly agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Agree in some cases), 4 (Do not Agree), 5 (Strongly disagree)

Website two

Compatibility and applications

18 [F1] Is your website compatible with a mobile device i.e. cell phone? *

Please choose only one of the following:

O Yes

O No

O Not sure

19 [F2] Do you have smart phone applications?
Please choose only one of the following and provide a comment:
O Yes, please specify
O No
O Other
If so, please specify

20 [F3] Dose your website link your clients with complementary facilities (i.e. hotels, restaurants, shops etc.,) on the Midlands Meander? *
Please choose only one of the following and provide a comment:
O Yes (please specify)
O No

21 [F4] How might the Midlands Meander Association assist you with the development of your website or proposed website in the future?
Please choose **all** that apply:
O Training
O Assistance with design of website
O Further development of your website
O Your online marketing i.e. Facebook, Twitter
O Online surveys
O I was unaware that the Midlands Meander Association offered the above services
O other
O Other:
Select all that apply

22 [F5] What feedback has your business had from Social Media? (Such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube etc,)? *
Please choose **all** that apply and provide a comment:
O no feedback
O positive feedback (please specify)
O negative feedback (please specify)
O Other

23. In the space below, please make any comments or observations regarding the above questions, which might further assist this investigation.
Please write your answer here:

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire.
Submit your survey.
Thank you for completing this survey.
Lime Survey – The impact of e-marketing on business performance (2)
Rsidemoodle.dut.ac.za/limesurvey/admin.php?action=showprintablesurvey&sid=86224

APPENDIX B

The semi-structured telephonic questionnaire: INTERVIEW GUIDE
Participants will be asked for their permission to participate in the interview.
Name, time and date will be recorded.

Good day, I am currently completing a research study for my MTech: Marketing, at Durban University of Technology.

The aim of the research is to investigate how the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing have had an impact on the relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance.

For this study, the definition of e-marketing used is based on that of Kotler and Keller (2009) "E-marketing describes company efforts to inform buyers, communicate and promote, and sell its products and services over the internet".

The answers provided by you will be used for this current research, as a mechanism to assess this study. The results will seek to provide vital information and feedback to the Midlands Meander Association members.

The research will aim to identify any new ideas, trends and future opportunities associated with the use of e-marketing by the members and their customers.

You may withdraw from the investigation at anytime, as your involvement is **voluntary**.
All responses provided by you in this interview, will be considered strictly confidential.

All information provided by you the respondent shall only be used for this current investigation.

This interview should take approximately 15 minutes.
The interview is to be undertaken by the owner, partner, manager, or key decision maker of the business.

Name: Position in company:
Telephone number: Website address:
Type of business:
Date: Time:

The interviewer will use the following themes and topics to encourage the Midlands Meander Association members to discuss certain topics relating to the research problem.

Implementing e-marketing within your business

Websites: Management and development of website, Links.
Blogs: Updating, Inviting visitors to write on your blog.
Social media: Facebook, LinkedIn, twitter, MySpace
Events: Announcements and specials
Online word of mouth

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Business performance

Sales/bookings
Exposure
Growth
Relationship with customers

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Relationship with customers

Customer satisfaction (online)
Customer loyalty
Online word of mouth

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Customer relationship management

Managing, training and development
Customer feedback
Newsletters
SMS's

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Checklist for review of open source, public domain documents **APPENDIX C**

REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS	DATE	SOURCE	POSITIVE COMMENT	NEGATIVE COMMENT	COMMENT
ONLINE FEEDBACK					
COMMENTS IN VISITORS BOOKS					
COMMENTS ON WEBSITE					
COMMENTS ON BLOG					
COMMENTS ON FACEBOOK					
COMMENTS ON TWITTER					
COMMENTS ON OTHER SOURCES					
REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS	DATE	SOURCE	POSITIVE COMMENT	NEGATIVE COMMENT	COMMENT
ONLINE FEEDBACK					
COMMENTS IN VISITORS BOOKS					
COMMENTS ON WEBSITE					
COMMENTS ON BLOG					
COMMENTS ON FACEBOOK					
COMMENTS ON TWITTER					
COMMENTS ON OTHER SOURCES					
REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS	DATE	SOURCE	POSITIVE COMMENT	NEGATIVE COMMENT	COMMENT
ONLINE FEEDBACK					
COMMENTS IN VISITORS BOOKS					
COMMENTS ON WEBSITE					
COMMENTS ON BLOG					
COMMENTS ON FACEBOOK					
COMMENTS ON TWITTER					
COMMENTS ON OTHER SOURCES					

APPENDIX D

(Example of covering letter sent with the online questionnaire to all Midlands Meander Association members).

Dear Midlands Meander Association Member,

In order to improve its marketing service to you, the Board of the Midlands Meander Association has partnered with me in some important marketing research, which forms part of my MTech in Marketing. You are **therefore encouraged to participate in this quick and simple marketing survey,** called "The impact of e-marketing on business performance".

It will take no more than 10 minutes of your time, and the data generated will provide the Midlands Meander with important information with which to plan its marketing.

In order to encourage your participation, the Midlands Meander will be awarding three spot prizes to those members that participate – more information is in their GM email out this week.

To participate, please click on the link below and copy and paste the "Token number" below into the required field.

http://rsidemoodle.dut.ac.za/limesurvey/index.php?sid=86224&newtest=Y&lang=en

Kind regards

Lizzy Wisdom
0717385886
(eawisdom@mweb.co.za)

Token number: azy4avv9jv9b9rz

APPENDIX E

(Example of covering letter sent with letter of information to all Midlands Meander Association Members).

Dear Midlands Meander Association Member,

Attached, please find a copy of the **Institutional Research Committee (IREC) Letter of Information**, with regards to my research study.

There are two methods of data collection that will involve interaction with you the member.

Electronic survey (sent to all members)
Telephonic interview (30 members)

Please read the attached letter and feel free to phone or email me with any questions or comments.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to work alongside your association.

Kind regards

Lizzy Wisdom
(eawisdom@mweb.co.za)
0717385886

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (IREC)
LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study:

To what extent have the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had an impact on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance?

Principal Investigator/s/researcher:

Mrs. Elizabeth Wisdom (qualification: BTech: Tourism Management)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s:

Ms Daya Veerasamy, qualification: MComm

Dr Alex van der Merwe, qualification: PhD

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

The proposed research will aim to investigate and answer the following question:

To what extent have the perceptions of the Midlands Meander Association members towards e-marketing had an impact on their relationship with their customers and influenced their business performance?

The proposed research intends to achieve a greater understanding of the use of e-marketing by the members of the Midlands Meander Association. In addition, the proposed research seeks to create awareness and understanding of any influences e-marketing may have on the Midlands Meander Association Members' business performance and impacts on their relationship with their customers.

The proposed research will endeavour to achieve feedback on the research question so that any problems or benefits associated with the use of e-marketing may be identified, discussed and recommendations provided. At the same time the proposed research will attempt to achieve the identification of any new ideas, trends and future opportunities associated with the use of e-marketing by the members and their customers.

Outline of the Procedures: Electronic survey (Questionnaires), telephonic interview (semi-structured telephonic questionnaire), review of Open Source Public comments and documents on websites.

In addition to the organisational permission from the MMA, permission will be sought from each MMA individual member (business) representative.

There are two methods of data collection that involve direct interaction with MMA member representatives: electronic survey and telephonic interviews.

For the electronic survey, participants will be required to indicate assent to participation by ticking a field in order for the survey to proceed.

Participants in the telephonic interview will be asked for their permission orally to participate in the interview. Interviews, including this indication of assent, will be digitally recorded.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: NO RISKS OR DISCOMFORT TO THE PARTICIPANTS.

Benefits: All participants to receive feedback on the results.

The researcher: publish an article in a journal and present the research results at a Conference.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: The participants are free to withdraw at anytime as this is a voluntary study.

Remuneration: No remuneration

Costs of the Study: the participants will not be expected to cover any costs towards the study.

Confidentiality: All information collected will be considered confidential. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to the information collected within the surveys and questionnaires.

Research-related Injury: not applicable

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher Elizabeth Wisdom (tel no. 0717385886), my supervisors: Ms Daya Veerasamy (tel no. 031 3735482) and Dr Alex van der Merwe (tel no. 0338458868) or the Institutional Research Ethics administrator on 031 373 2900. Complaints can be reported to the DVC: TIP, Prof F. Otieno on 031 373 2382 or dvctip@dut.ac.za.

General:

Potential participants must be assured that participation is voluntary and the approximate number of participants to be included should be disclosed. A copy of the information letter should be issued to participants. The information letter and consent form must be translated and provided in the primary spoken language of the research population e.g. isiZulu.

Table 1 Little's MCAR test (part 1 of 4) **APPENDIX F**

Univariate Statistics							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Missing		No. of Extremes[a]	
				Count	Percent	Low	High
id	98	49.50	28.434	0	0.0	0	0
age group	97	3.49	1.316	1	1.0	0	0
Owner	98	1.43	.497	0	0.0	0	0
Partner	98	1.91	.290	0	0.0		
Manager	98	1.73	.444	0	0.0	0	0
Key decision maker	98	1.97	.173	0	0.0		
other	98	1.93	.259	0	0.0		
Accommodation	98	1.58	.496	0	0.0	0	0
Hospitality Restaurant	98	1.60	.492	0	0.0	0	0
Arts Craft Decor	98	1.63	.485	0	0.0	0	0
Leisure Activities	98	1.80	.405	0	0.0		
Events	98	1.89	.317	0	0.0		
Weddings	98	1.90	.304	0	0.0		
Conservancies	98	2.00	0.000	0	0.0		
Museums	98	2.00	0.000	0	0.0		
Nature Reserves Natural Areas	98	1.96	.199	0	0.0		
Conservation Groups	98	1.97	.173	0	0.0		
Place of worship	98	2.00	0.000	0	0.0		
Tour guides	98	1.98	.142	0	0.0		
Tour Operator	98	1.98	.142	0	0.0		
Other Type of business A	98	1.66	.475	0	0.0	0	0
Other Type of business	98	4.85	1.761	0	0.0	0	0
Years Business	94	3.83	1.292	4	4.1	0	0
International	98	1.44	.499	0	0.0	0	0
Domestic	98	1.07	.259	0	0.0		
children	98	1.72	.449	0	0.0	0	0
Teenagers	98	1.79	.412	0	0.0		
Singles	98	1.61	.490	0	0.0	0	0
Couples	98	1.40	.492	0	0.0	0	0
Families	98	1.36	.482	0	0.0	0	0
Middle Age	98	1.47	.502	0	0.0	0	0
Retired	98	1.46	.501	0	0.0	0	0
Student	98	1.76	.432	0	0.0		
Other Target Market	98	1.64	.482	0	0.0	0	0
Other Target Market	98	9.01	3.463	0	0.0	24	0

Midlands Meander Brochure	98	1.00	0.000	0	0.0		
Another Company's Website	98	1.48	.502	0	0.0	0	0
Magazine	98	1.62	.487	0	0.0	0	0
Advertisement	98	1.60	.492	0	0.0	0	0
Posters	98	1.84	.372	0	0.0		
Flyers	98	1.76	.432	0	0.0		
Travel Expos	98	1.94	.241	0	0.0		
Word of Mouth	98	1.15	.362	0	0.0		
Newsletter	98	1.72	.449	0	0.0	0	0
Sms	98	1.90	.304	0	0.0		
Radio	98	1.95	.221	0	0.0		
Television	98	2.00	0.000	0	0.0		
Competitions	98	1.76	.432	0	0.0		
Direct Mail	98	1.91	.290	0	0.0		
Facebook	98	1.36	.482	0	0.0	0	0
YouTube	98	1.95	.221	0	0.0		
Twitter	98	1.78	.419	0	0.0		
Blog	98	1.87	.341	0	0.0		
Trip Advisor	98	1.79	.412	0	0.0		
Accommodation Booking Website	98	1.63	.485	0	0.0	0	0
Other marketing A	98	1.50	.503	0	0.0	0	0
Other Marketing BUSINESS	98	9.35	4.579	0	0.0	0	0
Owner website	98	1.87	.341	0	0.0		
Virtual magazine	98	1.94	.241	0	0.0		
Other forms of social media	98	1.95	.221	0	0.0		
Website Yes	98	1.07	.259	0	0.0		
Length Of Website	85	3.52	1.315	13	13.3	0	0
No Website	98	1.93	.259	0	0.0		
Website Address	98	1.09	.290	0	0.0		
Technical Skills Constraints	98	1.97	.173	0	0.0		
Time Constraints	98	1.98	.142	0	0.0		
Uncomfortable with Internet	98	2.00	0.000	0	0.0		
Other reasons	98	1.99	.176	0	0.0		
Not applicable No Website	98	1.93	.259	0	0.0		
Updated Daily	98	2.91	.324	0	0.0		
Updated Weekly	98	2.64	.722	0	0.0		
Updated Monthly	98	2.48	.840	0	0.0	0	0
VAR00010	98	2.85	.462	0	0.0		

VAR00009	98	2.81	.531	0	0.0		
VAR00008	98	2.49	.840	0	0.0	0	0
Updated other	98	3.84	.531	0	0.0		
Updated other	98	1.91	.290	0	0.0		
E-marketing increased booking sales	98	8.77	3.226	0	0.0	2	0
Comment increased Percentage	98	3.09	1.158	0	0.0	19	0
Internet mktg increased Gross Profit	98	9.09	3.224	0	0.0	11	0
Comment increased Gross Profit	98	3.29	1.260	0	0.0	22	0
E-marketing increased visitor numbers	98	8.92	3.229	0	0.0	3	0
Comment increased visitor numbers	98	2.61	.741	0	0.0		
New clients	42	37.38	32.866	56	57.1	0	0
Existing clients	42	45.19	34.713	56	57.1	0	0
E-marketing response form	98	1.97	.418	0	0.0		
Clients tell me website	98	2.54	.814	0	0.0	0	0
Website comment	98	4.01	.465	0	0.0		
Estimated figures	98	1.86	.518	0	0.0		
Estimated comment	98	1.95	.300	0	0.0		
Other base figures on	98	3.04	.349	0	0.0		
Usefulness	88	1.43	.828	10	10.2	0	2
Ease of use	88	1.36	.847	10	10.2		
Booking Payment facilities	87	2.99	1.617	11	11.2	0	0
Map Direction	88	1.51	.844	10	10.2	0	2
Image	88	1.31	.778	10	10.2		
Product Information	88	1.38	.848	10	10.2		
Links to other websites	88	3.02	1.583	10	10.2	0	0
blogs	87	3.99	1.206	11	11.2	0	0
You Tube clips	87	4.15	1.167	11	11.2	10	0
Customer comments	88	2.74	1.601	10	10.2	0	0
Growth of business	88	1.77	1.201	10	10.2	0	10
Building relationships customers	88	1.89	1.245	10	10.2	0	0
Primary introducer business	88	2.98	1.516	10	10.2	0	0
SEO	81	2.25	1.401	17	17.3	0	0
Social media channels	84	2.39	1.473	14	14.3	0	0
YouTube important	81	3.77	1.335	17	17.3	0	0
Mobile phone important	92	1.67	1.250	6	6.1	0	10

Mobile compatible with website	98	2.17	1.055	0	0.0	0	0
Do you have Smartphone applications yes	98	1.85	.362	0	0.0		
Please list applications	98	2.95	.264	0	0.0		
Do you have Smartphone applications s NO	98	1.51	.502	0	0.0	0	0
Other Do you have Smartphone applications	98	1.91	.290	0	0.0		
Links to complementary facilities YES	98	2.52	.815	0	0.0	0	0
Comment Does your website link your clients with complementary	98	4.79	.966	0	0.0		
Link to complementary facilities NO	98	2.09	.964	0	0.0	0	0
Comment Does your website link your clients with complementary A	98	1.93	.259	0	0.0		
Training	98	1.69	.463	0	0.0	0	0
Assistance	98	1.72	.449	0	0.0	0	0
Further development	98	1.73	.444	0	0.0	0	0
Online marketing	98	1.56	.499	0	0.0	0	0
Online survey	98	1.70	.459	0	0.0	0	0
Unaware what MMA offers	98	1.58	.496	0	0.0	0	0
Other How might the Midlands Meander Association assist you with A	98	6.21	1.835	0	0.0		
No feedback	98	1.77	.426	0	0.0		
feedback comment	98	2.92	.398	0	0.0		
positive feedback	98	1.46	.501	0	0.0	0	0
Feedback comment positive	98	3.48	1.884	0	0.0	0	0
negative feedback	98	1.96	.199	0	0.0		
Feedback comment negative	98	3.94	.375	0	0.0		
Social media feedback	98	3.81	.684	0	0.0		
a. Number of cases outside the range (Q1 - 1.5*IQR, Q3 + 1.5*IQR).							
Little's MCAR test: Chi-Square=2033.996, DF=2606, Sig.=1.000							

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test for questions 16 and 17

KMO and Bartlett's Test Question 16			KMO and Bartlett's Test Question 17		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.677	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.665
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	190.299	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	139.703
	df	45		df	21
	Sig.	0		Sig.	0

Table 6: Communalities for questions 16 and 17

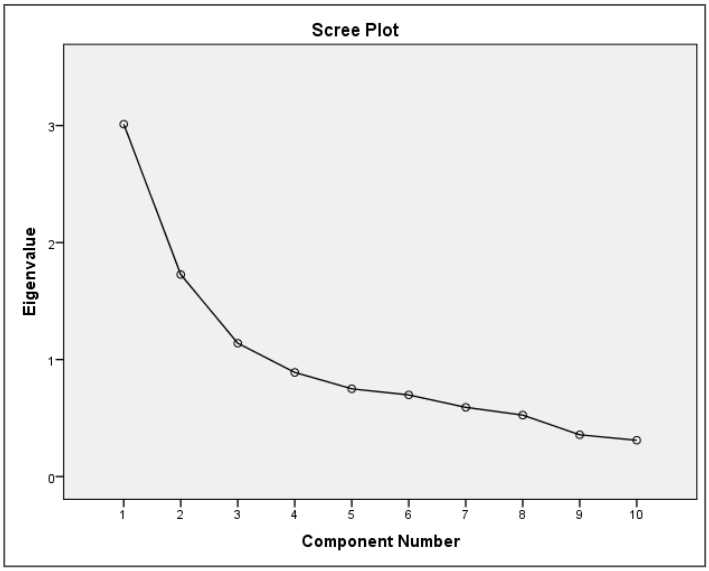
For Question 16			For Question 17		
Communalities			Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction		Initial	Extraction
usefulness	1	0.671	website important to growth of business	1	0.735
ease of use	1	0.633	website important to building relationships with customers	1	0.737
booking payment facilities	1	0.668	website is the primary introducer of business	1	0.366
map directions	1	0.427	SEO is important	1	0.606
images photos	1	0.615	Social media channels are important	1	0.563
product information	1	0.416	YouTube as a form of information	1	0.574
links to other websites	1	0.546	the mobile phone is important	1	0.464
blogs	1	0.741			
YouTube clips	1	0.509			
customer comments	1	0.651			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

APPENDIX H

Table 7: Total Variance Explained For Question 16

Total Variance Explained									
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.012	30.117	30.117	3.012	30.117	30.117	2.550	25.505	25.505
2	1.727	17.268	47.385	1.727	17.268	47.385	1.848	18.484	43.989
3	1.139	11.395	58.780	1.139	11.395	58.780	1.479	14.791	58.780
4	.890	8.903	67.682						
5	.750	7.502	75.185						
6	.698	6.977	82.162						
7	.592	5.917	88.079						
8	.525	5.250	93.329						
9	.357	3.570	96.899						
10	.310	3.101	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Figure 28: Scree plot of components for question 16

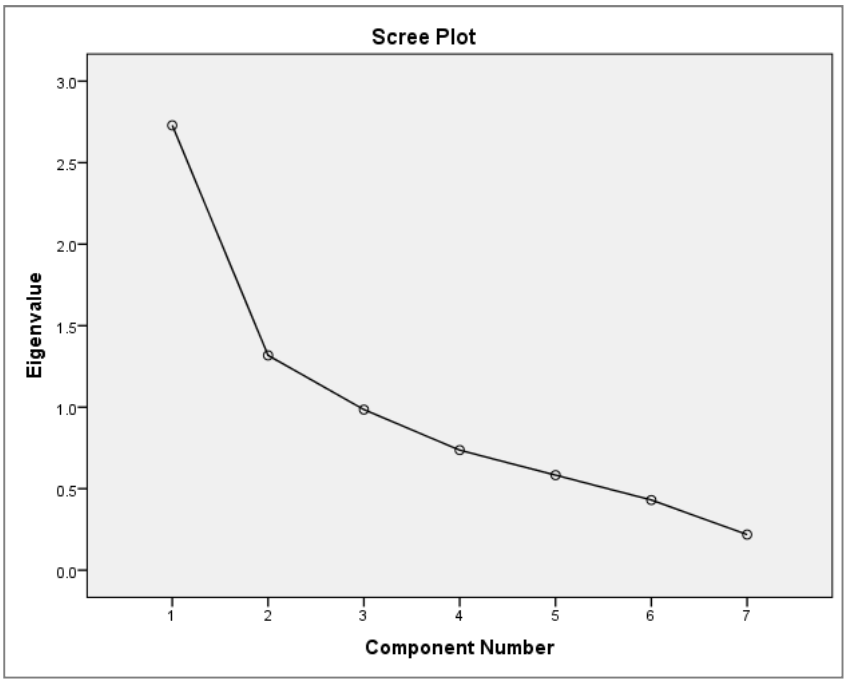


APPENDIX I

Table 10: Total Variance Explained for question 17

Total Variance Explained									
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.729	38.981	38.981	2.729	38.981	38.981	2.147	30.672	30.672
2	1.318	18.825	57.806	1.318	18.825	57.806	1.899	27.134	57.806
3	.985	14.074	71.880						
4	.737	10.521	82.401						
5	.583	8.329	90.730						
6	.430	6.150	96.880						
7	.218	3.120	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Figure 29: Scree plot for question 17



APPENDIX J

Facebook and eWOM/WOM Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. 2-sided)	Exact Sig. 1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.129[a]	1	0		
Continuity Correction[b]	12.937	1	0		
Likelihood Ratio	14.759	1	0		
Fisher's Exact Test				0	0
Linear-by-Linear Association	14.975	1	0		
N of Valid Cases	98				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.36.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Facebook and Twitter Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig.(2-sided)	Exact Sig. 1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.760[a]	1	0		
Continuity Correction[b]	13.818	1	0		
Likelihood Ratio	22.86	1	0		
Fisher's Exact Test				0	0
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.599	1	0		
N of Valid Cases	98				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.86.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

'Facebook' and Another company's website' Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.263[a]	1	0.608		
Continuity Correction[b]	0.091	1	0.763		
Likelihood Ratio	0.263	1	0.608		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.675	0.381
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.26	1	0.61		
N of Valid Cases	98				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.79.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Facebook and Newsletters Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.090[a]	1	0.008		
Continuity Correction[b]	5.889	1	0.015		
Likelihood Ratio	7.809	1	0.005		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.009	0.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.018	1	0.008		
N of Valid Cases	98				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.64.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Facebook and Trip Advisor Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.345[a]	1	0.021		
Continuity Correction[b]	4.224	1	0.04		
Likelihood Ratio	5.98	1	0.014		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.022	0.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.291	1	0.021		
N of Valid Cases	98				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.50.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Nonparametric Correlations **APPENDIX K**

			Another company's website	WOM/ eWOM	Facebook	Twitter	online Newsletters	website information Fac 1 of 1	customer relationship Fac 2 of 1	communication Fac 3 of 1	website growth of business Fac1 of 2	social media channels Fac 2of 2	website links with facilities	Competitions	Blog
Spearman's rho	Another company's website	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.102	.052	.027	.135	.002	.290**	.046	-.017	.363**	-.151	.167	.195
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.315	.613	.792	.186	.986	.007	.672	.887	.001	.138	.101	.055
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98
	WOM / eWOM	Correlation Coefficient	.102	1.000	.393**	.093	.199*	-.057	-.124	-.161	-.299**	.262*	-.227*	.176	.083
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.315		.000	.363	.050	.602	.255	.139	.009	.023	.025	.083	.418
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98
	Facebook	Correlation Coefficient	.052	.393**	1.000	.401**	.269**	.030	.013	.138	.018	.478**	-.163	.177	.229*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.613	.000		.000	.007	.780	.902	.204	.875	.000	.108	.081	.024
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98
	Twitter	Correlation Coefficient	.027	.093	.401**	1.000	.325**	-.018	-.020	.165	.288*	.218	-.096	.205*	.294**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.792	.363	.000		.001	.869	.854	.129	.012	.061	.346	.042	.003
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98

	online Newsletters	Correlation Coefficient	.135	.199*	.269**	.325**	1.000	.039	.205	.215*	.108	.364**	-.065	.445**	.298**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.186	.050	.007	.001		.720	.058	.047	.358	.001	.524	.000	.003
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98
	website information Fac1 of 1	Correlation Coefficient	.002	-.057	.030	-.018	.039	1.000	-.120	-.017	.286*	-.053	.043	.122	.179
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.986	.602	.780	.869	.720		.273	.880	.013	.651	.691	.264	.099
		N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	74	74	86	86	86
	customer relationship Fac2 of 1	Correlation Coefficient	.290**	-.124	.013	-.020	.205	-.120	1.000	.029	.277*	.206	-.116	.267*	-.210
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.255	.902	.854	.058	.273		.792	.017	.078	.289	.013	.052
		N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	74	74	86	86	86
	communication Fac3 of 1	Correlation Coefficient	.046	-.161	.138	.165	.215*	-.017	.029	1.000	.255*	.373**	.299**	.083	.304**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.672	.139	.204	.129	.047	.880	.792		.028	.001	.005	.450	.005
		N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	74	74	86	86	86
	website growth of business Fac1 of 2	Correlation Coefficient	-.017	-.299**	.018	.288*	.108	.286*	.277*	.255*	1.000	-.046	.088	.140	.089
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.887	.009	.875	.012	.358	.013	.017	.028		.693	.453	.231	.449
		N	75	75	75	75	75	74	74	74	75	75	75	75	75
	social media channels Fac 2	Correlation Coefficien	.363**	.262*	.478**	.218	.364**	-.053	.206	.373**	-.046	1.000	.050	.252*	.228*

	of 2	t													
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.023	.000	.061	.001	.651	.078	.001	.693		.668	.029	.049
		N	75	75	75	75	75	74	74	74	75	75	75	75	75
	website links with facilities	Correlation Coefficient	-.151	-.227*	-.163	-.096	-.065	.043	-.116	.299**	.088	.050	1.000	-.122	.047
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.138	.025	.108	.346	.524	.691	.289	.005	.453	.668		.230	.646
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98
	Competitions	Correlation Coefficient	.167	.176	.177	.205*	.445**	.122	.267*	.083	.140	.252*	-.122	1.000	.267**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.101	.083	.081	.042	.000	.264	.013	.450	.231	.029	.230		.008
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98
	Blog	Correlation Coefficient	.195	.083	.229*	.294**	.298**	.179	-.210	.304**	.089	.228*	.047	.267**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.418	.024	.003	.003	.099	.052	.005	.449	.049	.646	.008	
		N	98	98	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75	98	98	98

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

APPENDIX L

Nonparametric correlations

Correlations												
			agegroup	years in business	emarketing increased booking sales	internet mktg incr GrossProfit	emarketing inc visitor nos	website information Fac 1of1	customer relationship Fac2 of1	communication Fac3 of1	website growth of business Fac1of2	social media channels Fac 2of2
Spearman's rho	agegroup	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.063	-.094	-.152	-.219*	.111	-.061	-.168	-.052	.250*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.549	.362	.136	.031	.308	.578	.123	.660	.031
		N	97	93	97	97	97	86	86	86	75	75
	years in business	Correlation Coefficient	.063	1.000	.000	-.066	-.070	-.004	-.124	.064	.091	.003
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.549		1.000	.530	.502	.970	.266	.571	.448	.982
		N	93	94	94	94	94	82	82	82	71	71
	emarketing increased booking sales	Correlation Coefficient	-.094	.000	1.000	.842**	.816**	-.102	.164	.225*	.136	.139
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.362	1.000		.000	.000	.352	.132	.037	.244	.236
		N	97	94	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75
	internet mktg incr GrossProfit	Correlation Coefficient	-.152	-.066	.842**	1.000	.868**	-.117	.183	.178	.147	.033
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.136	.530	.000		.000	.281	.092	.101	.208	.777
		N	97	94	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75
	emarketing inc visitor nos	Correlation Coefficient	-.219*	-.070	.816**	.868**	1.000	-.189	.130	.223*	.205	.077
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.502	.000	.000		.081	.231	.039	.078	.511
		N	97	94	98	98	98	86	86	86	75	75
	website information Fac	Correlation Coefficient	.111	-.004	-.102	-.117	-.189	1.000	-.120	-.017	.286*	-.053
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.308	.970	.352	.281	.081		.273	.880	.013	.651

	1of1	N	86	82	86	86	86	86	86	86	74	74
	customer relationship Fac2 of1	Correlation Coefficient	-.061	-.124	.164	.183	.130	-.120	1.000	.029	.277*	.206
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.578	.266	.132	.092	.231	.273		.792	.017	.078
		N	86	82	86	86	86	86	86	86	74	74
	communication Fac3 of1	Correlation Coefficient	-.168	.064	.225*	.178	.223*	-.017	.029	1.000	.255*	.373**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.123	.571	.037	.101	.039	.880	.792		.028	.001
		N	86	82	86	86	86	86	86	86	74	74
	website growth of business Fac1 of2	Correlation Coefficient	-.052	.091	.136	.147	.205	.286*	.277*	.255*	1.000	-.046
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.660	.448	.244	.208	.078	.013	.017	.028		.693
		N	75	71	75	75	75	74	74	74	75	75
	social media channels Fac2 of2	Correlation Coefficient	.250*	.003	.139	.033	.077	-.053	.206	.373**	-.046	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.982	.236	.777	.511	.651	.078	.001	.693	
		N	75	71	75	75	75	74	74	74	75	75

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Nonparametric correlations APPENDIX M

Correlations

			website important to growth of business	website important to building relationships with customers	website is the primary introducer of business	SEO is important	Social media channels are important	YouTube as a form of information	the mobile phone is important
Spearman's rho	usefulness	Correlation Coefficient	.395**	.293**	.276**	.232*	.295**	-.026	.103
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006	.009	.037	.006	.819	.341
		N	88	88	88	81	84	80	88
	ease of use	Correlation Coefficient	.307**	.194	.160	.252*	.180	-.027	.063
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.070	.136	.023	.102	.811	.559
		N	88	88	88	81	84	80	88
	booking payment facilities	Correlation Coefficient	.341**	.292**	.134	.128	.025	.092	.031
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.006	.217	.258	.820	.418	.775
		N	87	87	87	80	83	80	87
	map directions	Correlation Coefficient	.167	.131	.260*	-.023	.205	-.007	-.056
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.119	.223	.014	.840	.061	.951	.602
		N	88	88	88	81	84	80	88
	images photos	Correlation Coefficient	.243*	.235*	.203	.219*	.077	.096	-.014
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.028	.058	.049	.485	.395	.901
		N	88	88	88	81	84	80	88
	product information	Correlation Coefficient	.299**	.324**	.313**	.181	.039	-.097	-.067
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.002	.003	.106	.721	.393	.537
		N	88	88	88	81	84	80	88
	links to other websites	Correlation Coefficient	.156	.247*	.188	.173	.144	.333**	.056
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.148	.020	.080	.123	.190	.003	.603
		N	88	88	88	81	84	80	88
	blogs	Correlation Coefficient	.165	.237*	.348**	.213	.229*	.349**	-.323**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	.027	.001	.057	.038	.002	.002
		N	87	87	87	80	83	79	87
	YouTube clips	Correlation Coefficient	.160	.160	.209	.233*	.254*	.539**	-.152
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.140	.139	.052	.038	.020	.000	.161
		N	87	87	87	80	83	79	87
	customer comments	Correlation Coefficient	.385**	.452**	.208	.250*	.132	.288**	-.081
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.052	.024	.231	.010	.455
		N	88	88	88	81	84	80	88

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

APPENDIX N

Nonparametric correlations

Correlations						
			website important to growth of business	website is the primary introducer of business	SEO is important	YouTube as a form of information
Spearman's rho	website important to growth of business	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.384**	.483**	.167
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.138
		N	88	88	81	80
	website is the primary introducer of business	Correlation Coefficient	.384**	1.000	.128	.313**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.254	.005
		N	88	88	81	80
	SEO is important	Correlation Coefficient	.483**	.128	1.000	.377**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.254		.001
		N	81	81	81	76
	YouTube as a form of information	Correlation Coefficient	.167	.313**	.377**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.138	.005	.001	
		N	80	80	76	81
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

LETTER FROM EDITOR

Mrs L Hodgson
English language editing
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31 October 2014

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, the undersigned, have language edited the completed research of Elizabeth Wisdom for the degree of Master of Technology: Marketing dissertation entitled: The impact of e-marketing on business performance: A case study of the Midlands Meander Association members.

The responsibility of implementing the recommended language changes rests with the author of the above work.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

L. Hodgson