



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY
IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Elvis Madondo, do hereby declare that unless otherwise indicated, this dissertation is solely the result of my own work. This work has not been submitted to any other tertiary institution for a degree award or other purposes and all the authors whose work contributed to this study have been accordingly referenced.

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Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God, the creator of the heaven and the earth and all that is within them, who made it possible for me to undertake and successfully complete this study.

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The completion of this study would not have been possible without the invaluable input of the tourists who visited Durban and the support from DUT staff members, family, and friends who cooperated and performed various relevant roles. I thank the Almighty God for his grace that was sufficient for me throughout the period of this study, for without which I could have done nothing.

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ABSTRACT

Social media is increasingly playing an important role in promoting tourism. The SAT Strategy (2013: 12) suggests that the opportunities in the tourism industry are so numerous but are not yet fully exploited where more marketing is needed to create more awareness. Leung, Law, Hoof, and Huhalis (2013: 5) add that travellers have widely adopted social media in order to search for information, organise, share and annotate their experiences and stories through micro blogs and blogs, online communities, media sharing sites, and other tools collaboratively. Tourism marketers are also considerably using social media to engage with actual and potential tourists throughout the decision making journey (Hudson and Thal 2013: 157). According to Hanekom (2015: 1) tourism is regarded as a critical component on the National Development Plan of South Africa because of its capacity to spur growth across the wider economy and create jobs. There is a need for ongoing efforts to promote the tourism industry for it to remain competitive and continue contributing to the welfare of the people.

The aim of this study is to determine the influence of social media in promoting tourism business activities in Durban, South Africa. The primary objective of the research is to examine the value of social media in promoting tourism in Durban. Durban is regarded as the leading tourism destination in South Africa and is globally marketed by an official marketing unit known as Durban Tourism-a part of the eThekweni Municipality (Durban Tourism 2012.4).

The study followed a quantitative research method in order to attain the set objectives of the study. Non-probability sampling technique was employed in recruiting the participants. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to generate the sample population in this study. The target population for the study were all the tourists that visited the Durban tourist destinations. The researcher managed to secure a 90% response rate as 272 questionnaires out of 300 were collected. A structured self-administered questionnaire with 42 questions was used in the survey that was conducted to obtain primary data. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 23.0 was used to analyse the data.

The results suggest that social media is of strategic importance in promoting tourism in Durban. Theorists in the literature review highlight that the influence of social media is more pervasive and compelling than conventional mass media because of its ability to influence a larger number of people, the ability to deliver rich information, and the minimal effort required from individuals to make influence attempts (Guo (2014: 3). The majority of tourists indicated that they are active on social media platforms of which, WhatsApp and Facebook had the highest numbers of users. The study also revealed that social media is not an optional extra in the tourism industry and suggests that, tourism companies, like any other company, must participate on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and other social media sites in order to succeed in today's highly competitive business environment (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010:62).

The study recommended that tourism authorities must encourage South Africans to visit their own country, adopt and integrate new social media applications, use social media to create awareness of the positive transformations that have taken place in the city, and offer more secure online holiday-purchase provisions. The study recommends further research to be undertaken on the influence of specific social media sites to allow more understanding and use of appropriate social media platforms by marketing practitioners.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter reviews the topics of social media, tourism industry in Durban and the use of social media in the tourism industry. The aim, objectives and the rationale of this study will be presented in this chapter, as well as the delimitations of the study. The chapter ends by outlining the structure of the rest of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Durban is regarded as the leading tourism destination in South Africa and is globally marketed by an official marketing unit known as Durban Tourism- a part of the EThekweni Municipality (Durban Tourism 2012.4). Marketers in the tourism business still need to better understand the potential or actual value of social media as a marketing communications tool. Many marketers are still thinking that this is a premature time to get an understanding of the influence of social media in promoting business activities (Shimp 2012: 403). Moreover, the great opportunities in the tourism industry in Durban are not yet fully exploited and the city has undergone several changes and improvements which need to be brought to the attention of the world.

According to Nzima (2015: 5) the wave of xenophobic attacks which was believed to have started in the Durban Isipingo area and spread to other provinces of the country has set back the hard work the country has done to clean up its image as a hub of violent crimes. The promotion of tourism is expected to go great lengths to provide tourists with a reassurance that the country is safe for them to visit. South African Tourism pledged to continue promoting tourism as well as addressing the negative perceptions on the country's image as a welcoming tourist destination. Shimp (2012: 403) argues that marketers are now tapping into social media and others have created their own social network sites as a means of conveying different

messages about their organisations or brands to customers. The tourism industry is one such industry which must undoubtedly start finding ways to utilise social media and engage with prospective and present tourists.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to Safko (2010: 4) many marketers still have the view that social media is a set of strange and foreign technologies that they may or may not use to market their offerings. The use of social media is however at its infancy in most industries. The South African Tourism Strategy (2013: 12) indicates that the opportunities in the tourism industry are so numerous but are not yet fully exploited and more marketing is needed to create more awareness. An information gap exists in the tourism industry in Durban pertaining to the role of social media in enhancing Durban as an attractive and safe tourist destination. The research problem may thus be summarised as the need to understand the value of social media in promoting the tourism industry in Durban.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to determine the influence of social media in promoting the tourism industry in Durban, South Africa.

The objectives of this study are:

- To examine the value of social media in promoting tourism in Durban, South Africa.
- To determine the perceived effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry.
- To ascertain whether tourists refer to social media prior to, during, and after their visits.
- To examine the extent to which social media can influence the final decision of a tourist.

1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

According to Hanekom (2015: 1) tourism is regarded as a critical component on the National Development Plan of South Africa because of its capacity to spur growth across the wider economy and create jobs. There is a need for ongoing efforts to promote the tourism industry for it to remain competitive and continue contributing to the welfare of the people. According to Safko (2010: 7) social media became more effective than the conventional marketing that was done in the last 6000 years because of the many benefits that it offers. The study is anticipated to broaden the understanding of the utilisation of social media in promoting tourism in order to aid the decision making process of the marketers and assist in policy formulation.

The benefits of social media in marketing tourism are immense to both the tourism marketers and the travellers. There are great opportunities in the tourism industry in Durban which need to be fully exploited. Marketers in the tourism industry must as well exploit the business opportunities presented by social media in order to remain effective in their promotional efforts of the tourism industry. Customers rely on reliable sources of information such as people they already know, share a bond with, and have a relationship with. Travellers have also turned to social media in order to share their experiences with others, mapping their travelling route, critique accommodation and search for information. Therefore, the motivation for this study was based on the need to understand the influence of social media in promoting tourism business activities in Durban.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study was confined to the tourists who visit tourist destinations in Durban and how the use of social media by both travellers and tourism organisations enhances promotional efforts in the industry. The study investigates how influential social media is in promoting the tourism industry in the greater Durban area.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS

The study was limited to the borders of the eThekweni Municipality region. The survey was conducted in one of the many major tourist destinations in Durban which

was the Durban beach front. This study only addressed a small sample of the tourism population of Durban, due to high costs that are involved in sampling larger populations.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

Given that the respondents were drawn from the tourists visiting the Durban tourist destinations and that only 300 participants took part in the study, the sample size becomes a limiting factor. Limited time and monetary resources constrain the research project to be conducted in other provinces and this may reduce the representativeness of the data that was collected. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised when generalising the results of this study to the entire population of South Africa.

1.9 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study aims to determine the influence of social media in promoting tourism in Durban, South Africa. Durban is well known for its swimming beaches, the Moses Mabhida stadium, the uShaka Marine World aquarium, green parks and gardens such as the Botanic Gardens, Mitchells Park and the world-class pedestrian promenade. Durban tourism has immensely contributed to employment in the country (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2014). According to the TKZN strategy (2014: 7) the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority (KZNTA) is responsible for promoting tourism within the province. The vision of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is to position the province as the continent's leading tourism destination. This can be achieved through the use of social media and other promotional strategies (TKZN Strategy 2014: 5-6). Promoting tourism in this region is the premise behind this study and the aim is to determine how influential social media is in achieving this.

1.9.1 Promoting Tourism

Statistics South Africa (2011: 3) defined tourism as all the activities undertaken by individuals travelling to places away from their usual environment, and staying there

for business, study, leisure and other purposes. South African tourism is growing ahead of other economic sectors, attracting foreign direct spent and investment in the country and creating jobs. The 2015 Indaba theme recognised the vital importance of tourism in driving the country forward and advancing economic developments. According to Fyall, Fletcher and Spyriadis (2009: 115) tourist destinations and products are better promoted via the internet than via traditional means such as television, catalogues, and brochures. Social media is one of the most effective internet based applications which allows interactive and direct relationships between customers and tourism organisations.

According to Dickman and Maddock (2012: 120) tourism can be promoted when there is effective communication with the potential and actual tourists. The marketer can use various elements of the promotional mix such as: direct marketing, sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, internet marketing, printed literature, and sponsorship to promote either a product or a service. Despite the plethora of marketing communication tools available to promote tourism, social media has become the far most effective way of generating awareness and creating interest in a product (Waxer 2012: 32).

In effect, Durban is seen as a product which is marketed throughout the world. The imperative for tourism marketers is to package Durban the best way possible, positioning it in the minds of the potential tourists as a destination which will offer good value for money and to create an awareness through the use of social media. Social media is already being used to push sales by attracting more tourists to South African destinations (Strauss and Frost 2014: 68). It is an effective tool for customer service, communications, and public relations (Irina *et al.*, 2014: 1291). According to Leung, Law, Hoof, and Huhalis (2013: 5) travellers have widely adopted social media in order to search for information, organise, share and annotate their experiences and stories through micro blogs and blogs, online communities, media sharing sites, and other tools collaboratively. Tourism marketers are also using social media considerably to engage with actual and potential tourists throughout the decision making journey. (Hudson and Thal 2013: 157).

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research method which was cross sectional in nature. The target population for the study were all the tourists that visited the Durban tourist destinations. A non-probability sampling technique was employed in recruiting the participants. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques are the two types of non-probability sampling technique that were used. The projected sample size was 300 but the achieved response was 272 questionnaires and this gave a more than 90% response rate. Participation was entirely voluntary and the whole process was carried out with great courtesy.

A structured questionnaire with 42 questions was used in the survey that was conducted to obtain primary data from the tourists. A pilot study was conducted with 12 questionnaires distributed to the tourists to ensure validity of the instrument. The survey was mainly conducted on the beach front and other public places that were convenient to the researcher. The researcher hired the service of a field worker who helped to distribute and collect the questionnaires from the tourists which were dropped in a sealed box to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 23.0 was used to analyse the data.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION CHAPTERS

The dissertation is divided into five chapters that are sequentially arranged from the introductory chapter to the concluding chapter. There is a chapter that deals with the theoretical framework of the study and another dedicated to explaining the research methodology that was followed in this study as well as a chapter dedicated to the presentation and analysis of the results.

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter gives a detailed introduction to this research. It covers the background to the research, problem statement, research objectives, and summary of the literature review, a summarised research methodology, and a brief outline of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks. The chapter reviews the existing literature about the study and focus is on the promotion of tourism

through the utilisation of social media platforms and other related strategies. The chapter also presents the theoretical frameworks and theories that are relevant to the use of social media and its influence in promoting tourism.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. The focus of this chapter is on specifying the study type, research design, research approach, target population, sample size and selection, sampling technique, instrument design, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. In simple, this chapter presents the design of the empirical study that was conducted in this study.

Chapter 4: Research Findings. The chapter presents and analyses the results of this study using various statistical methods. Discussion of the results will then follow in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations. The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions and recommendations emanating from this study. Areas which need further research on the use of social media applications in promoting tourism are also presented.

1.12 CONCLUSION

The chapter presents an introduction to the study and discusses the research problem. The aim, objectives, and the rationale that motivated this study are also given. The outline of the dissertation chapters and brief explanations are provided. The following chapter is dedicated to the reviewing of the existing literature and the discussion of relevant theories that can explain how influential social media is in promoting tourism.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the background and the introduction to this study. A detailed theoretical framework relating to the South African tourism industry, the promotion of tourism in Durban, and the influence of social media in promoting the tourism industry are presented in this chapter. The role of social media in promoting tourism business and other elements of the promotional mix are explained in this chapter.

2.2 DEFINITION OF TOURISM

Statistics South Africa (2011: 3) defines tourism as, all the activities undertaken by individuals travelling to places away from their usual environment, and staying there for business, leisure and other purposes. Holloway (2002: 2) states that tourism is a temporary movement of people outside their normal place of residence and work, together with the facilities provided to cater for those visits and the activities undertaken during the stay in those visited places. A person's usual environment refers to all the places frequently visited by that individual, and the areas around his or her residential place. The United Nations World Tourism Organisations (UNWTO) define a visitor, to distinguish him/her from a tourist as a person travelling to a place away from his/her usual environment for a period of less than one year and whose main purpose is not to undertake a remunerated activity from the place of visit.

2.3 THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to the University of Navarra (2011: 4686) South Africa is a leading tourist destination in Africa and one of the most visited destinations in the world as it has a wide array of attractions coupled with developed cities. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa has improved its tourism position in the world from the 52nd most visited destination to the 17th most visited tourism destination in 2005. Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Gauteng are the most popular tourism destinations

for international tourists. However, even though KZN is not as popular as Western Cape, the former has more to offer and a great potential to grow (South African Tourism 2011: 15).

The leading role player in promoting the South African tourism industry is Tourism South Africa and the provincial tourism authorities who supplement their efforts (Statistics South Africa 2011: 2). The country has in the last ten years significantly expanded its tourism plant through a growth in the number of guest houses, hotels, lodges, game farms, and the number of airlines and buses servicing the country. (Saayman and Saayman 2008: 35). Tourism was considered by the government of South Africa as one of the country's growing sectors. It constitutes approximately 7% of employment in this country. The tourism industry is also recognised as the fastest growing sector throughout the world and of great importance, a sector that continues to create employment opportunities (Tassiopoulos 2010: 328).

According to the statistics collected by the Department of Home Affairs in 2010, there was a sharp increase in the number of travellers (both South Africans and foreign nationals). In 2001, the number of travellers which was processed reached nearly 19 million and in 2010 the number rose significantly to almost 32 million. Statistics South Africa (SSA) noted that the number of foreign arrivals on average grew by 7% annually. The data indicated that among the foreign travellers, 72.1% used road, 27.5% used air, 0.2% used sea, and 0.01% used rail (Statistics South Africa 2010: 5). In 2010, the total number of tourists who visited South Africa was 8 073 552, indicating a remarkable increase of 15.1% from the recorded 7 011 865 tourist visit of 2009. According to Asia News Monitor (2015: 2) the government of South Africa said that tourism is continuing to significantly contribute to the national economy of South Africa, with a 200% expansion of tourism contribution to the GDP of the country since 1990. The statement issued by the International Cooperation, Trade and Security indicates that tourism directly represents 3% of South Africa's GDP and supports over 617 000 jobs. Including the indirect impacts, tourism generated 9.7% of the GDP and supported over 1.4 million jobs in 2014, according to the statement.

The tourism industry is reported to be a major contributor to the South African economic growth, jobs and employment of all the citizens. This shows a need for on-going efforts to showcase the country as a tourist destination of choice. The country is moving towards a goal of becoming one of the top 20 global tourist destinations by 2020 (Asia News Monitor 2015.2). Milwood, Marchiori and Zach (2013: 165) suggest that, given the increase in the use of social media applications in recent years, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) are forced to adopt and integrate this new technology so that they can better communicate with their online target audience. South Africa's marketing investment strikes a balance between business, leisure, and events tourism, as well as between emerging source markets and traditional markets. The adoption of social media in South Africa by the tourism departments can help the industry to better interact with its target audiences. According to the statement issued by the government, domestic marketing campaigns are being increased to mobilise more South Africans to visit their own country (Asia News Monitor, 2015.2).

2.3.1 Subdivisions in the tourism industry

Moutinho (2011: 5) states that the vibrant and thriving travel and tourism sector of South Africa can be divided as follows:

Hospitality sector: This refers to the provision of food, beverages and accommodation to the tourists by business organisations.

Transport sector: Where organisations focus on transporting the tourists in and around the city or the country.

Meetings, incentives, conferences, and events sector: This refers to the hosting or arranging of events such as exhibitions.

Tourist attractions: These are shows or places popular with the tourists and ranges from beaches, galleries, museums, World Heritage Sites as well as exhibitions.

2.3.2 Purpose of visit

According to the Statistics South Africa (2011: 6) the tourists who come to South Africa do so primarily for holiday and this constitutes 93.6% of the total arrivals. From the total, 3.1% come for business, 2.4% in transit, and 1.0% come to study.

2.3.3 The launch of social media hub on Telegraph.co.uk by South African Tourism

According to Lovvet (2011: 1) the South African tourism sector once launched a campaign called Undiscover South Africa which was centred around a campaign site on Telegraph.co.uk. The campaign was intended to promote the country as an affordable tourist destination. The site centred on social networking, recommendations and user-generated content, highly affordable luxury holiday options, exploring the country's wildlife, food and wine, as well as culture and heritage. Users were invited to blog about previous visits to South Africa, share holiday memories, exchange travel tips, as well as encouraged to upload videos and pictures. The hub was linked to Facebook, and it featured an interactive map featuring content about the various parts of the country including Durban. James Brown (2011: 1) added that the social media hub was designed to encourage interactivity and deepen levels of engagement.

2.3.4 KwaZulu-Natal Tourism

According to the South African Information Desk (2010: 14) KwaZulu-Natal is the country's domestic tourism leader, increasingly on the 'must-do, must see' lists of prospective travellers, and highly popular among international visitors. The TKZN strategy (2014: 7) indicates that the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority (KZNTA), operating as Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is responsible for promoting tourism within the province. The major tourist destinations in the province are found in the Durban City. The vision of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is to position the province as the continent's leading tourism destination (TKZN Strategy 2014: 5-6). The contribution of KZN tourism to the Gross Geographic Product (GGP) was R18 billion in 2010-2011 and this constituted approximately 10% of the provincial economy. The province attracted 11.6 million domestic tourism trips and 1.3 million foreign visits (TKZN Strategy 2014: 5).

2.3.5 The tourism sector in Durban

Durban is one of the major centres of tourism in South Africa and Africa because of its extensive beaches and the warm subtropical climate (Rogerson and Rogerson 2014: 195). The city is located off the east coast of the Indian Ocean, bordering the African continent (eThekweni municipality 2011: 1). It is situated on the eastern seaboard of Africa and is built around one of the busiest ports in the continent (Durban Tourism 2012: 1). Durban is most known for its swimming beaches which are lifeguard protected, the iconic Moses Mabhida stadium, the uShaka Marine World aquarium, green parks and gardens like Mitchel Park and the Botanic Gardens, and the world-class pedestrian promenade (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2014: 2).

.According to Rogerson and Rogerson (2014: 190) South African cities such as Durban have taken up the challenge of promoting urban tourism, including for the purposes of economic regeneration. Durban is marketed globally by an official marketing unit known as Durban Tourism- a part of the eThekweni Municipality. Murillo, Vaya, Romani and Surinach (2011: 4) highlight that it was only in the last decades of 20th century when many cities became aware of the economic potential of tourists visiting cities and embraced promoting tourism as a key sector inside their economies. Different policy interventions have been undertaken in Durban as have been shown in other cities to strengthen the tourism product base of the country's cities. These interventions encompasses the establishment of convention centres, new entertainment complexes, heritage tourism attractions, aggressive competitive bidding to host mega events such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the 2010 Soccer World Cup as well as Casino developments (Rogerson and Rogerson 2014: 191). Cities are growing tourist destinations in both developing and developed countries and the promotion of tourism is a vital issue to policymakers in many cities. Promoting urban tourism has emerged as a significant research topic in recent years (Rogerson and Rogerson 2014: 189).

2.3.6 Building a successful tourism industry in Durban

According to Naidoo and Suren (2011: 1) people from Johannesburg are raving about the changes that have taken place in Durban especially the transformation of

the beach-front resort area. This has seen many people posting about Durban on social media sites such as Facebook. Their attitude towards Durban has grown unbelievably positive and this is seen in the increasing numbers of tourists visiting the city. Social media has the potential to create the much needed awareness of the transformation of the beachfront. Tourism in Durban is cashing in on the major tourism infrastructure investments like the Ushaka Marine World and the beachfront. However, the city must not lose momentum and need to work hard to promote its tourist attractions and lure more international tourists. Social media can be a powerful tool which the city can use to maintain this momentum (Naidoo and Suren 2011: 5).

According to Naidoo and Suren (2011: 5) the local tourism leaders met in Elangeni Hotel to discuss and strategise ways of promoting the Durban City to the world and they were roused by Van Rooyen's sentiments for promoting the tourism industry in Durban. Van Rooyen emphasised greatly on the need to attract international tourists to visit Durban as a world-class beach destination. The tourism industry, together with Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, Durban Tourism, and other stakeholders, need to team up and sell Durban to South Africa and the World (Naidoo and Suren 2011: 5). Over the years there has been many changes which needs to be promoted on a national and at an international level to realise the tourism potential Durban has to offer. These changes need to be brought to the awareness of the nation and the world so that Durban would not lose momentum. Furthermore, Van Rooyen (2011: 6) also indicates that Durban had lost international tourists in the past as a result of local tourists who were afraid to visit places like the beach-front because of the level of crime. However, he highlighted that things have changed. There is need to send a word to tourists that Durban is now a friendly tourist destination. Social media is one such communication platform which can penetrate all corners of the world and deliver the promotional messages which the Durban City may need to communicate. Naidoo and Suren (2011: 4) report that during the 2014 December holiday, the flow of people into and around Durban was high up to the 9th of January whilst Johannesburg and Cape Town Cities were only busy until the 2nd of January. This indicates the potential of the Durban city in attracting both local and foreign visitors.

As other cities were getting less busier after the December holidays, Durban was still flooded with the tourists who came to enjoy their holiday in the city.

2.4 THE PROMOTION OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS AND PRODUCTS

According to Pomeroy, Noble and Johnson (2011: 962) promotion is the means by which organisations attempt to remind, persuade and inform customers about brands or products that they sell. In the tourism industry, promotion is the most visible factor of the '4' Ps in the marketing mix and the other three Ps refer to Product, Place and Price. Bujdosó, Manhas, David and Nedelea (2013: 37) supplement that tourism is a type of service to which the marketing mix can be applied to and promotion is an essential key element in this industry. The promotion of tourism destinations implies a particular form of communication consisting of various ways of transmission of information and messages meant to inform the potential tourist about destinations' characteristics and the component elements of tourism products offered/available.

According to Dickman and Maddock (2012: 120) tourism can be promoted when there is effective communication with the potential and actual tourists.. However, according to Neascu (2014: 119) today's customers no longer have trust on corporate messages and they no longer want to hear about commercial ads as well. Social media has become one of the most effective ways of communicating with the customers in the tourism industry. Neascu (2014:119) highlights that the promotion of tourism is targeted to develop a positive attitude towards destinations and tourism products, and to influence the purchasing and consumption behaviours of the tourists. It also aims to achieve a favourable modification of a tourist's habits and mentality towards tourist destinations and tourism products. Milwood *et al.* (2013: 166) suggest that information from sources outside the destination domain can exert significant influence on the intention to visit that destination. This led to the implementation and use of social media tools by various destination marketing organisations.

2.5 THE INTERNET

According to Howison, Finger, and Hauschka (2014: 296) Internet technology has disturbed the traditional business models of many industries, including media, finance and retail, and this has had great implications in the tourism industry. The Internet and the new emerging social media have transformed traditional marketing and communication strategies used in the tourism industry. The impact of Internet on the way of doing business is so tremendous. It lifted geographical barriers and provided users with new forms of interactive media. This is supported by Loda (2014: 306) who states that the digital revolution has already changed almost everything about how business is conducted in the tourism industry. The tourism industry has greatly benefited from the new opportunities offered by the Internet.

Luliana *et al.* (2013: 67) argue that the Internet, especially through the social media platform, has changed how marketers and consumers communicate. They add that the Internet has many distinct characteristics such as:

- Interactivity and the provision of information when demanded
- Inexpensive storage of vast amounts of information in different virtual locations
- Inexpensive and powerful means of searching and disseminating of information
- Ability to serve as a transaction medium
- Low establishment and entry costs for sellers
- Serving as a physical distribution medium for certain products, for example, softwares (Luliana *et al.* (2013: 68).

Al Kailani and Kumar (2011. 76) highlight that one of the main advantages of Internet is that it enables marketing practitioners to reach a worldwide customer segment, so that prospective customers and actual customers can search, select, and purchase products from suppliers around the world. Loda (2014: 306) argues that the Internet is most studied as a stand-alone medium, not in context with other media. The Internet is more often compared with television and print advertising. One comparison suggested that the Internet is better than print medium in that it elicits more elaboration and it leads to a more advertising effectiveness. Because of the

high-risk decision in selecting tourism destinations, the Internet was ranked as the most credible information source.

2.5.1 Online marketing

According to Howison *et al.* (2014: 297) online marketing refers to the process of using information and communication technologies as well as digital media to deliver marketing messages. Gay, Charlesworth and Esen (2007: 6) state that online marketing is the process of building and maintaining relationships with customers through online activities to facilitate the exchange of products, services, and ideas that satisfy the goals of both parties. Today's businesses are offered opportunities to distribute and promote their products and services through online marketing. Gay *et al.* (2007:7) supplement that it is necessary for tourism businesses to provide interactivity that meets a diverse range of potential consumers to enable the customers to select their choice, for example, inclusion of online booking facilities on the websites. In contrast, traditional marketing approaches evolve around the concept of "pushing" a promotional message to a broad audience. Customers are directly exposed to messages conveyed through radio, newspaper, and television. Online marketing strategies differ from traditional approaches in that it focuses on the customer itself and is thus customer driven. Internet users can access the information wherever and whenever they like, they can decide for themselves how, when, and where to access the marketing messages or the information (Howison 2014: 271). There is also great flexibility for customers to pull content according to their demands, interests, wishes, and needs. Ideally, because customers are able to choose the information to receive, access, and use, it leads to a "pull" strategy, a new marketing approach offered by the internet (Pomering *et al.*, 2011: 962).

The Internet provides a wide range of new ways for users to interact with one another, with business, and with online content. This provision for interactivity is, according to Gay *et al.* (2007: 8), the greatest advantage of online marketing. Companies are now able to interact with potential and existing customers and this allows the business to get valuable information about their products and services, build customer relationships, and create a community that can be used as a source pool. According to Howison (2014: 278) the opportunity for online interactive

communication is provided by social media. Social networks are regarded as a platform for people who share the same interests to gather to socialise and this also assist the businesses to interact with their existing and new customers. However, Chan and Guillet (2011: 347) make a distinction that although social media is based on the web, it is not equal to online marketing and it is just a subset. According to Howison *et al.* (2014: 273) social media has become increasingly evident through Web 2.0 developments. Tuten (2008: 3) defines Web 2.0 as developments in technology employed online to enable interactive capabilities in an environment characterised by dialogue, user control, and freedom. Both of the writers portray Web 2.0 as connecting the people and people as creators of content and communicating it with others. This holds strong implications in the tourism industry as it is essentially a people business.

2.6 SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Hays *et al.* (2013: 212) social media refers to practices, behaviours, and activities among communities of people who gather online to share knowledge, opinions, and information using conversational media. Conversational media refers to Web based applications that make it easy to create and transmit content in various forms such as videos, words, audios, and pictures. Social media refers to 'fluid', 'conversational', and 'participatory' online communities. Safko (2010: 3) in a simple definition states that social media is the media people use to be social. The social media terminology is made up of two parts. The first part, *social*, refers to the instinctual need of a human to connect with other humans and this has been done in one form or another since the beginning of human species. People need to be around and take part in the groups of similar like-minded people where they can feel at home and comfortable to share their experiences, ideas, and thoughts. The other part, *media*, refers to the means used by people to connect to other people. Safko (2010: 4) further indicates that whether they are bells, the telegraph, drums, written words, the telephone, television, radio, mobile phones, video, audio, websites, or photographs, the technology used by people to make those connections is what media is.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) state that social media is a group of applications based on the Internet that build on the technological and ideological foundations of

Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and sharing of user-generated content. This is supported by Howison *et al.* (2014: 74) who similarly highlight that social media became evident through Web 2.0 developments and conceptualised it as the second stage of Internet development. Chan and Guillet (2011: 347) argue that social media only emerged in recent years and there is not a universally adopted definition for it. Some literature equated social media to terms such as user-generated content, Web 2.0, consumer-generated content, and even social websites. However, Cusick (2013: 161) argue that web 2.0 is still a work in progress and provide ideas for further research in the future to understand the complexity issues and advance knowledge in the tourism and hospitality field.

Web 2.0, also known as Social Web, offers individuals a new way of communicating and interacting through social media. Social media is based on user-generated content and it includes public services and applications such as virtual worlds, social networking sites, customer review sites, video sharing platforms, and many others. It allows the user to interact with others, review, edit, or share the information with others (Tuten 2008: 4). Pomeroy *et al.* (2011: 962) highlight that social media is a completely new set of tools, and new technology that allow people and business organisations to connect customers and prospects more efficiently as well as to build relationships. It is doing what direct mail, radio, prints advertising, billboards, and the telephone did up until now. However, the difference is that social media is now more effective and more efficient (Safko 2010: 5). Furthermore, Kang and Scheutt (2013: 93) notice that social media is one of the fastest growing communication technologies available in the Internet environment as well as adopted in tourism marketing.

According to Leung, Law, Hoof and Buhalis (2013: 3) social media is a popular buzzword as well as a technological concept which brought pervasive changes in business-to-customer communication, business-to-business communication, and customer-to-customer communication. Social media has increased in popularity at a global level in recent years. For example, Facebook was said to have more than one billion users in 2012 since its invention in 2004. Facebook and other online social networks have profoundly improved the propagation of the much needed information by making the information incredibly easy to digest and share on the internet (Akrimi and Khemakhem 2012: 2). Syed-Ahmad *et al.* (2013: 161) report that Flickr is the

world's most popular photo community and it offers a platform where travellers can share and respond to photographs. Most travellers enjoy keeping their memories in photographic forms and they enjoy to share with others as well as passing comments after viewing the photographs.

2.6.1 Categories of social media

According to Safko (2010: 9) there is a need to categorise the entire world of social media. In responding to the need, the following categories of social media were found but the categories are not equally applicable and effective in promoting tourism in South Africa. The categories are: social networking, publish, photo sharing, audio, video, microblogging, livecasting, virtual worlds, gaming, search, mobile, and productivity applications. Irina, Razvan, Ridica and Daniel (2014: 1288) argue that certain social media categories cannot equally meet personal needs of the individuals as well as the needs of the business. It was suggested that social networks, video file sharing, blogs, and micro-blogs platforms can be used for both tourism business and personal purposes (Leung *et al* 2013: 10).

According to Kang and Scheutt (2013: 94) there is a variety of forms of social media such as photo sharing sites (Photobucket, Flickr), social networks (Facebook, Twitter), video sharing and creating site (Ustream, YouTube), microblogging tools (Twitter), online communities, social tagging (Digg), rating/review websites (TripAdvisor), public internet forums, moblogs/blogs, podcasting, tagging sites, wikis, news readers (Google Reader), and individual websites. These forms of social media were also adopted by Akar and Topcu (2011: 36) who also gave a similar way of categorising the various forms of social media. However, there are great differences in how writers categorise social media and there is no common criteria of categorising social media given.

2.6.2 Types of Social Media

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 58) there are different types of social media and these can be categorised into: Social Networking Sites, Blogs and Micro-Blogs, Content Community Sites, Collaborative projects, Virtual Worlds, and Sites Dedicated for Feedback. However this way of categorising social media is different from how it was categorised above by Safko (2010: 9

2.6.2.1 Social Networking Sites

These are websites where individuals meet virtually, create personal profiles, develop relationships, communicate, and connect to other individuals whom they might or might not know physically. While social networking sites are a type of social media, some authors refer to all social media sites as social networking sites with different capabilities such as video or photo sharing (O' Connor 2008: 2).

2.6.2.2 Blogs and Micro-Blogs

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 355) blogs refers to websites that allow bloggers to share insights in a particular area as well as personal experiences, interact with others through posting of comments, and to keep logs. These could be image-based, text-based, video based, or audio-based. Micro-blogs refers to another form of blogging sharing the same function and only different in that the content of those blogs are text-based and are limited to a certain number of characters (O' Connor 2008: 2).

2.6.2.3 Content Community sites

These are sites designed to share material modified from original work with people who upload the material. The content shared typically includes photos, text, presentation slides, and videos. Content community sites are different from social networking sites in that it is not a prerequisite to create a personal profile to use the shared content (Chan and Guillet 2011: 348).

2.6.2.4 Collaborative projects

These sites aim to aggregate community intelligent through depending on the users to work out the content. They can be classified into two types: social bookmarking sites and wikis. Wikis refers to sites which users can continuously modify and edit and this enhances the quality of the content. Social bookmarking sites helps individuals store and manage collection of links. The links stored online can be shared with others (Koplan and Haenlein 2010: 59).

2.6.2.5 Virtual Worlds

These are online applications resembling the real world in a 3D environment. Represented by a customised human-like character or a picture, individuals could interact with others in the virtual world (Chan and Guillet 2011: 60).

2.6.2.6 Sites Dedicated to Feedback

This social media type refers to websites that allow users to read, post, discuss, respond, review, and share opinions, thoughts, and experiences on a myriad of topics. Online sites and forums dedicated for product reviews are the most typical of sites dedicated for feedback (Chan and Guillet 2011: 348).

2.6.3 Application of social media in promoting tourism business

There are a number of companies which are still lagging in the utilisation of social media marketing platform (Chan and Guillet 2011: 346) which makes this study necessary to provide an understanding of the potential and benefits of social media for tourism companies . This study can be more important to the city of Durban's tourism industry as this social media marketing strategy may help to attract more inbound tourists.

For tourism marketers, social media represents a very important tool to communicate and engage with travellers. This implies that social media marketing should be incorporated in the online marketing plan for tourism businesses as suggested by Gay *et al.* (2007: 3). Tourism operators need to raise their level of online commitment and transform their marketing strategies to the online environment.

According to a comprehensive review of relevant literature about the use and impact of social media in the tourism industry, Leung *et al.* (2013: 3) highlight the strategic importance of social media in tourism competitiveness. The current era of social media has evolved the Internet from broadcasting medium to a participatory platform which allows the tourists to become the "media" themselves for collaborating and sharing information (Leung *et al.* 2013: 4). Hays *et al.* (2013: 214) argue that social media has radically altered the way of creating and dissemination of information. This technology does now allow individuals to easily contribute their opinions, creations and thought to the Internet. There are changes in the way in which the society consumes and contributes to the creation of information. This was supported by Luliana (2013: 66) who indicates that social media allows prospects and customers to communicate directly with their friends or with a brand representative. In addition, Safko (2010: 7) suggests that social media became more effective than the conventional marketing that was done in the last 6000 years because it allows for two-way communication.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 62) indicate that social media has many advantages as it helps in connecting consumers to business, aid in developing relationships and foster those relationships in a low cost and timely manner. This is supported by Guo (2014: 1) who highlights that social media is an effective channel of engaging customers and building relationships through experience sharing and community building, a function not offered by traditional communication outlets. Loreche *et al.* (2012: 1755) add that social media is involved in effecting and influencing attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour, while bringing together different like-minded people. Cusick (2013: 161) supplements that social media is an effective and low cost global marketing tool. This makes social media the most relevant tool in promoting tourism because tourism is a service which needs to be marketed globally.

Loreche *et al.* (2012: 1755) point out that people in general like the act of creating, contributing, and joining online communities to fulfil their needs of being recognised, socially connected, interacting with others, and getting a sense of belongingness. In each day, more than 3 million photos are uploaded to Flickr, 5 million tweets, and a million new blog entries are posted on Twitter and other blog sites and these statistics significantly demonstrate the potential of social media in promoting tourism (Luliana *et al.* 2013: 67). Social media sites enable potential visitors to learn from previous visitors through its ability to spread electronic word-of-mouth at a dramatic speed. The shared experiences from previous visitors to the destination can influence the intention of potential visitors to visit the place.

According to (Leung *et al.* 2013: 4) the higher degree of “use democracy” culture and the ability to share information through social media have made substantial changes to the bargaining power of customers and information asymmetry. Hays *et al.* (2013: 212) add that the advent of social media market the shift from word-of-mouth to what they called *world-of-mouth*. This shows that the importance of adopting social media by tourism marketing organisations is very critical.

According to Hays *et al.* (2013: 213) the line of communication opened by social media in the tourism industry is not only producer-to-consumer, but can be consumer-to-producer, consumer-to-consumer, as well as one-to-one, many-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many. This is what traditional communication media could not offer. The popularity of online travel communities is mainly attributed to the ability

to gain trustworthy reviews from visiting the sites. However, social media is criticised by Howison *et al.* (2014: 272) who argue that businesses cannot control the content that can be uploaded by Internet users and information that is reviewed by other users. The transposing of traditional marketing approaches into the world of electronic marketplaces is not guaranteed to work.

2.6.3.1 The Social Information Processing Theory

The social information processing theory gives a clear lens to analyse how interpersonal influence processes through the use of social media. The premise behind this theory is that meaning is socially constructed, and social environments offers an important source of information and cues about individual's behaviour and perceptions. It differs from the traditional face-to-face contexts in that the information delivered on social media platforms has extended from natural language to other formats of communicative languages such as audio, text, video, and rich media (Tham *et al.* 2013: 151).

The other difference from face-to-face contexts is that the personal influence on social media platforms is expanded in terms of its scale and scope as a larger number of individuals can get connected by informational linkages than conventional communication tools. Social media also differs from traditional face-to-face contexts in that a less effort is invested by people to reach a larger number of other people and as a result, individuals are encouraged to act on their natural impulse to share information and knowledge. Computer-mediated communication on social networks .allows immediacy of feedback which provides an unprecedented ability to connect people sequentially and concurrently. Guo (2014: 3) states that the influence of social media is more pervasive and compelling than conventional mass media because of the ability of social media to influence a larger number of people, the ability to deliver rich information, and the minimal effort required from individuals to make influence attempts. This theory implies that social media can be successfully applied in promoting tourism business.

2.6.3.2 Role of social media in tourism operations and management

Leung *et al.* (2013: 7) suggest that social media provide unprecedented opportunities to tourism companies to understand and respond to customer preferences. This can be achieved through analysing the comments on online communities such as

Virtualtourist and TripAdvisor. Travel related companies and hotels can be able to better understand their competitors. It also becomes easier for travel related companies and hotels to discover what their guests like and dislike about them. In response to this rapidly expanding trend and the potential benefits which can be offered by social media, numerous tourism businesses and hotels were seen integrating social media applications into their websites. This can be done to enhance the tourist's information search experience.

According to Chan and Guillet (2011: 346) social media can be an effective tool in the tourism industry to build brand loyalty, act as online distribution channel, perform service recovery, and build relationships with customers in the community. The writers add that social media can help the company to obtain operational and strategic goals, and to harness the power of brand advocates. Social media meets the travellers' needs by allowing the sharing of information among individuals in various parts of the world. This gives the travellers unfiltered information, the type of information they have long aspired for. The industry report (World Travel Market 2011) announced that over one-third of United Kingdom leisure travellers choose their hotels on the basis of social media sites like Facebook and TripAdvisor.

Social media plays a major role in disrupting traditional business models and is allowing creators of content to connect directly with their audience. Ingram (2012: 1) highlights that such socially-driven disruptions are affecting the rest of the economy, particularly in industries providing services that can easily be socialised such as the tourism business and the education market. He warns that service businesses that do not use or fail to use social features to increase efficiency and lower communication barriers will not survive long. This assertion is supported by Howison *et al.* (2014: 297) who indicate that social media is not an optional extra in the tourism industry. However, organisations need to have an understanding of how to use social media to accomplish their various purposes. Organisations also need to understand the identity of different member types in a virtual community in order to use appropriate social media platforms that can effectively appeal to different member types.

2.6.3.3 The Social Media Consumption Behaviours Theory

The social media usage behaviours of consumers may work as a precursor to understand how organisations might use social media tools for relationship marketing purposes. Consumer's communication behaviour on user-generated content was differentiated in one research into consumption (lurking) and contribution (posting). In an attempt to identify the different member types in a virtual community, Valk, Bruggen and Wierenga (2009:186) suggest six patterns of members' participation/communication behaviour as: i) core members, who are the people contributing the most to the community by supplying, retrieving, and discussing information, ii) informationalsists, those who mostly retrieve and supply information, iii) conversationalist, those who discuss the information, ix) functionalists, those interested in retrieving information, x) opportunists, the individuals who retrieve marginal content, and xi) hobbyists, the individuals who focus on updating their personal information. Based on this theory, marketing practitioners would incorporate a range of social media platforms to appeal to different member types (Heinonen 2011: 357). However, this theory does not specify which particular social media platform to use when and where.

2.6.4 Uses of social media by tourism organisations

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010; 62) the higher level of efficiency available in using social media compared to traditional communication channels prompted tourism industry leaders to state that tourism companies, like any other company, must participate on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and other social media sites in order to succeed in today's business and technological environment. This is supported by Loreche *et al.* (2012: 1756) and Luliana *et al.* (2013: 68) who encourage companies to be active on social media sites in order to remain successful. Furthermore, Guo (2014: 2) supplements that companies should not only have a presence in social media, but also use these platforms to interact with customers.

Luliana *et al.* (2013: 67) suggest that tourism companies must utilise the social media platforms as those websites provides an opportunity for companies to interact and engage with current and potential customers, create meaningful and important relationships with customers, and encourage an improved sense of intimacy of the customer relationship. However. Guo (2014: 3) argue that little is known about how

organisations can use social media to develop those relationships. Social media is more relevant in today's tourism business environment where customer loyalty can vanish through a small mistake which can be followed by online propagation of the unfortunate encounter with a certain tourist destination, company, product, service or brand (Mersey, Malthouse and Calder 2011: 39).

Mersey *et al.* (2011: 40) indicate that some companies had already noticed the power of social media and others are beginning to notice now. A few social networking websites already allow customers to exchange information about products and services as well as participating in co-creating value in online experiences. Guo (2014: 2) supplements that tourism organisations can utilise social media to create bonds with customers. Companies can also use social media to reinvigorate their marketing by listening and responding to customers' needs and building ongoing dialogues. The various uses of social media by tourism organisations are explained below.

2.6.4.1 Destination marketing

Bakker (2012: 32) emphasises that social media is turning the whole destination marketing sphere upside down. William Bakker is a chief strategist at Think! Social, a Vancouver-based digital marketing agency focusing on the tourism industry. He argues that people may not talk about their laundry detergent, but when it comes to travel and tourism, everybody talks about it. As a result of this, destination marketing organisations are discovering various ways to manage digital campaigns and utilise social media (Lain and Vinh 2013: 8). Durban's destination marketing organisation is no stranger to the powers of social media. In response to the mega event of FIFA World Cup 2010, it mounted a social media blitz via its websites which featured beautiful pictures of the Durban beaches.

2.6.4.2 Correcting misperceptions about destinations

According to Cindy (2012: 32) an example of a destination marketing organisation which embraced the power of social media is Florida DMO in 2010. In response to the BP oil spill, the Florida Live website was mounted with social media blitz and was linked to residents' Twitter feeds and Flickr pages-real time evidence that Florida beaches had been spared destruction. In addition, Seccombe (2012: 31) supplements by vowing that they had to correct that misperception by fighting it with

the truth: with real people, with real photos and in real time. Florida then launched a five-week campaign that attracted contestants to 'VISIT FLORIDA' A Facebook page and website was set up and contestants could win a grand price of three Florida vacation packages.

2.6.4.3 Pushing sales

Social media is used in the tourism business industry to push sales by attracting more tourists to South African destinations (Strauss and Frost 2014: 68). Marketing will create awareness of tourist attractions available in the region, provide information, and persuade the people to visit South Africa. Hudson and Thal (2013: 61) further argue that some social media sites leads to some sales and ultimately this can contribute to the growth in revenue. However, it is difficult to determine what increase in sales was a result of social media or other marketing efforts.

2.6.4.4 Converting prospective tourists to tourists

Social media is an effective tool for customer service in the tourism industry, communications, and public relations. The use of social media for marketing and sales is partially responsible for converting prospective tourists to tourists who will actually visit or plan to visit South Africa at a later stage (Irina *et al.* 2014: 1291). The success of a marketing effort is largely seen in its ability to convert prospective customers into actual customers.

2.6.4.5 Responding to customer complaints

Some tourism companies use social media to respond to customer complaints at this final stage. Academic scholars noted the potential of social media in helping tourism and hospitality companies to increase their online presence and to engage potential, current, and previous guests. The ability of social media to improve the online presence of tourism companies and engaging with prospective and actual tourists allow the companies to quickly identify customer complains. Social media allows tourism organisations to take note of some of the negative postings by tourists and provides a chance to respond to those postings as well as to improve the quality of the services offered (Kang and Scheutt 2013: 94).

2.6.4.6 Managing customer relations

Leung, Law, Hoof and Buhalis (2013: 6) illustrate that social media is useful for managing customer relations with its unique ability to attract customers through focused, in-depth, and member generated content, retaining the customers through building relations with other members, and engaging customer through social attractions. Irina *et al.* (2014: 1291) also suggest that social media is an effective tool for customer service, communications, and public relations. However, little is known about how the relationships are actually created on social media.

2.6.4.7 Source of insights for improvements

According to Kang and Scheutt (2013: 94) other tourism companies are utilising the opportunity presented by social media to gather insights to boost continual incremental improvements. The greatest contributions can however come from new customer insights and brand reinforcement. Facebook interactions can help a company to appreciate the extensive planning that goes into a big trip and a company can respond by launching a site dedicated to inspirational journeys. The conversations are moderated by the customers and they can go as far as exchanging advices, information, and stories.

2.6.4.8 Reinforcing the brand

The fresh insights obtainable from social media have the potential to reinforce the innovation aspect of the brand (Hudsson and Thal 2013: 160). However, Milwood *et al.* (2013: 167) argue that destination marketing organisations do not only need to engage in online conversations, but they also need to make adjustments to their web marketing strategies based on their findings from the conversations. Engaging with consumers consistently using social media can be used to reinforce durability and strength for a brand and evidence that confirms a huge return on investing in social media will emerge (Dholakia and Durham 2010, cited in Hudson and Thal 2013: 161).

According to Divol, Edelman, and Sarrazin (2012: 5) some tourism organisations like Vail Resorts and Disney have embraced social media to good effect. However, results indicate that social media still accounts for less than 1% in an average marketing budget. A recent research suggests that tourism companies are not

effectively utilising social media to engage travellers in a more meaningful way (Chan and Guillet 2012: 348).

2.6.4.9 Influencing destination image

Lai and Vinh (2013: 3) demonstrate that destination image has in recent years become a very important issue in the promotion of the tourism industry since many countries are using global marketing strategies to compete with other destinations. Syed-Ahmad *et al.* (2013: 162) define destination image as an overall impression of a destination derived from thoughts, emotions, and perceptions based on information obtained from a range of sources. Skinner (2008: 916) suggests that two different images are involved in the branding of a tourism destination. One image is created by the feedback from travellers possessing and sharing experience with the destination or from non-experienced travellers utilising external sources of information, which as well generate feedback that influence the evaluation of destinations. Social media is undoubtedly of a major influence towards the development of this image. The other image is generated through promotional activities of the tourism marketing organisation or the government.

2.6.4.10 Inferring the expectations and experiences of visitors

The participation and monitoring of online conversations provides an opportunity to tourism organisations to understand the expectations of prospective visitors as well as the experience of past visitors to the destination. According to Hudson and Thal (2013: 156) social media has caused a fundamental change to the consumer decision making process and raised the expectations of the customers from their destinations. The ability of tourism organisations to meet those expectations gives the customers a good experience. When the expectations are exceeded, it is hoped that tourists will be pleased.

2.6.4.11 Easy access to global audience

According to Hays *et al.* (2013: 212) social media gives destination marketing organisation (DMO) a tool to easily reach a global audience with limited resources. This can be achieved with easy and at great speeds. Traditional strategies are not

efficient in reaching the global audience and the rise of social media created the much needed opportunity in the tourism sector to reach the global audience with messages. This is one of the greatest advantages of social media over traditional media.

2.6.4.12 A tool to measure public beliefs, attitudes and values

Milwood *et al.* (2013: 166) supplement that tourism can use the analysis of user-generated-content shared on social media sites as an efficient way to measure public beliefs, values, and attitudes towards a tourism destination. The messages or comments from the people using social media sites are loaded with meanings and the organisations needs to analyse and evaluate the messages in order to be informed about the people's attitudes, values and beliefs towards a destination.

2.6.5 Uses of social media by travellers

Cindy (2012: 32) argues that it is high time to forget about catchy television jingles and dog-eared road maps as people are massively turning to social media. Travellers have turned to social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, You Tube, and Pinterest to review hotels, map their routes, critique accommodations, and post personal videos and photos. Guo (2014: 2) states that Twitter and Facebook are the most popular social networking sites with search engine marketers. An unprecedented opportunity was created for destination marketing organisation (DMOs) like Durban Tourism to connect with travellers and attract them in real time. Luliana *et al.* (2013: 67) add that the unique aspect of social media is that it managed to revolutionize the marketing practices of promotion and advertising. The major uses of social media by travellers are explained below.

2.6.5.1 Reliable source of travel information

According to Kang and Scheutt (2013: 95) shared travel experiences and user-generated-content shared on social media is considered as a more reliable source of information than information provided by private sector businesses and tourism businesses. Social media plays a major role in creating pre-trip destination impressions as well as a source of recommendations which influences travel decisions. The tourism industry is an information intensive industry and individuals need to be exposed to as much information as possible in order to make informed decisions. Social media is considered by travellers as most reliable source of

information than information from private organisations which may be subjected to their selfish interests.

2.6.5.2 Photo sharing

Social media has resulted in online photo sharing becoming the norm and travellers easily share, view, and respond to photos posted on social media sites. Syed-Ahmad *et al.* (2013: 161) suggest that as photo-sharing through Flickr, the largest photo sharing site became so common. Researchers can use responses to photos by viewers to examine destination image. It was observed that tourists take and share photographs as part of their gaze. The photos are often evocative and descriptive of the destination. People can view photos and members can comment on those photos that impact them and tag them as favourites (McKercher, Cheung and Law, 2010: 726).

2.6.5.3 Influencing destination choice

According to Tham, Croy and Mair (2013: 144) there is a range of alternative destinations available to destination decision makers. It is posited that a range of information sources influence destination choice. Word-of-mouth is a key aspect to decision making which was made available electronically in recent years through technological advances in the form of social media. This change to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has introduced decision makers to an easy-to-access and much broader collection of friends that have a potential to influence decision making. In addition, it appears that electronic word-of-mouth is now given the same credence as word-of-mouth (WOM), and is assumed to cause the same influence in destination decision making (Litvin and Hoffman 2012: 136).

2.6.5.4 Engaging with marketers

Tourism marketers are considerably using social media to engage with actual and potential tourists. Travellers need to get engaged with marketers so that they can get updated on current information or price discounts on certain product bundles. Travellers will have the chance to ask questions and get clarity whilst at the same time the marketers can respond to the questions as well as conveying their marketing messages concurrently. On the “evaluation” stage, customer to customer interaction through social media is now playing a pivotal role in decision making (Hudson and Thal 2013: 158).

2.7 TRIP PLANNING AND THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Waxer (2012: 31) states that travellers in recent years are turning to social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Foursquare to review hotels, map their travelling route, critique accommodation and post personal photos. This is supported by Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013: 211) who indicate that social media has fundamentally changed how travellers plan for and book trips, access information, and the way of sharing experiences. They emphasises that the increasing prevalence of social media platforms that allows users to collaborate, communicate and publish original content such as wikis, videos, blogs photos and reviews is a significant development in the evolution of internet. The original content on social media has the power to influence behaviour of the travellers. This can be explained better by the social influence theory.

2.7.1 The social influence theory

According to Kang and Scheutt (2013: 95) social influence is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that individuals who are important to him or her want that person to behave in a particular behaviour. Individuals participating in social media activities, as people in communities, are influenced by community group members. Travel experiences shared on social media is considered as one of the most important aspects of tourism organisations as well as traveller behaviours for tourists. Social influence theory provides a well-established base to understand the psychological commitment to a certain attitude or behaviour. This also explains the changes in the individual behaviour produced by social influences. This makes social media a very influential platform in the tourism industry.

2.7.2 The pre-trip phase of the traveller and the role of social media

There is need to ascertain the extent to which tourists use social media in the three phases of travellers' travel planning process. A recent research from Google has shown that among leisure travellers, 84% use the internet as a major resource for planning. According to Torres (2010 cited by Leung *et al.* (2013:3) the likelihood of online travellers coming across a social media content was more than one-tenth of the search results. This led scholars to coin the paramount importance of social media in the pre-trip or research phase of the traveller's planning process after noticing an increase in the popularity of websites that contain traveller-generated content. Howison *et al.* 2014: 175) highlight that tourism operator-generated

content is particularly more important at the point of pre-trip and the challenge is for tourism companies to perceive and capitalise upon the influential audience reach enabled by social media.

Leung *et al.* (2013: 8) argue that lack of a direct experience with a tourism product is an important issue in tourism, meaning that the perceived benefits and quality of tourism products cannot easily be evaluated before the product is consumed. Usually tourism-related products are high-involvement, high-priced, and well-differentiated and travellers need to collect and review enough information early in their decision making process so as to reduce the risk of making wrong decisions. This information need can be met through searching the content on social media. Tourists cannot only collect the much needed information from relatives and friends available in their social network, but also can access extensive information from internet users around the world (Luliana, Luigi and Mihaji 2013: 68).

Theovenot (2007 cited by Leung *et al* 2013: 9) supplement that travel perspectives and experiences of previous tourists could be shared with others in various formats such as audio, image, text, and video. Social media information is a collaboration of knowledge from people around the world. This makes social media a more effective tool in equipping the customers with destination and tourism product knowledge than other sources of information. However, it is argued that the information content on social media can be unreliable because it can be posted by a person with a commercial self-interest. Trust was found to be very important in the creation and use of travel-related user generated content found on social media. Less trust was placed on more generic social networking sites than online travel websites.

2.7.3 The during-trip phase of the traveller and the role of social media

User generated content on social media can provide unprecedentedly up-to-date information in diversified formats to the tourist. Howison *et al.* (2014: 275) strongly emphasise the importance and use of social media by travellers during the travel process. The writers added that travellers use the Internet and Facebook to communicate from airports or major bus stations using their mobile devices or free Internet access at the airports. Tourists also use free internet access at their destinations and accommodation to send emails, videos, and digital images. They also send text messages containing information about their destinations, arrivals,

and departures. Friends and families will then begin to follow them on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media and become recipients and co-creators of user-generated content created by the tourists (Yoo and Gretzel 2011: 140).

Social media influences awareness to destination and subsequent decisions when selecting the destination. It was reported that information on social networking sites greatly influences customers when making their purchase decisions. In another study conducted in 2007 by comScore, 84% of the tourists reported that travel reviews had significantly influenced them on their purchase decisions.

2.7.4 The post-trip phase of the tourist and the role of social media

It was reported that social media is also predominantly used after the trip for sharing the experience. Luliana *et al.* (2013: 67) highlight that social media influences the behaviour of the tourist from information acquisition stage to post-purchase behaviour such as patterns of Internet usage and dissatisfaction behaviours or statements. This was supported by Loreche, Habibi, Richard and Sankaranarayanan (2012: 1755) who state that almost all customers, especially travellers, can participate actively in the generation and enrichment of online travel content.

According to Yoo and Gretzel (2011: 139) some scholars, knowing that this is the last phase of the trip planning process, were eager to investigate the motive of tourist in post-purchase evaluation and creation of user generated content on social media. It was found that social interaction and sharing of life experiences are the two major factors motivating the travellers to create user generated content on social media (Howison *et al.* 2014: 274). The writers highlighted the importance of traveller-generated content on the during trip and after travel stages of the travel planning process.

2.8 ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN TRAVELLERS' DECISION MAKING

According to Leung, Law, Hoof, and Huhalis (2013: 5) travellers have widely adopted social media in order to search for information, organise, share and annotate their experiences and stories through micro blogs and blogs (eg twitter and blogger), online communities (eg TripAdvisor and Facebook), media sharing sites (eg

YouTube and Flickr), social knowledge sharing sites(eg Wiktravel), social bookmarking sites (eg Delicious), and other tools collaboratively.

According to Al Kailani and Kumar (2011: 68) communication through the new form of consumer socialisation, social media, has profound impacts on marketing strategies as well as on consumer decision making process. Social media provides a virtual environment for people to communicate through the Internet and it is an important agent for consumer socialisation. Luliana *et al.* (2013: 66) states that the consumer socialisation theory predicts that communication among consumers affects their behavioural, effective, and cognitive attitudes. This signifies the potential influence which social media can cause in the tourism industry. It affects even the behaviour of the tourists to visit certain places.

The nature of the product, tourism experience, cannot be evaluated prior to consumption as it is intangible. Therefore, personal recommendations are greatly influential and can easily be accessed on social media platforms. Travellers rely on other travellers' advice far much more than standard print advertisements and guidebooks. In response to this, Hays *et al.* (2013: 213) affirms that many travel organisations are developing their own online travel communities to engage consumers in conversations. They add that those travel communities will gain more importance in the future.

Hays *et al.* (2013: 212) supplement that social media is particularly relevant to the tourist's decision making process since tourism is an 'information-intensive industry. Travellers need to get information to make informed decisions about destinations, tours, restaurants, attractions to visit, and accommodation. Information is also greatly needed throughout the trip-planning process.

2.9 THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TOURIST DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Law, Leung and Buhalis (2009: 602) point out that the consumers follow the stages in the buyers' decision making process before making any purchase. These authors state that the five stages of the decision making process are: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. However, Hudson and Thal (2013: 156) argue that social media has caused a fundamental change to the consumer decision making process and this

resulted in the emerging of a more sophisticated view about the engagement of consumers with various brands. The extent and implications of the changes brought by the communication platform of social media called for the re-evaluation of the consumer decision journey in the travel and tourism industry. This is supported by Lai and Vinh (2013: 2) who demonstrate that a tourist decision procedure is so complex. Social media made the information evaluation stage of the decision making process increasingly relevant.

2.9.1 Tourism need recognition

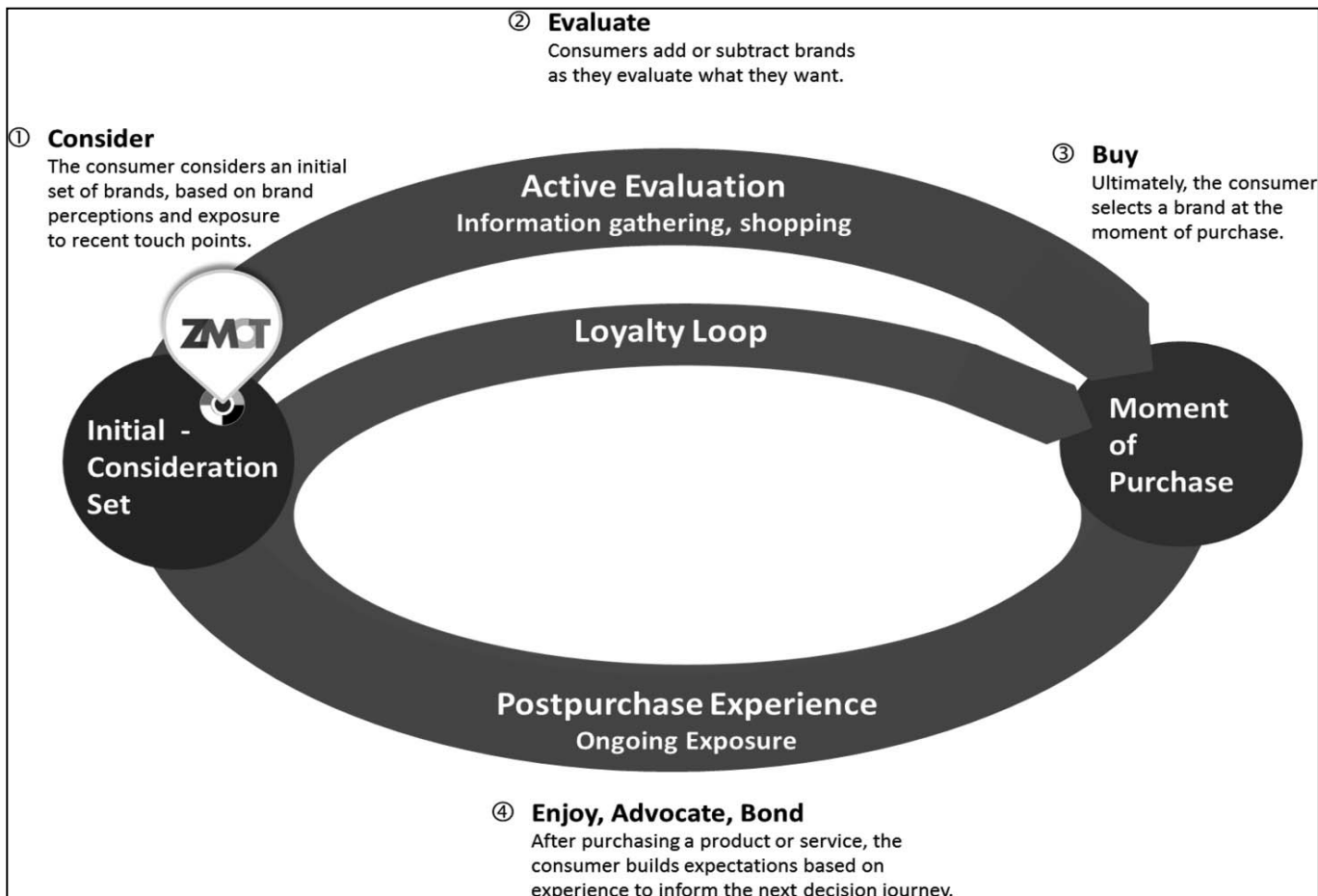
Law, Leung and Buhalis (2009: 602) suggest that the understanding of traveller information search can help the industry to develop, optimise search engine, and to better meet the needs of customers by customising the websites. The Internet is the most important source of information to travellers, especially the young and the educated segment. Senior and mature travellers use the internet in conjunction with printed brochures. Social media is relevant in need recognition of the consumer (Pan, McLaurin and Crotts 2007: 35). Many people may realise about their need to travel through social media platforms. When other tourists post about their personal experiences, a need is triggered in the reviewers to visit certain destinations. Without social media, some individuals might stay ignorant of their need to travel or may be aware of the need to travel but are not motivated to embark on travel in that period. Social media has the power to arouse the travel need in individuals.

2.9.2 Information search

Kang and Schuett (2013: 93) indicate that information shared on social media sites is an important source of information to travellers and may influence travel decision of potential tourists. The information is regarded by travellers are more reliable and free from bias than the information from corporate organisations. Tourists require different information from social media at different stages of their travel. It was found out that many travellers prefer to book online when they have visited the destination before and still feel familiar with the place. In this internet era, social media plays a very important role in information search and the available information can influence destination decisions before departure. (Law, Leung and Buhalis 2009: 603):

Tourism marketers are considerably using social media to engage with actual and potential tourists throughout the decision making journey. The stages of the decision journey in the tourism industry were put across by Court, Elzinga, Mulder, and Vetvik (2009: 30) as: (i) consider, (ii) evaluate, (iii) buy, (iv) enjoy, bond, and advocate.

Figure 2.1: The consumer decision journey today



Source: Court *et al.* (2009: 30)

The model consumer decision model depicted in Figure 1 was modified to recognise the importance of the “Zero Moment of Truth” (ZMOT), a recently coined term to describe the reality where tourism marketers have to compete for customers’ attention online long before a purchase decision is made (Court *et al.* 2009: 31). Tourism marketers use social media in various ways to engage with travellers throughout this consumer decision process (Hudson and Thal (2013: 157).

2.9.3 Evaluation of alternatives

According to Customer Research North America (2015) at the “evaluation” stage, customer to customer interaction through social media is now playing a pivotal role, for example, on social media like TripAdvisor.com and or blogs such as travelblog.org. Consumers undertake an outreach to marketers and other sources of information at this stage. Tourism companies are no longer the unrivalled experts on the quality or attributes of products and brands. Online reviews of tourist attractions or hotels, for example, play a very important role at the evaluation stage.

In the travel and tourism industry, the research on social media is predominated by blogs and blog websites. These can be the most influential tools to reach the potential tourists during the evaluation stage (Hudson and Thal 2013: 158). Brand communities available online are also influential at this stage. They open venues to express intense brand loyalty and emotional connection with the brand by the customers. It is suggested by research that marketers should perform a passive role when it comes to facilitating these brand communities (Chan and Guillet 2011: 350).

2.9.4 Purchase decision

According to Pick (2013: 1) more than half of social media users, especially under the age of 35, tend to follow the recommendations from their friends online for destinations, products and services. The “buy” stage is most likely to occur through social media sites. Law, Leung and Buhalis (2009: 604) supplement that more travellers are now purchasing tourism products through websites and the purchase intentions are directly influenced by the websites image. Some tourism organisations and hotels are using social media not as just a customer relationship tool. On their Facebook pages, some hotels are now offering room-booking technology amounting to a considerable increase in sales (Strauss and Frost 2014: 225). However, it is suggested that tourism organisations should avoid hard selling on social media sites. A deeper brand connection interestingly begins after purchase as the consumer starts interacting with the product and other new online touch points. At the enjoy, advocate and bond stage, tourism businesses can engage with customers through a relatively new social media platform of geo-

location such as Foursquare and Loopt where travellers are encouraged to broadcast their whereabouts (Chan and Guillet 2011: 348).

2.9.5 Post-purchase Behaviour

Social media provides a good platform for tourists to rate their experience and express their feelings. After returning to their respective homes, travellers often like to exchange and share their travel experience. As travellers enjoy sharing their travel diaries on social media sites, the content on social media affects the viewer's perception of the image of a certain destination (Pan *et al.* (2007: 37). Hays *et al.* 2013: argue that as social media rises in popularity, the travellers gain more power as the authority of tourism organisations declines. Marketers and institutions in the tourism industry no longer have the ultimate control over the image of their product or destination. Social media is current and constantly evolving phenomena involving consumer generated content shared online.

2.10 A 20-YEAR PERIOD TREND REVIEW

Line and Runyan (2012 cited in Leung *et al.* 2013: 4) emphasise the importance of academic scholars to review prior research in their fields of study because the extant research works on specific research areas can help the scholars to appreciate historical patterns and better predict future trends. In response to this assertion, Buhalis and Law (2008 cited in Leung *et al.* 2013: 5) reviewed 149 eTourism studies from 1998 to 2007, a 20-year period. They exhibited the status quo and ubiquity of information technology in the promotion of tourism. Their work demonstrated that a number of issues in e-Tourism were not fully addressed in the literature and e-Tourism research was still in its infancy. Furthermore, if research was able to exactly identify how, where, and when social media influences customers, marketers were going to be able to craft effective marketing strategies that can manipulate the advantage of social media's unique ability to engage with customers.

2.11 THE PROMOTION MIX

According to Debasish and Murilidhar (2013: 78) the tools in the promotion mix are direct marketing, advertising, public relations and publicity, online advertising, sales promotion, and personal selling. Neascu (2014: 120) distinguishes categories of promotional activities into: sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, and public relations. This shows that sales promotion, advertising public relations, and personal selling are the common elements of the promotion mix. Blaga (2013: 31) highlights that the effectiveness of a communication system depends on how the tourism organisation manages to develop the messages, choose the target audience, and select the media (means) by which the information is conveyed to the target audience. However, Debasish and Murilidhar (2013: 79) argue that communication tools have merits and demerits which do affect the effectiveness of a communication system.

Figure 2.2: The Promotion Mix Elements.

Promotional mix instruments			
Advertising	Public relations	Sales promotion	Direct sales
Commercials-printed, radio/tv broadcasted, Catalogues, magazines, Brochures, flyers, Posters, tourist maps and guides banners, internet sites, audio-video materials (CD, DVD, stick USB, Movies)	Conferences, press release, articles, shows, speeches, Seminars Year books, sponsorships Slogans, special events, tours, lobby	Games, challenges, gifts, lotteries, various manifestations, trips, Demonstrations, samples, coupons, Loyalty cards, bundles, Free offers, discounts	Commercial presentations, business meetings, incentives, trade fairs and exhibitions, Direct marketing

Source: Neascu (2014: 120)

2.11.1 Advertising

Debasish and Murilidhar (2013: 78) define advertising as any paid form of non-personal presentation of goods, services, or ideas by an identified sponsor. Traditional media such as radio, magazines, television, newspapers, direct mail, books, transit cards (advertisements on taxis and buses), and billboards were commonly used to transmit messages to consumers. In addition to this, the Internet emerged as a modern advertising medium. However, some writers argue that the Internet medium is a stand-alone medium.

Loda (2014: 305) adds that television is acknowledged to be the most powerful advertising medium and it reaches a broad spectrum of present and prospective customers. The greatest benefit of advertising lies in its ability to reach a larger number of customers at a given time period. This makes cost per contact relatively low in advertising than with other elements of the promotion mix. The greatest advantage of advertising is that it can reach masses of audience, for example, through national television channels. However, Loda (2014: 306) argues that the credibility of advertising has reduced in recent years because it is known to be a vested interest source and consumers very often discount the information. The total cost of advertising is generally high and this makes it more expensive.

2.11.2 Sales promotion

According to Bujdoso *et al.* (2013: 38) sales promotion in the tourism industry is described as a set of association techniques which offer customers an enhanced incentive to buy or remain loyal to a particular organisation or brand. These techniques are used to stimulate consumer demand when applied independently or collectively. Sales promotion techniques offer incentives for impulse purchase, for example e, the use of discount vouchers, competitions, coupons, gifts, and free offers. Sales promotion is used as a short-run tool intended to generate immediate increases in demand. Other organisations use sales to supplement other promotional mix elements such as personal selling and advertising in order to improve their effectiveness.

2.11.3 Public relations

Loda (2014: 305) defines publicity as editorial space in broadcast or print media to promote a place, person, or product. In the tourism industry, public relations is about how to keep positive the perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes of customers, to influence how they think about a tourism organisation. A tourism organisation can employ various programmes designed to promote and protect the organisation's image, for example, use of exhibitions, product or destination literature, or the issue of articles about the organisation or its products (Bujdoso *et al.* 2013: 38). Publicity is associated with higher rates on credibility, purchasing intent, mental processing, and attitude than advertising. However, this does not mean publicity uniformly outperforms advertising. It is considered as a supportive element and not a primary factor in the promotion process of the organisation.

2.11.4 Personal selling

This refers to all promotional attempts through face-to-face contact between the salesperson and the person to whom the promotional message is targeted. The greatest advantage of this element of the promotional mix is that the seller can adjust the sales presentation to suit the specific needs of the customer. Tourism fairs are a typical example of an environment where personal selling can achieve great benefits.

2.11.4.1 Tourism fairs

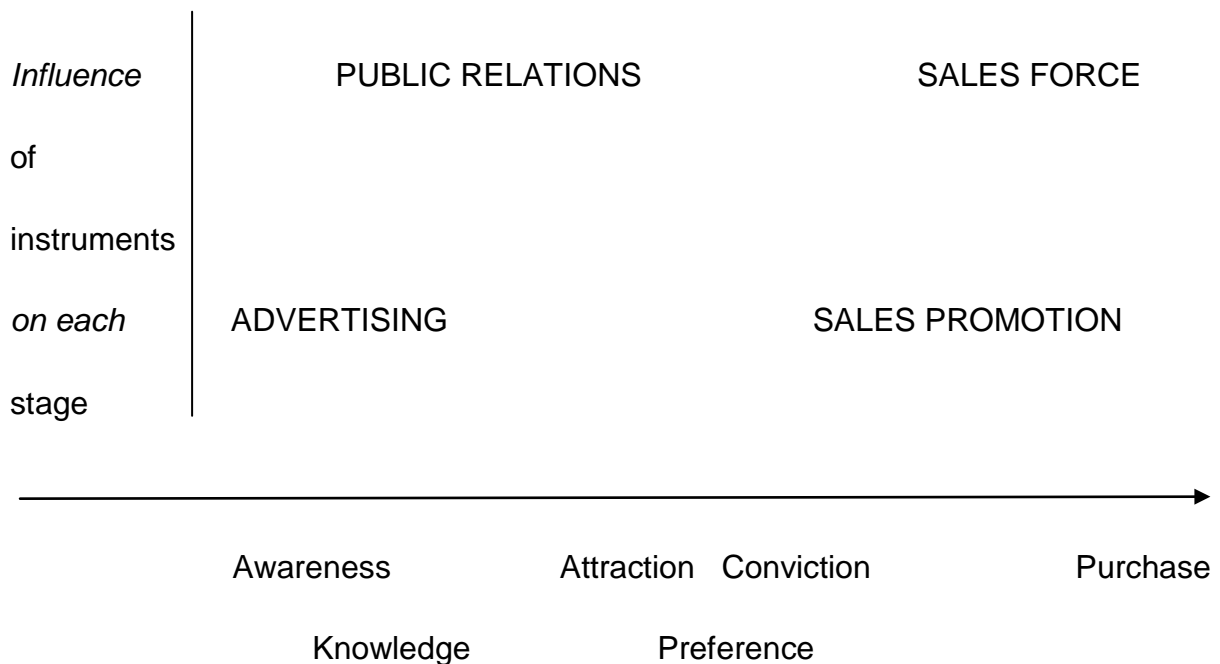
According to Neascu (2014: 119) tourism fairs take place in the form of integrated short promotional campaigns which are intended to reach a mass of potential customers. It enables the dissemination of different promotional materials to an interested audience as well as offering an opportunity to address various participants. The complexity of this promotional strategy is conferred by mainly three aspects: the multitude of objective to be accomplished, possibility to associate a variety of promotional techniques, and the great number and diversity of participants. The centre of the various categories of the participants is the visitors. Visitors are most important as they are the potential tourists and the exhibitions are addressed to them. Visitors attend tourism fairs to get price offers, to learn about new things in the

field, to find products that meet their needs, and to get informed about the offer in the market (Bujdoso *et al.* 2013: 39).

2.11.5 Lavidge and Steiner Model

According to Braga (2013: 33) the setting of communication objectives helps to better understand how to adjust the communication tools depending on the context, situations, and different characteristics. In 1961, Lavidge and Steiner developed the hierarchy of effects model which is graphically illustrated in Figure 2: 3.

Figure 2.3: Output Variation Communication Mix's Tools Based On Objectives.



The correlation described and established above recommends that, for a marketing communication strategy that target to raise brand awareness or to draw the attention of consumers to the product or service, advertising and public relations are the recommended tools. If the tourism organisation wants to develop preferences, stimulate opinions, correct a bad image about a tourist destination, the model also recommends the use of public relations tools such as participation in fairs, lobbying, sightseeing familiarization, and other personal communication channels. Sales promotion is also recommended by participating in open point's sale of travel packages, contests, and tourist information (Braga 2013: 34).

2.12 INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND THE PROMOTION OF TOURISM

According to Rehman and Ibrahim (2011: 188) Integrated Marketing Communication involves the merging of distinct communication functions in such a way that the organisation speaks with “one voice”. It moved beyond just communication to the creation of synergistic communication through a process of using elements of the promotional mix in a unified way. Marketing communication is the voice of the organisation and its brand and is the way by which a company can establish a dialogue and create relationship with customers. It allows the customers to know the producer of the product, what benefit it stands for and link the brand to places, events, people, feelings, and experiences (Sisodia and Telrandhe 2010: 133).

Integrate Marketing Communication is there to enhance the ability of the company to deliver the right message to the right customers in the right place and at the right time. It is the planning and execution of all marketing communication needed for a brand, company, place or product to satisfy the common set objectives and support the positioning of promotion. Integrated Marketing Communication boosts promotional mix elements, whether it is direct marketing, advertising, sales promotion, internet/interactive marketing, personal selling or public relations, combined to provide a clear and consistent maximum communication impact. It must not just communicate with prospective and present customers, but also with related industries, vendors, employees, and the external that is directly or indirectly involved with the organisation (Sisodia and Telrandhe 2010: 134).

According to Pomeroy *et al.* (2011: 962) Integrated Marketing Communication represents a voice of creating brand awareness, educating the market, delivering information, and creating a positive image of the company. This implies that social media cannot effectively work in isolation from other elements of the promotional mix in the tourism industry. The tourism industry in Durban must integrate social media with other promotional elements in order to effectively promote the tourism industry of the city. Rehman and Ibrahim (2011: 190) argue that it is difficult to promote a product or an organisation without employing integrated marketing communication

and that nothing can be sold in this competitive global environment without promotion, no matter how good

2.12.1 Tourism demand modelling and forecasting

According to a review conducted in 2008 by Song and Li of 121 published articles from 2000 to 2007, incorporating multiple approaches is the way by which forecasting accuracy can be improved. There was not a single model which was found to consistently outperform other models in all situations. This means that given the increasing importance of social media in the tourism industry and having praised it so well, it does not mean that social media can always outperform other approaches to the promotion of the tourism industry. Demand cannot be accurately forecasted after only employing social media. Multiple approaches need to be incorporated to improve forecasting accuracy and demand modelling (Leung *et al.* 2013: 4). Therefore this means that other approaches to the promotion of the tourism industry must not be ignored. Social media alone is not enough in doing meaningful business in the tourism environment. According to Leung *et al.* (2013: 5) the successful practice of managing and manipulating social media in promoting the tourism industry still remains largely unknown to scholars and practitioners despite of the high adoption of social media by both suppliers and tourism consumers in recent years.

2.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on reviewing the literature on how social media is used by both travellers and tourism organisations in the tourism industry and how social media influences the promotion of the tourism industry. The importance of social media has dramatically increased but the practitioners still need to discover the art of manipulating it in order to realise the full potential of their tourism businesses. Tourism organisations in Durban must use various promotion strategies in an attempt to enhance the performance of the tourism industry because social media cannot always outperform other approaches to promoting the tourism industry in the City.

The next chapter gives a presentation of the research methodology that was employed in the collection of primary data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Hennink (2011: 26) research methodology refers to the way in which data was collected during a study. This chapter focuses on the research methodology and design that was used in the study. It discusses the rationale of the research methodology employed, which is directed by the objectives of the study. The research objectives are outlined followed by the research design. A discussion of the processes undertaken to collect the primary data is detailed thereafter.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research method selected for this study follows from the research objectives. For this reason, the objectives are listed hereunder:

- To examine the value of social media in the promotion of tourism in Durban, South Africa.
- To determine the perceived effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry.
- To ascertain whether the tourists refer to social media prior to, during and after their visits.
- To examine the extent to which social media can influence the final decision of a tourist.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Burns and Bush (2010: 148) explain a research design as a detailed outline of the procedures that were followed in a research effort in order to achieve the set aim and objectives. It relates to specified research methods that were followed in the collection and analysis of data. According to Malhotra (2010: 10) a research design refers to a framework for implementing a research project and it provides the procedures that must be followed in obtaining the necessary information for achieving the research objectives. It is a blueprint to be used by the researcher in executing a research project and it reflects the way of gathering the data. Its main

purpose is to propose a study that will provide information for decision making as well as answering the research questions. Research designs can be exploratory, descriptive or causal. This study followed a descriptive research design in order to achieve the set aim in determining the influence of social media in promoting the tourism industry in Durban, South Africa. According to Churchill and Lacobucuci (2010: 59) descriptive research identifies the relationship between variables or the frequency within which something occurs, which supports the objectives of the study.

The research approach may either be quantitative or qualitative in nature and this differentiates both procedures of data collection and data analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007: 145). This study was cross-sectional and followed a quantitative research approach. Creswel (1994: 2) defines a quantitative research approach as “an inquiry variables, measured in numbers, and analysed following statistical procedures, in order to determine the truthfulness of the predictive generalisations of the theory”. In support of this, Saunder *et al.* (2007: 145) indicate that the quantitative research approach predominantly deals with data-collection and data analysis procedures such as use of questionnaires and statistics or graphs that use statistical models and numerical data

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding a human or social problem, based on building a holistic and complex picture, composed of words, recording the detailed views of the respondents, and conducted in a natural setting. In a simplistic manner, Sognuro (2002: 3) states that quantitative research is an empirical research where the data is in the numerical form, and qualitative research is an empirical research where the data is not in numerical form. These two research approaches are equally recognised and used in conducting research. The major differences mainly lie in the areas of data collection and data analysis. While quantitative research relies heavily on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research makes little use of statistics and numbers and relies mainly on subjective analysis and verbal data. Sognuro (2002: 4) presents a summary of the differing characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research approaches as garnered from the literature and his experience in the course of conducting his evaluation study

Table 3.1: Differing Characteristics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches.

Factor	Qualitative	Quantitative
Data Collected	Soft data	Hard data
Data collection techniques	Active interaction with sample population	Passive interaction through questionnaire and/or experiment design
Sample population	Small population	Large population
Research variables	Large number	Small number
Data collection	On-going observation and interview	Before and after training or experiment
Relationship	Intense and long term with Subjects	Distance and short term
Research context	Uncontrolled	Controlled
Data analysis	Context/ interpretive	Statistical analysis
Research findings	Inductive though creativity and criteria reflection	Deductive through inferences from data
Research instruments	Researcher as an instrument	Questionnaires
Tools	Interview guide, tape recorder, transcriber, computer, type writer, etc	Computer, calculator
Interpretation of information/ results	Subjective Nature of enquiry	Objective Interpretivism Positivism
Research tradition	Ethnography, hermeneutics Phenomenography Case studies, etc	Descriptive, correlational, experimental, casual comparative, etc

Source: Educational Research Quarterly, Sognuro (2002: 5)

These differing characteristics presented in Table 3.1 are similar to the ones identified by Creswel (1994: 3). Sognuro (2002: 6) cautions that the differences between these two approaches to research should not obscure the similarities in logic, which makes these methods compatible. Sekerani and Bougie (2013: 147) highlight that a quantitative research approach is followed when there is a need to generalise the findings of the study to a larger population. It involves methods of data collection which emphasise the use of structured and formalised standard questioning practices in which the researcher predetermines the response options. While trying to avoid strongly supporting one approach over the other, the key rule is to understand the nature, and appropriateness of each of the two approaches, and enter the evaluation or research arena with an open mind (Sognuro 2002: 7).

3.2.2 Research Strategies

According to Saunders *et al.* (2007: 135) the seven major research strategies are: survey, experiment, case study, grounded theory, action research, archival research and ethnography. Each of these strategies employs different methods of data collection and choice of a strategy for a research project depends on objectives of the study, research questions, the extent of existing knowledge, and the amount of resources available. Given the cost implication and the amount of work to be done in a limited period, a survey strategy was employed for this study.

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

A population refers to the whole group of topics, people, or events of interest to the researcher from which the researcher wishes to investigate (Kotler and Armstrong 2013: 110). Zikmund and Babin (2013: 312) similarly define a population as a collection of units aimed to be investigated by the research effort. For this study, the population consisted of local and foreign nationals who visited the tourist destinations in the city of Durban. According the report (eThekweni Municipality 2015: 1) 2014 was a busy year with visitors as 7.4 million people from other parts of South Africa and abroad visited the city. Approximately the same number of visitors was expected to visit the city of Durban in 2015.

3.4 SAMPLING METHOD

Sekerani and Bougie (2010: 296) define a sample as a subset of the research population. Furthermore, they add that a greater sample size implies more reliability of the findings from the study. Bless and Smith (2008: 159) argue that it is more advantageous to study the whole population because data from the whole population is more reliable than data from a sample. The interviewing of the whole population was also supported by Smith and Albaum (2012: 2), however, this study used a sample because of time and budgetary constraints.

The study employed a non-probability sampling technique. According to Babbie (2012: 192) a non-probability sampling technique refers to a collection of sampling approaches which have distinguishing characteristics that subjective judgement can play a role in selecting the sample. Convenience sampling, a form of non-probability sampling was employed in this study and it refers to the ease with which participants can be obtained by the researcher (Gravetter and Farzano 2011: 151). As a result, respondents were chosen at the convenience of the researcher.

Purposive sampling was also used in the study. This is a type of non-probability sampling technique where units in the sample are selected based on characteristics pre-specified by the researcher so that the sample will have same distribution characteristics assumed to be existing in the population (Babbie 2012: 192). Some of the pre-specified characteristics were age, period of visit, purpose of visit, and place of origin. Respondents were all above the age of 18, less than 1 year in Durban, and purpose of visit was not related to remunerated activities in Durban. This was consistent with Stephen (2011: 11) who defines tourism as activities of individuals who travel and stay in places away from their usual environments for not more than one year for business, leisure, and other non-remunerated activities within a place of visit. This broad concept was used to identify tourists from the general population.

3.5 SAMPLE SELECTION AND SIZE

Sample size refers to the number of units that will be selected into the research study (Burns and Bush 2010: 60). Factors such as precision of data collection instruments and heterogeneity of the population affected the sample size. Sekaran and Bougie (2010:296) state that an appropriate sample size must range between 30

and 500 respondents. A total of 300 tourists in Durban was the sample size for this study.

3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The main objective of this study was to examine the value of social media in the promotion of the tourism industry in Durban, South Africa. According to Saunders *et al.* (2007: 103) the research instruments that can be used for primary data collection are: interviews, observations, questionnaires, standardised tests, archival records, and documentations. For this study, the research instrument developed to obtain primary data was a questionnaire. Zikmund and Babin (2013: 280) support the use of questionnaires in self-administered surveys such as this one.

A questionnaire is a document which contains questions developed to solicit appropriate information for analysis. It can be used to provide both qualitative and quantitative data. According to Burns and Bush (2010: 60) a questionnaire was considered to be the most suitable instrument for data collection for this study because of certain reasons as follows:

- The instrument is easy to administer to the tourists who are the respondents in this study,
- It can provide a substantial amount of information,
- Respondents receive the same questions and this reduces bias by making the process identical to all respondents,
- Questionnaires can be used to elicit information on attitude, perceptions, and opinions of the individual,
- The instrument was regarded as the best means of collecting unbiased, precise and relevant information for this study, and
- The instrument was identified as a cost-effective method for this study.

However, albeit the existence of these many advantages, the designing of a questionnaire is a complex exercise which is time consuming (Edward 2013: 805).

3.6.1 Questionnaire development

According to Martin (2006: 3) the development of a questionnaire involves decisions about wording, questions ordering, selection and wording of response options, formatting and mode of question administration. He adds that this instrument needs to be properly prepared and responsibly administered in order for it to be a vital instrument for data collection. The questions were linked directly to the research objectives and were also derived from the literature. This was done to ensure that the questions address the research objectives, to ensure validity of the outcome of the research.

The validity of the questionnaire was improved through a pilot study that was conducted in Durban. Great care was taken to avoid misunderstanding, ambiguity, offence or bias as the goal of the questionnaire was to establish a clear communication with the tourists and to ensure the questionnaire measured what the researcher intended to measure. With the nature of the study in mind, sensitive questions were avoided and this was done to increase the response rate. When administering the questionnaires, an assistant was hired by the researcher and his role was to engage with the respondent. This included the distribution of the questionnaires, provide clarity to the respondents on unclear or misunderstood questions, and to collect the completed questionnaires. The researcher ensured that the questionnaires were completed in his or his assistant's presence.

The questionnaire consisted of 42 questions which were put in five sections. The first section addressed the demographic characteristics of the respondents and each section from the second to the fifth addressed an objective of the study. Closed-ended questions with predetermined answers were utilised mainly because the huge sample size of 300 respondents and the volume of questions in each questionnaire was going to make it difficult to analyse the responses if open-ended questions were to be used. Also, this study adopted a quantitative approach. Armstrong and Kotler (2006: 111) suggest that closed-ended questions must have all the possible answers so that the participants can make choices from the predetermined answer options. This was observed in the designing of the questionnaire used in this study.

The justification for the use of closed-ended questions is that the questions were easier and quicker to answer as they required minimal writing by the respondent.

Closed-ended questions also allow greater uniformity and consistency within the research findings (Babbie 2012: 240). The choice of using closed-ended questions was also arrived at after considering that they allow better standardisation of the responses. Closed-ended questions minimises the chances of obtaining irrelevant responses and ensures easy encoding of data. However, open-ended questions are good for the betterment of the results because they allow individuals to express themselves more.

Martin (2006: 6) identified six types of closed-ended questions and these are: ranking, category, listing, rating, quantity, and grid. The questionnaire had a mixture of rating and category type of closed-ended questions. It mainly consisted of Likert-scale type questions that were weighed using SD (Strongly Disagree), D (Disagree), N (Neutral), A (Agree), SA (Strongly Agree). There were clear instructions laid out in the questionnaire and the respondents were required to tick the box matching their opinions. The questions were designed to allow rapid computation, graphical presentation, and statistical analysis of data as suggested by (Malhotra 2004: 290).

3.6.2 Advantages of using a questionnaire

The questionnaire has many advantages which include that it is an efficient and quick way of collecting information from a larger number of respondents. Malhotra (2004: 178) highlights that a questionnaire is an easy instrument to administer. In addition to this, Coles, Duval and Shaw (2013: 60) demonstrate that a questionnaire is a highly flexible instrument. Saunders *et al.* (2007: 356) further add that a questionnaire reduces the variability of results as the respondents receive the same questions, making it easy to code, analyse, and interpret the results.

This instrument makes the process of data collection identical to each respondent and reduces the level of bias that the interviewer might impose through mood, conduct, and appearance. Data collection is cost-effective and the answers are standardised and thus allowing the respondents to interpret the answers in the same way. The questionnaire is also advantageous in that it reduces the errors which might be made by the interviewer when recording the responses. These advantages motivated the use of a questionnaire in this study and the disadvantages of using a questionnaire are presented in the next paragraph.

3.6.3 Disadvantages of using a questionnaire

While many advantages exist for utilising the questionnaire as the research instrument, Edward (2013: 805) argues that the designing of a questionnaire is a complex and time consuming exercise. Saunders *et al.* (2007: 286) notice that the delivering of a questionnaire is costly and it gives only one chance to collect the data. The next paragraph gives detail about the pilot study that was conducted in Durban beach front resort place.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is a preliminary small-scale study conducted prior to the main research effort. Its main purpose is to verify feasibility of the study and to inform improvements in the research plan and design as well as to identify the areas which may need correction or just revision. According to Saunders *et al* (2007: 387) a pilot study allows the assessment of the validity of the questions in the instrument and the reliability of the data to be collected. Validity of the data to be collected can be enhanced through a preliminary analysis of the data obtained through a pilot study as this can indicate that the data that will be collected will address the research objectives.

Given these benefits that can be obtained from conducting a pilot test, a pilot study was conducted with 12 questionnaires to assess the grammar, layout of the instrument, length of the questionnaire, clarity of instructions and the questions, and the methods of distributing and collecting the completed questionnaires. The results indicated one spelling error which was rectified. The findings also revealed that the tourists had no challenge in understanding the questions but the respondents attach more value to their time so the questions have to be direct and short. It was also revealed that writing boards and pens must be provided to the respondents because certain areas like the beach front where respondents were located makes it difficult to complete the questionnaires if no writing boards and pens were provided.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

All research efforts deals with the collection of data which may be available in secondary and primary sources. Secondary data refers to raw data or published summaries compiled for other purposes by other researchers somewhere. Primary data is data collected for the specific purpose at hand by the researcher. As what is common with other quantitative researches, this research effort employed a questionnaire as the research instrument to collect primary data. The questionnaire was designed mainly using closed-ended questions and a Likert scale in a bid to solicit perception judgement of the respondents and to allow the application of statistical analytical tools.

The questionnaire was self-administered to the respondents and the researcher hired the assistance of a field worker to help in the distribution and collection of completed questionnaires. The questionnaires were handed to the respondents around the beach front resort area, one of the major tourist destinations in Durban. Certain public places like the bus stops were accessed and some questionnaires were handed to the tourists in those places.

The survey was conducted during the July/August holiday period as it is another busy time of the year in the tourism industry and respondents were readily available. The questionnaires were distributed accompanied by a letter of information and consent and there were clear instructions in the questionnaire that facilitated the answering of the questions without the researcher and the field worker getting too much involved although they were sometimes getting involved in shedding more clarity to questions not clearly understood by the respondents.

The questionnaires were completed whilst the researcher and the field worker were waiting. Participation was entirely voluntary and the whole process was carried out with great courtesy. The researcher and the field worker collected the completed questionnaires from the respondents by asking the participants to drop the questionnaire in a sealed box to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

3.8.1 Data analysis

Data analysis entails the manipulation, ordering, summarising and categorising the data and describing it in more meaningful terms (Malhotra and Birks 2010: 410). According to Ader, Mellenbergh and Hand (2008: 336) it is the process of cleaning, inspecting, transforming, and modelling data with the aim of indicating useful information, supporting decision making, and suggesting conclusions. Wilson (2010: 200) supplements that data analysis is the organisation of the research data in a systematic way and the use of that data to test the research hypotheses. The collected questionnaires were checked for completeness and 28 spoilt questionnaires were found. The Microsoft Excel version 2010 and the Statistical Package for Social Scientist were used to analyse the data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used.

Descriptive statistics focused on frequencies, mean, standard deviations and the presentation of data in a meaningful way as suggested by Zikmund and Babin (2013: 336). Conclusions and generalisation about the population based on the results from the sample were arrived at through the use of inferential statistic (Mendenhall, Beaver and Beaver 2010: 4). Chi square test, variance analysis (ANOVA), correlation analysis, and factor analysis are some of inferential statistics that were used to interpret the data in this study.

3.8.2 Validity

According to Beardedn, Netemeyer, and Haws (2011: 60) validity determines the truthfulness of the research findings or the extent to which the researcher truly measured what was intended to be measured. Similarly, Sekaran and Bougie (2010: 156) define validity as a measure of how well a particular concept was measured with the research instrument. All efforts were made to ensure that the questions in the questionnaire were constructed in line with the research objectives, research literature, and conceptually sound results obtained by other scholars about social media and its influence in the tourism industry. Validity was addressed through conducting a two factor analysis and a pilot study.

3.8.3 Reliability

Reliability simply refers to whether a research study may be replicated. Bearden *et al* (2011: 6) define reliability as the ability of data collection methods to collect accurate and consistent results. Malhotra (2010: 318) states that reliability test is important for ensuring the collection of consistent data from diverse administrations of a measuring scale.

The following measures were used to improve both validity and reliability of the questionnaire,

- A pilot study was conducted and it provided learning points in improving the reliability of the instrument.
- A larger sample of this study is more likely to provide more accurate results than if a smaller sample was used.
- All questions included in the questionnaire were derived directly from the objectives of this study.
- Each question asked was essentially fulfilling a specific objective.
- All questions were made easy, short, and straightforward to cater for different levels of intellectual capacities among the participants.
- The research instrument was pre-tested to provide information that helped in the structuring of the instrument in order to improve the validity of results.

3.9 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

According to Crow and Wiles (2008: 1) anonymity and confidentiality refers to the ability of the researcher to safeguard sensitive information and the names of the respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured in this study by keeping the questionnaires away from the general public and by not asking the respondents to divulge their names.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study required the participation of tourists and a letter informing them of the reasons of carrying out this study was shown to them. Participants were told about the aim of this research and that the results can be shown to interested parties.

Ethical standards were greatly observed in this study. No one was forced to take part in the survey if he/she was not willing to do so.

The right to privacy was also ensured by dropping the completed questionnaires in a sealed box when collecting from the respondents. Respondents were informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time for whatever reason which they might have deemed necessary and that their responses were confidential as suggested by Creswell (2009: 89).

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Given that the respondents were drawn from the tourists visiting the Durban tourist destinations and that only 300 participants took part in the study, the sample size became a limiting factor. Time and monetary resource that was available constrained this research project to be conducted in other provinces and this might have reduced the representativeness of the data collected.

3.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the research methodology that was followed in this study. The research design, target population, sample selection and size, instrument design, data collection and analysis methods, and validity and reliability were discussed. The study adopted a survey strategy which was carried out using a self-administered structured questionnaire with predetermined response options.

The next chapter provides a presentation of the research findings and the analysis of the results.

CHAPTER 4

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE PRIMARY DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research methodology and the methods that were followed in collecting the primary data for this study. This chapter presents the results and discuss the findings obtained from the questionnaires in this study. The questionnaire was the primary tool that was used to collect data and was distributed to 300 tourists at the Durban beach front resort and other public places. The data collected from the responses was analysed with SPSS version 23.0. The results will present the descriptive statistics in the form of graphs, cross tabulations and other figures for the quantitative data that was collected. Inferential techniques include the use of correlations and chi square test values; which are interpreted using the p-values.

4.2 THE SAMPLE

In total, 300 questionnaires were despatched to the tourists around the major tourist destinations in Durban. Exactly 272 completed questionnaires were collected and this gave a more than 90% response rate.

4.2.1 The Research Instrument

The research instrument consisted of 42 items, with a level of measurement at a nominal or an ordinal level. The questionnaire was divided into 5 sections which measured various themes as illustrated below:

Question 1 – Biographical Data.

Question 2 – Experience / Impression.

Question 3 – Effectiveness of social media.

Question 4 – Tourists refer to social media.

Question 5 - Social media and the tourist decision making.

4.3 RELIABILITY STATISTICS

The two most important aspects of precision are **reliability** and **validity**. The success of a research study is mainly dependent on the reliability and validity of the research. A research can employ an internal consistency method to determine the reliability of a measuring instrument (Welman, Kruger, and Michel 2005: 147). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the degree of the instrument's internal consistency. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as "acceptable" (Andrew, Pederson and McEvoy 2011: 202). The various sections that made up the research instrument were considered in obtaining Cronbach's alpha scores.

The table below reflects the Cronbach's alpha scores for all the items that constituted the questionnaire.

Table 4.1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Sections	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
2. Experience / Impression	15 of 15	.752
3. Effectiveness of social media	6 of 6	.458
4. Tourists refer to social media	4 of 4	.432
5. Social media and the tourist decision making	6 of 6	.677
Overall	31 of 31	.857

The overall reliability score of 0,857 exceeds the recommended Cronbach's alpha value of 0.700. This indicates a high degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for the various sections of the research.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for section 5 is 0.677. According to Belaja, Sai, and Lin (2012: 80) a Cronbach's alpha scoring between 0.6 and 0.7 is acceptable even though it is questionable. Section 3 and 4 have values below 0.700, the scoring was 0.458 and 0.432 respectively. Amongst the reasons for this are the following:

- The construct is newly developed.
- Some statements were a collective of individual statements within the same sections.

4.3.1 Factor Analysis

According to Moonsamy and Singh (2012: 5) factor analysis is a statistical technique whose main goal is data reduction. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent a number of questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. For example, as part of a national survey on political opinions, participants may answer three separate questions regarding environmental policy, reflecting issues at the local, state and national level. Each question, by itself, would be an inadequate measure of attitude towards environmental policy, but *together* they may provide a better measure of the attitude.

Factor analysis can be used to establish whether the three measures do, in fact, measure the same thing. If so, they can then be combined to create a new variable, a factor score variable that contains a score for each respondent on the factor. Factor techniques are applicable to a variety of situations. A researcher may want to know if the skills required to be a decathlete are as varied as the ten events, or if a small number of core skills are needed to be successful in a decathlon. You need not believe that factors actually exist in order to perform a factor analysis, but in practice the factors are usually interpreted, given names, and spoken of as real things.

The matrix tables is preceded by a summarised table that reflects the results of KMO and Bartlett's Test. The requirement is that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy should be greater than 0.50 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity less than 0.05. In all instances, the conditions are satisfied which allows for the factor analysis procedure. Factor analysis is done only for the Likert scale items. Certain

components divided into finer components. This is explained below in the rotated component matrix.

Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Sections	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
		Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Experience / Impression	.782	680.442	105	.000
Effectiveness of social media	.574	83.763	15	.000
Tourists refer to social media	.546	69.766	6	.000
Social media and the tourist decision making	.757	209.429	15	.000

All of the conditions are satisfied for factor analysis. This means that the variables that constituted the instrument were perfect measures of the component. It can be concluded that the sections in the instrument measured exactly what they were intended to measure.

4.3.2 Rotated Component Matrix

Factor analysis is a statistical technique whose main goal is data reduction. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent a number of questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. With reference to tables 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6:

- The principle component analysis was used as the extraction method, and the rotation method was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. This is an orthogonal rotation method that minimizes the number of variables that

have high loadings on each factor. It simplifies the interpretation of the factors.

- Factor analysis/loading show inter-correlations between variables.
- Items of questions that loaded similarly imply measurement along a similar factor. An examination of the content of items loading at or above 0.5 (and using the higher or highest loading in instances where items cross-loaded at greater than this value) effectively measured along the various components.

Table 4.3: Section 2 (Impression of Durban Questions)

Rotated Component Matrix^a

Experience / Impression	Component			
	1	2	3	4
The weather is always good	.135	.441	-.169	.520
I like the service I am offered at the hotel I am staying at.	.557	.037	.282	.046
The sincerity of the people in Durban	.756	.055	-.047	.205
The cost effectiveness of the holiday	.527	.248	.025	-.428
The price of the hotel is reasonable	.205	.668	.251	.028
The price of the food is cheap	-.020	.771	.152	-.046
The price of clothing is affordable	.606	.358	-.077	.064
The costs of the taxis are cheap and affordable.	.769	.157	-.096	.052
Durban has the best beaches	.317	-.058	.155	.597
Sunbathing is what I enjoy doing in Durban	.409	.295	.065	.287
Durban has many world class attractions	.018	.238	.463	.524
I feel safe here	.658	-.205	.158	-.063
I enjoy the variety of food cuisines	-.042	.129	.723	.048
Durban caters for my holiday needs.	.101	.069	.614	-.029

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

This section measured the impression or the experience of the tourist in Durban. As depicted in Table 4.3, the section did not load perfectly along one factor, it is split along four sub-themes. This is because the questions in this section induced indifference.

Table 4.4: Section 3 (Effectiveness of social media questions)

Rotated Component Matrix^a

Effectiveness of social media	Component	
	1	2
Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with marketers	.680	.010
I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial ads	.002	.813
I do not have a tendency of ignoring/avoiding ads on social media as I do with commercial ads	.286	.343
I always carry a mobile device to access social media.	.717	-.060
I monitor what other people post on holiday destinations	.606	.217
I don't enjoy interacting with other travellers on social media	.011	.764

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

This section loaded along 2 sub-themes (components) as shown in Table 4.4. This means that respondents identified different trends within the section. The splits

within the section are colour coded as illustrated in the table. This section is characterised by questions that induced positive and negative considerations.

Table 4.5: Section 4 (Pattern of referring to social media questions)

Rotated Component Matrix^a

Tourists refer to social media	Component	
	1	2
I referred to social media prior to visiting Durban	.609	.277
I never referred to social media whilst I am in Durban for interacting with other travellers	.037	.970
I have already shared a part of my experience with my virtual friends whilst I am in Durban.	.829	-.122
I will post information on social media after my visit so that others can be informed.	.692	.043

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

This section inferred the pattern with which tourists refer to social media throughout the stages of their travelling process. As revealed in Table 4.5, the section loaded along two components. There was only one question which was identified as a different component, the rest were identified as one trend.

Table 4.6: Section 5 (Social media and tourist decision making questions)

This section was set out to measure the extent to which social media can influence the decision of a tourist. It is shown in Table 4.6 that the variables that constituted

this section loaded perfectly along a single component. This implies that the statements in the section measured what they were set out to measure

Component Matrix^a

Social media and the tourist decision making	Component
	1
Travel reviews influenced my decisions	.424
I found social media to be more unreliable for information.	.642
I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media	.565
Interactions with virtual friends cannot influence my behaviour.	.670
I received recommendations and advices from travellers prior to visiting Durban	.720
My original decision was modified or changed after reviewing travel content on social media	.664

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

4.4: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA (SECTION A)

This section summarises the biographical characteristics of the respondents. The research primarily focused on a number of biographic variables, which are discussed below.

4.4.1 Age and Gender

Overall, the ratio of males to females is approximately 1:1 (54.0%: 46.0%).

Within the age category of 30 to 39 years, 61.3% were male and 38.7% were female.

Within the category of males (only), 38.3% were between the ages of 30 to 39 years.

This category of males between the ages of 30 to 39 years formed 21.0% of the total

sample. Within the category of females, 29.5% were between the ages of 30 to 39 years. This category of females between the ages of 30 to 39 years formed 13.3% of the total sample. The category of males and females between the ages of 30 to 39 was the highest category, it formed 34.3% of the whole sample. It was followed by the age category of 40 to 49 years with 26.6% of the total sample and gender distribution was 54% males and 45% females. The 20 to 29 and 50 to 59 age group had 25.1% and 7% of the total sample. The smallest category was made up of respondents of the ages of 60 years and above. This only constituted 3.3% of the total sample. Males and females were 2.2% and 1.1% of the total sample respectively. This category was followed by the under 20 years old respondents category which constituted 3.7% of the whole sample. Males were 1.5% and females were 2.2% of the total sample in the category of respondent under the age of 20.

The table below describes the overall gender distribution by age.

Table 4.7: Gender and age distribution of the respondents

		Gender		Total	
		Male	Female		
Age	Under 20	Count	4	6	10
		% within Age	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender	2.7%	4.9%	3.7%
		% of Total	1.5%	2.2%	3.7%
	20 – 29	Count	34	34	68
		% within Age	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender	22.8%	27.9%	25.1%
		% of Total	12.5%	12.5%	25.1%
	30 – 39	Count	57	36	93
		% within Age	61.3%	38.7%	100.0%
		% within Gender	38.3%	29.5%	34.3%
		% of Total	21.0%	13.3%	34.3%

40 – 49	Count	39	33	72
	% within Age	54.2%	45.8%	100.0%
	% within Gender	26.2%	27.0%	26.6%
	% of Total	14.4%	12.2%	26.6%
50 – 59	Count	9	10	19
	% within Age	47.4%	52.6%	100.0%
	% within Gender	6.0%	8.2%	7.0%
	% of Total	3.3%	3.7%	7.0%
60 and above	Count	6	3	9
	% within Age	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within Gender	4.0%	2.5%	3.3%
	% of Total	2.2%	1.1%	3.3%
Total	Count	149	122	271
	% within Age	55.0%	45.0%	100.0%
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	55.0%	45.0%	100.0%

4.4.2 Race

The racial composition of the sample is indicated in the figure 4.1.

The majority of respondents were African (41.5%) whilst the smallest grouping was Coloured (11.4%). The Indian and the White respondents were 25.4% and 21.7% of the whole sample respectively.

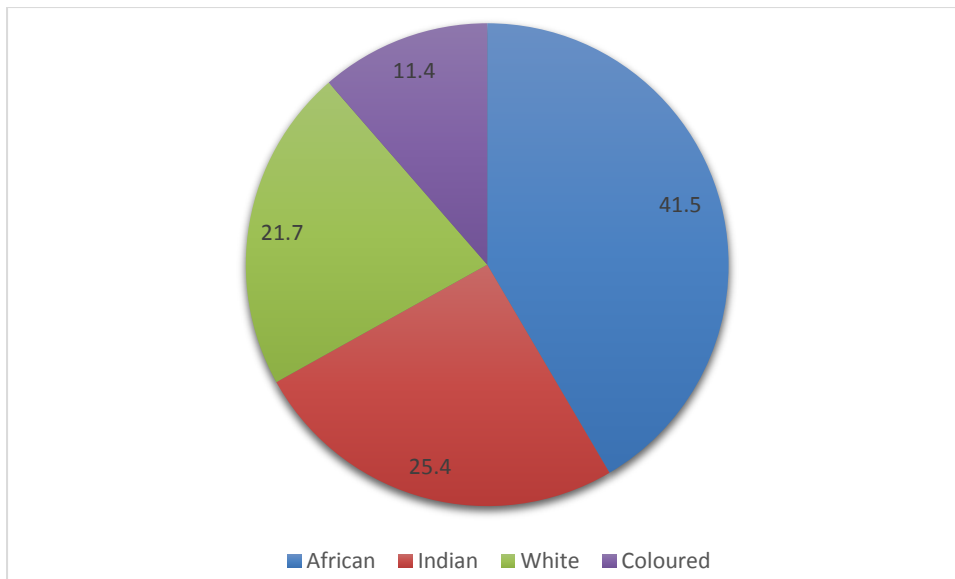


Figure 4.1 Sample population by Race

4.4.3 Country of permanent residence

Table 4.8 below indicates the country of permanent residence of the tourists who visited Durban. The study shows that the majority of the tourists per country of permanent residence were South Africans. South Africans were 37%, followed by Zimbabweans and Americans with 12.1% and 5.5% of the sample respectively. This shows that South Africans are active in visiting the resort places in their nation. According to the statement issued by the government, domestic marketing campaigns were targeted to mobilise more South Africans to visit their own country (Asia News Monitor, 2015.2). This study shows that more than one third of the tourist informants were South Africans and this supports that South Africans are visiting their country.

Table 4.8: Country of permanent residence

	Frequency	Percent
South Africa	101	37.1
Zimbabwe	33	12.1
United States	15	5.5

Nigeria	12	4.4
India	12	4.4
Ghana	11	4.0
Congo	11	4.0
Pakistan	11	4.0
Malawi	9	3.3
Britain	8	2.9
Canada	7	2.6
Mozambique	6	2.2
Cameroon	6	2.2
Botswana	5	1.8
China	4	1.5
Rwanda	4	1.5
Australia	3	1.1
France	3	1.1
Burundi	3	1.1
Russia	2	.7
Madagascar	2	.7
Somalia	2	.7
Morocco	1	.4
Tanzania	1	.4
Total	272	100.0

However, the ratio of South African tourists to international tourists was approximately 4: 6 respectively. This shows that even though South Africans are visiting their own country, their proportion is less than that of foreign nationals and therefore, more domestic campaigns need to be undertaken to mobilise South Africans to visit places in their own country. This is in line with the sentiments made by Van Rooyen (2011: 6) who indicates that Durban had lost international tourists in the past as a result of local tourists who were afraid to visit places like the beach-front because of the level of crime.

Nigerian, India, Ghana, Congo and Pakistan constituted a relatively equal amount of respondents of 4%. The rest of the countries were less than 4%, with Russia, Madagasca, Somalia, Morocco and Tanzania being the lowest, with less than 1% of the total respondents per each country. The results show that Durban is a tourist destination of choice for international tourists. International tourists constituted 72.9% of the respondents in this study. From this 72.9% of international tourists, 75.5% were Africans. This indicates that the country is moving towards achieving its goal of becoming one of the top 20 global tourist destinations by 2020 as reported in the literature (Asia News Monitor 2015.2). However, it also shows that the Durban city draws the majority of its tourists from the African Continent.

4.4.4 Marital Status

The marital status of the respondents is as follows.

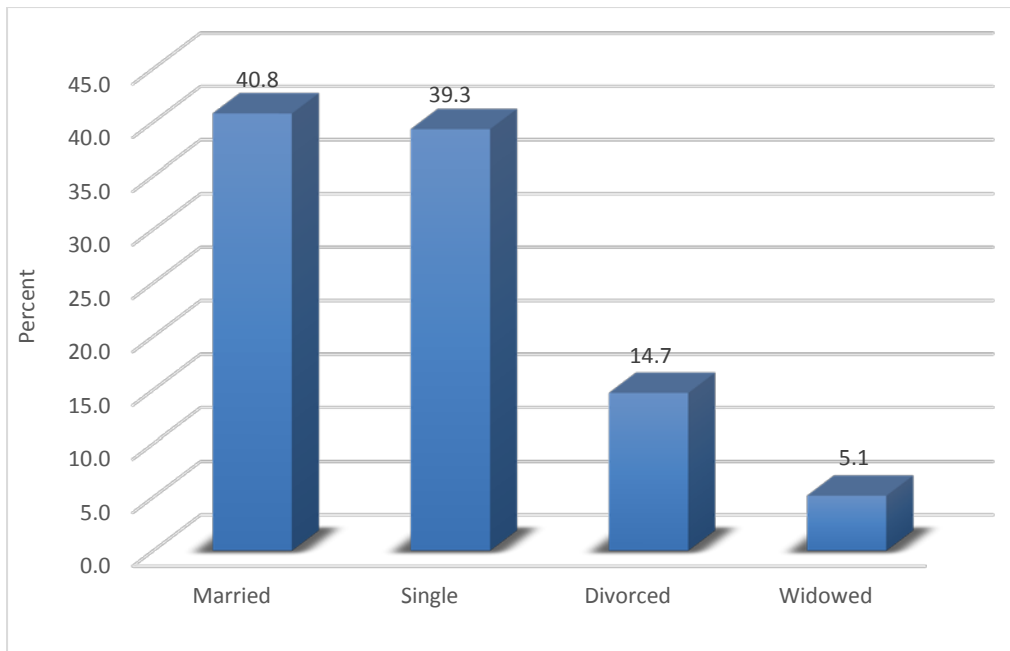


Figure 4.2 Marital status

There were similar numbers of married and single respondents (40%). The number of divorced respondents was 14.7%, followed by the last group of widowed respondents which had 5.1%. The results indicate that the widowed and the divorced people do not travel as much as the married and the single people.

4.4.5 Educational level

The figure below (figure 4.3) indicates the education levels of the respondents.

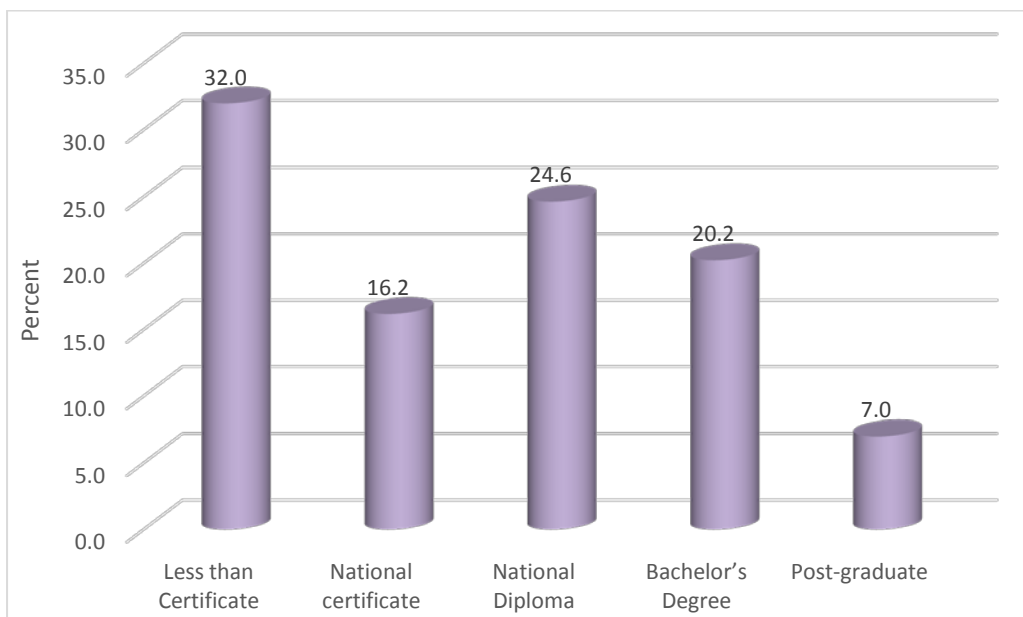


Figure 4.3: Educational level of the respondents

Nearly half of the respondents had at most a school qualification (National Certificate or lower). Two thirds of the respondents had a tertiary qualification, with National Diploma qualification having 24.6%, followed by a Degree level with 20.2%, and National certificate and Post-graduate levels with 16.2% and 7% respectively. The highest educational level category was made up of people with less than a Certificate and this formed 32.% of the total sample. This was followed by a National Diploma and a Degree qualifications with 24.6% and 20.2% respectively. The two lowest categories were National Certificate and Post-graduate levels.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The section that follows analyses the scoring patterns of the respondents per variable per section. Where applicable, levels of disagreement (negative statements) were collapsed to show a single category of “Disagree”. A similar procedure was followed for the levels of agreement (positive statements). This is allowed due to the acceptable reliability levels. The results are first presented using summarised percentages for the variables that constitute each section. Results are then further analysed according to the importance of the statements.

4.5.1 Value of social media

This section investigates the impression or experience of the tourists who visited Durban and the value of social media in promoting Durban. Pan *et al.* (2007: 37) stipulate that tourists often like to exchange and share their travel experiences on social media sites. The shared experiences affect the other viewer’s perception of the image of a certain destination. Table 4.9 below depicts the adoption of social media by tourists.

Table 4.9: Tourists' online communities involvement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	221	81.3	81.3	81.3
No	51	18.8	18.8	100.0
Total	272	100.0	100.0	

More than 80% of the respondents indicated that they were active in online communities. Only 17.6% of the respondents indicated that they were not active on any social media platform. A more than 80% rate of the tourist's active on social media platforms indicates the relevance of social media in the tourism industry. This is consistent with the assertion of Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013: 211) who indicate that social media has fundamentally changed how travellers plan for and book trips, access information, and the way of sharing experiences. The most commonly used platforms are indicated in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Social media platforms popular with the tourists

	Frequency	Percent
WhatsApp	92	33.8
Face book	68	25.0
Twitter	17	6.3
Google plus	15	5.5
YouTube	14	5.1
Flickr	11	4.0
Foursquare	7	2.6
None	48	17.6
Total	272	100.0

The two most popular platforms were WhatsApp and Facebook. This shows that these two are the most influential social media tools among the tourists. Milwood *et al.* (2012: 167) state that the most popular social media tools were Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Google plus and Foursquare respectively. However, the same authors state that the adoption of social media platforms is not static, it differs with place and changes with time. This study has revealed that WhatsApp is the most popular platform followed by Facebook in Durban. Ease of use on mobile devices and cost factor are some of the reasons why WhatsApp and Facebook are so popular with tourists in Durban.

4.5.2 Experience / Impression

Table 4.10 summarises the scoring patterns of the respondents' impression or experience in Durban.

Table 4.11 Tourists' Impression of Durban

	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %
The weather is always good	73	26.8%	36	13.2%	163	59.9%
I like the service I am offered at the hotel I am staying at.	70	25.7%	58	21.3%	144	52.9%
The sincerity of the people in Durban	93	34.2%	53	19.5%	126	46.3%
The cost effectiveness of the holiday	65	23.9%	35	12.9%	172	63.2%
The price of the hotel is reasonable	59	21.7%	44	16.2%	169	62.1%
The price of the food is cheap	40	14.7%	37	13.6%	195	71.7%
The price of clothing is affordable	98	36.0%	31	11.4%	143	52.6%
The costs of the taxis are cheap and affordable.	129	47.4%	33	12.1%	110	40.4%
Durban has the best beaches	44	16.2%	21	7.7%	207	76.1%
Sunbathing is what I enjoy doing in Durban	74	27.2%	44	16.2%	154	56.6%
Durban has many world class attractions	34	12.5%	28	10.3%	210	77.2%
I feel safe here	121	44.5%	44	16.2%	107	39.3%
I have not encountered crime during my visit.	90	33.1%	28	10.3%	154	56.6%
I enjoy the variety of food cuisines	29	10.7%	46	17.0%	195	72.2%
Durban caters for my holiday needs.	20	7.4%	33	12.1%	219	80.5%

The same information is graphically presented in Figure 4.4 to make the analysis and comparison easier.

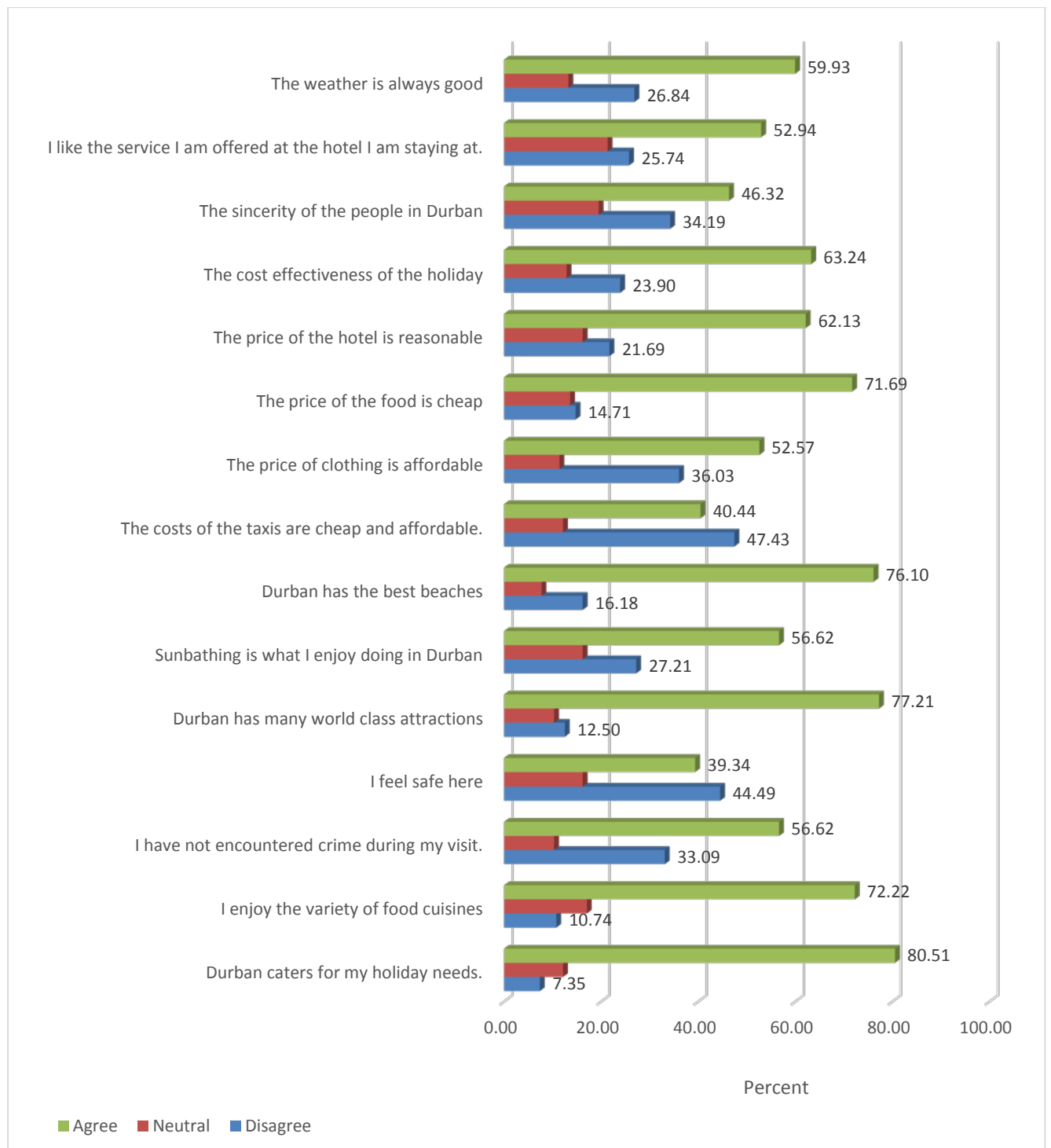


Figure 4.4 Tourists' experience in Durban

The three highest levels of agreement were for “Durban caters for my holiday needs” 80.51%, “Durban has the best beaches” 76.10%, and “I enjoyed a variety of food cuisines” 72.22%. The other three second highest values of agreement were for

“Durban has many world class attractions” 77.21%, “The price of the food is cheap” 71.69% and “The cost effectiveness of the holiday” 63.24%. These values indicate a highly favourable impression of Durban from the tourists who visited the city.

The following patterns are observed:

- 13 of the 15 statements have higher levels of agreement than disagreement. The significance of these differences will be tested later (below).
- The statements referring to taxi fares and safety had higher levels of disagreement. Nearly half of the respondents, 47.43% of the sample, were in disagreement with the statement that the costs of the taxis are cheap and affordable. 44.49% also disagreed with the statement “I feel safe in Durban.” These two were the highest statements of disagreement amongst the tourists.
- In some instances, the levels of agreement were much higher, and in others not so high. The two highest levels of agreement were 80.51% for, “Durban Caters for my holiday and 77.21% for “Durban has many world class attractions.” The two lowest levels of agreement were 39.34% for “I feel safe here” and 40.44 for “The costs of taxes are cheap and affordable.”
- Out of 15 questions, 13 have very low percentages of indecision but were lower than the levels of agreement and disagreement on all variables. Only questions 14 and 15 had scores slightly higher than the level of disagreement.

To determine whether the scoring patterns per statement were significantly different per option, a chi square test was done. The null hypothesis claims that similar numbers of respondents scored across each option for each statement (one statement at a time). The alternate states that there is a significant difference between the levels of agreement and disagreement. The results are shown table 4.11 below.

Table 4.12: Chi square test

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
The weather is always good	94.11	2	.000
I like the service I am offered at the hotel I am staying at.	47.853	2	.000
The sincerity of the people in Durban	29.478	2	.000
The cost effectiveness of the holiday	114.404	2	.000
The price of the hotel is reasonable	102.757	2	.000
The price of the food is cheap	180.14	2	.000
The price of clothing is affordable	70.066	2	.000
The costs of the taxis are cheap and affordable.	57.007	2	.000
Durban has the best beaches	226.816	2	.000
Sunbathing is what I enjoy doing in Durban	71.324	2	.000
Durban has many world class attractions	235.794	2	.000
I feel safe here	37.11	2	.000
I have not encountered crime during my visit.	87.559	2	.000
I enjoy the variety of food cuisines	185.356	2	.000
Durban caters for my holiday needs.	273.404	2	.000

The highlighted sig. values (p-values) are less than 0.05 (the level of significance), it implies that the distributions were not similar. That is, the differences between the way respondents scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant. From the scoring pattern, the differences can be noticed but this was also shown statistically in Table 4.11

4.5.3 Effectiveness of social media

This section deals with the use of social media in disseminating promotional messages. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry. Table 4.14 illustrates the scoring pattern of the results obtained.

Table 4.13: Effectiveness of social media

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with marketers	12.1%	17.3%	70.6%
I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial ads	54.0%	16.2%	29.8%
I do not have a tendency of ignoring/avoiding ads on social media as I do with commercial ads	24.3%	21.0%	54.8%
I always carry a mobile device to access social media.	20.2%	13.6%	66.2%
I monitor what other people post on holiday destinations	29.4%	11.0%	59.6%
I don't enjoy interacting with other travellers on social media	57.0%	11.0%	32.0%

There are some very different scoring patterns from the tourists surveyed in the study. Figure 4.5 reveals that there are high scores for both agreement and disagreement to the statements in this section. Neutral measures are very low and the difference between respondents who agreed and those who disagreed is significant. The highest agreement value is 70.59% to the statement "Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with marketers." It is followed by 66.18% to the statement "I always carry a mobile device to access social media." This is consistent with Hudson and Thal (2013: 158) who indicate that travellers are getting engaged with marketers so that they can get update on current information or price discounts on certain product bundles. The authors also state that travellers need to ask questions and get clarity whilst at the same time the marketers can respond to the questions as well as convey their marketing messages concurrently.

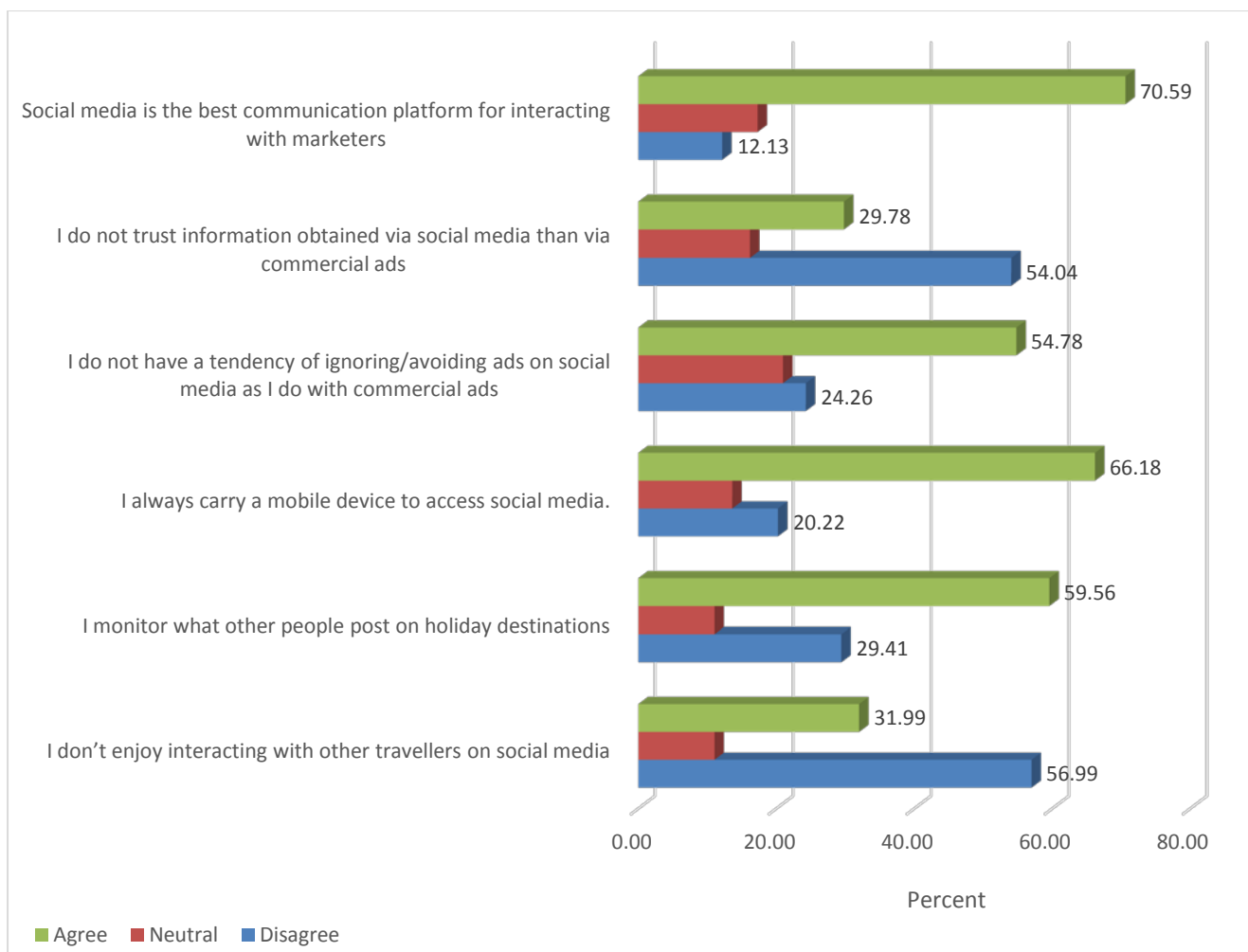


Figure 4.5: Effectiveness of social media

As can be seen from Figure 4.5, 59.56% of the respondents indicate that they monitor what other people post on holiday destinations and 54.78% agreed that they do not ignore ads on social media as they do with ads on commercial channels. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry. The findings reveal that social media is a more effective tool in promoting the tourism industry. The high levels of disagreement were 56.99% for the statement “I do not enjoy interacting with other travellers on social media,” and 54.04% for the statement “I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial ads.” This reveals that tourists enjoy interacting with other travellers and they trust the information from the social media platform. This suggest that social media is an effective tool for promoting the tourism industry. The chi square tests are shown below.

Table 4.14: Chi square test

Test Statistics

	Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with marketers	I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial ads	I do not have a tendency of ignoring/avoiding ads on social media as I do with commercial ads	I always carry a mobile device to access social media.	I monitor what other people post on holiday destinations	I don't enjoy interacting with other travellers on social media
Chi-Square	170.963 ^a	60.051 ^a	56.743 ^a	133.816 ^a	97.971 ^a	86.390 ^a
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.7.

The scoring patterns are not similar across each option. That is, the differences between respondents who agreed and those who disagreed were significant.

4.5.4 Tourists refer to social media

This section looks at the pattern of social media use by tourists prior to visiting a destination, during the visit, and after the trip. One of the objectives of the study was to ascertain whether tourists refer to social media prior to the visit, during the visit, and after the trip. Table 4.15 depicts the results obtained in this section.

Table 4.15: Tourists’ pattern of referring to social media

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I referred to social media prior to visiting Durban	28.7%	9.6%	61.8%
I never referred to social media whilst I am in Durban for interacting with other travellers	52.9%	11.0%	36.0%
I have already shared a part of my experience with my virtual friends whilst I am in Durban.	11.8%	11.4%	76.8%
I will post information on social media after my visit so that others can be informed.	21.0%	12.1%	66.9%

The information in this table is graphically illustrated in the following figure and explained thereafter.

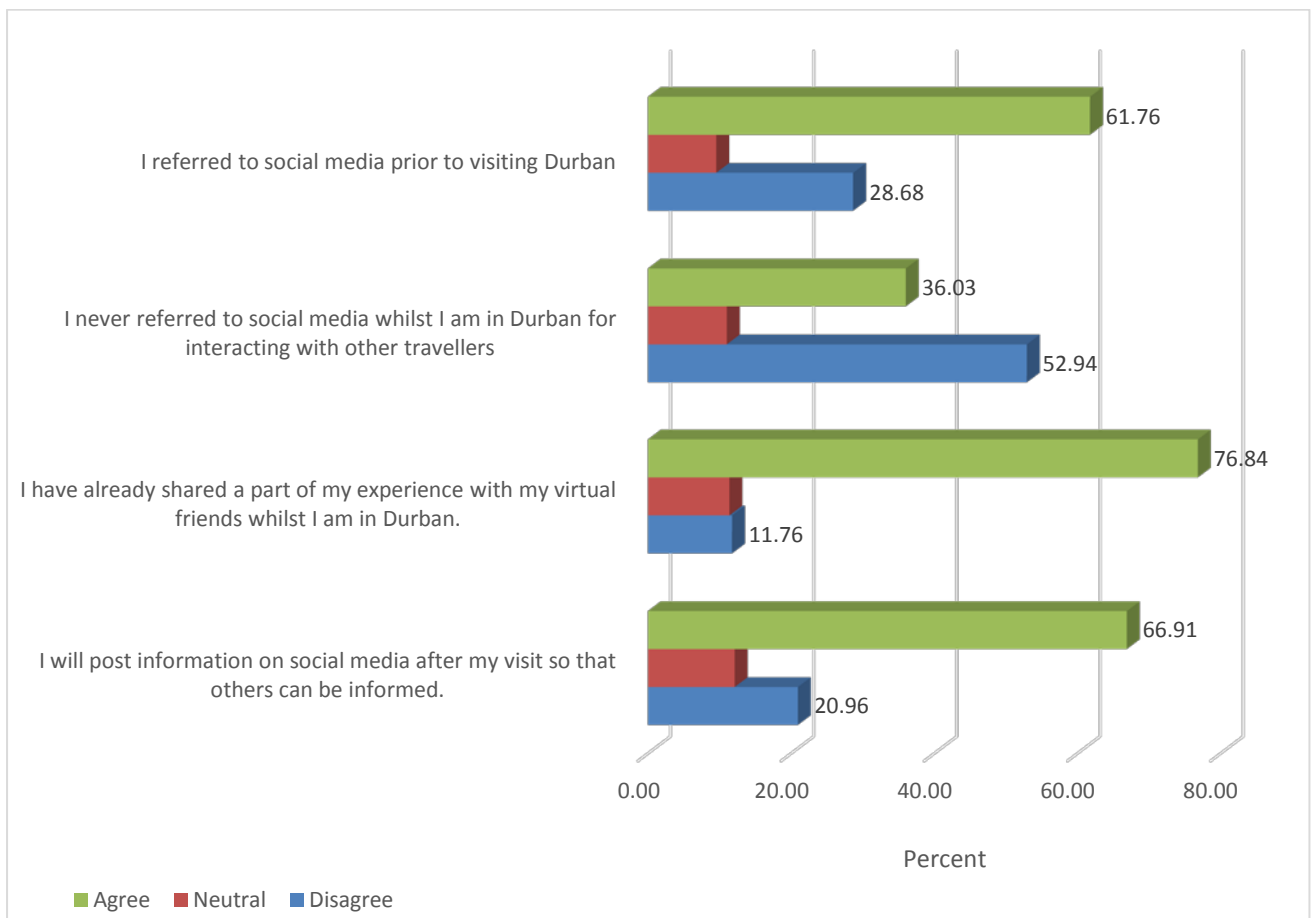


Figure 4.6: Tourists’ pattern of referring to social media

One statement had a more negative scoring pattern (disagreement). This related to the use of social media while in Durban. More respondents indicated that they still accessed social media whilst in Durban. Neutral scoring was kept minimum at less than 13% for all variables. This was because the type of questions in this section was not appealing to the respondent’s personal judgement but simply behaviour pattern and behaviour intentions. Figure 4.6 above illustrates that from the tourists surveyed in this study, 76.84% had already shared a part of their Durban experience with virtual friends, 66.91% indicated that they will still post information about Durban after their visit, and lastly, 61.76 indicated that they had referred to social media prior to visiting Durban. One of the objectives of the study was to ascertain whether tourists refer to social media prior to, during, and after their trips. The study reveal that tourists refer to social media at all stages of their trips. The chi square tests are as follows.

Table 4.16: Chi square test

Test Statistics

	I referred to social media prior to visiting Durban	I never referred to social media whilst I am in Durban for interacting with other travellers	I have already shared a part of my experiences with my virtual friends whilst I am in Durban.	I will post information on social media after my visit so that others can be informed.
Chi-Square	113.853 ^a	72.559 ^a	231.669 ^a	141.184 ^a
df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.7.

The scoring patterns are not the same.

4.5.5 Social media and the tourist decision making

This section investigates the extent to which social media can influence the decision making process of a traveller. The last objective of the study was to examine the extent to which social media can influence the final decision of a tourist. Table 4.16 illustrates the results obtained from the empirical study.

Table 4.17: Social media and the tourist decision making

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Travel reviews influenced my decisions	29.8%	14.3%	55.9%
I found social media to be more unreliable for information.	54.8%	16.9%	28.3%
I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media	33.6%	24.4%	42.1%
Interactions with virtual friends cannot influence my behaviour.	36.2%	23.6%	40.2%
I received recommendations and advices from travellers prior to visiting Durban	37.1%	17.3%	45.6%
My original decision was modified or changed after reviewing travel content on social media	40.8%	14.3%	44.9%

The information in Table 4.16 is graphically depicted in the following figure and explained thereafter.

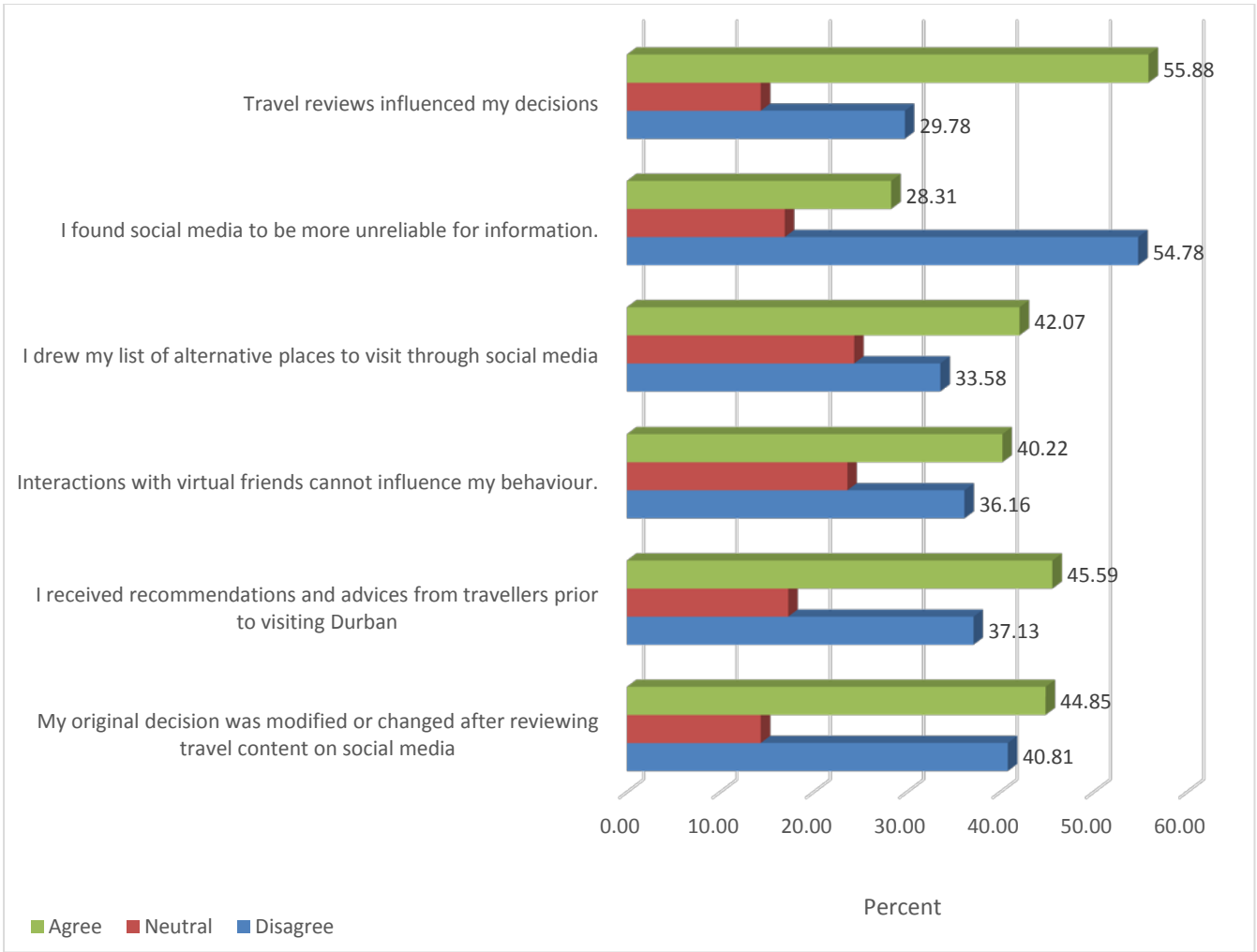


Figure 4.7 Social Media and the tourist’s decision making

The pattern in Figure 4.7 shows a very different scoring with only two variables with measures above 50%. These were 55.88% in agreement to the statement “Travel reviews influenced by decision,” and 54.78% in disagreement to the statement “I found social media to be more unreliable for information.” This reveals that social media can influence the decision of the travellers to a considerable extent and the information relatively reliable.

As can be seen from Figure 4.7, the rest of the scoring are all less than 50% and the values for agreement and disagreement are relatively equal. This is also associated with high level of neutral values although there is no a value for it above 25%. The chi square tests are shown below.

Table 4.18: Test statistics

Test Statistics

	Travel reviews influenced my decisions	I found social media to be more unreliable for information.	I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media	Interactions with virtual friends cannot influence my behaviour.	I received recommendations and advices from travellers prior to visiting Durban	My original decision was modified or changed after reviewing travel content on social media
Chi-Square	71.963 ^a	61.596 ^a	12.760 ^b	12.185 ^b	34.463 ^a	44.831 ^a
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.002	.002	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.7.

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 90.3.

The scoring patterns are different.

4.6 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The traditional approach to reporting a result requires a statement of statistical significance. A **p-value** is generated from a **test statistic**. A significant result is indicated with "p < 0.05". These values are highlighted with a *. A second Chi square test was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables (rows vs columns). The null hypothesis states that there is no association between the two. The alternate hypothesis indicates that

there is an association. The table in Appendix D summarises the results of the chi square tests.

4.6.1 Chi square tests

The chi-square test results reveal that there are a number of significant relationships between the research statements and the respondents' biographical data. From the table in the appendix, the p-value between "Social media is very important to a tourist" and "Marital Status" is 0.023. This means that there is a significant relationship between the variables **highlighted in yellow**. That is, the marital status of the respondent did play a significant role in terms of the importance of social media as a tourist. Marital status also showed significant relationships with the statements: "I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial channels," p value 0.036, and " I do not have a tendency of ignoring ads on social media as I do with commercial channels," p value 0.031. This means that marital status plays a role on the level of trust of social media information and the tendency with which people can avoid or ignore that information.

From the table in Appendix D, significant relationship exists between gender and the following statements: "Durban caters for my holiday needs," p value 0.046, "I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial ads," p value 0.025 and "I monitor what other people post of holiday destinations," p value 0.030. This means gender plays a role in terms of the level of satisfaction with a holiday destination, level of trust of information on social media, and the pattern with which people monitor what other people post on holiday destinations.

Race shows significant relationships with the following statements: "I became aware of certain tourist attractions in Durban through social media," "Price of food in Durban is cheap" and "I found social media to be more unreliable for information" ($p = 0.035$, $p = 0.03$ and $p = 0.025$, respectively). Race and the price of food show an association because different race groups appeals differently to different kinds of food. One race group may find their type of food cheaper and the other race may find theirs to be expensive. Race also plays a role on the perception of the individual on the reliability of social media information.

Age, furthermore shows significant relationships with the following statements: "Social media is the best platform for interacting with marketers," "The sincerity of the

people in Durban” and “I will post information on social media after my visit so that others can be informed” ($p = 0.041$, $p = 0.044$ and $p = 0.029$, respectively). These results shows that age plays a role on the rate at which tourists interact with marketers and the pattern of posting information on social media platforms.

Significant relationships also exist between country of permanent residence and the following statements: “The weather in Durban is always good,” p value 0.011, “I feel safe here,” p value 0.046, “I always carry a mobile device to access social media,” p value 0.043, “I don’t enjoy interacting with other travellers on social media”, p value 0.008, “Durban caters for my holiday needs,” p value 0.044, “I do not have a tendency of avoiding or ignoring ads on social media as I do with commercial channels,” p value 0.002, and “ I will post information on social media after my visit so that others can be informed,” p value 0.039. The pattern shows that more significant relationships exist between the respondent’s country of permanent residence and the research statements. These results show that the country of permanent residence of a tourist influences the social media usage behaviour of the tourist and the level of satisfaction from the destination. This can reflect on the diversity of the tourists as they come from different backgrounds.

Lastly, significant relationships were revealed between educational level and the following statements: “Social media aroused my need to travel to Durban,” “I feel safe here” and “My original decision was changed or modified after reviewing travel content on social media” ($p = 0.021$, $p = 0.008$, $p = 0.012$, respectively). Educational level displays a significant association with the arousal of the need to travel to through social media and the influence of decision making after reviewing travel content on social media. Results showed that 68% of the respondents had a tertiary qualification and this shows that there is a higher need to travel among the educated than the less educated and that need can be aroused through social media platforms.

All values without an asterisk (*) or (p -values more than 0.05) do not have a significant relationship.

4.7 CORRELATIONS

Correlation analysis is a statistical tool used to describe the degree to which two variables are linearly related to one another (Zar 1984: 226). Wegner (2010: 418) state that Pearson's correlation frequently computes the correlation between two numerics (ratio-scaled) random variables. Bivariate correlation was also performed on the (ordinal) data. The results are found in Appendix D. The most commonly used bivariate correlation technique is Spearman's correlation. Spearman's correlation measures the relationship between variables without giving a distinction between the dependant and the independent variables (Mertler and Vannatta 2002: 13).

The results indicate the following patterns: positive values indicate a directly proportional relationship between the variables and a negative value indicates an inverse relationship. All significant relationships are indicated by an asterisk (* or **). As a result, only those measures indicating significant relationships (highlighted by an asterisk) will be discussed, as shown by the Spearman's correlation calculation.

There is a directly proportional relationship between the respondents' perception of the importance of social media "Social media is very important to me as a tourist" and the statements that follow. A directly proportional relationship exists between "Social media is very important to me as a tourist" and the statements: " I became aware of certain tourist attractions in Durban through social media" ($r = 0.290$, $p = 0.000$), "Social media aroused my need to travel to Durban" ($r = 0.227$, $p = 0.000$), "I have already shared a part of my experience with my virtual friends whilst I am in Durban" ($r = 0.128$, $p = 0.035$), "I will post information on social media so that others can be informed" ($r = 0.164$, $p = 0.007$), and "I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media" ($r = 0.152$, $p = 0.012$). All of these preceding correlation values between the statement, "Social media is very important to me as a tourist" and five of the given statements all support the existence of directly proportional relationships. Tourists indicate that social media is very important to them as it creates awareness to tourist destinations, used to select which destinations to visit, and arouses the need to visit those destinations. During and after their visits, they use it to share their experience with friends and to post information that can keep others informed. One of the objectives of the study was to examine the value of social media in the promotion of the tourism sector in Durban. These results reveals

that social media is very important to tourists and to the promotion of the tourism products and that it is of great value to both tourists and tourism promoters.

Another trend that exists is that there is a directly proportional relationship between “Durban caters for my holiday needs” and the following statements: “The cost effectiveness of the holiday” ($r = 0.193$, $p = 0.001$), “The price of the hotel is reasonable” ($r = 0.249$, $p = 0.000$), “The price of the food is cheap” ($r = 0.226$, $p = 0.000$), “Durban has the best beaches” ($r = 0.182$, $p = 0.003$), “Sunbathing is what I enjoyed doing in Durban” ($r = 0.132$, $p = 0.030$), “Durban has many world class attractions” ($r = 0.203$, $p = 0.001$) “I feel safe here” ($r = 0.123$, $p = 0.042$), and “I enjoy a variety of food cuisines” ($r = 0.190$, $p = 0.002$). These results indicate a directly related proportionality. Respondents have shown that the cost effectiveness of the holiday which is mainly indicated in the price of the hotels and the price of food, coupled with existence of world class attraction such as beaches, and sunbathing activity, as well as the availability of a variety of food cuisines and security provisions in Durban affects the extent to which their tourism needs are catered for in Durban

The correlation value between “The costs of the taxis are cheap and affordable” and “The cost effectiveness of the holiday” is 0.386. This is a directly related proportionality. Respondents indicate that the cheaper travelling costs are (lower taxi fares), the more cost effective the holiday becomes, and vice versa.

Another directly related proportionality exists between the statement “I monitor what other people post on holiday destinations” and the statements: “My original decision was modified or changed after reviewing travel content on social media” ($r = 0.217$, $p = 0.000$), “I received recommendations and advice from other travellers prior to visiting Durban” ($r = 0.182$, $p = 0.003$), “I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media” ($r = 0.183$, $p = 0.003$), “Travel reviews influenced my decision” ($r = 0.257$, $p = 0.000$), and “I referred to social media prior to visiting Durban” ($r = 0.194$, $p = 0.001$). These interesting results means tourists who monitor what other travellers post on holiday destinations will have their decision changed or modified as a result of that and this will play a part when drawing a list of alternative places to visit. It also means that prior to visiting Durban, tourists review travel content and

also receives recommendations and advice from other travellers, which influences their decisions.

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented all the data collected from the study. The research instrument (questionnaire) was shown to be reliable although it exceeded the recommended score with inconsistencies emanating from the fact that the construct was a newly developed one and some statements were a collective of individual statements within the same sections. The results of the descriptive statistics used in this study indicate that the majority of the research participants were Africans and nearly all participants were active on various social media platforms, with WhatsApp and Facebook being the most popularly used applications. The gender ratio was found to be approximately 1:1 and the two-thirds of the respondents had a tertiary qualification.

Analysis such as factor analysis, chi-square tests of independence, Pearson's correlation, and t-tests were carried out on the collected data. The results of the inferential tests performed in this study revealed significant relationships between demographic variables such as gender, marital status, country of permanent residence and educational level, and various research statements. A number of directly proportional relationships were found. The statement "Social media is very important to a tourist" displayed the existence of more directly related proportionalities.

The next chapter is dedicated to conclusions and recommendations for further study on the influence of social media in promoting the tourism industry.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents conclusions on the findings of this study and gives a set of viable recommendations on how social media can successfully be used to promote tourism. The conclusions and recommendations of this study were drawn from secondary data sources as well as the primary study that was conducted. The limitations of this study were noted and areas which need further research were therefore suggested.

5.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The study had four objectives which are presented in the next section.

5.2.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to determine the influence of social media in promoting tourism business in Durban, South Africa.

5.2.2 Objectives

The underlying objectives of this study were:

- To examine the value of social media in the promotion of tourism in Durban, South Africa.
- To determine the perceived effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry.
- To ascertain whether the tourists refer to social media prior to, during and after their visits.
- To examine the extent to which social media can influence the final decision of a tourist.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

The findings will be discussed in respect of each of the objectives which guided this study.

5.3.1 Objective one

- To examine the value of social media in the promotion of tourism.

According to a comprehensive review of relevant literature about the use and impact of social media in the tourism industry, the findings revealed a strategic importance of social media in tourism competitiveness. For tourism marketers, social media represents a very important tool to communicate and engage with travellers (Gay *et al.* 2007: 3). It provides unprecedented opportunities to tourism companies to understand and respond to customer preferences. This can be achieved through analysing the comments on online communities such as Virtualtourist and TripAdvisor (Leung *et al.* 2013: 4).

Theorists in the literature review highlight that the influence of social media is more pervasive and compelling than conventional mass media because of its ability to influence a larger number of people, the ability to deliver rich information, and the minimal effort required from individuals to make influence attempts (Guo (2014: 3). It has evolved the internet from broadcasting medium to a participatory platform which allows the tourists to become the “media’ themselves for collaborating and sharing information. Social media sites enable potential visitors to learn from previous destination visitors through its ability to spread electronic word-of-mouth at a dramatic speed. The shared experiences from previous visitors to the destination can influence the intention of potential visitors to visit the place. This gives the travellers unfiltered information, the type of information they have long aspired for. The industry report (World Travel Market 2011) announced that over one-third of leisure travellers choose their hotels on the basis of social media sites like Facebook and TripAdvisor (Luliana *et al.* 2013: 67).

The findings from the primary study concur with the theoretical review in revealing the paramount importance of social media in promoting tourism in Durban, South Africa. The contribution of social media in promoting tourism in recent years is highly significant as a number of social media platforms were developed and people around the world have subscribed to many. The majority of tourists indicated that they are active on social media platforms and Whatsapp and Facebook had the highest numbers of users. Tourists also indicated that they became aware of certain tourist destinations in Durban through social media and their needs to travel were also

aroused by social media content. This reveals how influential social media is in the promotion of tourism, it goes from creating awareness to destinations to influencing the individual to visit the destination.

In an attempt to infer what tourists are going to share on social media pertaining to Durban tourism experience, a couple of questions were asked. The general impression about Durban was positive as the majority of the tourists revealed a high level of satisfaction from visiting Durban and that their holiday needs were catered for. In contrast to face-to-face contexts, the personal influence on social media platforms is expanded in terms of its scale and scope as a larger number of individuals can get connected by informational linkages that conventional communication tools cannot provide. This signifies the influence that social media has in promoting tourism in Durban as it is most likely that a positive impression about Durban is going to be shared since the findings revealed that most tourists had intentions of sharing their tourism experience with virtual friends.

5.3.2 Objective two

- To determine the perceived effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry.

The study revealed that social media plays a major role in disrupting traditional business models and is allowing creators of content to connect directly with their audience. Ingram (2012: 1) warns that service businesses that do not use or fail to use social features to increase efficiency and lower communication barriers will not survive long. The study also revealed that social media is not an optional extra in the tourism industry. It became more effective than the conventional marketing that was done in the last 6000 years because it allows two-way communication (Safko 2010: 7).

The study revealed that the higher level of efficiency available in using social media compared to traditional communication channels prompted tourism industry leaders to state that tourism companies, like any other company, must participate on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and other social media sites in order to succeed in today's business environment (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010:62). This study further revealed that tourism companies must utilise the social media platforms as those websites provides an opportunity for companies to interact and engage with current and

potential customers, create meaningful and important relationships with customers, and encourage an improved sense of intimacy of the customer relationship (Luliana *et al.* 2013: 67).

The primary study revealed that social media is the best platform for interacting with marketers and that tourists have more trust on social media content than commercial ads. This is consistent with some academic scholars who note the potential of social media in helping tourism and hospitality companies to increase their online presence and to engage potential, current, and previous guests. The use of social media for marketing and sales is partially responsible for converting prospective tourists to tourists who will actually visit or plan to visit South Africa at a later stage (Irina *et al.* 2014: 1291). Milwood *et al.* (2013: 167) suggest that destination marketing organisations do not only need to engage in online conversations, but they also need to make adjustments to their web marketing strategies based on their findings from the conversations.

The findings revealed that tourists do not avoid social media content as they do with commercial ads and they always carry mobile devices to access social media content. These findings concurs with the views of Leung *et al.* (2013: 6) who illustrate that social media is useful for managing customer relations with its unique ability to attract customers through focused, in-depth, and member generated content, retaining the customers through building relations with other members, and engaging customer through social attractions.

The findings also revealed that tourists enjoy interacting with other travellers, and they monitor what other people post about holiday destinations. This is consistent with the views of Bakker (2012: 32) who emphasises that social media is turning the whole destination marketing sphere upside down. He argues that people may not talk about their laundry detergent, but when it comes to travel and tourism, everybody talks about it.

5.3.3 Objective three

- To ascertain whether the tourists refer to social media prior to, during, and after their visits.

The findings from the primary study reveal that tourists refer to social media at all stages of their trips. Firstly it was revealed that they refer to social media prior to embarking on their trips. This is consistent with the views of Luliana *et al.* (2013: 68) who indicate that tourism-related products are usually high-involvement, high-priced, and well-differentiated and travellers need to collect and review enough information early in their decision making process so as to reduce the risk of making wrong decisions. This information need can be met through searching the content on social media. The findings are also consistent with a recent research from Google which revealed that among leisure travellers, 84% use the Internet as a major resource for planning. According to Leung *et al.* (2013: 3) the likelihood of online travellers coming across a social media content while using the Internet was more than one-tenth of the search results.

The study reveals that tourists refer to social media during their trips. This concurs with the a previous research by Yoo and Gretzel (2011: 140) who found out that tourists use internet access at their destinations and accommodation to send emails, videos, and digital images. They also send text messages containing information about their destinations, arrivals, and departures. In another study conducted in 2007 by comScore, 84% of the tourists reported that travel reviews had significantly influenced them on their purchase decisions. It was reported that information on social networking sites greatly influences customers when making their purchase decisions.

A previous research by Luliana *et al.* (2013:67) found out that social media is predominantly used after the trip for sharing the experience. However, this is inconsistent with this primary study which revealed that social media is predominantly used during the trip stage of the tourist travel process. According to Yoo and Gretzel (2011: 139) some scholars, knowing that this is the last phase of the trip planning process, were eager to investigate the motive of tourist in post-purchase evaluation and creation of user generated content on social media. It was found that social interaction and sharing of life experiences are the two major factors motivating the travellers to create user generated content on social media.

5.3.4 Objective four

- To examine the extent to which social media can influence the final decision of a tourist.

The findings from the primary study revealed that social does influence the final decision of a tourist to a considerable extent. This is in line with the consumer socialisation theory which predicts that communication among consumers affects their behavioural, effective, and cognitive attitudes Luliana *et al.* (2013: 66). Personal recommendations are greatly influential and can easily be accessed on social media platforms. Travellers rely on other travellers' advice far much more than standard print advertisements and guidebooks.

According to the literature review of this study, it was revealed that social media can influence an individual from need recognition stage to the actual purchase of tourism products or embarking on a trip. According to Hudson and Thal (2013: 156) social media had caused a fundamental change to the consumer decision making process and this resulted in the emerging of a more sophisticated view about the engagement of consumers with various destinations. The extent and implications of the changes brought by social media called for the re-evaluation of the consumer decision journey in the travel and tourism industry.

In support of the finding of this study that social media influences the final decision of a tourist to a considerable extent, Pick (2013: 1) states that the "buy" stage is most likely to occur through social media sites. More travellers are now purchasing tourism products through websites and the purchase intentions are directly influenced by the website's image. Some tourism organisations and hotels are using social media not as just a customer relationship tool. On their Facebook pages, some hotels are now offering room-booking technology amounting to a considerable incremental in sales (Strauss and Frost 2014: 225).

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions derived from the findings are:

- Social media is of paramount importance in promoting tourism and it is not just an optional extra. Tourism businesses that do not use or fail to use social

features to increase efficiency and lower communication barriers may not survive long.

- The efficiency available in using social media compared to traditional communication channels prompted this study to conclude that social media is one of the most effective tools in promoting tourism.
- Tourists refer to social media at all stages of their trips. Predominantly, social media is used for information search prior to the trip, updating friends about departures, arrivals and destinations during the trip, and sharing experiences after the trip.
- Social media influences the final decision of a tourist to a considerable extent. The extent and implications of the influences exerted by social media to the tourist's decision making process caused fundamental changes to the tourists' decisions.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

The major limitation of the study was that the instrument used was newly developed and has not been extensively tested and this will pose a limitation on the applicability of the results obtained. After identifying some shortcomings during the analysis of the collected data, there was some manipulation of the results to allow a better interpretation of the findings. The "Effectiveness of social media" and "Tourists refer to social media" sections produced an unacceptable Cronbach's alpha scorings of 0.458 and 0.432 respectively. However, the overall reliability score of 0.857 exceeded the recommended value of 0.700, indicating an acceptable, consistent scoring for the overall research effort.

The following paragraphs discuss the general implications and recommendations.

5.6 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The study yields many implications for both practice and literature on the promotion of tourism. The study explored the influence of social media in promoting tourism. Following the results of this research effort, it is recommended that tourism marketing bodies and tourism companies must break communication barriers and increase their efficiency in promoting tourism activities by increasing the utilisation of the social media platform in their ongoing efforts to showcase the City and the Country at large as tourist destinations of choice. According to Kaplan and Haenlein

(2010: 62) the higher level of efficiency available in using social media compared to traditional communication channels prompted tourism industry leaders to state that tourism companies, like any other company, must participate on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and other social media sites in order to succeed in today's technological and business environment.

5.7 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Listed below are specific recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5.7.1 Encourage more South Africans to visit their own country

The results of the primary study revealed that South Africans are not dominant in visiting their country. This was also found to be consistent with the literature by Van Rooyen (2011: 6) who suggest that the decrease in international tourists in past years was as a result of local tourists who were afraid to visit resort places like the beach-front because of crime levels. More domestic campaigns need to be undertaken to mobilise South Africans to visit places in their own country. Bennet, Jooster and Strydom (2005: 26) suggest that the promotion and development of tourism should not take place without the participation and involvement of local communities. Local people must be incorporated in the tourism development agenda.

5.7.2 Attracting tourists from other continents

The primary study revealed that three-quarters of the international tourists were Africans. This indicates that the city draws the majority of its tourists from other African countries. There is a need to intensify marketing efforts in other continents besides Africa. This will allow the country to move towards achieving its goal of becoming one of the top 20 global tourist destinations by 2020 as reported in the literature (Asia News Monitor 2015.2).

5.7.3 Adopting and integrating new social media applications

The theoretical study of this research work revealed that there are a number of companies which are still lagging in the utilisation of social media marketing platform. This study was undertaken to make tourism companies understand the business potential in social media. The study recommends the integration of social media

applications on companies or tourism marketing organisations' websites. Milwood, Marchiori and Zach (2013: 165) suggest that, given the potential effectiveness of social media in promoting tourism in recent years, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) are forced to adopt and integrate this new technology so that they can better communicate with their online target audience.

5.7.4 Use social media to create awareness of the positive transformations.

Many changes have taken place in Durban, especially the transformation of the beach-front resort area. The theoretical study reveal that local tourists were afraid to visit these places like the beach-front resort places due to high crime level (Van Rooyen 2011: 6). He highlights that things have changed and there is need to send a word to tourists that Durban is now a friendly tourist destination. Social media is one such communication platform which is recommended by this study to be utilised to create awareness of those positive transformations. It can deliver the promotional messages which the Durban City may need to communicate to all corners of the world.

5.7.5 Increase online marketing efforts

The primary study revealed the strategic importance of social media in tourism competitiveness. It represents a very important tool to communicate and engage with travellers. This implies that social media marketing should be incorporated in the online marketing plan of tourism businesses as suggested by Gay *et al.* (2007: 3). The study recommends tourism operators to raise their level of online commitment and transform their marketing strategies to the online environment. The Internet provides a wide range of new ways for users to interact with one another, with business, and with online content. This provision for interactivity is, according to Gay *et al.* (2007: 8), the greatest advantage of online marketing.

5.7.6 Revolutionise marketing practices

According to Cindy (2012: 32) travellers have turned to social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, You Tube, and Pinterest to review hotels, map their routes, critique accommodations, and post personal videos and photos. It is no longer time to invest all marketing efforts on traditional media such as radio, television and newspaper. An unprecedented opportunity was created for destination marketing organisation (DMOs) to connect with travellers and attract

them in real time. The study recommends tourism companies to utilise the unique aspect of social media to revolutionize their marketing practices of promoting tourism.

5.7.7 Allow more interaction with travellers

Tourism marketers are considerably using social media to engage with actual and potential tourists. Travellers need to get engaged with marketers so that they can get updated on current information or price discounts on certain product bundles. Travellers will have the chance to ask questions and get clarity whilst at the same time the marketers can respond to the questions as well as conveying their marketing messages concurrently. On the “evaluation” stage, customer to customer interaction through social media is now playing a pivotal role in decision making (Hudson and Thal 2013: 158).

5.7.8 Provide free internet access at destinations and accommodations

Tourists may need to use free internet access at their destinations and accommodations to send emails, videos, and digital images. They can also send text messages containing information about their destinations, arrivals, and departures. Friends and families will then begin to follow them on social media platforms and become recipients and co-creators of user-generated content created by the tourists (Yoo and Gretzel 2011: 140). This will allow more chances of promoting the tourist destinations.

5.7.9 Offering online-purchasing provisions

Tourism companies must offer more online-purchase applications. This will allow the “buy” stage to occur through social media sites. Travellers are now interested in purchasing tourism products through websites and the purchase intentions are directly influenced by the websites image. The theoretical study reveal that some tourism organisations and hotels are using social media not as just a customer relationship tool. On their Facebook pages, some hotels are now offering room-booking technology (Strauss and Frost 2014: 225).

5.7.10 Incorporating multiple approaches

This study does not claim that social media can consistently outperform other promotional tools available to the tourism marketers and neither can it be used in isolation. Traditional approaches to promoting tourism must not be ignored.

Therefore, this study recommends tourism organisations to use multiple approaches in promoting the tourism industry. Multiple approaches need to be incorporated to improve forecasting accuracy and demand modelling (Leung *et al.* 2013: 4). However, Rehman and Ibrahim (2011: 188) suggest that it must go beyond just communication to the creation of synergistic communication through a process of using other elements of the promotional mix in a unified way.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research investigated the influence of social media in promoting the tourism industry in Durban, South Africa but was unable to examine the influence of specific social media platforms. The influence of specific social media sites will give a better understanding to marketing practitioners on what platform to use and in what situation. Razvan *et al.* suggest that different categories of social media cannot equally exert the same influence in meeting the needs of the business as well as those of individuals. Different social media platforms are not equally applicable in promoting tourism. Further research could investigate the influence of specific social media platforms in promoting tourism business.

This study indicate that social media can successfully be utilised to engage and interact with actual and potential customers, create important and meaningful relationships with tourists, and encourage an improved sense of intimacy of the customer relationship. However, little was revealed in the theoretical and primary study of this research effort about how organisations can use social media to develop those relationships. Further research is recommended to be undertaken on how social media can be utilised to create meaningful and important customer relationships.

Despite of the high adoption of social media by tourism consumers and suppliers in recent years, the successful practice of manipulating and managing social media in promoting tourism still remains largely unknown to both practitioners and scholars. Further research could investigate how to successfully manage and manipulate the business opportunity presented by various social media platforms. Tourism organisations need to have an understanding of how to use social media to accomplish their various purposes.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The empirical findings of the study have revealed that social media is of paramount importance in promoting tourism. Marketing practitioners in the tourism industry must adopt and integrate social media in their marketing strategies rather than taking social media as just an optional extra. Tourism organisations must use social features to break communication barriers and increase efficiency for them to remain competitive. Social media is one of the most effective communication channels in the tourism industry and has more efficiency in recent years than traditional channels. Tourists refer to social media at all stages of their trips and this communication channel has fundamentally changed the decision making process of the tourists and it has power to influence the final decision of travellers.

However, social media cannot effectively work in isolation from other elements of the promotional mix, it must be integrated with other elements of the promotional mix in order to effectively promote the tourism industry. Having revealed the value and importance of social media in promoting tourism, it does not mean that it can outperform other approaches available to promoting tourism, incorporating multiple approaches is the way by which effectiveness in promotion can be achieved. There is no single marketing strategy which can consistently outperform other strategies in all situations. Social media alone is not enough in doing meaningful business in the tourism environment.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick where appropriate

1. Demographic data

1.1 Gender Male Female

1.2 Race African Indian White Coloured

1.3 Age group Under 20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and above

1.4 Country of permanent Residence

1.5 Marital Married Single Divorced Widowed

1.6 Educational level Less than National National Bachelor's Post- Certificate certificate Diploma Degree graduate

2. Value of social media

2.1 Are you active on online communities? Yes/No

2.2 Which social media platform are you most active on?

Face Twitter YouT Flickr Google Fours Whats None
book ube plus quare app

Please indicate your opinion on the following statements

SD – Strongly Disagree D- Disagree N – Neutral A – Agree SA – Strongly Agree

No.	Test item	SD	D	N	A	SA
2.3	Social media is very important to a tourist					
2.4	I become aware of certain tourist attractions in Durban through social media					
2.5	Social media aroused my need for travel to Durban					

SOUTH AFRICA, DURBAN AS A TOURIST DESTINATION.

2.6 I enjoyed my visit to Durban because,

EXPERIENCE/ IMPRESSION SD D N A SA

2.6.1 The weather is always good

2.6.2 I like the service I am offered at the hotel I am staying at.

2.6.3 The sincerity of the people in Durban

2.6.4 The cost effectiveness of the holiday

2.6.5 The price of the hotel is reasonable

2.6.6 The price of the food is cheap

2.6.7 The price of clothing is affordable

2.6.8 The costs of the taxis are cheap and affordable.

2.6.9 Durban has the best beaches

2.6.10 Sunbathing is what I enjoy doing in Durban

2.6.11 Durban has many world class attractions

2.6.12 I feel safe here

2.6.13 I have not encountered crime during my visit.

2.6.14 I enjoy the variety of food cuisines

2.6.15 Durban caters for my holiday needs.

3 Effectiveness of social media

	Please tick the most appropriate	SD	D	N	A	SA
3.1	Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with marketers					
3.2	I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial ads					
3.3	I do not have a tendency of ignoring/avoiding ads on social media as I do with commercial ads					
3.4	I always carry a mobile device to access social media.					
3.5	I monitor what other people post on holiday destinations					
3.6	I do not enjoy interacting with other travellers on social media					

4 Tourists refer to social media

	Please show the best opinion	SD	D	N	A	SA
4.1	I referred to social media prior to visiting Durban					
4.2	I never referred to social media whilst I am in Durban for interacting with other travellers					
4.3	I have already shared a part of my experience with my virtual friends whilst I am in Durban.					
4.4	I will post information on social media after my visit so that others can be informed.					

5 Social media and the tourist decision making

	Please indicate your opinion	SD	D	N	A	SA
5.1	Travel reviews influenced my decisions					
5.2	I found social media to be more unreliable for information.					
5.3	I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media					
5.4	Interactions with virtual friends cannot influence my behaviour.					
5.5	I received recommendations and advices from travellers prior to visiting Durban					
5.6	My original decision was modified or changed after reviewing travel content on social media					

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT



Dear Respondent

I am a currently registered student with the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), located in Durban South Africa. As part of my studies and to qualify for the award of a Masters in Management Sciences degree, I have to complete a dissertation. I am therefore conducting a study titled, The influence of social media in promoting the tourism industry in Durban, South Africa.

I have to distribute questionnaires to tourists who are currently enjoying their visit in Durban so I kindly request you to participate and contribute to this study by completing this questionnaire which will not take more than 15 minutes of your valued time. All the data collected in this study will solely be applied for research purposes and confidentiality is guaranteed.

Should you not understand any one question in this questionnaire, please do not hesitate to ask me or my fieldwork assistant for clarity. My supervisor can also be contacted on 031 373 6870 should you need to make any further enquiry. All your effort to complete this questionnaire is highly appreciated.

Yours truly,

Elvis Madondo

APPENDIX C: GATE PASS



Parks, Recreation & Culture Unit PARKS, LEISURE & CEMETERIES

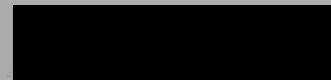
70 St Thomas Road
Botanic Gardens, Durban, 4001
P O Box 3740, Durban, 4000
Tel: 031 322 4000
Fax: 031 201 8639
www.durban.gov.za

18/06/2015

To Mr Elvis Madondo

RESEARCH SURVEY: TOURISM INDUSTRY

Please be advised that the Acting Deputy Head: Sherelle Whitaker hereby provides Mr E. Madondo permission to conduct Interviews/Questionnaire on Durban Beachfront during the one (1) month period of July 2015.


**SHERELLE WHITAKER
ACTING DEPUTY HEAD:
PARKS, LEISURE & CEMETERIES**