



**THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET IN THE PROMOTION OF BED AND
BREAKFAST AND GUESTHOUSES IN MTHATHA**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the role of the internet in the promotion of Bed and Breakfast as well as Guest houses establishments in Mthatha. These establishments are an important sector in the hospitality industry in South Africa and due to a number of developmental projects in Mthatha over the last decade, there has been a rapid increase in such businesses especially in the upmarket suburbs of the town. This increase in the number of establishments has resulted in increased competition for business.

The internet has radically altered today 's media landscape and presents the hospitality industry with new opportunities to promote their companies. It also enables hospitality industry managers to find out what people need, what content they are looking for, and how one's company can help them. The nature of the study was exploratory, and fulfilled the purpose of the study using a qualitative research method. The theoretical approach applied in this research was the e-value model. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The study revealed that the hospitality sector can benefit greatly if they use the internet strategically to achieve growth.

DECLARATION

I, Luleka Velelo, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research and that this research has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree to any other institution.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SME	Small-Medium Enterprises
B&B	Bread and Breakfast
ICT	Information Communication Technology
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
IoT	Internet of Things
SMO	Social Media Optimisation
SEA	Search Engine Advertising

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Internet use has increased in all social and business spheres and the use of these technologies are transforming business practices. Among the practices that are being radically changed has been the way the businesses have managed their reputation and attracted customers in the digital space. The rapid increase in the number of internet users together with the growing transactions that are conducted online, according to Law, Qi and Buhalis (2010: 302) give a clear indication of the status of the technology.

Bed and Breakfast and guest houses are an important sector in South Africa and due to a number of developments in the Mthatha area over the previous decade, there has been a fast growth in the number of Bed and Breakfasts and guest houses in the upmarket suburbs of the town. The rapid development in this sector has led to the increase of competition and therefore there is a greater need for establishments to find inventive ways of promoting themselves to remain viable. The SME sector plays an important role in South Africa, but can only carry on doing so if these entities utilise the opportunities accessible to them (Market research 2014). These opportunities also involve the use of the internet for promotion of businesses. Bhasin (2011: 07) argues that previously, small businesses only had a limited method to promote their products particularly through techniques such as printing out fliers or supporting small events. However, now there are all types of opportunities available on the web. The internet is available in all countries and now there are massive opportunities for the businesses that are in a position to market their products and in the process make profits (Budica, Piui, Budica and Tudor 2012: 176). Nowadays people can go into a place directly or indirectly through contacts from emails, brochures or by means of an online engine, like Google

or similar. Corporate promotion is an essential part of any corporate success since it is through advertising that an industry grows its customer base and unlocks new openings of opportunity. Promotional mix is defined by the chartered institute of marketing (2009) as set of tools that an industry can use to connect the paybacks of its products or services to its clients.

1.2 Research Problem and Aims

Despite the fact that various small scale industries are trying to familiarise and use the digital space to promote their businesses, there are always anticipated challenges they face, mainly those that operate in the rural margin. Fatoki and Garwe (2010: 730) argue that SMEs face challenges posed by the business climate as these factors directly impact on how people consume services and products offered by most companies. Thus access to good and usable information about the market is a requirement for all SMEs. These companies need to recognise their consumers, their purchase preferences, the way they purchase, their preferred places where they purchase and usually the time they purchase so as to meet these demands. The target marketplace is therefore important to any business since there is a need to align contexts and product offerings. For new entrants, then it is fundamental for the owners to choose their customers and also determine what they need. The increase in the number of Bed and Breakfasts and guest houses in Mthatha offers a good context for studying how these institutions exploit the internet for promoting their services and products. The extensive usage of the internet in other sectors has generated opportunities for this sector as well. This research seeks to examine how the Bed and Breakfasts and Guest houses establishments utilise the internet to promote their business.

This study seeks to answer a number of research questions as far as the following aims are concerned:

- To examine the current uses of the internet for the promotion of Bed & Breakfasts and guest houses establishments.

- To determine customer responses to promotional messages on the internet.
- To identify the challenges faced by the sector when using the internet to promote their businesses.
- To make recommendations for the further usage of internet or how internet utilisation can enhance the hospitality industry.

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 Introduction

This section reviews the preliminary literature related to the study. It will provide ideas that have been acknowledged on this topic, and their strong points and weaknesses. The chapter begins by providing a background of internet marketing in small scale B&Bs businesses in Mthatha. Later, investigator examines literature associated with internet utilisation and promotion activities including business promotional mix in bed and breakfasts businesses as well as guesthouses broadly. The methods of promotion are discussed with direct application to the hospitality sector

1.3.2 Internet use by Small Scale Business

Parson and Oja (2013: 271) defines the internet as the leading computer network which carries data worldwide in the blink of an eye. The internet has an increasing influence on business activities and offer significant opportunities for business success. As such, businesses with different sizes and in different sectors are taking up these opportunities offered by the internet. Azad and Hasan (2011: 56) note that although SMEs have the potential, they are now increasingly utilising the recently appropriated the internet technology for communication and transactions to improve their effectiveness. Worryingly, however is the slow proportion of businesses that

are embracing the internet in the developing world. The growing number of internet users mean that SMEs must begin to plan on utilising the internet so as to get prospective clients who are now spread across geographical boundaries. Previous scholars have acknowledged many benefits to be accrued to SMEs that use the Internet. Amongst these benefits are closer relationships among value chain stakeholders, improved production, enhanced competence, better access to market information, obtaining information system competences to support commerce revolution, and getting of new customers in other countries (Acılar and Karamaşa 2010: 13; Dai 2010: 30).

1.3.3 Internet and Business Promotion

Promotion is defined as an approach in which an industry makes its services recognised to clients, both existing and possible (Jim 2015: 3). Jim (2015: 3) argues that it is a serious blunder to regard promotion as if it is all about marketing. There are a number of methods that a sector can take to get their communication through to clients, although marketing is undoubtedly a significant one. The key purpose of promotion is to guarantee that clients are aware of the presence and location of the products. Promotion is also used to convince clients that the product is superior to rival products and also to remind clients about why they need to purchase the products (Jim 2015: 5). William and Curtis (2008: 98) are of the opinion that the internet has had extensive influence on communication practices and the improvement of sales (Schneider 2010: 120), advertising practices and even organisational philosophy (Moutinho 2010: 66) in travel and the hospitality sector.

It is essential to recognise that an industry will practice more than one technique of promotion. The diversity of promotional approaches used are referred to as the promotional mix. Borrie (2013: 3) identified a list of five tried and verified methods of internet promotion that can aid to business growth.

These techniques are search engine optimisation, social media optimisation, search engine advertising, email and online business directory listing.

1.3.3.1 *Search engine optimisation*

Macmillan Dictionary (2013) defines search engine optimisation as the method of editing the content of a website so that it has an advanced search engine status and therefore draws more tourists. There are essentially three pillars of the process of search engine optimization, namely keyword targeted quality content formation, user-friendly website and URL structure along with developing third party links (Borrie 2013: 3). According to Mihalic and Buhalis (2013: 34) an industry needs to detect key statements and relations that are directly related to their products and services.

1.3.3.2 *Social media networking*

Social media networking has gained popularity in the recent times for promoting businesses (Borrie 2013: 4). Social media is defined as an application that offer users the ability to create and share content (Amason 2011: 55). Social media like Facebook, Twitter YouTube and LinkedIn do not only aid in connection building can also play a substantial role in providing credibility and faith to your product amongst your target market. The benefits of social media to small hospitality industry are noted by Milhalic and Buhalis (2013: 35) who notes that the social media tools are necessary for viral promotion. The social media can offer small hospitality industry businesses the rewards of sending promotional messages swiftly at lowest cost.

1.3.3.3 *Search engine advertising (SEA)*

The advertising campaigns usually done on SEAs involve paid advertisements which feature in the inert search engine outcomes. The internet has the ability to spread the role of advertising far past the accomplishments of traditional media (Du Plessis and Federick 2012: 93). The technique of using internet saves time and is cost-effective and having a respectable web existence reduces a lot of time required for notifying customers about your products and

services, how to utilise them and their benefits etc. Distributing commercial communications using emails to your existing and potential customers is one of the best conservative techniques of internet promotion. Having your establishment registered in a reputable online business listing directory is one of the greatest means of ensuring your business gets maximum exposure free of charge (Borrie 2013: 4).

Although there is little research that concentrates on internet promotion of the hospitality industry in South Africa, the World Wide Worx conducted a survey in 2012 that shows the impact of the internet on SMEs. The study showed that practically two-thirds of SMEs in South Africa have online presence. This study concluded that as many as 79 percent of SMEs with a website note that they are lucrative, with 30 percent of these maintaining they are strongly lucrative and those without a website, only 59 percent report lucrativeness and just 14 percent of these claim to be strongly lucrative. The study evidently shows that the increasing ubiquity of the internet means that a website is fast becoming a necessity. Therefore, it is imperative for B&Bs and guest houses to utilise these opportunities of the internet.

1.3.4 The Promotional Mix

The promotional mix is also referred to as a marketing communication mix. The promotion mix is defined by Sukhman, Gupta and Kalra (2012: 25) as the word used to describe a set of tools that a company can use to send messages successfully about the benefits of its products or services to its clients. The promotion mix is divided into the following six classes: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing tools that the business can use to communicate client worth and enhance customer interactions (Kotler and Keller 2009: 46).

1.3.4.1 Advertising

Advertising refers to any compensated form of non-personal production and use of concepts, goods or amenities by a recognised promoter (Kotler and Armstrong 2010: 472). Kim, Hwang and Fesemenmaier (2005: 44) notes that advertising is aimed at primarily altering affective and cognitive processes particularly responsiveness, awareness and intention to purchase. With regard to businesses, advertising increases the clients as well as building a good corporate reputation of the firm. Advertising requires one to thoroughly plan, scheme, organize and regulate all communicational events of an enterprise to appropriate target groups with the aim of contributing to the marketing goals (Müller, Alt and Michelis 2011: 59).

Since advertising is a communication link between the buyer and the seller, it fosters advice, influence and reputation to the targeted group about the product or service especially their accessibility, value and features. The outcomes of advertising any service or product greatly depends on the success of advertising campaign (Trehan and Trehan 2010: 49). There are numerous ways in which advertising can be done, these include among others; classified, internet advertising, point of sale and tele-shopping advertising. Divisekera and Kulendran (2006: 189) found out that there was a positive relationship between advertisement and the total number of tourists visiting Australia from New Zealand and Japan.

1.3.4.2 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion refers to short period motivations that intends to inspire the acquisition or transaction of a product or service. Sales promotion can be executed via numerous ways including free gifts, sampling, trade shows, contests couponing, sampling, discounts, and exhibition at trade fairs and even subsidised funding (Trehan and Trehan 2010: 50). Such activities modify the value and price correlation of a product or service by the target group with the

likely effect of making instant sales. The idea behind sales promotion is to persuade customers to switch from competing brands, grow product consumption, to strengthen the marketing communication exertions for the trademark and to influence brand reliability. This in turn increases sales, profit and market share (Stralser 2012: 90). Larisa (2014: 446) found out that sales promotion in the travel industry stimulates demand, and sustain a continuous engagement with customers. Hence if the approach is adopted in the small hospitality industry it would be expected that this will result in increased number of customers.

1.3.4.3 *Personal Selling*

Personal selling refers to the personal demonstration of products or services by the companies' sales staff with the intention of producing sales and building client relations. Shimp and Andrews (2013: 69) define direct marketing as the way of targeting distinct consumers to both attain an instant response and also nurture enduring customer relations. Personal selling has a number of advantages since it builds personal relations between the marketer and the consumer. This permits the marketer to keep customers interest at heart and develop long-term relations. Due to the two-way interactive nature of this promotional tool, the customer gets more information that can be provided by adverts. On the other hand, the marketer has a good chance to get feedback from the customer with regard to product or service weaknesses and strengths (Kumar 2010: 73; Stralser 2012: 86). B&B businesses may benefit a lot if they invest more in personal selling especially when they work with tour operators.

1.3.4.4 *Public Relations*

It is the nurturing of virtuous relationships with the firm's numerous publics by attaining favorable publicity, building up a decent company image and also handling unfavorable events, stories or events (Kotler and Keller 2009: 47).

With the new technologies, companies have been empowered to engage with their stakeholders in a more interactive and effective manner. Baka (2016:149) gives an example of user generated reviews as companies are now able to review services and products. Baka (2016: 149) points out that:

Websites present secret reviews with unrevealed rating instruments opening up communication networks with consumers and require managers to come to terms with numerous grounds for reputation development.

1.3.4.5 Direct Marketing

Shimp and Andrews (2013: 75) define online marketing as the advertising of products and services online. There are various ways in which the marketer can reach out to the customer but the most commonly used platforms include, tele-marketing, mobile phone marketing and direct mail (Kumar 2010: 75). The major challenge with this approach is the acquiring of addresses and contact details of the prospective customers. However apart from that it also has a number of advantages which include; precision targeting, personalisation, flexibility, privacy, measurability, low cost, detailed information and the fact that it is immediate (Hudson 2008: 10). Considering the nature of business in the hospitality industry there is a high chance of frequent repeat customers hence the effect of direct marketing cannot be underestimated.

Every one of these promotional tools involves the usage of precise methods to communicate with customers. For example, promotion may be out door, internet based, broadcast and print. Sales promotion involves the use of coupons, displays, discounts, and demonstrations. Personal selling consists of sales demonstration, trade displays and incentive programme. Public relations may use telesales, catalogues, kiosks, the internet text messaging, interactive TV, and other methods.

The application of promotional mix methods in B&Bs and guest houses, using the internet as medium of communication is advantageous. For example, with online promotion, there are no media purchasing, printing charges or center/sales agent fees. In contrast with conventional methods of promotion, the internet is low-cost (Stipic 2014: 4). Stipic (2014: 5) further adds that unlike flyers or TV or radio commercials, the online promotional messages last for longer periods. When your promotion efforts are virtual, they stay online however with advertising material or TV advertisements or commercials they have a restricted run and if you require continual coverage you have to pay for it. Most website content is everlasting and will yield returns forever.

Website advertising offers lasting content. While a commercial in a newspaper or business magazine possibly will rapidly lose its sales making worth within a day or so or as soon as the next subject is published. Website promotion is normally everlasting. Occasionally, however, the dates of prices and special offers might have to be changed. Nevertheless, the enormous content of your website promotion content will stay online for many years.

1.4. Research Methodology

1.4.1 Research Design

There are two methods of research namely qualitative research and quantitative research methods. The differences between these approaches is, on one hand qualitative research does not focus on attempting to measure phenomena especially in terms of quantities, amounts or occurrences. Therefore, the purpose of qualitative research methods seeks to understand the social contractedness of knowledge and also insist that knowledge is obtained from individual (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2009: 8).

In contrast Welman *et al.* (2009: 8) notes that quantitative research does not focus on the processes but emphasises measurement of phenomena and the

investigation of relationships between variables. According to Creswell (2013: 36) the processes of qualitative research are characterised as inductive, evolving and formed by the investigators experience in gathering and analysing of the data.

The study draws on qualitative research methods to obtain information from key individuals using in-depth interviews. The study design was merely exploratory as the researcher only wanted to explore the research question and make recommendations for further research.

1.4.2 Target Population

Welman *et al.* (2009: 20) observes that the population usually refers to objects of study and these maybe, individuals, groups, events or even organisations. Therefore, a research problem always has to address specific population groups and population refers to the totality of elements that meet the requirement of being part of the study.

In this study the unit of analysis includes a sample selected from the B&Bs and guest houses in Mthatha together with customers of the selected establishments. In total there are approximately 100 Bed and Breakfast and guesthouse establishments in Mthatha.

1.4.3 Sample Method

Sampling is the process of selecting a representative subsection or some part of the larger population (Zikmund *et al.* 2013: 385). If the population is too large, the researcher usually takes a sample that will be used in the study. The basic idea of sampling is that by selecting some of the units in a population, we can draw conclusions about the whole population (Cooper and Schindler 2011: 364). Sampling techniques are divided into two broad classes- probability and nonprobability.

In the case of probability sampling, one can conclude that the probability that any unit of the population has an equal chance of being part of the sample. In contrast non-probability sampling cannot guarantee this equal chance. The advantage of non-probability sampling is that it is not difficult and also cost-effective (Welman *et al.* 2009: 39)

This research uses a non-probability sampling method and a judgmental sampling technique was used to select the companies that were selected to be part of the study. For judgemental, the researcher chooses the sample members according to some criterion (Cooper and Schindler 2011: 385). The criterion used to choose this sample was that the chosen B&B and guesthouse establishments were some of the busiest establishments in the area. The sample included 10 managers or owners of the Bed and Breakfast and guesthouse establishments and 6 customers who frequently visit the establishments.

1.4.4 Data Collection

Primary data is collected using interviews. Secondary data contain both raw and published summaries; and may comprise data gathered by other organisations, governments, or data collected by a research organisation. Routine data gathered by institutions partaking in an activity is secondary data which may be similar to primary data but is obtained without incurring unnecessary expenditure. The use of secondary data can result in cost and time savings (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 46).

In this research, it is imperative to obtain information straight from the person responsible for promotion of the hospitality industry. The method used to collect data was the primary data collection methods through the use of in-depth interviews.

1.4.5 Data collection instruments

The researcher used an interview schedule to gather the data. Issues that were be covered in the interviews are as follows:

- Measuring the use of social media in business practices
- Understanding internet as a tool for business promotion
- Understanding of internet use to build relationships with customers.
- Understanding of the effectiveness of using internet as compared to traditional media.
- Customer access to the internet

1.3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis techniques were utilised. The initial step in data preparation as pointed out by Cooper and Schindler (2011: 422) is to revise raw data to identify errors and oversights that compromised value standards. The data was assembled into themes and further analysed qualitatively. NVIVO a qualitative package was used to analyse data.

1.3.6 Confidentiality and Anonymity

To ensure adherence to research ethics, a cover letter as well as consent forms were provided for respondents to complete before the beginning of the interviews. Assurances were also given on the respondents 'right to privacy. Anonymity ensures that the researcher does not use information which will lead to the identification of the participants while confidentiality guarantees that the identities are not going to be publicised in any way when compiling the report. All participants in this study were assured of confidentiality.

1.3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity of the study implies the interpretation of observation and determines Lincoln and Gruba (1995) Observe that it is important for qualitative research to attain a sufficient level of rigour for the research outcomes to be meaningful. It is this rigour that guarantees validity and reliability. whether the investigator is calling what is measured by the correct label. Responses to questions for example can be more or less be a valid depiction of fundamental social phenomenon like a person's attitudes or values (Silverman 2013: 55).

Silverman (2013: 55) defines reliability as the point to which the outcome is independent of the unintentional circumstances of the research. He also points out that examining reliability is closely correlated to guaranteeing the quality of field notes and assuring the public access to the procedure of their production. For these to be attained, as argued by Houghton et al. (2013: 13) and Lincoln and Gruba (1985) several aspects related to rigour have to be considered. Amongst these aspects are research credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability. Once a researcher ensures that these are considered by taking deliberate actions as rigour mechanisms, the research quality improves.

The researcher will ensure that different forms of mechanisms to ensure rigour will be taken into account at all levels of the study such as ensuring that literature guides the study, auditability of the process through reflexivity and recording of the responses and ensuring that the voices of participants are heard by providing thick descriptions. Other mechanisms will include the use of a Dictaphone for all the interviews, and transcription. The researcher will select interviews for this study because it is a flexible method. The information collected from the interviews will serve as primary data in this research.

1.3.8 Delimitations

The study was conducted at Bed and Breakfast and Guest house establishments that are situated in Mthatha and the category of people that were interviewed were the managers and customers of these establishments in Mthatha. The part of internet promotion that was researched include website promotion, email marketing, social media promotion, internet advertising, online bookings and search engine marketing.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research and hence offers an outline of the research problem, the objectives, the rationale of the study and information on the research methods that were used.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter describes the problem of the study and also explain the selected a theoretical framework.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter presents the study approaches employed in conducting the study.

Chapter 4: Discussion of findings

This chapter discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusion

Conclusions from the findings are described and subsequently recommendations for further study are made.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study by outlining the overview of the research. The background of the study, the research problem and the purposes of the study is provided. In addition, the delimitation of the study together with the details of how the chapters in this research was structured is also presented. The next chapter provides a review of available literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study examines how the Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) and Guest house establishments utilise the internet to promote their business. The chapter begins by providing a background of internet marketing in small scale B&Bs businesses in Mthatha. This section reviews literature associated with internet utilisation and marketing which, includes business promotional mix in bed and breakfasts and guesthouses broadly. Methods of promotion, namely online business, E-mail marketing, search engine and social media optimisation, search engine advertising, and online directory listing is discussed with direct application to the hospitality sector. In addition, the chapter also describes the e-value theory, which has been used to explore internet adoption by businesses in different sectors. Lastly, an in-depth explanation on the research gap, which necessitates this research is provided.

2.2 Internet Use by Small Scale Businesses

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have an increasing influence on business activities and offer outstanding opportunities for business success. As such, businesses with different sizes and in different sectors are taking up the opportunities presented by ICTs at diverse speeds. Azad and Hasan (2011: 56) note that although SMEs have the potential, they are now increasingly utilising the internet for communication and e-commerce to acquire competitiveness. Worryingly, however is the leisurely rate of adoption which is apparent in the developing world. The increasing number of internet consumers has brought implications on SMEs contemplating adopting the internet to reach larger numbers of potential customers who are now spread across the world. Previous research has recognised various benefits to be accrued by SMEs as users of ICT which include closer working relations

amongst value chain associates, increased production, heightened effectiveness, better access to information and knowledge, getting information system competencies to maintain business transformation, and getting new customers either locally, country-wide, or worldwide (Acılar and Karamaşa 2010: 13; Dai 2010: 30). Furthermore, it has been recognised that not all companies need to implement ICT tools to the equal degree of complexity and that there is no “one-size- fits-all” ICT approach. Tank, Chong, Lin, and Cyril 2010: 28). However, in most developing countries, people are still not familiar with the internet technology (Azad and Hasan 2011: 56). Since e-businesses is computer, internet and software dependent, establishments typically face scores of glitches in operating businesses using the internet. Therefore, slow adoption rate of internet marketing was attributed to the negative perception on complexity on the use of internet and computers.

Entirely those concerns emphasised the necessity of a full investigation of ICT implementation specifically in the developing countries by looking at the benefits and obstacles of using ICTs, and their interrelationships with features of the companies particularly B&Bs. While the adoption of the internet by SMEs is one of the things that have been comprehensively examined, in South Africa precise inadequate attempts have remained (Dai 2010: 31).

There is little research in South Africa that focuses on internet promotion in the hospitality industry. The World Wide Worx, an internet research organisation, conducted a survey in 2012 that shows the impact of the internet in SMEs. The study showed that practically two-thirds of SMEs in South Africa have websites. For instance, 79 % of SMEs with a website report that they are lucrative, with 30 percent of these asserting they are powerfully lucrative and those deprived of a website, only 59 % report success and just 14 percent note that they are powerfully lucrative. The study indicated that the developing ubiquity of connectivity means that a website is slowly becoming a must-have. A recent survey that was conducted by SME Survey in 2018 about SMEs readiness to embrace internet technology indicated that small and medium enterprises are moving slowly and notes that it is important that they get new

skills. However, things in the South African SME sector are about to change especially with respect to the Internet of Things (IoT). At least 83% of decision-makers in a new study imagine to be using the internet in their businesses within five years. In an SME Survey conducted in 2018 and done in partnership with QuickBooks that involved 1400 interviews with SME decision-makers showed that 70% of SMEs are ready to acquire new skills and are eager about IoT. This shows that although the inclination is there, this will only be realised if businesses act on this.

The advent of the internet has greatly transformed the tourism and hospitality industry in many ways. Most travellers depend on the internet to acquire information with regards to accommodation and travel (Kazoba and Massawe 2016: 16; Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer 2014: 83; Bekteshi and Bekteshi 2017: 138). In this contemporary world, current travellers that need to book rooms online, prefer to access information quickly via the internet unlike what used to happen in the past. Marx (2014: 39) reports that for the period of the third quarter of 2010, nearly 56% of hotel bookings were done on internet. Making a reservation via the telephone appears to be out-of-date for numerous guests, particularly with the ubiquity of online booking tools which are available on the different establishments' websites (Wan-Salman and Radzi 2015: 151; Maswera 2006: 5)

2.2 Internet Use in the Hospitality Industry

B&Bs and guest houses can have a considerable economic impact, particularly in communities where motels and hotels are inadequate as B&Bs may handle a huge percentage of guests (Chen, Lin and Kuo 2013: 279). B&Bs in underdeveloped areas often experience resource-based promotion complications. First, many B&Bs operators are prickly with making advertising decisions because of the lack of instantaneous returns (Chen, Lin and Kuo 2013: 279). Moreover, as contended by Maswera, Edwards and Dawson (2008: 189), tourism owners in Africa lack specialised skills or accommodation management information to endorse their products. Therefore, examining the

current use of internet for promotion of B&B establishment and developing effective marketing strategies becomes critical issues for B&B operators. The study examines the role of the internet in the promotion of bed and breakfast and guest houses in Mthatha and hopes to support operators develop marketing strategies that meets the context of the customers when marketing B&Bs. Few studies to date have recognised the extensive variety of traveller wants and prospects related with rural areas (Chen, Lin and Kuo 2013: 280).

2.3.1 Bed and Breakfasts Sector in Mthatha

Mthatha is the third big city in the Eastern Cape Province following both Port Elizabeth and East London. The town was the former capital of the Transkei, during apartheid. It is located in the Wild Coast area in the province. Mthatha has a huge potential for growing in the province. The town is located in one of the poorest and underdeveloped areas in the country and tourism can play an important role. According Acheampong and Tichaawa (2015: 113), the area faces several challenges related to poor service delivery of water, houses, electricity and sanitation.

There are vast opportunities for the tourism industry due to its proximity to the wild coast region as well as its natural beauty of the landscape. In addition, the population, infrastructure and facilities that are there have the capacity to support a thriving accommodation services industry such as B&Bs and guest houses. The town is close to popular tourism destinations such as Cofee Bay, Port St. Johns, Mkambati Game Researve and many others, (Acheampong 2011: 52). These destinations are popular with both domestic and international tourists.

However, one of the major problems that the tourism sector faces in Mthatha is the number and quality of accommodation facilities in the town. There are only four hotels and these range in size from three to four stars. The hotels are Savoy a three-star with 48 rooms and a recently opened four-star hotel, Garden Court with 101 rooms. Mayfair is also a four-star hotel with 96 rooms. The rooms at these hotels are certainly insufficient, hence, the rising number

of B&Bs, self-catering and guesthouses establishments in the city. During December festive season, the town often receives a lot of both local and foreign visitors to visit families and relatives as well as visit places such as Nelson Mandela's rural home.

2.4 Internet Marketing

The pervasiveness of the internet presently has ensured that all facets of life have been affected in one way or the other by this medium. For the tourism industry, Bekteshi and Bekteshi (2017: 138) have observed that:

The use of ICTs and the internet in this industry has been so extensive that the functioning of this industry at the current stage would be considered impossible without the support of the ICT and the internet.

Everyone wants to get attention for their brand (Mosley 2018: 01) that is one of the reasons marketers divide their focus across different form of digital marketing to get attention. These forms of digital marketing are divided into three main types of media which are paid, owned and earned media. Paid media refers to the marketing channel that you for to increase traffic such as pay per click, display ads and paid content promotion (Mosley 2018: 01). Paid media works well when you have just started and nobody knows about your business. Owned media sites are an extension of your brand and create additional avenues for people to interact with your brand (Garman 2019) for example websites, social media channels and blog sites. Earned media is essentially online word of mouth, usually seen in the form of viral tendencies, mentions, reposts, reviews, recommendations or content picked up by 3rd party sites (Mosley 2018: 01; Garman 2019).

Banoobhai-Anwar (2016: 10) argue that one of the uses of the internet by the five star hotels he studied in Cape Town was to promote and market tourism products and services. The medium enabled the hotels to do so at a lower cost and communicate proficiently and efficiently directly with tourism consumers, (Banoobhai-Anwar 2016: 10). Turban, King, Lee, Liang and Turban (2015:

247) point out that through the internet, organisations can engage in mass e-mail promotion, web marketing, on line branding, use search engines for search optimisation and develop e-newsletters for promotion of hospitality facilities. Through the technology, organisations in the hospitality sector are able to increasingly leverage digital technologies to build and maintain relationships with customers online thereby smoothly enhancing the exchange of products and services, (Bharadwaj, Sawy, Pavlou and Venkatraman 2013: 479; Sashi 2012: 255; Nothnagel 2006: 35). In a study of the importance of the internet for hotels in Croatia, Batinic (2013: 120) concluded that the internet was now indispensable as it was used for getting new customers, retaining of existing customers, developing brand awareness and get access to research data required to achieve business and marketing objectives. This led Papasolomou and Melanthiou (2012: 330) to conclude that the internet as a communication medium had become an integral part of business development in the hospitality sector.

In developed countries, predominantly in South Africa, the issue of internet advertising has also attracted the attention of academics, (Banoobhai-Anwar 2016: 11; Song 2005: 55; Maswera 2006: 7; Maswera, Edwards and Dawson 2008: 192; Elliott and Boshoff 2009: 36; Matikiti, Afolabi and Smith 2012: 182). Elliott and Boshoff (2009: 38) maintains that the utilisation of the internet for advertising tourism services in South Africa, indicate that information technologies, such as the internet can only contribute to the modest operation of a business, if it is considered an important resource necessary for objective accomplishment. This implies that the usage of the internet helps in improving the profitability of a commercial business unless there is a deliberate and strategic deployment of this technology in the business. Another study by Song (2005: 55) in South Africa's Gauteng Province revealed that the catering and accommodation sector is one of the hospitality sector that benefits hugely from internet promotion as the number of online bookings increased between 2003-2005. The researchers attribute the increase to growth in internet usage in the province.

Even though research results have shown the value of the internet as a marketing tool, Thomas, Shaw, and Page (2011: 972) however, argue that the connexion between internet advertising and the profitability has not yet been confirmed from previous studies. Scholars like Matikiti, Afolabi and Smith (2012: 183) attribute this to the fact that the relationship between internet use and business success is more multifaceted than earlier believed. In addition, Vorhies, Orr, and Bush (2011: 16) attempt to explain the differences in the findings as the studies looked at different units of study such as rooms, business size Income and a dependence on cross-sectional approaches.

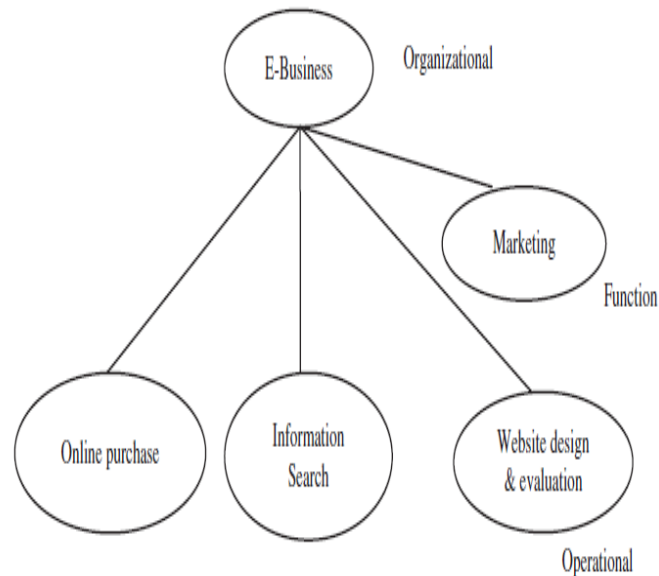
Consequently, inconsistent findings concerning the monetary benefits of internet advertising in the hospitality sector and a lack of available works on the influence of e-commerce in the South African tourism industry necessitated the drive in carrying out this study.

2.5 Internet Utilisation

Information has become an integral part of the hospitality industry and a research review on the impact of the internet on travel and tourism sector by Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2012: 84) showed that between 2001 and 2010, there was a significant increase in output in research on the use of the internet in the industry. According to Kundu and Chatterjee (2018: 58) the hospitality industry in 2018 has seen a new digital wave captivating. The hospitality sector plays a big role in the global economy and contributes more than half of service exports in countries like Spain, South Africa or Mexico, and now contributes more than 3% of global GDP. Hospitality organisations need to use appropriate digital technologies for them to succeed in creating digital solutions to enhance their sales, brand image and consciousness (Kundu and Chatterjee 2018: 58). Preliminary research from internet aggregators show that there are over 12 million users per month who access tourism related internet websites and that there is nearly one website per every 3 internet operators worldwide. As shown in the categorisation they developed Tang-Taye and Boyer (2012: 84), the internet has been used primarily for online

purchase, information search, website design and evaluation, marketing and e-business.

Figure 2.1: Uses of the internet in the travel industry



Adapted from Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2014: 104).

The figure above shows that the internet has been deployed for various purposes namely for online purchases for services, information search, marketing and website design and evaluation. Previous studies have revealed a connection between internet usage and revenue growth, (Acılar and Karamaşa 2010: 09; Reino, Frew, and Albacete-Saez 2011: 67). Nevertheless, studies from both advanced and developed countries are not conclusive with some noting a positive correlation between internet usage and business effectiveness while others have not confirmed this relationship (Marx 2014: 31; Feng 2010: 498). Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts (2006: 377) as well as

Mirasol and Cunanan (2017: 203) have noted the proliferation of travel blogs and concluded that blogs had become a cost effective way for companies to assess their service quality, hence enable them to improve customer's experiences. They also indicated that in the digital world it is evident that travellers are convinced by what bloggers post on the webpage. A number of issues have been studied on hospitality internet utilisation.

These comprise of the tourists' usage of the internet as compared to other information sources, the adoption of online marketing by SMEs; the impact of internet on the operations of the hospitality sector, the promotion of accommodation services online, website features of the hospitality sector, the organisational influences in small scale tourism businesses on the success of internet marketing and e-commerce adoption by the travel and tourism industry, (Acılar and Karamaşa 2010: 11; Reino, Frew, and Albacete-Saez 2011: 68; Marx 2013: 20; Feng 2010: 502). These previous studies provide the necessary background and some information on the various issues related to internet utilisation. Dahlin, Enebrand, and Wennergren (2015: 22) state that there are a number of websites that provide online reviews. TripAdvisor is one good example built to show clients' reviews of hospitality services. In a study to understand Internet reviews on Trip Advisor, Tuten and Solomona (2015: 287); O'Connor (2008: 55) noted the efficiency of the internet in improving communication with customers but bemoaned that some of the reviews on the internet were bogus as organisations seek to outcompete each other. They concluded that:

Many people (including Trip Advisor itself) suspect that at least some reviews are bogus - posted either by other hoteliers to drag down the scores of their competitors, or by hoteliers themselves to do the inverse or push existing negative reviews 'below the fold' so they will not be seen at a glance by casual surfers, O'Connor (2008: 55).

In a study that was aimed to regulate which online advertising communication tools that are used by guest houses in Pretoria East, Marx (2013: 22) noted that the guest houses were using the internet for marketing purposes but recommended that they needed to invest more time and money especially on social network marketing and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). This view was also echoed by Matikiti, Afolabi and Smith (2012: 189) who noted that it is important for the industry to develop their technological competence, managerial support and better alliances for the internet to have meaningful impact on profitability.

Salwani, Marthandan, Norzaidi and Chong (2009: 167) developed the e-value model to explain the factors that determine the usage of the internet by small businesses. This model was developed after realising that since the internet attracting the attention of many investigators and business executives there was no established approach on the use of the internet for improving organisational effectiveness and efficiency (Afolabi, Matikiti and Smith 2012: 85). Unger and Schutte (2015: 1086) claim that to effectively compete in the e-environment, value has to be created that customers will pay for. In an attempt to address this question Salwani, Marthandan, Norzaidi and Chong (2009: 185) developed this communicating, inclusive and multi-dimensional theoretical model that became the e-value model. According to Salwani *et al.* (2009: 186) E-value model was developed to analyse the influence of e-business on business success. Although Salwani *et al.* (2009: 187) studied the relationship between internet adoption and business performance, this does not give a clear answer on whether e-commerce enhances business effectiveness (Afolabi *et al.* 2012: 186). Business effectiveness is measured by a number of variables in an organisation hence some adjustments were done on the E-Value Model as indicated by the figure below.

Figure 2.2: E-value model

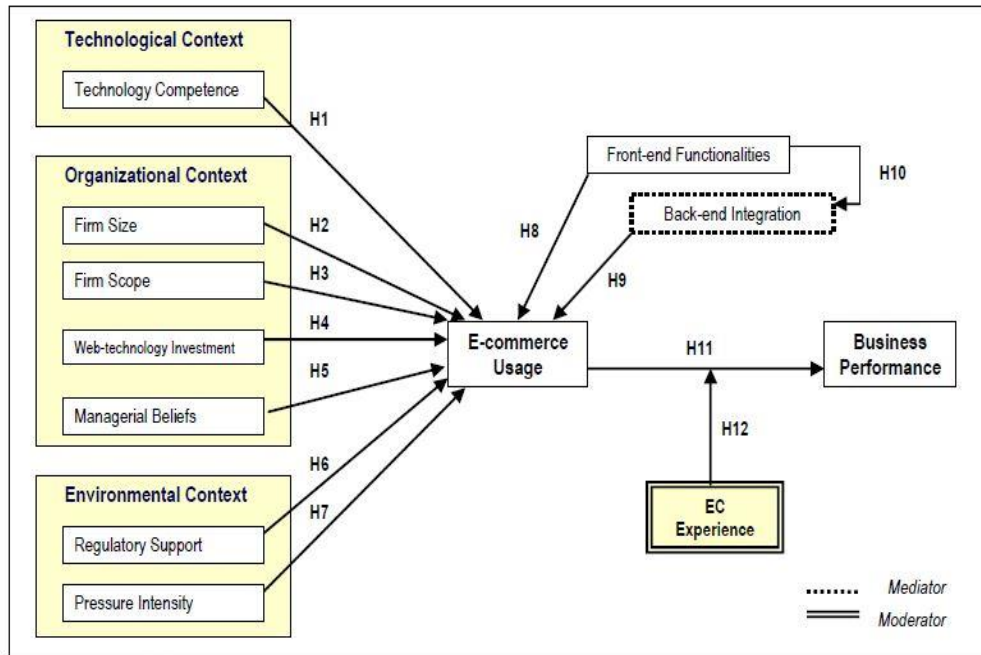


Figure 2.1: E-VALUE Model

Adapted from Salwani *et al.* (2009)

According to this model, internet use is basically impacted by the technological, organisational and the environmental contexts. Technological context relates to the technological competence of the businesses in question. Organisations which are competent in using the technology are more ready to use the internet than those who do not have the skills. The organisational issues that affect the use of the internet relate to company size, firm scope, web technology investment and executive beliefs. Bigger companies, management views on internet utilisation and availability of web technology affect the nature of how the internet will be used. Lastly, the environmental context is influenced by the extent of competition in the business sector and whether regulatory authorities are supportive of internet utilisation. Matikiti and her colleagues (2018: 298) however modify this model and point out that apart from these, the perceived benefits of use and the level of education of

management also affect the appropriation of the internet by the hospitality sector in South Africa. In addition, they recommend regular support from government to ensure that the industry gets the maximum benefits from using the internet. Specifically, for this study, the model identifies the key variables that need to be taken into cognisance among them size, competencies, resources, government support and competition

Chen, and Yang (2014: 279); Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2015: 90) also add that for the Internet to contribute to the business' competitive advantage, it is important for it to be combined with other resources of the business. They specify that the use of the internet, does not translate easily to the improvement in the performance of a business. This could provide evidence that suggests that there is no consensus among scholars on internet utilisation by these SMEs. In short, Matikiti (2011: 50) noted that a depiction of the connection between internet promoting and the success of the business has not yet been found from previous studies. It is pragmatic that although the internet is viewed as one of the most influential advertising medium and communication tools in the tourism industry, its financial implications have not yet been agreed by hospitality academics.

2.6 Business Promotion for B&Bs and Guest Houses

Promotion is the way in which an organisation makes its services and products known by its existing and new customers (Jim 2015: 3). It is an error to believe that promotion by businesses is all about marketing. There are different methods that a business can use to get their communication across to the clients. These approaches are activities meant to impart, convince and encourage clients once they are making the decision to purchase and marketing is certainly an important one (Jim 2015: 5). According to Batinic (2013: 119) and Vucetic (2016: 139) business promotion can be placed into two main categories impersonal and personal. Impersonal promotion include advertising via different platforms such as television, radio, cinema, stickers and mail advertisements while personal methods are those in which there is

direct interaction between the customers or would be customer with sales personnel (Baird and Parasnis 2011: 32). Lee, Reynolds and Kennon (2003: 47) conducted a study of the types of advertising approaches and the apparent accomplishment of these objectives by small scale tourism operators. Three primary marketing techniques used by bed and breakfast operations are WOM, Chambers of Commerce and Brochures. In terms of their popularity, Lee, Reynolds and Kennon (2003: 47) noted that they were used by 98,9%, 94.7 and 89.7% respectively. Tourism guests are independent, relatively wealthy, well-educated and frequent travellers and Lee, Reynolds and Kennon (2003:49) suggest that operators should advance current promotion strategies to find those customers, entice, and treat them well and personalise their service so that people will always want to visit the businesses.

2.6.1 The aims of promotion

The foremost aim of promotion guaranteeing that customers know the different products and influence customers to make a purchasing decision. Through promotion, customers are convinced that one's service or product is always better than others and the reasons why the products/service must be purchased is given (Jim 2015: 9). It aims at encouraging both existing and new customers to increase their purchase. In the case of a product having been improved, the aim of promotion would be to demonstrate the superior specifications or qualities of the new product. In addition, it aims to promote or enforce the brand image as well as the business image. The exercise also aims to rectify any misleading reports about the product or service and reassure customer or would be customers. To ensure that the aims of promotion are realised a number of methods can be adopted and implemented. There is need to apply modern approaches for business promotion. According to Al-Weshah, Al-Hyari, Abu-Elsamen, and Al-Nsour (2011: 273) web-enabled services increase the profitability of SMEs since they transform the relationship with clients by creating a better relationship between the firms and its customers and other stakeholders.

2.6.2 Methods of promotion

It is vital to understand that a business can use other methods of promotion. There are a number of strategies that can be used and marketing scholars call these strategies as the promotional mix.

Marx (2013: 33) proposes that there are many communication tools that can be used in the hospitality industry to promote their merchandise and offerings. They can include the following online sales, online public relations, online advertising, online direct mail, online packaging, online retail store design or commercial offices and online word-of-mouth among others. With these technological developments, promotions should be conducted outside of their local circumstances and across defined geographic margins to reach a number of probable customers. Borrie (2013: 3) identified a list of five techniques of promoting products online that can help a business to grow. These are social media optimization, search engine advertising, search engine optimisation, e-mail marketing, and business listing. These promotional techniques are discussed in greater detail below.

2.6.2.1 Search engine optimisation

Search engine optimisation (SEO) enables one to edit the internet content so that the website is easily visible thus attract many users (Macmillan Dictionary, 2013). Babu (2012: 03) observes that SEOs are just techniques of creating websites, which can be easily visible online. It enables a website to be more detectable by the search engine and the also users. O'Connor (2008: 50) points out that results from an SEO, are usually not from advertising but are organised due to the relevance of the search.

Borrie (2013: 5) points out that there three ways by which a search engine can be easily visible. This could be the use of key words, websites that are user friendly, the URL structure as well as links from third party organisations. Mihalic and Buhalis (2013: 34) argue that businesses need ensure that they identify key terms and words which are associated with their service or

products. Usually, properly designed websites with the correct use of key words and themes are displayed on the first or the subsequent page. Generally, users only read the first few internet pages on the search results (Babu, 2012: 5). In the United States it was found that about 73 % of the users only view the results that appear first after searching. Given this scenario only a few pages are visible out of the millions that exist (McCabe, 2014: 1). Of late, search engines have emerged as vital means for connecting travellers and tourists. According to Serra, Ramón and Galbis (2013: 22) the majority of travellers in the United States use search engines to plan for their vacation and information generated from internet studies show that traffic to hospitality websites lead to an increase in bookings.

2.6.2.2 Social media optimisation

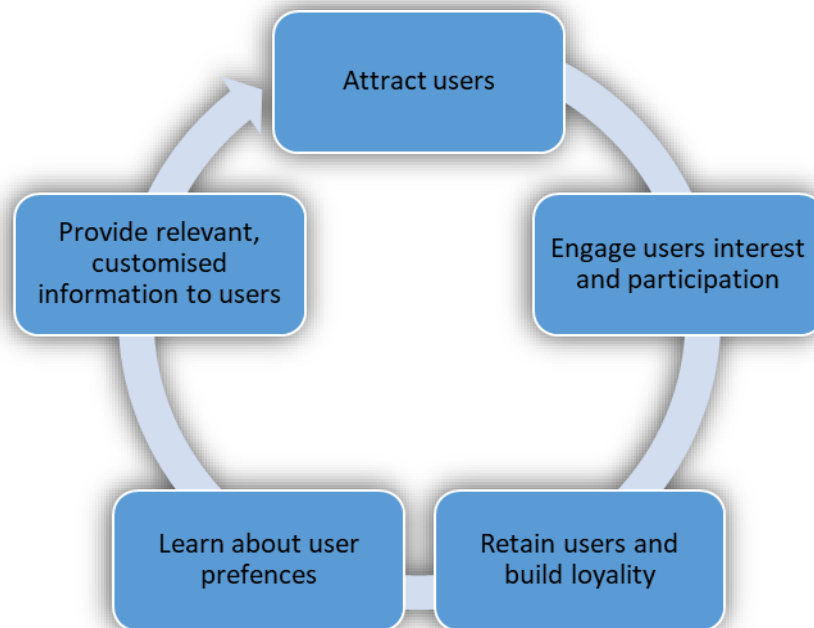
The widespread availability of social media now also provides new opportunities for product promotion by businesses in the tourism sector, (Hays, Page and Buhalis 2013: 212). Varagic (2008: 4) defines social media optimisation (SMO) as:

A 'systematic approach of social media activities that aims in attracting visitors to a website by establishing a quality relationship among its users.

Borrie (2013: 4) concur with this definition and adds that the popularity of the social media now requires that businesses use the social media to promote their websites. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 60) observe that social media are social software tools whose beginnings started with the Web 2.0 and that they must enable content creation and sharing by users.

Sigala, Christou, Gretzel (2012: 114) recommends a social media marketing cycle as shown in figure 3 below.

FIGURE 2.3: Social Media Marketing Cycle



Adapted from: Sigala, Christou, Gretzel (2012: 114).

Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2006: 4) states that there are many applications that allow users to share, post, create content on the internet. Users create the content and circulate it amongst themselves so as to promote their products on the Internet, (Blackshaw and Nazzaro 2006: 4).

Malcolm (2012: 25) studied the degree to which B&Bs use social media platforms and also assessed whether or not utilising them had any material effect on how hospitality industry websites appeared on the selected search engines. His study showed that while social media usage was becoming quite popular in the marketing of these businesses, there was no relationship between the usage of social media and their prominence on search engines. However, having a strong online presence and using social media can help hospitality businesses in their marketing efforts. Given this reality, it may be

added that this social media communication platform can be used to find out customers' responses to promotional messages of B&Bs and guesthouses.

Furthermore, following the introduction of the Internet, the number of people and businesses using the internet increased substantially. Social media has enabled new ways of undertaking business and that organisations have to urgently join the social media so as to keep up to date recent trends.

In another study, Van Niekerk (2014: 9) argued that although businesses in the country are already using social media to promote their businesses, there are few studies on how this has been done. In his research of how hotels in the Western Cape were using social media for promotional reasons, it was shown that social media platforms are now indeed regarded as an important element of the promotional mix.

Momany (2015: 05). In another study, investigated how social media platforms affect brand awareness and internet sales. The results indicated a positive correlation between the two. Momany (2015: 59) further recommended that businesses have to invest resources towards developing their social media strategies in line with current social media ecosystem. Cheung and Lee (2012: 223) note that electronic WOM, provide many possibilities of exchanging and publishing information on the Internet. Guests can use social media tools to voice their experiences and reviews (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler 2004: 43). Cole, DeNardin and Clow (2017: 205) noted that social media like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram enable small businesses to reach new customers as well as to engage them. Therefore, it is important to deploy the internet using social media and online travel reviews to market their services and products (Marx 2013: 85). Huberman (2010: 1) explains that social media can be used for online marketing communication so that clients can generate, read and share content easily. These tools create many online word-of-mouth opportunities that permit the use of videos, written words and sounds (Mangold and Faulds 2009: 358). On another note, Mbatha (2013: 540) explored specific barriers to the exploitation of ICTs by tourism SME

Service providers in the City of Tshwane in South Africa. Results revealed that high cost, limited funds and lack of technical know-how are barriers in the diffusion of ICTs among the tourism SME service providers.

In the case of social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and others, they assist a lot by building links online and also lend credibility and trust on a product especially by the target audiences. The benefits of social media to small hospitality industry have been explored by Milhalic and Buhalis (2013: 37) especially on their role in viral marketing. It is clear that social media use is increasing hence the importance for small hospitality industries to harness this tool for promotional purposes. Through the social media, businesses can enhance their destination reputation, get opinions of consumers, communication of information and also engage in e-word-of-mouth advertising. Shin, Pang and Kim (2016: 187) explored how companies can use social media to promote two-way dialogic communication and hence build better relationships with their customers. Bradbury (2011) established that the use of social media gives positive, measurable results as evidenced by increasing rates of visits and customer satisfaction. The effective use of the social networking can also offer small hospitality industry businesses the advantage of being able to send promotional messages quickly at minimum cost, (Alwan 2018: 69). This effectively means that it has become imperative for the sector to appropriate the technology to enhance profitability. However, since contexts sometimes determine how this happens, it becomes important to gain insights on how this industry in Mthatha is using the social media technology.

2.6.2.3 Search engine advertising

Xiang, Wang, O'Leary and Fesenmaier (2017: 514) in a study of the travellers' use of the internet observed that the majority of customers now use search engines when planning their trips. The search engine advertising (SEA) get sponsored advertisements that come up when searching online. Vucetic (2016: 136) in another study of how small hotels in Croatia promote their

services, noted the increasing number of hotels which are now using search engines advertising. Vucetic (2016: 136) noted:

Online promotion enables tourism businesses to narrow down the target audience they want to offer their products and services to and whose age, sex, location as well as some less well sought personal data such as hobbies and activities.

These are referred to as sponsored links, the messages have a text link placed in the search engines by advertisers who pay a fee for every click made on the link by a user (Pan *et al.* 2007: 40). Research has shown that most users making bookings in the hospitality industry only focus on results shown at the beginning of the results, hence positioning is very essential (McCabe 2014: 1). SEA is another alternative that can be used in order to enhance visibility on the search results. Sponsored links are usually separated from organic search results and they even notify the user that it is advertising (O'Connor 2009: 235). With google for instance, the sponsored links are located on the right side with a line separating them from organic search results. One great advantage that SEA has over SEO is that in the event of changes in the algorithm the paid advertisements are not affected (O'Connor 2009: 235).

The internet has the capability to spread advertising far outside the accomplishments of traditional media (du Plessis and Federick 2012: 93). The method of using internet saves time and money and having a good web presence actually reduces a lot of time spent informing customers about the organisation's products and services, how they are used as well as their benefits. A search engine is the first tool used when searching for accommodation. It is necessary that strategies be used by B&B operators to try and make sure that search engines display their products and services. Pan, Litvin and O'Donnell (2007: 43) observe that searchers now have huge challenges when searching online as there are huge amounts of information and that this often frustrates those looking for information. There are search engine optimisation techniques that are used to enhance website visibility such

as developing a site structure that is appropriate, use of outbound links, and the use of key words in web content that are easily identifiable. (Pan, Litvin and O'Donnell 2007: 44). The importance of SEO optimisation was highlighted by Anandan, Arun, Janahan, Moyeenudin, and Parvez (2018: 289) who conducted a study about digital marketing in hotel industry and discovered that search engines are playing a key role in emerging accommodation especially if they use pictures and videos to show their facilities. This allows them to also get business from associated industry players such as travel agencies and airlines. In this case therefore, it is fundamental to determine which of the establishments have websites and the value they derive from them. The above literature has shown without contradiction, the importance of company websites and the use of SEO in terms of enhancing company visibility.

2.6.2.4 Email marketing

Distributing messages through emails is becoming one of the most important tools for communicating with potential customers. Waldow and Falls (2012: 57) notes that in the world there are close to 2.9 billion emails in the world out of a total population of over 7 billion.

Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2012: 844) argue that:

Widespread adoption of e-mail as a means of distributing promotional messages has the advantages of low setup and distribution costs, targeted distribution of promotions such as discounts and coupons, and affordability by small and medium-sized businesses.

This by itself shows the number of customers that companies can be able to target using e-mail marketing. In the United States, Waldow and Falls (2012: 66) notes that almost 94 percent of the people in that country have emails and that emails remain as the source of news, accessing work documents, getting promotional materials from retailers and many other functions. Heung (2003: 378) in a study to assess how people used the internet noted that 30 percent

of the 1114 research participants received marketing information from hotels in Hong Kong. From these findings, it is apparent that e-mail use is now rooted in people's practices and lifestyles. The introduction of smart phones has prepared e-mails to be readable on these devices. Other scholars like Ellis-Chadwick and her colleague (2016: 298) maintain that the impact of the email marketing can be more visible if the emails are able to sustain engagement, must be personalised, and must have interactive features such as hyperlinks. Guest houses can send e-mails, send products catalogues or even newsletters to prospective customers in order to execute online sales promotions as a marketing communication instrument. By ways of distributing promotional e-mails with a mark-down or special offer message, the guest house can connect with prospective guests (Marx 2013: 80; Morimoto and Chang 2006: 09). This tool is cost-effective, convenient, fast, and powerful and a very successful way of communicating to existing guests (George 2010: 337). However, Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2012: 846) also warn that if not done properly, customers may just delete the messages and may not achieve conversion objectives of a business. This then shows the potency of email marketing as a tool for getting additional business thereby enhancing profitability. However, one has to be strategic to ensure that the emails achieve their objectives.

2.6.2.5 *Online Business Listing Directory*

Listing an organisation in a reputable business listing directory is one of the key ways of giving an organisation free publicity. (Borrie 2013: 05; Law 2019: 05). Advertisers using online listings to reach a very targeted and specific clientele. The people who consult online directories are looking for specific services or products. On the other hand, the online directory permits organisations to include essential information that customers can use to reach the business or service they are looking for. The most popular online directories are Yahoo, Yell.com, Yelp.com, Google+, Local and GoMyLocal.com (Taylor 2013: 49; Pakroo 2014: 30).

The advantage of using online directories is that it increases site visibility to a greater audience and a specific geographical location. This implies that the type of traffic an ad produces is more likely to be relevant. This is because the targeted audience is typically looking through a directory in the search of a specific service or product. Furthermore, online directories allow the organisation to have worldwide footprint since people can locate them via the internet from anywhere across the globe (Taylor 2013: 50). Considering the advantages posed by online directories and listing, it may be sound to recommend such to businesses in the hospitality sector.

2.7 The Promotional Mix

In marketing, the promotional mix has also been referred to as the marketing communication mix. Khanfar (2016: 96) defines it as a combination of techniques that seek to publicise its services and products to targeted customers. This is achieved by using different advertising and communications channels in a coordinated manner. In this regard, it is vital to identify the optimal mix and this is achievable after conducting an extensive market research (Stralser 2012: 85).

There are five types of promotion methods and each one has a unique contribution to the overall promotion effect. The promotion mix is divided by Kotler and Keller (2009: 46) into the five categories that include sales promotion, advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing and personal selling. The schematic representation of the promotion mix is depicted by the following figure.

Figure 2.4: Schematic presentation of the promotion mix.



Adapted from Kotler and Keller (2009: 47).

As is shown in the above figure, the promotional mix is composed of five distinct activities. In terms of this research, therefore, the internet must be utilised for all these activities in order for it to contribute effectively to profitability. Using the internet in a manner that is not integrated will not be able to assist in terms of achieving organisational success. Each of these activities outlined by Kotler and Keller (2009: 47) will be explored in greater detail in the following sections.

2.7.1 Advertising

Advertising refers to any paid form promoting of ideas, products and services by a recognised organisation (Kotler and Armstrong 2010: 472). The general aim of advertising is to convey information to a defined target group in order to accomplish anticipated effect. Kim, Hwang and Fesemenmaier (2005: 44)

noted that advertising is aimed at primarily altering affective and cognitive processes especially top-of mind awareness, and attention to procure. With regard to businesses the desired effect would obviously be to increase clients and build a good image of the organisation. The task of advertising is to thoroughly plan, design, coordinate and control all communicational actions of an organisation with respect to related target groups with the intention of contributing to the marketing activities (Müller, Alt and Michelis 2011: 59).

Since advertising is a communication function between the buyer and the seller, it enlightens, influences and remind the targeted group about the product or service with regard to place of availability, price, features and sales promotion schemes. The success of marketing of any service or product greatly depends on the success of advertising campaign (Trehan and Trehan 2010: 49). There are numerous ways in which advertising can be done and these include among others; classified, internet advertising, point of sale and tele-shopping advertising. Divisekera and Kulendran (2006: 189) found out that there was a positive correlation between advertisement and the number of tourists visiting Australia from New Zealand and Japan. Though new technologies have enabled a growth in advertising revenue, Duffet (2015: 499) in a study on how Facebook has been used as a medium for advertising, concludes that this has raised more questions than answers. Though his findings in South Africa concluded that there was a positive correlation between Facebook advertising and attitudes of millennial, other research in the United States, had noted that:

Respondents disclosed that Facebook advertisements were predominantly uninformative, irrelevant, uninteresting, and would, therefore, not generally click on them (Duffet 2015: 499).

This highlights that even though advertising can contribute significantly to organisational growth and profitability through informing potential customers about products and their features, prices and availability, it is vital to ensure that this is done strategically.

2.7.2 Sales promotion

Sales promotion refers to those incentives that are intended to reassure the acquisition or sale of a product or service. It involves the distribution of material via a wide range of actions other than personal selling, advertising and promoting which arouse consumer procuring and dealer efficiency (Trehan and Trehan 2010: 49; Kanagal 2010: 3). According to Trehan and Trehan (2010: 50) sales promotion includes all those events other than advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity that are planned to encourage customer demand and expand the marketing presentation of sellers.

Sales promotion can be executed via numerous ways including discounts, contests, free gifts couponing, sampling, trade shows, and exhibition at trade fairs and sponsored financing (Trehan and Trehan 2010: 50). Such activities modify the price and worth relationship of a product or service and have the potential effect of producing immediate sales. The idea behind sales promotion is to motivate customers to switch from rival brands, increase product consumption, to reinforce the marketing communication efforts for the brand and to motivate brand loyalty. This in turn increases sales, profit and market share (Stralser 2012: 90). Larisa (2014: 446) found out that sales promotion in the tourism industry stimulates demand and public relations sustain a continuous engagement with customers. Hence, if the approach is adopted in the small hospitality industry such as those offering bed and breakfast services, it would be expected that this will result in increased number of customers.

2.7.3 Public relations

Public relations is the building of respectable associations with the firms' various stakeholders by attaining favourable publicity, developing a recognised business image, and managing unfavourable stories, events or rumours (Kotler and Keller 2009: 47). With the new technologies, companies have been empowered to engage with their stakeholders in a more interactive and effective manner. Baka (2016: 149) gives an example of user generated

reviews where customers are now able to review services and products. Baka (2016: 149) points out that:

Websites hosting anonymous reviews with undisclosed rating mechanisms open up communication channels with customers but also compel managers to come to terms with multiple grounds for reputation-building.

Public relations is a two way communication system in which the organisation engages with the customers or target group. The main concern of public relations is to establish and maintain mutual understanding and goodwill between the two. Public relations also serve an intelligence function and enables organisations to analyse and interpret trends and issues that may impact on the business and stakeholders. It helps to formulate suitable social goals which helps to strike stability between commercial necessities and socially responsible conduct (Warnaby and Moss 1998: 139).

Public relations is different from other marketing strategies such as advertising due to the fact that it is public relations that best supports the introduction of a brand because it has higher trustworthiness. On the other hand, it is cheaper as compared to advertising (Ceylan 2007: 11). According to Ceylan (2007: 15) organisations in the hospitality industry use public relations in order to increase awareness in the marketplace and then generate sales opportunities. It also strengthens the value of a service by always countering negative publicity. Tourism related organisations should find relevant and reliable strategic marketing support in public relations. It is apparent that public relations is vital to the customer and the tourism industry since it assists the organisation to achieve their objectives via the control and influence of customer perceptions. However, in an era of information overload, it is important for managers to be on the lookout for negative reviews and reputation busting information available in the online space.

2.7.4 Personal selling

Personal selling is a marketing tool that involves oral communication between a marketer and a potential customer. The communication may primarily be focused on an emerging relationship with the prospective customer but eventually will end up with an effort to close the sale. The approach involves selling a service or product on a one to one basis. This can be achieved face to face or telephonically (Kumar 2010: 73). Generally, personal selling is costlier compared to other promotion tools and in a bid to reduce cost and make them more effective tie ups with related products or services are done, for instance, hotels can partner with airlines to come up with a concessional package tour.

Personal selling has a number of advantages since it builds personal relationship between the marketer and the customer. This allows the marketer to keep customers interests at heart and develop longer term relations. Due to the two-way interactive nature of this promotional tool, the customer gets more information than can be provided by adverts. On the other hand, the marketer has a good chance to get feedback from the customer with regard to product or service weaknesses and strengths (Kumar 2010: 73; Stralser 2012: 86). Bed and Breakfasts businesses may benefit a lot if they invest more in personal selling especially when they tie up with tour operators.

2.7.5 Direct marketing

Direct marketing is a promotional tool in which there is direct communication with the prospective customer. Kotler and Armstrong (2010: 472) proposed some predefined steps which marketing strategies must follow. They are of the opinion that marketing plans must have five steps which include market research to understand customer's perceptions and wants; product development along the lines of perceived customer wants; product delivery and customer feedback, market testing (Kotler and Armstrong 2010: 472).

Nevertheless, in the contemporary era of internet marketing there are particular changes that have occurred in the notion of marketing. The internet appears to be stimulating some of the best uncomplicated ideas of marketing. Although some of these developments have positive repercussions for marketing anywhere in the world, the special effects of others are not so positive. In particular, Internet marketing has helped with product expansion and the notion of marketing itself.

In traditional marketing, data was often collected from consumers in order to develop products that are needed by customers. However, the information richness that the internet offers for both corporations and customers means that business managers must harness this technology to gratify the ever increasing customer demands. This should then allow them to participate favourably in the increasingly competitive business front (Darby, Jones and Al Madani 2003: 110). The internet, if successfully integrated in the marketing mix, can yield successful marketing outcomes. The marketing mix characterises the organisation's marketing contribution and contains the manageable variables that the establishment puts together to gratify the prerequisites and desires of the target market (Bennet 2005: 198).

The system is fully organised by the marketer, who promotes and directs the customer through a variety of media options, receives direct orders from the clients, and offers product or service straight to the customer. The practice is increasingly becoming popular due to the quest by businesses to place more emphasis on customer satisfaction which promotes recurrent purchase. The promotion thrives on the use of a database which enables the marketer to precisely target and personalise liaisons with the customer. This consequently helps in building a continuing relationship with the customer (Hudson 2008: 09). There are various ways in which the marketer can reach out to the customer but the most commonly used platforms include, tele-marketing, mobile phone marketing and direct mail (Kumar 2010: 75). The major challenge with this approach is the acquiring of addresses and contact details of the prospective customers. Apart from that, it has a number of advantages

which include; precision targeting, personalisation, flexibility, privacy, measurability, low cost, detailed information and the fact that it is immediate (Hudson 2008: 10). Considering the nature of business in the bed and breakfast industry there is a high chance of frequent repeat customers hence the effect of direct marketing cannot be underestimated.

2.8 The Use of the Internet in the Promotion of Bed and Breakfasts

Computers and the Internet have transformed the manner we live, the manner we connect, the manner we acquire information, and the manner in which the business is done (Chen and Yang, 2014, Feng 2010: 511; Kuo, Shen, Shih, Wang, and Cheng 2013: 282; Matikiti 2011: 54). Today, several businesses depend on internet for their everyday operations. The internet brings traders and purchasers together.

As a medium of communication, the World Wide Web offers a practical, easy and fast way for networking with customers, suppliers and other industries. A corporation's Web presence helps to improve trustworthiness, collect feedback, advance customer service and enable business processes (Chen, Lin, and Kuo 2013: 282). However, the key methods of marketing and advertising for B&Bs and guest houses are word of mouth and internet existence (Momany 2015: 53). Regardless of the collective use of the internet for marketing, researchers have pointed out that B&B owners often lack the information and means to make effective use of online marketing opportunities (Matikiti 2011: 50).

Reino and Frew (2010: 68) studied factors affecting the phenomena surrounding data and communication technologies adoption by the rural accommodation establishments in Scotland. The conclusions recommend that rural businesses have a habit to adopt less technology than those situated in urban settings. In the same lines of thought Acılar and Karamaşa (2010: 14) explored the issues affecting the implementation of e-commerce by small businesses. He argued that while large corporations have been fast to

embrace information and communication technologies, SMEs have been slow to appropriate these technologies for numerous reasons, particularly in emerging countries. The findings conclude that for the small company in the hospitality industry to be able to continue operating in this fast-changing environment, they have to adopt technological advances such as e-commerce to stay viable. The study also notes that adopting e-commerce in emerging countries is a main encounter for particularly small businesses with rare resources.

Furthermore, Momany (2015: 57) investigated the effects of social media on the bed and breakfast (B&B) industry, as measured by the impact of social media outreach on brand awareness and online sales. Results indicate strong correlations between internet use and increased brand awareness and online sales, which equate to profitability. Momany (2015: 57) further suggested that B&B managers should invest in restoring their social media marketing schemes with the existing social media landscape. On another note, Mbatha (2013: 532) explored specific barriers to the utilisation of ICTs by tourism SME Service providers in the City of Tshwane in South Africa. Outcomes of the study discovered that high price, inadequate funds and absence of technical know-how are obstacles in the use of ICTs between the travel SME service providers.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented an examination of research literature related to the focus of the study, namely, descriptions of SMEs and the B&B industry in South Africa. Business promotion was also explored as a vital part of any business. Other literature on internet marketing activities, including business promotional mix by bed and breakfast and guesthouses was also examined. In addition, the literature on methods of promotion, namely search engine optimization, social media optimization, search engine advertising, E-mail marketing and online business listing directory was also explained. Finally, the section covered existing literature related to the use of internet for promotion of Bed and Breakfast and guesthouse establishments, and customer responses to promotional messages was also looked at. While there is proof to recommend that generally speaking, social media outreach can have a positive outcome on brand awareness, the literature revealed that there is insufficient research related to B&Bs and guesthouse establishment with the use of internet particularly in Mthatha Eastern Cape province. Combined with this gap in current literature, this supports the need for this study on the role of the internet in the promotion of Bed & Breakfast and guest house establishments in Mthatha.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter reviewed the relevant literature that applies to this study and this chapter outlines the methodology that was used in this study. As such, the study design, which is the qualitative design, the target population, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, also data analysis techniques are clarified.

3.2. Research Design

Research design addresses the structure of the study that was used by the investigator to answer the research questions and objectives. Van Wyk (2016: 3) stipulates that the research design articulates the required data, the methods which are going to be utilised to gather and analyse the data, and how all of this is going to answer the research question.

There are two methods of research, qualitative and quantitative research methods. The critical distinction between these approaches is that qualitative research suggests an emphasis on procedures and meanings that are not thoroughly examined, or measured in terms of quantity, amount of strength or occurrence. Therefore, the purpose of qualitative research methods is to create the socially constructed nature of realism, to stress the relationship between the researcher and the study units, as well as to emphasise the value laden nature of enquiry (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2009: 8). They turn the world into a sequence of depictions, together with conversations, recordings, photographs, field notes, interviews, and memos to the self (Creswell 2007: 36). In qualitative research, the research takes place in their natural settings,

thereby trying to create sense of, or understand any phenomenon in terms of the senses that society brings to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3).

In contrast Welman *et al.* (2009: 8) defines quantitative research as methods that do not include the examination of processes but emphasise the measurement and investigation of fundamental relationships between variables in a value free context.

Creswell (2013: 47) adds that the procedures of qualitative studies are inductive, evolving and formed by the investigator's experience in gathering and analysing the data. The study drew on qualitative research methods in obtaining information from key individuals using in-depth interviews. The study design will be exploratory in nature since the researcher intends to explore the research question and leave recommendations for further research.

3.3 Research Philosophy

The interpretivist method is derived from the realistic method of data collection such as interviews and observations. In this type of studies, meanings develop usually towards the conclusion of the research process. Dudovskiy (2018: 40) states that the greatest notable dissimilarities of interpretivism including, Hermeneutics refers to the philosophy of clarification and understanding. Hermeneutics emphasises on texts and knowledge literature and as such, has a little significance to social or commercial studies. The second form of this approach is the symbolic interactionism which takes symbols cultural terms and insists that social objects have shared meanings and that these meanings can only be derived from decoding these codes. Since this study approach does not focus on texts, this has limited applications for the purposes for this study. Lastly, there is phenomenology, which is the philosophical custom that pursues to recognise the world through understanding how the phenomena is experienced. This study applies this variation and as pointed out by Schutz (1962: 59) in his seminal research in 1962, it allows one to:

Develop a comprehensive, precise, clear and articulate explanation and understanding of a particular human experience or experiential moment. It attains its objective through the practice of a special researcher stance and approach and through specialised approaches of systematic data treatment, participant selection, solicitation of information, and assembling of interview components into a final report (Schutz 1962: 59).

This view was later emphasised by Brown (2011: 30) who noted that this approach enables one to understand the lived experiences of a target population so as to understand the meanings that they attach to those experiences. In reality, efforts are not made to generate an objective record but to understand an individual's lived experiences.

Thanks to adoption of this form of interpretivism, qualitative research areas such as intercultural differences in organizations, leadership and analysis, issues of ethics, and issues impacting leadership etc. can be studied in a great level of depth (Dudovskiy 2018: 55). Qualitative study is characterised by its goals, which relate to understanding some features of social life, and its methods which produce words, rather than quantities, as data for analysis (Patton and Cochran, 2002: 04). Its advantage is that it allows one to get complete and rich views of social phenomena under investigation.

3.4 Target Population

According to Welman *et al.* (2009: 20) population is the study object and this may comprise of human products, individuals, groups, organisations and events or the conditions to which they are visible. Therefore, a research problem communicates to a specific population and the population incorporates the total collection of all elements of analysis above which the investigator desires to make explicit conclusions.

In this study, units of analysis included a sample selected from the Bed and Breakfast and guest houses in the Mthatha and customers of these selected establishments. According to the local King Dalidyebo Municipality, there are approximately a hundred accommodation establishments mainly Bed and Breakfast and guesthouse establishments in Mthatha. These accommodation establishments include hotels, lodges, B&B and guest houses. Some B&B owners are now operating as students' hostels because there is a high demand for student accommodation in the area.

3.5 Sample Method

Gentles, Charles and Ploeg (2015: 06) describe sampling as the selection of exact data sources from which data will be gathered to address the research aims. Sampling the selection of a group of individuals or households who can be contacted by mail, by telephone or in person when doing research and has the data that is important for one to solve a research problem (Schmidt and Hollensen 2006: 157).

Sampling is the process of selecting representative subsection or some part of the larger population (Zikmund *et al.* 2013: 385). If the population is too large, the researcher usually tries to take a sample that will be used in the study. The basic idea of sampling is that by selecting some of the units in a population, we can draw conclusions about the whole population (Cooper and Schindler 2011: 364). Sampling techniques are divided into two broad classes namely, probability and nonprobability techniques.

In the case of probability sampling, the probability that any unit or member of the population have an equal chance of being involved in the sample. In contrast non-probability cannot stipulate this chance. The advantage of non-probability sampling is that it is not difficult and cost-effective (Welman *et al.* 2009: 39)

This research was conducted by means of a non-probability sampling method. A judgmental sampling method was used to select the companies to be interviewed. Judgemental sampling occurs when the individual researcher chooses the sample members who meet some criterion (Cooper and Schindler 2011: 385). Patton (2015: 263) defines judgemental sampling as the reason and authority that lies in choosing information-rich circumstances for in-depth study. Information-rich circumstances are those from which one can acquire excessive information about matters of central significance to the objectives of the investigation. Researching information-rich cases produces perceptions and in-depth understanding. (Patton 2015: 264).

The participants were selected because they were expected to generate valuable data for this project. The criterion used to choose this sample was that the chosen bed and breakfast and guesthouse establishments were some of the most active establishments in the area since some establishments have ventured to student accommodation. The sample included 10 managers or owners of the Bed and Breakfast and guesthouse establishments and 6 customers who frequently visit each establishment.

3.6 Data Collection

Primary data was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews and here the investigator interviewed one participant at a time. The key advantage of the face-to-face interview is the attendance of the interviewer, which makes it easier for the interviewee to either explain answers or ask for clarification on some of the matters on the survey (Lavrakas 2008: 37). According to Adams (2015: 01) semi-structured interviews are conducted conversationally with one respondent at a time. The semi-structured interview employs a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions. About one hour is

considered a reasonable maximum length for semi-structured interviews in order to curtail exhaustion for both interviewer and respondent. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are supposed to deliver a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be attained from purely quantitative methods such as questionnaires.

There are three important categories of research interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are orally administered questions, in which a list of prearranged questions are asked. There is usually no possibility for follow-up questions to responses that permit further information. On the other hand, unstructured interviews do not replicate any defined theories or ideas and are achieved with slight or no organisation. Such an interview can simply begin with an opening question like Can you tell me about your experience of booking online? They will then develop based primarily upon the primary answer. Unstructured interviews are typically longer and often last several hours. They are also not easy to manage and to partake in as the lack of prearranged interview questions delivers little guidance on what the conversation is about.

Semi-structured interviews contain numerous important questions that aid to define the areas to be covered, but also permits the investigator or respondent to side-track in order to follow an idea or answer in more detail. The study used semi-structured interviewing method. The flexibility of this method, mainly associated to structured interviews, also permits for explanation of information that is essential to participants but may not have been formerly thought of as relevant by the research team. Semi-structured interviews are excellently suitable for a number of valued tasks, especially when the open-ended questions need follow-up questions (Adams 2015: 493).

According to Dudovskiy (2018: 3) the benefits of interviews consist of possibilities to gather detailed data on the research questions. Additionally, in this type of primary data collection investigator, has direct power over the flow of the conversation and has a chance to explain certain matters during the process if required (Dudovskiy 2018: 3).

In this research, it was important to get information straight from the person accountable for promotion in the hospitality industry. The method that was used to collect data were interviews and the researcher got appointments with the interviewees and conducted the interviews during times that was suitable to them. Most interviews were conducted mid-morning when the establishments were not busy.

3.6.1 Data collection instruments

The investigator used an interview schedule to gather the data. As soon as you design an interview schedule it is vital to have questions that are expected to yield as much information about the research phenomenon and also be able to address the aims and objectives of the research (Gill *et al.* 2008: 292). In a qualitative interview the best questions must be open-ended. These are the questions that need more than a yes/no answer, and must be impartial, sensitive and clear. It is typically best to start with questions that participants can answer effortlessly and then continue to more challenging or complex topics.

The type of questions that were open-ended required unstructured replies whereby respondents answers the questions anyhow. Issues that were covered in the interviews are as follows:

- Understanding internet as a tool of promotion
- Understanding of internet use to build relationships with customers.
- Evaluating the purposes, they use internet for.

- Utilisation of the social media platforms for promotion, communication and promotion of the business.

Understanding of the effectiveness of using internet as compared to traditional media.

- Accessibility of establishments by customers on the internet

3.7 Pilot Study

The most important step is to go through is the process of piloting, which in fact refers to testing the questionnaire. The main goal of pilot studies is to evaluate the viability so as to evade potentially terrible consequences of embarking on a large study - which could possibly sink the whole research effort (Thabane, Ma, Chu, Cheng, Ismaila, Rios, Robson, Thabane, Giangregorio and Goldsmith 2010: 1). This process is imperative in that it checks that the phrasing of each enquiry is clear and unmistakable; the guidelines on how the respondents should respond to the questions are clear; the questions look specialised; the researcher has explained who he/she is; and the purpose of the questions has been explained. The pilot interviews were done with three Bed and Breakfast owners and one customer. The respondents were invited to provide feedback on the content of the interview and the simplicity of the questions, and to specify challenges that they may have encountered during the study. The respondents showed that the language used in the interview was easy and comprehensible so this justified that no revision was essential.

3.8 Data Analysis

The method of analysis selected for this study was a qualitative method of thematic analysis. The first stage in data preparation was to edit raw data to identify errors and oversights that would compromise quality principles (Cooper and Schindler 2011: 421). Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3353) the objective of a thematic analysis is to classify

themes- that is patterns in the data that are vital or thought-provoking, and utilise these themes to address the study or say something about a topic. This is much more than just summarising the information; a best thematic analyses interprets and makes sense of it (Maguire and Delahunt 2017: 3353). The theoretical framework of the thematic analysis for my interviews was mostly built upon the theoretical points of Braun and Clarke (2006: 79). Braun and Clarke's (2006: 83) identified a six phase approach to Thematic Analysis (TA)

1. *Familiarisation with the data*: interpretation and re-reading the data. In this study the audio recorded of the interviews were listened repeatedly for their correct translation and transition so that the researcher is familiar with the data. All interviews were conducted in English by the researcher.
2. *Coding*: producing brief labels that classify main features of the data applicable to answering the research question; after coding the whole dataset, organising codes and applicable data citations. In this study all the descriptions related to the topic of enquiry were noted and each different unit of meaning was also noted. The units from the interviews were cut and grouped together based on their similarity. Then each unit was coded.
3. *Searching for themes*: investigating the codes and organised data to recognise important larger patterns of meaning It also includes organising information related to each theme. In this study each pile of similar units was labelled as primary themes using keywords from the highlighted text. The researcher revised the categories as the data was continuously coded.
4. *Reviewing themes*: examination of the themes different to the dataset, to regulate that they express a substantial story that respond to the research question. Themes can be distinguished, divided, joined, or rejected. The investigator went over the whole interview record to identify different units, grouping and regrouping similar and different units, and re-naming classes.

5. *Defining and naming themes*: developing a thorough scrutiny of each theme; selecting an explanatory name for each theme. The researcher read through all important units per group and rearranged units as suitable. The groups were re-named as suitable.
6. *Writing up*: putting together the analytic description and data citations; contextualising the analysis in relative to existing literature. This is the final step where the researcher used previous literature to justify the findings.

For the purpose of this study, the following themes were developed. Each theme consists of particular questions regarding the marketing of the establishment.

The four themes were derived from the interview schedule.

Theme One: Importance of the internet to the hospitality Industry

The importance of the internet to the hospitality industry is a main theme emerging from the literature review and notes the impact of internet in small business sector. This theme was informed by three primary sub-themes:

Sub-theme one: Internet Usage patterns

Sub-theme two: Internet Marketing

Sub-theme three: Importance of the website

Theme Two: Internet and traditional ways of marketing

Internet and traditional ways of marketing is also a primary theme emerging from the literature review. The literature review disclosed that traditional ways of marketing are still relevant but business need to adopt the internet.

Theme Three: Internet Use for Promotion

Internet use for promotion is also a major theme emerging from the literature review. The literature review disclosed different methods of promoting business online. This theme was informed by five sub-themes:

Sub-theme one: Internet Advertising

Sub-theme two: Social Media Marketing

Sub-theme three: Search Engine Marketing

Sub-theme four: Online Booking

Sub-theme five: Email Marketing

Theme Four: Challenges of using internet

Challenges of using the internet is a primary theme emerging from literature review. The literature review reveals that SMEs face challenges in using the internet to improve organisational performance.

In this study the NVIVO package for analysing qualitative data was utilised. NVIVO was used to generate documents from the data gathered, edit the data appropriately, explore the data content, search for associations and data relationships, and create nodes of the discovered concepts within the data. Such techniques allowed the researcher to gather novel perspectives on emerging and noteworthy themes and sub-themes. Using the NVIVO software, coding of the data involved the extraction and categorisation of passages of text. This process consisted of sectioning the data and ascribing them into distinct groups.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Lincoln and Gruba (1995) Observe that it is important for qualitative research to attain a sufficient level of rigour for the research outcomes to be meaningful. It is this rigour that guarantees validity and reliability. whether the investigator is calling what is measured by the correct label. Responses to questions for example can be more or less be a valid depiction of fundamental social phenomenon like a person's attitudes or values (Silverman 2013: 55).

Validity in qualitative research focuses on the level to which the data gathered is an honest expression of the phenomenon being studied (Teusner, 2016: 87). Validity seeks to provide the assurance that the research will actually assess what it intends to measure which is further amplified as confirmability, credibility and transferability. In this study, validity is the assurance that the data collected from the participants are truly reflective of their comments and thoughts as captured through the data gathering exercise.

Silverman (2013: 55) defines reliability as the point to which the outcome is independent of the unintentional circumstances of the research. He also points out that examining reliability is closely correlated to guaranteeing the quality of field notes and assuring the public access to the procedure of their production.

For these to be attained, as argued by Houghton et al. (2013: 13) and Lincoln and Gruba (1985) several aspects related to rigour have to be considered. Amongst these aspects are research credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability. Once a researcher ensures that these are considered by taking deliberate actions as rigour mechanisms, the research quality improves. The table 3.1 below summarises the rigour mechanisms and suggested by both Lincoln and Gruba (1985); Houghton et al. (2013: 14) and reveals what the researcher did to ensure rigour in this study:

Table 3.1: Summary of rigour mechanism

Rigour activity	Rigour Mechanism	What was done to ensure rigour in this study
Credibility	Longer interviews Member checking Personal Journal	Interviews long enough to acquire all information Transcribed data checked by more than half of interviewees for correctness

		A personal research journal kept by the research
Dependability	Reflexivity Audit trail	Continuous reflexivity during the research process Audit trail to justify why all activities were undertaken.
Transferability	Thick descriptions	The researcher tried to provide thick descriptions including quotes from research participants
Conformability	Audit trail	All reasons for choices and decisions during the research process were justified
Fittingness	Linking results with literature review Auditing Transcript Use of a thematic log.	A thematic log was used and the research process was always guided by the literature in the field.

In keeping with the above, the researcher ensured that different mechanisms to ensure rigour were taken into account at all levels of the study, such as ensuring that literature guided the study, auditability of the process through reflexivity and recording of the responses and ensuring that the voices of participants were heard by providing copious descriptions. Other mechanisms included the use of a dictaphone for all the interviews that were transcribed and ensuring that more than half of respondents were member checked. The researcher selected interviews for this study because it is a flexible method. The information collected from the interviews served as primary data in this research.

3.10 Conclusion

The chapter described the methodology for the study and included the research design, technique, population, sample, data collection techniques and the data analysis technique. The research aims were used to develop the study design. The next chapter presents the results and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

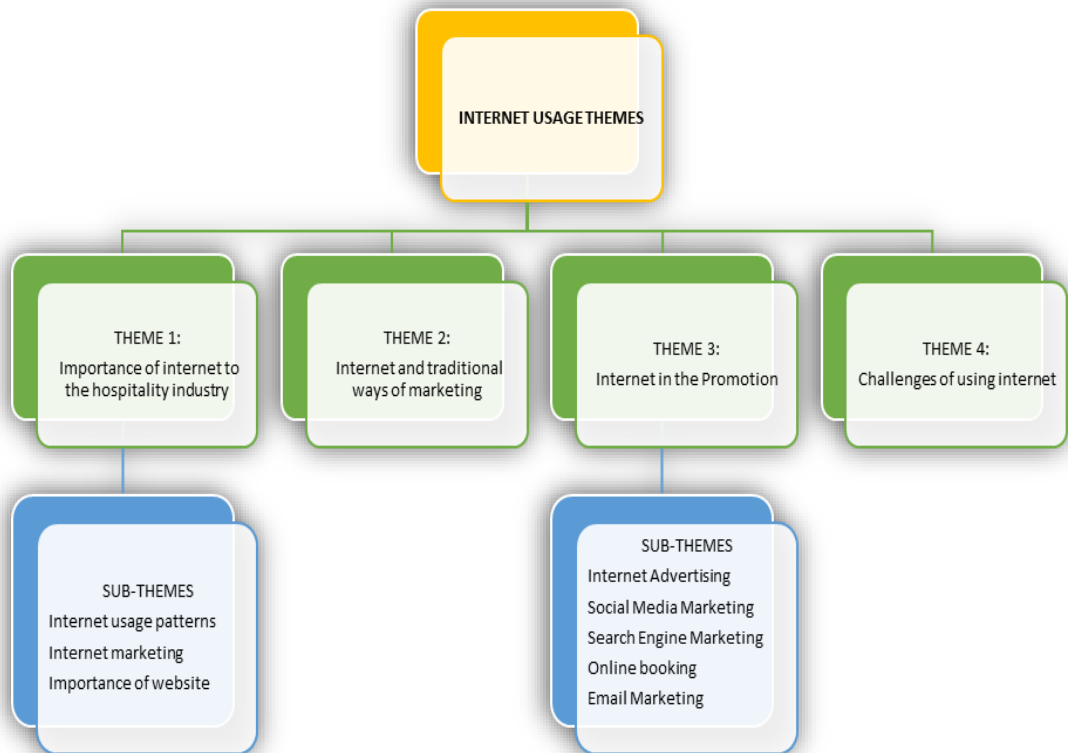
The previous chapter outlined the research methodology which was used in this study. In this chapter the results from data collected from the groups of respondents namely the customers as well as the owners of the selected B&Bs are presented and analysed. As was indicated in the previous chapter, there were six conveniently selected customers as well as ten business owners operating in the sector in Mthatha who participated in the research. As was indicated in the first chapter, the study's objectives were:

- To examine the current use of internet for promotion of Bed & Breakfast and guest house establishments.
- To determine customer responses to the promotion of messages through the use of the internet.
- To make recommendations for the further use of internet or how internet utilisation can enhance the hospitality industry.

This chapter begins by describing the sampled B&Bs and guest house establishments and thereafter explains how the internet is being used for marketing and promotion purposes. In the second segment, customer responses regarding the use of the internet are presented.

For the purpose of this study, the following themes were designed. Each theme consists of particular questions regarding the marketing of the establishments. The four themes were derived from the interview schedule and are shown on the figure below.

Figure 4.1: Major Themes and Sub-themes



(Source: Self-Generated)

Theme One: Importance of the internet to the hospitality Industry

The importance of the internet to the hospitality industry is a major theme emerging from the literature review and some of the literature shows the positive impact of internet in small business sector. This theme was further developed by three primary sub-themes:

Sub-theme one: Internet Usage patterns

Sub-theme two: Internet Marketing

Sub-theme three: Importance of the website

Theme Two: Internet and traditional ways of marketing

Internet and traditional ways of marketing is also a primary theme emerging from the literature review and data. The literature review disclosed that traditional ways of marketing are still relevant but business need to use the internet.

Theme Three: Internet in the Promotion

Internet in the promotion is also a major theme emerging from the literature review and data. The literature review disclosed different methods of promoting business online. This theme was also further developed by five sub-themes:

Sub-theme one: Internet Advertising

Sub-theme two: Social Media Marketing

Sub-theme three: Search Engine Marketing

Sub-theme four: Online Booking

Sub-theme five: Email Marketing

Theme Four: Challenges of using internet

Challenges of using the internet is a primary theme emerging from literature review. The literature review reveals that Small-Medium Enterprises face challenges when using the internet for promotional purposes.

4.2 Introduction of the Visited Companies

4.2.1 B&B One

This business has five rooms available and it is owner operated. The owner and his family also stays at the premises. It is located in South Ridge Park. It employs three full-time workers, two of whom stay at the premises. One employee is a handyman and two others are cooks. They also clean the

premises. The owner is responsible for marketing and management of the B&B. The major customers are government employees. The business has now also ventured into providing catering services for local customers. The establishment has a Facebook account, Instagram and twitter. They are registered with Tourism Grading Council.

4.2.2 B&B Two

This is a larger B&B with 12 rooms and seven full-time employees. It is also located in Southridge Park. There is a manager, who is responsible the marketing and management of the facility. The owners, though residing in the town, do not run the affairs of the establishment. This establishment even gets international guests and their major local customers are mainly from the private sector. They have a fully functional website with affordances such as online payment and booking systems. They also have a Facebook and twitter page. They are registered with the Tourism Grading Council.

4.2.3 B&B Three

This Fort gale based enterprise is the smallest B&B in the sample with four bedrooms. It is also owner operated and has one employee. The owner does both management and marketing of the business and most of the business they get is from other operators who, after having received bigger bookings than they can handle, would always ask this property to accommodate their clients. They also sometimes get government and private customers. They do not have a website and are not registered with the Tourism Grading Council.

4.2.4 B&B Four

This B&B is also based in Fort gale and is the largest in the sample. It has 22 bedrooms, swimming pool and has 12 full-time workers. It is run by the owner who does the marketing and advertising of the business. This facility

too, has a fully functional website which is updated regularly by the host of the website. Their clients are mostly from bigger companies with branches in Mthatha such as clothing and retail chains.

4.2.5 B&B Five

This establishment is located in Blakeway, a suburb just outside of town. It has eight bedrooms and is also operated by the owner of the B&B with only three employees. They do not have a website but are listed online by marketing agencies. Their major clientele is both from big business as well as smaller business people who have businesses in Mthatha and the surrounding areas. According to the owner, their clientele is mostly building contractors operating in the Transkei region. One of the customers interviewed here was in Mthatha for leisure.

4.2.6 B&B Six

The last B&B is based in Southernwood and has seven rooms. There is a manager who runs the business while the owner is based in Johannesburg. There are only two employees, apart from the Manager at this business there are staff members who are responsible for cooking and maintenance of the property. They have a Facebook page but no website. Major clients are from the private sector.

4.2.7 Guest House One

This establishment is based in Napgen. There is a manager, receptionist and three staff members responsible for cooking and overall maintenance of the company. This establishment has 10 rooms that were fully booked. The manager and the receptionist are responsible for website management and online promotion of the business. Their major clients are government institutions and private sector companies like Eskom.

4.2.8 Guest House Two

This guesthouse is at Fort gale in Mthatha and consists of 10 rooms. The owner of this guest house is also owning a B&B that is not far from the guest house. There is a manager who runs the place since the owner is involved in other businesses. They currently they have online presence with a fully functioning website. They use both traditional media and internet to promote the business. Their major clients are individuals and private companies. They do not get many clients from government entities.

4.2.9 Guest House Three

This establishment is based at Deville Road in Mthatha. It's a luxury 4 star graded guest house which offers 20 en-suites and 2 family rooms. Each room has a workstation and free Wi-Fi connectivity for the customers. It is listed on veneus.com and have social media pages where they interact with client. Clients can book online in less than 5 minutes. Major clients are government employees and individual tourists.

4.2.10 Guest House Four

This establishment is based at Southernwood in Umtata and is 5 minutes away from the city centre and has 10 rooms. Their mission is to provide guests hospitality that will surpass expectations as a "Home away from home". This guest house is also available online where guests can enquire about room rates and book. Major clients are most locals and businessman/ women travelling to Umtata for business meetings. There's 24hour unlimited wireless fidelity connectivity for guests so that they can work and enjoy their stay.

4.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THEMES

4.3.1 Theme One: Importance of internet to the hospitality industry

According to Borrie (2013: 05) the internet is an important tool for promoting small businesses. The internet has become pervasive in the country and like in all spheres of life, people have also started to use it for business purposes.

The following questions were asked under this theme:

- Do you use internet in your business?
- Explain how you access the Internet
- How frequent do you access the Internet?
- How good are your internet search and use skills?
- Explain the reasons for using the Internet?
- Do you use the internet for marketing of your business?
- If yes, please explain how you utilize the internet for your business?
- What type of your clients do you think use the internet?
- Do you have your own website as a business?
- How useful is the website?
- If you do not have, explain why?
- Who is responsible for marketing the business online?

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme One: Internet Usage patterns

Table 4.1: In-depth Interview samples of the Internet use patterns

<i>"Yes I use internet for my business"</i>	All respondents
<i>" Yes in this day and era we have clients who use online booking more than the old fashioned way looking for accommodation physically. We also use the internet for research. We learn</i>	Respondent 2

<i>about price ranges in our industry, new services that we can offer as well as information like online marketing. As a business person, I need to know the best practice and that helps me compete in the market. If I did not have that information, I would not be able to compete and remain in business”.</i>	
<i>“I access internet 24/7 because I need to respond to my guests on the go. If I don’t respond on time they might look for other places to stay in. I mean like I am always online every second, every hour and every day”.</i>	Respondent 5
<i>“I am very competent when it comes to the use of the internet, remember that I am a graduate from the hospitality school. The internet makes my life easy ... for instance if someone books online, that limits the paper work required in the process”.</i>	Respondent 8
<i>“We get enquiries through emails and we also respond through emails. It is faster and even cheaper. Calling customers is very expensive but now we can give quotations and take bookings using emails. It would have been very difficult for me to run this business if we did not have the internet”.</i>	Respondent 7
<i>“Mostly our customers use the old way of calling but only after they have searched the internet and seen our services on the listings. These agencies, create online pages for you and when one searches and see our facilities and services, they call us for bookings”.</i>	Respondent 6

In this study, all the establishments confirmed that they indeed used the internet for marketing and promoting their business. The table shows the importance of internet usage in the hospitality sector. All the respondents indicated that they use internet in their business and highlighted the reasons for using the internet. At least two of the establishments indicated that they rely on other marketing agencies who list them online such as booking.com, Tripadvisor, Trivago, Safari.com, Brabys and Room for Africa. Usually individuals search online and thereafter as B&Bs, they receive calls from prospective customers. The local tourism boards also list these establishments and it helps a lot with marketing. Borrie (2013: 05) and Law (2019:05) are of the opinion that having business listed in a respectable business listing directory is the vital effective way of attaining business maximum publicity free of charge.

These findings are in line with many researchers such as Kazoba and Massawe (2016: 16); Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2014: 83); Bekteshi and Bekteshi (2017: 138) who argued that most travellers depend on the internet to acquire information with regards to accommodation and travel. This led to Papasolomou and Melanthiou (2012: 330) to conclude that the internet as a communication medium has become an integral part of business development in the hospitality sector. This means that internet is crucial for any business.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme Two: Internet Marketing

Table 4.2: In-depth Interview samples of the Internet marketing

<i>"In this business we use internet for marketing purposes using various media platforms".</i>	Respondent 9
<i>"We have an instagram, Facebook and twitter accounts. We also have a fully functioning website whereby we post our promotions for example in August we had a promotion in partnership with Link</i>	Respondent 7

<i>pharmacy for a women's day whereby the winner got a weekend stay at our guesthouse".</i>	
<i>"It is still a myth for me to use the social media platforms for promotion. I only have a website where the guests get information that they can use to call and book. I also depend on flyers and brochures which we distribute to people at malls like Mthatha Plaza and Circus triangle".</i>	Respondent 6
<i>"Most clients that I get online are those organisations like government institutions and private companies which book through travel agencies. We also depend on walk-ins and telephone booking".</i>	Respondent 10

Internet marketing contributes to the business competitive advantage (Tang-Taye and Boyer 2010: 90) and it is important to integrate with other businesses resources. The respondents indicated that they use internet for marketing and promotion of business using various media platforms. They further indicated that they have an Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts and one indicated that they have a fully functioning website where they post their promotions. Another indicated that it links its promotion in partnership with a local pharmacy. One respondent, however, noted that for him, internet marketing is still a new thing. The responded relies on telephone bookings and traditional means of promotion. Bharadwaj, Sawy, Pavlou and Venkatraman (2013: 479); Sashi (2012: 255); Nothnagel (2006: 35) are of the view that through this technology, organisations in the hospitality sector are able to increasingly leverage digital technologies to build and maintain relationships with customers online thereby smoothly enhancing the exchange of products and services.

Bekteshi and Bekteshi (2017: 138) are in consensus with the above statement and they have observed that the use of ICTs and the Internet in this industry has been so extensive that the functioning of this industry at this

stage would be considered impossible without the support of the ICT and the Internet.

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme Three: Importance of the website

Table 4.3: In-depth Interview samples on the importance of the website

<i>"I have fully functionally websites where customers get information about my business that is the location of the establishment, review of the establishment, contact details, pricing and photographs of the rooms and the packages that I offer".</i>	Respondent 1
<i>"The website is very useful and vital because the customer can navigate our website and choose the packages they want and also get information about offers. They get the ratings from previous customers and that gives them an opportunity to choose and compare place to stay according to the prices and location and reviews".</i>	Respondent 2
<i>"For me although I have a website it does not provide more information about what I am offering as a guest house. It contains only basic information such as the company name, contact details and physical address of this establishment".</i>	Respondent 6
<i>"The marketing strategies are usually done by managers and receptionists who are always on board checking who has logged in, booked, viewed and like and commented on our establishment".</i>	Respondent 4
<i>"The internet helps us a lot especially with international guests. If you check online, I have very good reviews because when they come, we give them the best service. So I know that they will always encourage others to contact us and check out our services online.</i>	Respondent 1

<i>Without the internet I would not have had the number of international customers that I have”.</i>	
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Nine respondents indicated that they do not need to drive around either marketing or buying supplies, which significantly reduces their operating costs. Banoobhai-Anwar (2016: 10) is of the opinion that the internet enables the hospitality industry to promote the business at a modest cost, unprecedented level of connectivity and communicated efficiently and effectively directly with tourism customers. The same respondents quoted above also highlighted that the internet is also important as it assisted them in getting information that they may need for their day to day operations. Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2012: 84) are of the opinion that information has become an integral part of the hospitality industry.

A study by Darby *et al.* (2003: 33) also found that the bigger information richness that the internet delivers for the enterprise and clients means that business managers must adopt this technology to gratify the ever growing consumer demands, which should then allow them to participate favourably in the increasingly competitive environment. This shows that through the internet, business people can be able to compete and develop products that are attractive to the market.

Another respondent said the internet is especially important for securing international customers. He pointed out that once an international customer stays at their establishment, they often write reviews, which they post online and people who intend to visit the country would often check the reviews and ratings online and then they book with us.

Babu (2012: 5) is of the opinion that a correctly optimised website will be highly visible to the search engines and will be shown on the first or second page of the search outcomes. Generally, majority of the internet users do not

go beyond the first few pages on the search results. This suggests that a website that is not properly optimised has very narrow chances of being seen by users. However, in a study to understand Internet reviews on Trip Advisor, Tuten and Solomona (2015: 287) and O'Connor (2008: 55), while hailing the efficiency of the internet in improving communication with customers complained that some of the reviews on the internet were bogus as organisations sought to outcompete each other

One B&B owner especially hailed the internet for having improved the establishment's communication with clients. The owner pointed out that most of their communications now are done through emails.

4.3.2 Theme Two: Internet and traditional ways of marketing.

Table 4.4: In-depth Interview samples on the Internet vs Traditional way of Marketing

<i>"Traditional way and promotion is still relevant because 50% of our business is generated from the traditional way. Surely the internet is the in-thing. However, for government and other public sector clients, I still have to do personal marketing. I still have developed marketing and promotional materials. If I want to reach out to those clients, I have to use these traditional means".</i>	Respondent 6
<i>"Through the use of internet and we have managed to book in many guests nationally and worldwide. However, our establishment face challenges on internet advertising because some guests don't trust online booking due to the escalating crime rate in Umtata such bank card scamming and fake account on social media which leads to people losing their valuable things".</i>	Respondent 5

<i>"The internet allows as a business to reach a wider market and now with such technology, I am able to get clients that I would not have reached using other marketing and promotion strategies. You see, with pamphlets and advertising in the media, I can reach only a limited market".</i>	Respondent 3
<i>"Internet marketing is the best when compared with traditional marketing, it is the best way and fastest way to get clients. It is very cheap and convenient".</i>	Respondent 2
<i>"We cannot do without traditional means of marketing. If I have to get some customers from government services, I have to register in their databases and after that contact the people responsible for selecting service providers. Otherwise without those contacts, I would otherwise never have received any customer from there or the municipality. Once one comes here, we get their email details and when we have specials we just email them. When they also want to book, they can drop us an email. This helps us to communicate easily and better".</i>	Respondent 5

While the internet is perhaps the fastest platform for marketing tourism services, this research reveals that traditional means of marketing and communication still remain potent tools in the industry. All the participants indicated that they still use traditional means of marketing such as media advertising, WOM and others. The questions that were asked for this section were as follows:

The following questions were asked in this section: -

- *How would you compare the use of the internet versus the traditional way of promoting business?*
- *Do you think traditional ways of marketing and promotion are still relevant?*
- *What percentage of your business do you get from traditional means of marketing?*
- *Has internet use increased your customer base as a business?*

Another operator indicated that she liked the internet as it helps her to get clients that she would not be able to get had she been using traditional marketing and promotional strategies. She noted that this is mainly as a result of the reach of the internet.

In the past, face to face promotion and marketing and mass media advertising were very important in promoting tourism products. All the tourism operators who participated in this study indicated that all of them still use traditional means of communication. One operator noted that for customers who work in government, they have to use traditional means of marketing.

Apart from these personal contacts, they also indicated that they still have to print fliers and brochures which are often distributed to tourism boards and also individuals who may be interested. The findings are supported by Lee, Reynolds and Kennon (2003: 47) who in their study to conclude the forms of marketing strategies and the supposed achievement of these strategies utilised most regularly by bed and breakfast operations are word-of-mouth (98.9%), Chambers of Commerce (94.7%), and brochures (89.7%). Furthermore, the word-of-mouth marketing was regarded as the most effective marketing strategy.

Another entrepreneur also added that they use the internet for younger clients but for the older clients, they needed to still use old and traditional methods. This view is confirmed by previous research which has shown that younger users, often referred to as Netizens, prefer to use the internet.

However, another operator noted that once one becomes a client, they will from thereon start communicating with them using the internet. This means these traditional methods are used when initiating a sale and thereafter, the internet becomes very important. But there was a notable disinterest in mass media advertising. Five of the interviewees said they find that advertising in the local media is expensive. In Mthatha, there is a local community radio and at least two newspapers like Mthatha Fever and the Daily Dispatch.

Most of the interviewees noted that they have now realised anyway that they may not need the media as most of their clientele do not use the local media. They now rely on face to face and internet marketing to promote their business.

4.3.3 Theme Three: Internet in the Promotion

Table 4.5: Frequency of Internet Use for Marketing and Promotion

FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Daily	83%
At least once a week	17%

As noted above, most operators indicated that they use the internet but what differed was the frequency and the type of internet sources used. The results showed that five out of the six interviewees, which is almost 83% used the internet daily while the remaining 17% used it at least once a week.

An interesting finding is that amongst the daily users were mostly younger business people and who used social media to promote their services. Amongst the sites they use were Twitter and Facebook. The researcher wanted to discover if the respondents utilise the internet for their promotions. According to the respondents they utilise the internet because it is faster and it reaches countless clients.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme one: Internet Advertising

Table 4.6: In-depth Interview samples of the Internet Advertising

<i>“The beauty of the internet is that it reaches everyone, nationally and internationally which makes it effective and help me expand the business. I once booked a guest from abroad who was very happy”.</i>	Respondent 1
<i>“With effectiveness of internet our establishment has managed to reach new clients e.g. government institutions and other private companies since they use travel agencies to book for their employees”.</i>	Respondent 2
<i>“Through the use of internet and we have managed to book in many guests from the entire country and even from other countries. However, our establishment face challenges on internet advertising because some guests don’t trust online booking due to the escalating crime rate in Umtata such bank card scamming and fake accounts on social media which leads to people losing their valuable things”.</i>	Respondent 4

The interviewed operators highlighted the effectiveness of internet advertising emphasising the fact that the internet reaches everyone,

nationally and internationally which enables them to expand the market.

The following questions were asked on this section: -

- *Do you advertise online & how effective have you been?*
- *Have you reached new clients by using the internet?*
- *Have you hosted international clients before and how did they get to know you?*
- *What are the challenges you face when advertising online?*

One respondent indicated that she once booked a guest from abroad who was very happy. With the effectiveness of internet, the establishments manage to reach new clients such as government institutions and other private companies since they use travel agencies to book for their employees.

However, one respondent said that through the use of internet and they have managed to book in many guests nationally and worldwide. However, their establishment faced challenges on internet advertising because some guests don't trust online booking due to the escalating crime rate in Umtata.

The findings from table 6, are validated by a study by Marx (2013: 22) that noted that the guest houses were using the internet for marketing purposes but recommended that they needed to invest more time and money especially on social network marketing and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). This view was also echoed by Matikiti, Afolabi and Smith (2012: 189) who noted that it is important for the industry to develop their technological competences, managerial support and better alliances for the internet to have meaningful impact on profitability.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme two: Social Media Marketing

Table 4.7: In-depth Interview samples of the Social Media Marketing

<i>“Our establishment is active on social media since we have social media pages on various platforms such as twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram”.</i>	Respondent 3
<i>“In order for our establishments to continue operating smoothly, we depend on social media marketing. We use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter because majority of our guests are always on social media”.</i>	Respondent 4
<i>“Yes social media marketing is very effective because the guests write reviews on the social media pages where everyone can access the information about the establishment. They also refer family and friends when they receive a proper hospitality from the establishment”.</i>	Respondent 5

Social media provides a platform for business owners and guests, where guests can express their experiences and reviews, by means of online word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler 2004: 43). All the establishment managers indicated that they are active on social media since they have social media pages on various platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. However, one manager said although he has a Facebook account he does not use it.

The majority of these operators confirmed in order for their establishments to continue operating smoothly they depend on social media marketing. They use Facebook, instagram, and Twitter because majority of guests are always on social media.

The operators noted that social media marketing is very effective because the guests write reviews on the social media pages where everyone can access the information about the establishment. They also refer family and friends when they receive a proper hospitality from the establishment. These responses are validated by Malcolm (2012: 25) who notes that Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) uses social media tools especially Facebook and Twitter. The study discovered that although social media has developed tremendously and have become popular in marketing efforts of hospitality businesses, there was no direct relationship between Bed and Breakfasts using social media in marketing efforts and how the Bed and Breakfasts graded on search engines. It was, however, shown that having a strong online presence and using social media can help Bed and Breakfasts increase their marketing efforts. However, given this reality, it may be added that this social media communication platform can be used to interact with customers.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme- three: Search Engine Marketing

Table 4.8: In-depth Interview samples of the Search Engine Marketing

<i>"Yes I am familiar with search engine marketing such as Trip Advisor, Safari .com, Trivago and I use these search engines to compare prices during peak hours like the festive season. There are many challenges in using these search engines for example I have to pay monthly subscription fee and there's lot of competition".</i>	All respondents
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Most of the operators are familiar with search engine marketing such as Trip Advisor, Safari .com, Trivago and have confirmed that they use these search engines to compare prices during pick hours like festival season. They indicated that there are many challenges in using these search

engines for example you have subscription fee and there's lot of competition. Some of the questions that were asked included:

- *Have you heard of sites such as Trip Advisor, Safari.com, Brabys, Trivago and others?*
- *Have you used them before?*
- *Did you get any business from such sites?*
- *What are the challenges you encounter in terms of using these?*

4.3.3.4 Sub-theme Four: Online Bookings

Table 4.9: In-depth Interview samples of online booking

<i>"Yes we use internet for bookings. The internet is cheap and fast and can reach millions of people in seconds".</i>	Respondent 1
<i>"I get equal businesses from online and traditional way of booking. I would say they give me 50/50".</i>	Respondent 2
<i>"Some of the bookings I get online are from the travel agencies and most clients stay here for a month for example I have a police officer that will stay here for 6 months. We get a lot of support from the government".</i>	Respondent 4
<i>"I don't get any online booking because my website is not fully functional because it talks about the contact information online and I still believe in the traditional way of promotion. But I get a lot of bookings on the telephone and on emails".</i>	Respondent 6

Nine out of ten establishments use the internet for bookings. They indicated that the internet is cheap and fast and can reach millions of

people in seconds. Only one of the respondents does not get any online bookings since his website is not fully functional because it only provides contact information he still believes in the traditional way of promotion. Some of the questions that were asked for this section included:

- *Have you used the internet for online bookings?*
- *What is the percentage of your business derived from online bookings?*
- *Do you get any bookings from internet agencies?*
- *If you are not getting online bookings, why is this so?*
- *What will you require as a small business in the hospitality sector to get online bookings?*

4.3.3.5 Sub-theme Five: Email Marketing

Table 4.10: In-depth Interview samples of the Email Marketing

<i>"I use email for marketing for instance I send emails to our regular customers about special discounts on the packages that we offer. It is very effective to use internet marketing because it is a cheaper and faster way to communicate with customers".</i>	Respondent 1
<i>"Every day I have to check emails and respond to social media enquiries. I have to make sure that I do that. If there is no internet, I go to an internet café. I cannot live without the internet, otherwise my business will collapse".</i>	Respondent 5
<i>"I use email for marketing for instance I send emails to our regular customer about special discounts on the packages that we offer. It is very effective to use</i>	Respondent 3

<i>internet marketing because it is cheaper and faster way to communicate with customers”.</i>	
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Five respondents highlighted that they use various forms of social media to promote their businesses and also emails. One respondent noted that she sends promotional e-mails to her guest about special packages and competitions. This finding is supported by previous studies of Marx (2014: 80); Morimoto and Chang (2006: 09), who discovered that distributing advertising e-mails with a markdown or special offer message, the guest house can connect with possible guests. This tool is cheap, useful, fast, and influential and is a very effective way of communicating to current guests (George 2010:337). This highlights that with the internet businesses can now communicate faster, easily and effectively with their customers.

The following questions were asked in this section: -

- Do you use emails for marketing?
- How effective is email marketing for your business?
- What are the opportunities of using emails to promote your business?
- Why are emails important for business?

The responses above confirm the role that the internet now plays in everyday business decisions even in smaller businesses. George (2010: 337) is in consensus with the findings and believes that email marketing is cost-effective, convenient, fast powerful and a very successful way of communication with existing guests. This means that one has to be strategic to increase the business profit.

4.3.4 Theme Four: Challenges of using internet.

This study indicated that there are indeed specific challenges that these small enterprises face. Among these are skills in digital marketing, costs, poor web functionalities and lack of government support.

4.3.4.1 Skills in digital marketing

In this study, the greatest challenge that entrepreneurs faced were related to inadequate skills. While the majority of entrepreneurs relied on marketing agencies and tourism boards to promote them online, they indicated they did not have a digital marketing strategy and skills to market their operations. This means that as business people, they do not use all the available digital channels and techniques to promote and market their operations. One of the operators put it succinctly when she said:

“I wish I had some skills like even knowing how to use the internet to reach out to prospective clients. Our information is out there and all what we do is to wait hoping that there will be a hit. I hear that in other established businesses they have people who are solely responsible for that. Knowing how to market online is very important but we do not know how to do that effectively”.

However, another respondent said:

“I am very competent when it comes to the use of the internet remember that I am graduate from a hospitality school. The internet makes my life easy, for instance if someone books online, that limits the paper work process”.

This shows that there is indeed a skills gap. Making technology available is not enough as operators may need additional skills to get maximum benefits from the technology. This view corroborates the findings of Matikiti, Afolabi and Smith (2012: 189) who found that it is important for the industry to develop their technological competences, managerial support and better alliances for the internet to have meaningful impact on profitability.

4.3.4.2 Inadequate web functionalities and web information

Another challenge that operators highlighted was that their websites do not have enough functionalities and information to boost their online visibility. The apparent lack of internet payment systems on their website showed that they do not depend on online payments for bookings concluded on their websites. Nonetheless, of the two operators that have online payment systems on their websites, indicated that it is imperative to have functionalities that permit online payment.

The utilisation of the Internet in modern tourism agencies business has certain disadvantages such as: web information is not at all times complete and trustworthy, payment safety is still not at the acceptable level, and the sale of certain products and services requires direct communication with the travel agent. This is in line with Mbatha's findings (2013: 532) which discovered specific barriers to the exploitation of ICTs by tourism SME Service providers in the City of Tshwane in South Africa. The study discovered that high cost, inadequate funds and lack of technical know-how are obstacles to the effective use of ICTs among the tourism SME service providers which is in line with the results of the present study.

4.3.4.3 Inadequate financial resources to pay for online marketing services

The respondents noted that for one to get optimal marketing services, one needs to pay agencies and search engines. There are web hosting companies and search engine services such as Airhost, Domain.co.za, google and yahoo that require clients to pay for them to ensure online visibility. At least four of the B&Bs that have websites indicated that they were offered such services but they are not able to afford the monthly payments.

One operator indicated that when he wanted to have a website he was given options but the service which will give him metrics and search engine optimization wanted about R1500 per month. He said:

“These Internet companies they offer interesting services and to get the best services it is very expensive”.

Only two respondents said that the internet was too expensive sometimes and they decided to distribute brochures and use media like the television and radio to promote their services.

As noted above, most operators indicated that they use the internet but what differed was the frequency and the type of internet sources used. The results showed that 5 out of the six interviewees, which is almost 83% used the internet daily while the remaining 17% used it at least once a week.

4.4 Section B: Internet Use by Customers

4.4.1 Introduction of customers

As was indicated earlier, in-depth interviews were conducted with six customers who utilised B&Bs and Guest Houses in Mthatha. Among these customers, three were aged 35 and above while the other three were below 35 years of age. Three respondents were male while the remaining were females.

4.4.2 Years Visiting Mthatha

The table below indicates the years the interviewed customers have been visiting the town.

Table 4.11: Years Visiting Mthatha

YEARS VISITING MTHATHA	PERCENTAGE OF CUSTOMERS
1 Year	33%
2 Years	17%
3 Years	0%
4 Years	17%
5 Years	33%

The above table reveals that most customers have been visiting the town for over two years, which means that they are basically familiar with the town and its available facilities.

4.4.3 Purpose of Visit

The table below explains the purpose of the visits per respondent.

Table 4.12: Reasons for visiting Mthatha

PURPOSE	PERCENTAGE
Leisure	33%
Studying	17%
Business	50%
Medical	0%
Other Reasons	0%

Table 2 highlights that half of the respondents were in town for the purposes of business while two others were in town for leisure purposes. Only one was in town for educational reasons. Of the three who were on business, two were working for private companies while the other was a government employee. This variation in purposes mean that the majority of customers have the authority to determine where they stay unlike for government employees, whose procurement offices may decide where their employees stay.

4.4.4 Theme 1. Use of the Internet by Customers

The results reveal that all of the respondents use the internet to check on the type of accommodation they require. All respondents indicated that the internet assists them to check the pricing, look at the facilities offered and check for other things like proximity to town and other amenities.

One customer however, said this is usually done at the beginning.

“Previously I used to stay at another B&B that was recommended to me but later, after checking online, I found a cheaper and more spacious place. This is where I stay every time when I am in Mthatha. They now know me; all I do now is to send an email. This is now my home away from home”.

The finding is supported by Heung (2003: 378) who assessed how people used the internet and found that 30 percent of the 1114 research participants in his study, received marketing information from hotels in Hong Kong through the internet. Based on this background it is apparent that e-mail usage is engrained in people’s routines and habits. The advent of smart phones makes accessing the internet much easier.

Another customer who was on business said they used the internet to locate the B&B where he was staying after considering a number of things. He said:

“For me, Mthatha is dangerous and yet I have to be here for business. I had to look for secure area. So checked for a B&B in Fort gale as I did not want to be near town. I checked the facilities and I like it here. Everything I want is offered here. It’s not about prices but security”.

Since security is important in one’s search for accommodation in Mthatha, this means that those establishments that are not online, may not be able to get such customers.

One of the respondents who was in Mthatha for leisure, indicated that she enjoyed even the hustle and bustle of the town. She said:

“I grew up here and some of my friends are still here. So for me I looked for a place online which is closer to my friends. I looked on the internet and asked my friends to go and enquire. That’s how I got this place. I like it that my friends can come any time and every time I am here; I stay at this place”.

Xiang, Wang, O’Leary and Fesenmaier (2017: 514) observed that the majority of customers now use search engines when planning their trips which is in agreement with the findings of the present study. The search engine advertising (SEA) engage sponsored advertisements which feature in the inorganic search engine results. The statement above shows that while there are several considerations that customers have to take into consideration, the internet is useful in helping the respondents achieve their decisions.

4.4.5 Theme 2: Advantages of Using Internet for Customers

All the interviewees noted that the internet is integral to their lives and is important in helping them make correct decisions pertaining to where they will stay in Mthatha. They noted that the internet allows them to compare prices and facilities. One of the respondents said they chose the facility as it was cheaper as compared to the other facilities they looked at. He said:

“You see, I went online and realised that this facility was cheaper as compared to the others. I could have stayed at the Holiday Inn but it’s too expensive. I compared the prices and I love this place. I always come here because it is cheaper”.

These findings are similar those by Roy, Raju, and Joseph (2019: 01) who noted that travellers may pick lodging, depending on its area, brand name, different offices, service quality, price, loyalty program, and quality reviews by past visitors. For one B&B, which has a website, one customer indicated that she booked and paid online. The customer said:

“I check whether there are rooms available, book my room and pay online. This makes my life very easy. Immediately after booking, they contact me and ask me about my food preferences. Now that’s quite convenient”.

Such functionalities on websites are very convenient to customers. In as much as the internet is important to business owners, it is very convenient to customers as well. They do not have to drive around town comparing prices and facilities they can do that even in the comfort of their offices.

4.4.6 Theme 3: Customer’ Views on Traditional Marketing and Promotion

Out of the six customers interviewed, only two respondents indicated that they got to know the establishment through traditional marketing and promotion.

Coincidentally, the ones who had known the establishments using traditional means were also older and indicated that they knew of the places mostly through word of mouth marketing and referrals. One of the customers said:

“I was looking for accommodation here and a friend who had been here recommended this place. You know Mthatha is very dangerous, so I asked how secure the place is and they confirmed that it is secure. Have also recommended this place to others.”

This statement shows that reputation matters. If a place has a good reputation, people would always recommend the place to others. McCormick (2016: 01) is of the view that a good business reputation is important because it facilitates growth in most valuable relationship and will have a ripple effect throughout your entire network.

4.4.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

4.5.1 Importance of the Internet to the Hospitality sector

The results showed that the internet is very important to the B&Bs as they use it for several uses including communication, research, Marketing and promotion. This is in line with Law, Qi and Buhalis (2010: 302); Wirtz, Schilke and Ullrich (2010: 273) who noted the internet's growing uses in the sector as well as the rapid increase in e-business transactions. The findings are in line with the observations by Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2014:102) who point out that the hospitality sector is an intensive user of information hence the need of strategically deploying the internet to get reliable and accurate information. Again the results show a growing trend wherein, as was argued Borrie (2013: 5), there is growing use of the search engine optimisation, social media optimisation, emails and online business listings even in small-scale businesses in the tourism industry. This is why some have their own company websites, and subscribe to organisations such as the Tourism Grading Council and others like Trivago, Tripadvisor and Safari.com. As the results show, this helped improve the visibility of the B&Bs online hence more customers that use these establishments. The use of social media is also now important as they also use Facebook and Twitter to

market their services and communicate with existing customers. The Internet enables owners to connect with potential customers hence allow small businesses to market their services cheaply and this shows that the Internet is now an important resource in the sector, (Budica, Piui, Budica and Tudor 2012: 177). Beyond this, as argued by Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2014: 103) the Internet in the industry has shifted power relations from travel organisations to consumers, who now have more information on prices than ever before.

4.5.2 Traditional Marketing and Internet Marketing

The results from this study also show that in as much as the Internet is becoming very important in the hospitality sector, traditional means of marketing such as face to face marketing, referrals and advertising, are also still very relevant, especially when targeting a specific market. It was shown that for most public sector customers and also older customers, the traditional means of marketing are still very effective. This is in contrast with what Duplesis and Frederick (2012: 19) maintained when they observed that the internet accomplishes far beyond what the traditional media can achieve. The study concedes to the view by Szopinsky (2017: 1665) that advertising in the press, in tourism magazines, on electronic media and at tourism fairs is in decline. While the internet's influence is growing, this nevertheless does not call for the immediate stoppage of all traditional means of marketing at this juncture.

4.5.3 Challenges faced by proprietors when using the internet

It was found that internet users do not have adequate skills and knowledge to ensure they optimise the full business value they can get from using the Internet. While Marketing agencies are there, it is important for owners to improve their knowledge and skills for them to use the Internet effectively to achieve their objectives. Furthermore, as was posited by Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer (2014: 86) the other

challenge apart from proprietors not understanding the role and potential of the internet in the sector, they also lack the technical skills to deploy the internet adequately.

4.5.4 Frequency of internet use

One of the most interesting findings of the study was that the majority of the owners used the internet on a daily basis. This shows how the internet has become integral to their businesses as a marketing, promotion, research and communication tool.

4.5.5 Internet use by Customers

The study showed that customers used the internet primarily for checking the quality of accommodation, the prices and proximity to areas of interest. In addition, others wanted to find more secure areas as Mthatha is a crime-ridden area. They noted that the Internet is very convenient as they can do everything easily and cheaply online. This study also concurred with Toh, DeKay and Raven (2011: 389); Kim, Xiang and Fesenmaier (2015: 279) who pointed out that internet use is affected by a number of factors such as levels of income, age, professional position, age, gender and generations.

This study in particular noted that younger, business people and those who have more resources who are prepared to pay more for security in Mthatha tend to use the Internet more. Furthermore, international travellers also tended to use the internet more perhaps confirming the argument by Szopinski (2017: 1665) that as the cultural distance grows between the travellers and the place they visit, more information is required hence the use of the Internet. It is important to note that a few also did not use the internet as they select their choices of B&Bs from referrals and advertising. However, this was confined mostly to those that were older and those that were booked by Government departments.

4.6 Conclusion

The results showed that the internet is now integral to the operations of businesses in the hospitality sector regardless of size. However, it was also shown that traditional marketing strategies are also relevant to other older customers and government market segments. It is therefore important for local entrepreneurs to know how to leverage the internet for them to optimize value from it.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected from B&B and guesthouses as well as from customers through the use of semi-structured interviews.

In this chapter, conclusions of the research from both business proprietors as well as customers are presented and discussed. This chapter provides an overview of the study, as well as a summary of the research findings. Recommendations for further studies are suggested.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of the Internet in the hospitality sectors especially B&Bs which are located in Mthatha.

5.2 An Overview of the Chapters in the Research Study

The study contained five chapters which directed readers from the identification of the research problem and aim of the research to the ultimate fulfilment of the research objectives.

Chapter one provided a framework of the study. It introduced the purpose of the study, a background of the study, the explanation of the research problem and the research aim and objectives.

Chapter two reviewed the literature related to internet utilisation and marketing activities, including business promotional mix in bed and breakfast and guesthouses broadly. Methods of promotion, namely search engine optimization, social media optimization, search engine advertising, E-mail marketing and online business listing directory were discussed with direct application to the hospitality sector. In addition, the chapter also described the e-value theory, which has been used to explore internet adoption by businesses in different sectors.

Chapter Three outlined the research design and methodology that was used in this study. As such the research design, which is the qualitative design, the target population, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, as well as data analysis techniques were explained.

Chapter Four presented an in-depth analysis of the research data. The chapter presented the analysis based on the themes that emerged in the literature. It further highlighted the findings of the research.

This chapter discusses the research conclusions. The research findings are compared to the research question and the objectives of the research in order to determine the extent to which objectives are realised. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations for future research.

5.3 Conclusions

The study commenced with the following research question:

What is the role of the internet in the promotion of bed and breakfast and guesthouses in Mthatha?

The objectives of the study were derived from the research problem.

Objective 1: To examine the current uses of the internet for the promotion of Bed & Breakfast and guest house establishments.

Objective 2: To determine customer responses to promotional messages on the internet.

Objective 3: To identify the challenges faced by the sector when using the internet to promote their businesses.

Objective 4: To make recommendations for the further use of internet or how internet utilisation can enhance the hospitality industry.

The next section will discuss the conclusions from the perspective of each research objectives.

Objective 1: Current use of the internet for promotion of Bed & Breakfast and Guest House establishments.

This research showed that the majority of the B&BS use the Internet for promotion, marketing, research and communication.

For promotion and marketing, these institutions used the internet to reach new customers, who are now using the internet when looking for accommodation which meets their own needs. The majority of participants in this study concurred that the internet is now a vital tool for helping the organisation reach new markets as well as retain their existing customer base.

As far as research was concerned, the owners of these institutions argued that the internet was very useful as they do research for information they need when doing quotations as well as seeking to diversify services such as new meals. It was shown that businesses in this sector always requires some information that owners do not have and through the Internet, they can quickly access this information.

The study concluded that the internet is now a vital tool for communication in the sector.

This online presence was promoted through membership of organisations in the tourism sector such as the Tourism Grading Council, Eastern Cape Tourism and others. Additionally, marketing agencies in the sector also list the different services offered by these B&Bs online as well as having their own websites and social media pages. It was revealed that bigger establishments had better resources and also had the capacity to have their own websites and hence better visibility online.

Objective 2: Customer responses to the promotion of messages through the use of the internet.

The study concluded that customers use the internet to make a variety of decisions related to their travel. The Internet proved that it is a potent resource for enabling customers to make a choice of where to stay as they considered a number of issues such as security, prices and closeness to amenities they needed. However, age was again a factor as older customers tended to prefer traditional forms of selecting and booking B&Bs such as Word of Mouth and referrals. In contrast, younger customers preferred to search, select and even pay for accommodation online. This helps them even select cheapest, yet safe and secure facilities as well as those that meet their own customer needs. In the case of communications, the internet has no doubt strengthened the two-way flow of messages between the operators and their customers.

Objective 3: Challenges faced by the sector when using the internet to promote their businesses.

As was shown in the last chapter, internet users do not have adequate skills and knowledge to ensure they exploit the full business potential they can get from using the Internet. While Marketing agencies are there, it is important for owners to have their own knowledge and skills to use the Internet effectively to achieve their objectives. Furthermore, the other challenge apart from proprietors not understanding the role and potential of the internet in the sector, is that they also lack the technical skills to deploy the internet adequately.

Availability of technology, it was shown, is not enough to ensure that business owners derive maximum benefits from the technology. In addition, the research showed that for those businesses that have the websites, there was a problem that these did not have adequate functionalities which promote ease

of use, hence improving customer experiences. Lack of adequate financial resources curtailed business owners' ability to pay for additional services such as search engine optimisation, which will promote their online visibility (Lee, Sung, Defranco and Arnold 2005:206).

Objective 4: Recommendations for the further use of the internet or how internet utilisation can enhance the hospitality industry.

Among the recommendations that can be made to enhance optimisation of internet usage in the hospitality sector include up scaling digital literacy skills for the sector, providing financial support to enable the sector to be able to pay for advanced services such as search engines optimisation and lastly to improve the web functionalities for the websites.

- Introduce digital skills literacy programmes for the sector

This study has shown that while many people now have access to technology, they lack the essential skills required for them to exploit the full potential of the internet. To ensure that the industry benefits from the appropriation of the internet, it is therefore recommended that industry regulators, players and government offer training in areas such as search engine optimisation, information search and digital marketing skills for them to grow their businesses.

- Provide a sector targeted digital support for the small-scale hospitality sector.

The other major problem that was raised by some participants was that they do not have enough resources to pay for digital marketing services offered by both marketing agencies, search engines, social media platforms like Facebook as all require additional financial resources for one to get enough visibility online. These organisations do advertise and promote private business for an additional fee, which most corporate institutions in the sector do not have.

This study calls for more funding to be afforded to these Destination Management Organisation to support the growing small scale hospitality sector in the area. Regional development agencies such as the Eastern Cape Tourism Development Agency, which is responsible for promoting tourism in the sector can fund such initiatives so that the province can optimise benefits from the internet.

- Improve web functionalities

The few establishments that were selected that had websites, the web functionality was not up to the required standard. The pages were not updated regularly and for some, customers are not able to pay online. It is therefore recommended that for the websites to improve the ease of use and enhance customer experience, the websites must be improved. They must be made more interactive to ensure that customers, especially those who are savvy at using the internet will be able to use the sites effectively.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

As in most studies, this particular research has its own limitations which are as follows:

- a) It was difficult to get the participants for more in-depth interviews due to their busy schedules. So at most the interviews were only about thirty minutes when more time would have enabled the researcher to get more information.
- b) The sample for customers, furthermore, can be increased to examine the impact of other socio-cultural factors on internet usage patterns.
- c) The use of a mixed design would have allowed the researcher to get quantitative data from customers while qualitative data was going to be obtained from the proprietors of the different establishments.
- d) Since reasons for visits and use of B&Bs differ depending on the seasons, it may be important to find out from other B&B users who use

the facilities during different seasons. For this study data was collected between June and July 2018. This may mean that the results may reflect the data from respondents who stay in these establishments mostly for business rather than for recreation and other reasons.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Given the fact that this study was only confined to B&Bs in Mthatha, it is important to undertake further research in both other less urbanised as well as in established cities to compare internet usage practices. Additionally, comparative studies are needed to understand how established hospitality entities such as big hotels use the internet in comparison to these small-scale enterprises. Methodologically, other methods such as website content monitoring and analysis can also be used as they can provide real-time and objective evidence about the use of the internet by these establishments. Finally, a more detailed study on the digital skills of proprietors would shed more light on what assistance different owners will require for them to get maximum benefits from the internet.

5.4 Conclusion

This study showed that the hospitality sector can benefit a lot if they use the internet strategically to achieve growth. The internet is having as profound influence on everyday life including how companies do business. Among the uses, as was shown by this study, were search engine optimisation, search engine advertising, e-WOM, Research and general marketing. Even small businesses such as B&Bs were using the internet for a variety of purposes such as for research, marketing and promotion as well as communication. Furthermore, it was concluded that traditional means of marketing and communication were still very important despite the growing influence of the internet. In terms of recommendations, it is important to develop trainings that will upscale the skills of industry operators in areas such as digital marketing, social media marketing and how to optimise the use of search engines among others

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APPENDICES

Annexure A: Letter of Information



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study:

The role of internet in the promotion of Bed and Breakfast and Guest House establishments in Mthatha.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Ms Luleka Velelo

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Prof R Rampersad (Associate Professor)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Bed and Breakfast and guest houses are an important sector in the hospitality industry in South Africa and due to a number of development projects in the Mthatha area over the last decade, there has been a rapid increase in the number of Bed and Breakfast and guest houses in the upmarket suburbs of the town. Small businesses, particularly Bed and breakfast and guesthouses, view the lack of market access and the inability to sell their goods and services as a major obstacle inhibiting their growth and proliferation.

The aim of the study is to examine the role of internet in the promotion of Bed & Breakfast and guest house establishments in Mthatha.

Outline of the Procedures:

The persons responsible for the promotion in the hospitality industry. The method that will be used to collect data will be the primary data collection methods which include semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and observation. Open ended questions will be highlighted to give the respondents an opportunity to give in-depth information related to the area of study. Participants will be expected to answer questions in English. The collected data will be analysed and stored in a confined place by the researcher.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There is no risk or discomfort associated with this study.

Benefits: The findings from this researcher will benefit the hospitality industry and will be published in accredited journals.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: Participants who may wish not to be part of this study will be given the option to withdraw.

Remuneration: There is no remuneration that will be received by the participants.

Costs of the Study: No costs associated with this study.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring anonymity of the respondents.

Research-related Injury: The researcher will be carried out indoors at the guest houses.

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

Supervisor: Prof R Rampersad (Faculty of Management Sciences, Dept of Public Relations) 031 3736876, email: renithar@dut.ac.za.

Please contact the researcher (0739542774), my supervisor (031 3736876) or the Institutional Research Ethics administrator on 031 373 2900. Complaints can be reported to the DVC: TIP, Prof F. Otieno on 031 373 2382 or dvctip@dut.ac.za

Annexure B: Permission letter to conduct research



12 September 2014

Liliz Guest House
3 CYPRESS Street
Fort Gale
Mthatha

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: CONSENT TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS- ACADEMIC RESEARCH- B&Bs and GUEST HOUSES IN MTHATHA

I am conducting research in the field of public relations. My research will examine the role of the internet in the promotion of Bed And Breakfast and Guest houses in Mthatha. This serves to inform you that I have selected your company as my unit of analysis.

I hereby request consent to conduct interviews with the manager as this would be most valuable to my field of research. Once the interviews are completed it will be analysed and a summary of the findings will be sent to you for your perusal. This research will be submitted for the requirement for a Masters Degree in Public Relations at the Durban University of Technology (DUT).

I thank you in advance and look forward to a favourable response

Yours Sincerely

Luleka Velelo (Ms)

Cell: 073 954 2774

Student Number: 21243358

Email: velelo@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONSENT

I, Oko Mtenqwane (Manager of the Guest House or B&B) hereby acknowledge that Ms Luleka Velelo will be conducting research with Liliz Guest House as the unit of analysis. I hereby grant consent to Ms Velelo to conduct interviews with me the manager at the above mentioned organisation.

Signature

24.09.14
Date



12 September 2014

White Lillies Guest House
T9 Chief JoJo Drive
Southridge Park
Mthatha
5099

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: CONSENT TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS- ACADEMIC RESEARCH- B&Bs and GUEST HOUSES IN MTHATHA

I am conducting research in the field of public relations. My research will examine the role of the internet in the promotion of Bed And Breakfast and Guest houses in Mthatha. This serves to inform you that I have selected your company as my unit of analysis.

I hereby **request consent to conduct interviews with the manager** as this would be most valuable to my field of research. Once the interviews are completed it will be analysed and a summary of the findings will be sent to you for your perusal. This research will be submitted for the requirement for a **Master Degree in Public Relations at the Durban University of Technology (DUT).**

I thank you in advance and look forward to a favourable response

Yours Sincerely

Luleka Velelo (Ms)

Cell: 073 954 2774

Student Number: 21243358

Email: velelol@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONSENT

I, Bulelwa Madabane (Manager of the Guest House or B&B) hereby acknowledge that Ms Luleka Velelo will be conducting research with White Lillies Guest House as the unit of analysis. I hereby grant consent to Ms Velelo to conduct interviews with me the manager at the above mentioned organisation.

Signature

15/09/2014
Date



12 September 2014

LE CHEF B & B
74 CHEF NKWENKWEZI DR
MTHATHA
EASTERN CAPE
5099

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: CONSENT TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS- ACADEMIC RESEARCH- B&Bs and GUEST HOUSES IN MTHATHA

I am conducting research in the field of public relations. My research will examine the role of the internet in the promotion of Bed And Breakfast and Guest houses in Mthatha. This serves to inform you that I have selected your company as my unit of analysis.

I hereby **request consent to conduct interviews with the manager** as this would be most valuable to my field of research. Once the interviews are completed it will be analysed and a summary of the findings will be sent to you for your perusal. This research will be submitted for the requirement for a **Master Degree in Public Relations at the Durban University of Technology (DUT).**

I thank you in advance and look forward to a favourable response

Yours Sincerely

Luleka Velelo (Ms)

Cell: 073 954 2774

Student Number: 21243358

Email: velelo@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONSENT

I, Elizabeth Huma (Manager of the Guest House or B&B) hereby acknowledge that Ms Luleka Velelo will be conducting research with Ms Nwabisa Peter as the unit of analysis. I hereby grant consent to Ms Velelo to conduct interviews with me the manager at the above mentioned organisation.

Signature _____

16/09/2014
Date

Annexure C: Interview Schedules

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR BED AND BREAKFASTS AND GUEST HOUSES IN MTHATHA

Topic: The role of internet in the promotion of Bed & Breakfast and guest house establishments in Mthatha.

Purpose: The aim of the study is to assess the role that the internet plays in the promotion of Bed & Breakfast guest's house establishments in Mthatha.

Internet Use patterns

Do you use internet in your business?

Explain how you access the Internet

How frequent do you access the Internet?

How good are your internet search and use skills?

Explain the reasons for using the Internet

Do you use the internet for marketing of your business?

If yes, please explain how you utilize the internet for your business.

What type of your clients do you think use the internet?

Do you have your own website as a business?

How useful is the website?

If you do not have, explain why?

Who is responsible for marketing the business online?

Internet Advertising

Do you advertise online & how effective have you been?

Have you reached new clients by using the internet?

Have you hosted international clients before and how did they get to know you?

What are the challenges you face when advertising online?

Social Media Marketing

Are you on social media?

Have you used any social networks for marketing your business?

Which social media have you used and why

How effective is the use of social media?

Search Engine Marketing

Have you heard of sites such as Trip Advisor, Safari.com, Brabys, Trivago and others?

Have you used them before?

Did you get any business from such sites?

What are the challenges you encounter in terms of using these?

Online Bookings

Have you used the internet for online bookings?

What is the percentage of your business derived from online bookings?

Do you get any bookings from internet agencies?

If you are not getting online bookings, why is this so?

What will you require as a small business in the hospitality sector to get online bookings?

Email Marketing

Do you use emails for marketing?

How effective is email marketing for your business?

What are the opportunities of using emails to promote your business?

Why are emails important for business?

Do you use emails to communicate with customers?

How regularly do you use emails for marketing/promotion?

Traditional Vs Internet marketing

How would you compare the use of the internet versus the traditional way of promoting business?

Do you think traditional ways of marketing and promotion are still relevant?

What percentage of your business do you get from traditional means of marketing?

Has internet use increased your customer base as a business?

Regulatory support

Do you think you receive adequate support from government and the hospitality industry to harness the use of the internet to improve the business?

What kind of support would you need to be able to optimize internet usage?

Do you have adequate resources to ensure that you use internet?

Overall,

How useful is the Internet to your business?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF BED AND BREAKFAST AND GUEST HOUSE ESTABLISHMENTS IN MTHATHA

Topic: The role of internet in the promotion of Bed & Breakfast and guest house establishments in Mthatha.

Purpose: The aim of the study is to assess the role that the internet plays in the promotion of Bed & Breakfast guest's house establishments in Mthatha.

SECTION A

Biographical Information

1. How long have you been visiting Mthatha?
2. Why do you visit Mthatha?

SECTION B

The following questions require a candidate response to enable the researcher to be able to gather the required data to be able to answer the questions about the research being undertaken

1. Do you agree with the assertion that internet is the best promotion tool for accommodation?
2. What are your thought about online marketing of the accommodation sector?
3. Do you use internet to search for accommodation?
4. How often do you utilize the internet for accommodation?
5. What are the opportunities of using the internet when looking for accommodation?

6. In your own opinion, is the internet a valuable tool to make reservations?
7. What kind of challenges do you face when you are undertaking online bookings?
8. How long does it take you to get the response?
9. How would you rate the response rate of accommodation industry when booking online?
10. How would you compare the use of the internet versus the traditional way of booking a reservation?
11. Would you recommend internet promotion as a best tool for businesses to undertake?