



**ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR EFFECTIVE MARKETING BY MICRO-
HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES IN
KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
**Doctor of Philosophy in Management Sciences Specialising in
Hospitality and Tourism Management**

In the
Faculty of Management Sciences
at the Durban University of Technology

TENSON NKOSANA

SEPTEMBER 2022

APPROVED FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

Supervisor:

Date: 06/09/2022

Dr EM Mnguni

Co-Supervisor:

Date: 06/09/2022

Dr JP Skinner

Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements) nor material which to a substantial degree has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed

Date: 06/09/2022

TENSON NKOSANA

Student Number: 21357021

Supervisor:

Date: 06/09/2022

Co- Supervisor:

Date: 06/09/2022

DEDICATION

In the hope that this work and achievement may in some way ignite their quest for success, this thesis is dedicated to my community at Kana.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my special gratitude and thanks to my academic supervisors Dr Erasmus Mnguni and Dr Jane Skinner for their guidance and constant supervision throughout this process. Their keen interest, timeous scholarly advise, and meticulous scrutiny helped me immensely in this study.

To my friend, Dr Hloniphani Ndebele, many thanks my dear friend for setting the pace and encouragement throughout the process.

I am extremely thankful to all those who participated in any way in this study, especially to those who responded to the questionnaires and to the interviews. I am indebted to all those whom I cannot mention by name owing to space constraints for their contributions directly or indirectly to the success of this project. Needless to say, I have benefited immensely from a lot of people to whom I extend my profound gratitude.

I express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues at the University of Mpumalanga for constant encouragement throughout this research project.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family for their everlasting kindness, patience, love and support throughout this very long process. I love you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
ABSTRACT	xiii
DEFINATION OF TERMS.....	xvi
ACRONYMS.....	xix
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
Introduction and background	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background to the study	1
1.3 Social media and the hospitality industry	3
1.4 South Africa as a tourist destination.....	4
1.5 Marketing in the hospitality industry	7
1.6 Social media marketing in hospitality	8
1.7 Research site.....	9
1.8 Research problem	12
1.8.1 Gaps in literature	12
1.9 Aim of the study	14
1.10 Objectives of the study.....	15
1.11 Research questions	16
1.12 Research methodology summary.....	16
1.13 Significance of the study	18
1.14 Delimitation of the study.....	17

1.15 Limitations of the study	18
1.16 Outline of the chapters.....	20
1.17 Summary	21
CHAPTER TWO.....	23
The adoption and utilization of social media for marketing	23
2.1 Introduction.....	23
2.2 Defining social media and social media marketing.....	24
2.3 The genesis of social media.....	25
2.4 Significance of social media marketing	27
2.5 Global investment in social media.....	29
2.6 Significance of social media marketing in big businesses	32
2.7 Social media marketing (SMM) in the hotel industry in general	33
2.7.1 Significance of SMM in SMES and micro hospitality businesses in RSA	35
2.7.2 Social media platforms for adoption by micro hospitality establishments	40
2.7.2.1 Facebook.....	42
2.7.2.2 YouTube	44
2.7.2.3 Twitter	46
2.7.2.4 LinkedIn	49
2.7.2.5 Instagram.....	50
2.7.2.6 TripAdvisor.....	51
2.7.2.7 WhatsApp	53
2.7.2.8 Pinterest	53
2.8 Use of SMM and user review sites by micro hospitality establishments	54
2.8.1 Social media in brand promotion and advertising	55
2.8.2 Social media in brand and reputation development	56

2.8.3 Customer relationship management (CRM).....	58
2.9 The South African context.....	59
2.9.1 Social media usage in SA.....	59
2.9.2 The contribution of the hospitality industry to the South African GDP	63
2.10 Analytical tools on SMM activity measuring.....	64
2.11 Summary	67
CHAPTER THREE	69
Effectiveness and challenges of social media as a marketing tool	69
3.1 Introduction.....	69
3.2 Effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool	69
3.3 Social media efficacy: monitoring and evaluation	73
3.4 Social media marketing challenges.....	76
3.5 Cybercrime in South Africa	79
3.6 Social Media effectiveness and challenges for small hospitality establishments in KZN- Literature gap	81
3.7 Summary	83
CHAPTER FOUR	84
The impact of COVID-19 on small hospitality establishments in KZN	84
4.1 Introduction.....	84
4.2 The South African outlook: Covid-19 impact	84
4.3 Economic impact of COVID-19	85
4.4 COVID-19 statistics in South Africa as at December 26, 2021	87
4.5 During and Post-COVID-19 tourism and hospitality sector recovery strategy	88
4.6 The impact of COVID-19 on small hospitality establishments in KZN.....	90
4.7 South Africa's Tourism Recovery Plan	96
4.8 Summary	97

CHAPTER FIVE	99
Theoretical framework for social media adoption and utilisation	99
5.1 Introduction.....	99
5.2 Theories and models	99
5.2.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).....	100
5.2.2 The Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Model	104
5.3 The relationship between TAM and TOE models	107
5.4 Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT)	109
5.5 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)	110
5.6 Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2 (UTAUT2)	111
5.6.1 UTAUT2 core constructs	113
5.7 Summary	115
CHAPTER SIX	116
Research Methodology	116
6.1 Introduction.....	116
6.2 Research process summary	116
6.3 Research methodology	118
6.3.1 Quantitative research paradigm.....	119
6.3.2 Qualitative research paradigm.....	119
6.4 Research design.....	120
6.4.1 Scope of the survey.....	121
6.5 Population.....	122
6.6 Sampling.....	124
6.7 Data collection methods and instrumentation.....	125
6.7.1 The questionnaire.....	127

6.7.2 Administration of the questionnaire.....	129
6.7.3 Interviews	130
6.7.4 Conducting the Interviews	131
6.8 Data handling procedure.....	133
6.8.1 Data collection.....	134
6.8.2 Data Editing.....	134
6.8.3 Data coding	135
6.8.4 Data entry.....	135
6.8.5 Data analysis.....	135
6.9 Reliability and validity.....	136
6.9.1 Pretesting	137
6.10 Limitations from data collection	137
6.11 Delimitations of the study	138
6.12 Ethical considerations	138
6.13 Summary	139
CHAPTER SEVEN	140
Data presentation and analysis	140
7.1 Introduction.....	140
7.2 Data Presentation	141
7.2.1 Participants' biographical data.....	141
7.3 Addressing specific research objectives.....	150
7.3.1 Objective 1: The adoption of social media by establishments	150
7.3.1.1 Adoption of specific social media platforms.....	151
7.3.1.2 Frequency of social media updates.....	158
7.3.1.3 Social media platforms' update frequency.....	161

7.3.2 Objective 2: Social media effectiveness	164
7.3.2.1 An Effective Feedback Loop	167
7.3.3 Objective 3: Challenges of adoption and utilisation of social media	180
7.3.3.1 Lack of adequate funding.....	180
7.3.3.2 Lack of specialized human resources	181
7.3.3.3 Difficulty in measuring the positive impact of social media adoption.....	182
7.4 Results from inferential statistics.....	183
7.4.1 Reliability of statistics	183
7.4.2 Social media effectiveness	184
7.4.3 Crosstabulations.....	185
7.4.4 Binary logistic regression.....	190
7.5 Conclusion.....	191
CHAPTER EIGHT	193
Conclusion and Recommendations	193
8.1 Introduction.....	193
8.2 Study contributions	195
8.2.1 Theoretical and literature contribution.....	195
8.2.2 Practical contribution	196
8.3 Conclusion.....	196
8.4 Recommendations.....	199
8.4.1 Recommendations for further research	199
8.4.2 Recommendations for hospitality establishments	201
8.4.3 Formulate your social media marketing strategy.....	203
8.4.4 Select the relevant SM platforms and conduct training as well	203
8.4.5 Develop and service your virtual communities	204

8.4.6 Develop and manage content.....	205
8.4.7 Evaluate and monitor	205
8.4.8 Product and service improvement	206
8.4.9 Policy recommendations	206
8.4.10 Limitations of the study.....	208
8.4.11 Recommendations for further research	208
8.5 Conclusion.....	209
REFERENCES	210
APPENDICES	231
Appendix A: University Ethics Clearance Letter	231
Appendix B: Questionnaire for Micro-Hospitality Businesses	232
Appendix C: Interview Guide for Micro-Hospitality Businesses operators	239
Appendix D: Observations guide for Small Hospitality Business in the KZN.....	241
Appendix E: Informed Consent letter for participants	244
Appendix F: Gatekeepers research approval letters	245
Appendix G: Language editor certificate	249

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Distribution of small hospitality establishments registered on booking sites in KwaZulu Natal	10
Table 2.1: Social media evolution	26
Table 2.2: Social media classification	40
Table 2.3: Growth in most popular social media platforms in South Africa	60
Table 4.1: Recovery plan for the South African tourism	96
Table 5.1: Major theories of users' acceptance of ICTs integrated into UTAUT2 model	112
Table 7.1: Cross analysis of findings: An overview of Events Centre Establishments	171
Table 7.2: Cross analysis of findings: Game/ Nature Lodges	172
Table 7.3: Cross analysis of findings: An overview of formal service accommodation establishments.....	174
Table 7.4: Cross analysis of findings: Guest accommodation	175
Table 7.5: Cross analysis of findings: Restaurants.....	177
Table 7.6: Cross analysis of findings: An overview of support services.....	178
Table 7.7: Cronbach's alpha score.....	183
Table 7.8: Social media effectiveness.....	184
Table 7.9: Chi-square Tests.....	186
Table 7.10: Cross tabulation on Covid-19 impact.....	186
Table 7.11: Do you observe any relationship between social media, location and service quality? *Is social media an effective marketing tool?	188
Table 7.12: Binary logistic regression - Impact of Covid-19.....	190
Table 8.1: The proposed framework for effective social media marketing	201

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Global digitalisation landscape.....	31
Figure 2.2: Types of social media (classification) in general	41
Figure 2.3: Twitter Statistics, 2019.....	48
Figure 2.4: Facebook access in South Africa in 2016	61
Figure 3.1: Social media monitoring and analysis tools.....	75
Figure 3.2: Mentionlytics dashboard for Tsogo Sun	75
Figure 4.1: COVID-19 statistics for South Africa as at 26th of December 2021	87
Figure 4.2: Levels of alert for Covid-19 in South Africa	89
Figure 4.3: The big 10 Covid-19 emergency plan.....	91
Figure 4.4: Notice to sell Cranford Country Lodge	92
Figure 4.5: Events cancelled and postponed in 2020 in KZN	94
Figure 4.6: Statistics of employees affected by Covid-19 in the Hospitality industry in 2020	95
Figure 5.1: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	101
Figure 5.2: Technology- Organisation-Environment Model	105
Figure 5.3: The relationship between TAM & TOE theories	108
Figure 6.1: Research onion.....	117
Figure 6.2: The scope of the survey.....	122
Figure 6.3: Kwazulu Natal map	124
Figure 6.4: Data handling process	133
Figure 7.1: Type of establishment.....	142
Figure 7.2: Years in business	143
Figure 7.3: Star grading of establishments.....	145
Figure 7.4: Clientele composition.....	149
Figure 7.5: Social media adoption (n=70)	150
Figure 7.6: Social media platforms adopted by sampled establishments	152
Figure 7.7: Presence of a social media manager or executive	155
Figure 7.8: Frequency of social media updates.....	159
Figure 7.9: Perception of social media effectiveness	164
Figure 7.10: Subscription to review sites.....	168

Adoption of social media for effective marketing by small hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The rise in popularity of social media as a marketing instrument has fundamentally changed the way in which small to medium enterprises, and small hospitality businesses in particular, interact with their clientele, especially in marketing their products and services. These small hospitality establishments (formal accommodation, guest accommodation, game lodges, events centres, restaurants and support services) have been influenced by social media and are compelled to adopt these platforms for effective marketing to keep pace with modern dynamics in tourist behaviour. The literature indicates that social media marketing in general has gained significant momentum across all sectors, with micro-hospitality establishments having embraced it fully in more economically developed countries.

Although prior studies indicate that social media, with a particular reference to travel review sites such as TripAdvisor, are now regarded as the major sources of reliable travel information for tourists, as well as influencing their decision-making processes, evidence from the literature shows that there is limited industry-specific research into the adoption and utilisation of social media for marketing regarding small hospitality establishments in the context of a less economically developed country, and this is at a time when these establishments are struggling to survive and to regain their market share due to recent and ongoing travel restrictions. Research in this area is limited. This research was conducted to address this gap.

The main aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of social media as a marketing strategy taking small hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa as a case study. To achieve this, a review of literature provided insights into social media adoption for marketing, backed by relevant theoretical

frameworks and specifically the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2 (UTAUT2). For data collection, both electronic and hand-delivered questionnaires were distributed to micro-hospitality establishments in KZN. Telephonic and live interviews as well as observations were also conducted with fifteen small hospitality establishments. A total of 70 respondents were engaged for this study through interviews, observations and questionnaires.

The results from the study revealed that although social media marketing has been adopted extensively by small hospitality establishments in KZN, its effectiveness as a marketing strategy is not uniform across establishments and cannot be generalized. Empirical results further revealed that these establishments were not being systematic in the utilization of social media marketing, that other marketing strategies were sometimes as effective in this context and that some were failing to optimise the opportunities that exist. The major challenges highlighted by most small hospitality establishments were: lack of adequate funding, lack of specialized human resources, and the difficulty of measuring the actual impact of social media adoption.

The conclusion drawn from the above empirical evidence and from the literature is that social media marketing is not an all-round strategy for effective marketing particularly for small establishments in a rural setting who are competing with hotel chains and franchises in urban areas. It is however the most significant marketing tool. It was therefore concluded that a combination of social media marketing, star grading and other informal means of assuring service quality, along with a clear marketing strategy adapted to the needs of the individual establishment, could provide the optimal matrix for effective marketing of small hospitality establishments in the context of a developing country.

This study contributed in two ways: firstly, the research addresses the gap identified in the literature by providing evidence on the relative effectiveness of social media for marketing by small hospitality establishments in the context of a

less economically developed country and, secondly, a social media marketing framework was proposed based on the evidence of shortcomings in marketing strategies by this group, highlighted by this study.

Key words: small hospitality establishments, social media marketing; less economically developed countries; KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Algorithms: Refers to how social media platforms are programmed to function systematically (Pasumponpandian, 2020).

Brand reputation: Foroudi (2019) defines brand reputation as the way the business is viewed by its clients and other business players, in terms of market dominance and good business practice

Clientele: These are defined by Kumar & Reinartz, (2018) as the existing or targeted customers of any business. For this study, it refers to customers or guests for small hospitality businesses that they target.

COVID-19: Corona virus disease (COVID-19) is defined by the World Health Organisation (2020) as an infectious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus. It was first discovered in 2019 in China and quickly spread across the world, affecting the hospitality industry particularly and the small businesses in the industry most severely.

Customer relationship management: refers to the strategies businesses use to manage their interactions with their customers in order to retain them (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018).

Cyber bullying: Vallury, Baird, Miller & Ward (2021) define cyber bullying as harassment which happens on social media among users

Effective marketing: is defined as the promotion of a business in a manner that saves money while bringing in increased business (Wiese, Martínez-Climent, & Botella-Carrubi, 2020).

Events Centres: are accommodation establishments with venues that can host events and functions such as weddings and conferences (Nguya, Kariuki & Muthengi, 2021).

Formal service accommodation: These are defined by Leon (2020) as small but formal hotels offering full board and all the services a normal hotel would offer. These establishments are also remotely located.

Game/ Nature Lodge: These are small, remotely located, accommodation establishments, offering full board to guests. Often they are family-owned and located in game reserves (Nguya, Kariuki & Muthengi, 2021).

Guest Accommodation: refers to non-formal accommodation with limited services, normally offering bed and breakfast only (Leon, 2020). For lunch and dinner, these establishments refer guests to local restaurants. Examples of these are guesthouses and back- packers' establishments.

Hotel chain: This refers to large hotel groups that have hotels in many countries and have a specific brand (Leon, 2020).

Less economically developed countries: These are developing countries with documented levels of poverty and low GDP as compared to high income countries (Nkosana, Skinner, & Goodier, 2016).

Social media adoption: This refers to the actual creation of social media pages (Budree, Fietkiewicz & Lins, 2019).

Social Media Marketing: Is defined by Canovi & Pucciarelli (2019) as a modern marketing trend conducted through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Social media utilization: This refers to the actual use of the social media platforms for marketing purposes (Aydin, 2020).

Social Media: This refers to social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (Chang, Ku, & Chen, 2019).

Star Grading: This is a quality standard affiliation which micro-hospitality establishments can choose to be part of. Five star designates excellent service or

the higher end establishments, while one star is the entry level, offering only very limited services (Nunkoo, Teeroovengadum, Ringle & Sunnassee, 2020).

Support services: This refers to service providers servicing wedding venues. These include cake makers, florists, DJs, décor hiring companies, make-up artists and photographers (Prinsloo & van Antwerpen, 2015).

Tourist: These are people traveling for leisure to resorts, game parks, and many other hospitality establishments (Nguya, Kariuki & Muthengi, 2021).

User Generated Content: These are posts on social media platforms, made by clients and potential clients (Assaker, Hallak & El-Haddad, 2020).

ACRONYMS

COVID-19:	Corona virus disease 2019
CRM:	Customer relations management
CTA:	Call-to-action
DJs:	Disc jockeys
GDP:	Gross domestic product
GHS:	General household survey
GPS:	Global positioning systems
ICT:	Information and communication technology
IDT:	Innovation Diffusion Theory
IT:	Information technology
KZN:	KwaZulu-Natal
LEDC:	Less economically developed countries
MEDC:	More economically developed countries
RSA:	Republic of South Africa
SM:	Social media
SME:	Small to medium enterprises
SMM:	Social media marketing
SMP:	Social media platform
TAM:	Technology acceptance model
TOE:	Technology-organisation-environment

TTFDS: Total tourist foreign direct spend

UGC: User generated content

UGT: Uses and Gratifications Theory

UTAUT2: Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2

VTC: Virtual travel communities

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one introduces the study to the reader. It provides the background of the study while introducing social media platforms and their marketing applications, giving specific reference to their applicability to small hospitality establishments in the context of a less economically developed country (LEDC). The chapter also introduces the specific social media platforms generally used by small and large hospitality establishments across the world; it explains the major factors motivating the direction chosen for this study, providing a statement of the problem, and explaining the purpose of the study, its objectives, research questions, limitations and de-limitations. The research site, which is KwaZulu-Natal Province, is also introduced and described. The significance of the study is and an outline of the chapters are given.

1.2 Background to the study

Information and Computer Technology (ICT) is generally defined as the use of computer hardware, software and any telecommunication gadgets, to develop, manipulate, convert, store and protect, send and receive information (Nepelski and Prato, 2018). ICT has evolved rapidly over the past decades, fundamentally changing the way in which the global hospitality business is conducted (Shami, 2019). According to Silva, Sharmeen and De Ona (2021) application and use of Information Technology (IT) has evolved from celebrating better gadgets to the introduction of the 'internet of things' characterized by e-commerce enabled platforms and social media.

Demydov, Baydoun, Beshley, Klymash, & Panchenko (2020) explain that the step up from "web 1.0", synonymous with the inception of internet, to "web 2.0" has significantly changed how marketing opportunities are created and developed.

Unlike Web 1.0, which was static, Nepelski and Prato, (2018) explain that Web 2.0 is highly interactive and this new characteristic has fuelled the genesis of social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter) and travel and tourism review sites (such as TripAdvisor). Social media marketing (SMM), a derivative of social media (SM) is a widely used modern marketing strategy executed through social media platforms (Aydin, 2020). Social media platforms at their inception were purely for users the world over to socialise through sharing photographs, ideas, travel information and experiences (Demydov et al, 2020; Silva et al, 2021; and Chieh-Heng, 2021).

Budree, Fietkiewicz & Lins (2019) align the growth in popularity and usage of social media, particularly in South Africa, to the widespread availability and use of smartphones and tablets, which, because of their affordability and portability as compared to computers and laptops, enable consumers to access SM and share information anytime, from anywhere.

When it comes to the application of ICT and its associated platforms for business purposes, Demydov et al (2020) highlight that businesses that lead in the global marketplace are generally more technologically advanced and are usually based in developed countries. In a similar analysis, Saleh (2021) explains that businesses doing well in these more economically developed countries (MEDC) have not only adopted social media marketing (SMM) but have demonstrated the ability to derive economic benefits from social media platforms through effective marketing while they also carve niches for themselves in the global marketplace. On the other hand, Heo and Lee (2019) highlight that businesses in less economically developed countries (LEDC) continue to struggle with ICTs and the subsequent adoption and utilisation of social media, often finding it difficult to carve a niche in the same marketplace. Although technology development imbalance remains a topical issue on local and international academic platforms, Li, Robinson, and Oriade, (2020) in their research on destination marketing

through technology, highlight that in the application and impact of SMM on specific industries, including the hospitality and lodging sector, this imbalance is less emphasized.

1.3 Social media and the hospitality industry

According to Chan & Guillet (2011) in their study on hotels in Hong Kong, the application of SM in the hospitality industry started with large hotels a decade ago. These were mostly hotel chains, which used YouTube videos highlighting the hotel's uniqueness, as well as introducing the hotel chain's new products and services to guests and potential guests. These authors explain further that large hotel chains such as Mandarin Oriental Hotels, who were among the pioneers, have very well-organized and developed SMPs. These are generally more user-friendly than those of other hotel chains and individual hotels. But, despite these large hotels having set the pace and established themselves on SM, Aydin (2020) notes the absence of a clear measuring tool for the effectiveness of SM as a marketing medium.

Staying in the same hospitality industry, many scholars (Mosweunyane et al, 2019; Aydin, 2020; Ban & ȚARCĂ, 2020; Chieh-Heng, 2021) note that the utilisation of SM for marketing has spread quickly to stand alone hotels, restaurant chains and franchises as well as to micro-hospitality businesses. Although the adoption and utilisation of SM started in the MEDC, it has also spread significantly to LEDC (Mosweunyane et al, 2019). Mosweunyane et al, (2019) argue that the adoption of SM is even more advantageous for micro-hospitality businesses because of the limitations of the financial resources available for their marketing strategies. However, despite the widespread adoption and utilisation of these technologies, the scholars found that prior studies on innovation adoption repeatedly noted micro-hospitality businesses' limited familiarity with web 2.0-based technologies, and the insufficient opportunities offered to them for full integration.

Below are the social media platforms most commonly used in the hospitality industry as highlighted by Ristova & Dimitrov, (2019)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- TripAdvisor
- Pinterest
- WhatsApp
- YouTube

1.4 South Africa as a tourist destination

During the apartheid era, tourism in South Africa was regarded as a low priority sector and international arrivals were recorded mostly from regional visitors coming from neighbouring countries in Southern Africa (Rogerson, 2019). Although tourism research during the apartheid era was very limited (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2018) South Africa witnessed a remarkable growth in arrivals due to the withdrawal of international sanctions which resulted from the country's re-entry into the global economy post-apartheid - particularly as a preferred tourist and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE) destination.

Democratisation of South Africa in 1994, as noted by Rogerson & Rogerson (2018), brought about economic emancipation of the local population, freedom to explore, and economic abilities (through more disposable income for some newly enfranchised groups) to participate in leisure activities all of which grew domestic tourism. This resulted in the mushrooming of more hospitality establishments (Mlambo & Ezeudujl, 2020). Although this political development brought many good things such as growth in industry in general, Rogerson (2019) argues that the industry that has witnessed exponential growth has been hospitality start-ups and expansions of hotel chains and consortiums. The small hospitality businesses

are also among this sprawl but are targeting the same market as is targeted by bigger hotels: local and international travellers.

The policy framework inherited from the apartheid regime sought to promote international tourism but was silent on what the government intended to do to promote small hospitality establishments at grassroots level (Rogerson, 2019). As noted above, the lifting of international sanctions when apartheid fell, led to the influx of hotel chains such as Hilton, Radisson Blu, and Marriot. The aim was to introduce international standards particularly in the MICE sector. Although this played an important role in putting South Africa on the world map as a competent and preferred destination for MICE, small establishments suffered serious competition particularly those in remote areas.

Post-apartheid South Africa also has huge potential as a tourist destination amongst other African nations (Rogerson, 2019). This disposition, if properly developed and supported, will in turn support small hospitality businesses relying much on the success of the country in bringing in international travellers as well as reviving domestic tourism (Mlambo & Ezeudujl, 2020). According to BMI Research, (2018) South Africa's status as a preferred destination in Africa is enabled by its wide range of tourist attractions such as world-class city breaks (e.g. Sun City), renowned parks with abundant flora and fauna (e.g. Kruger National Park) and cultural diversity. Mlambo & Ezeudujl, (2020) add generally well-developed infrastructure in South Africa as compared to its neighbouring countries, as another pull factor for tourists and a stimulus for growth in this sector. Although the republic is the largest and leading tourist destination in Africa, BMI Research (2018) bemoaned stringent visa regulations for other countries except those that are part of SADC, as inhibiting the full potential to attract international tourists with higher buying power. South Africa relaxed visa requirements for countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Lesotho which form the largest source markets for regional tourism. The downside of this approach is that all

these countries are classified as low income nations. This means that the average spend per tourist from these countries is also low.

A true reflection of South Africa as a tourism destination must include the woes bedevilling the country. Rogerson (2016) underscores crime and security as the most serious worry visitors have about South Africa. The crime, as highlighted by the BMI Report (2018), is however, more prevalent in urban areas and less in rural settings (which is the focus area for this research). Unfortunately, the label of an 'unsafe destination' is a blanket approach to the whole country and not area specific when it comes to travel warnings by tourist source countries (Li, Robinson & Oriade, 2020). Although the local tourist offices and centres have put in place measures such as tourist guides and patrols by local security forums, to increase safety of tourists at places like beaches and resorts, Mlambo & Ezeuduji, (2020) argue that there is still a serious need for effective brand marketing to instil confidence in tourists as well as to showcase what South Africa has to offer, particularly for rural areas such as KZN.

While the future of tourism and the survival of small hospitality establishments looked promising in 2019, the growth trajectory took a sharp drop in March 2020 when the first case of COVID-19 was recorded in South Africa followed by subsequent lockdowns and travel restrictions. According to StatsSA (2021) domestic tourist arrivals dropped from 3.9 million in January 2020 to 520 000 in January 2021. Foreign arrivals decreased by 87.7% from 1.59 million in January 2020 to 195 000 in January 2021. As the government eased restrictions, hotels were given authority to accommodate people offering essential services only during the 1st and 2nd waves of the COVID-19. However, this move only assisted urban hotels and lodges realise some revenue while rural hospitality establishments, including those in KZN, remained closed. Bartis, Hufkie & Morali (2021) further explain that the continued lockdown and restrictions resulted in lost revenue for these small establishments and inability to meet daily

operational costs which in turn resulted in businesses closing, while some were sold and many people lost jobs.

The above detailed context indicates the country's performance in tourism in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras as well as the current situation under COVID-19 pandemic. It is clear from the above context that the small hospitality establishments which are highly dependent on a thriving tourism sector are currently experiencing a difficult time. As noted above, these small independently owned establishments in rural settings are competing with well-established and well-resourced hotel chains and consortiums such as Marriot and Hilton for the same dwindling market (Hlengwa, 2021). Marriot recently acquired Protea hotels and this move shows how competitive and hostile the sector is with particular implications for establishments that have limited resources (Businesstech, 2020). Such acquisitions, as noted by Smith (2021) in his research on uneven development in post-apartheid South Africa, create a monopolistic situation. The monopolistic entities can lower prices to where it becomes difficult for SMEs to compete. Rogerson, (2018) further explains that these international hotel chains are well resourced with operational departments handling important business functions such as centralised booking offices, and group marketing departments handling all marketing matters and supported by big budgets. This is not the case with small hospitality businesses. Their marketing is limited either by resources or lack of expertise (Li et al, 2020).

1.5 Marketing in the hospitality industry

As highlighted above, marketing approaches approved in the hospitality industry cannot be generalized for small and big establishments (Li et al, 2020). The scholars indicate that the business structures, resources and market orientation is all different between small and large hospitality establishments. Mlambo & Ezeudujl (2020) further explain that small establishments tend to allocate less resources to marketing. The scholars break down the resources into two, namely

financial resources and human capital, both being responsible for the marketing function. The bigger establishments, as noted by Li et al (2020) have become trend setters when it comes to dynamic marketing. They explain that these establishments do not only make resources available for marketing, but have gone a step further into research and development around product innovation, coming up with effective marketing plans. Since the South African government is giving limited assistance to small hospitality establishments, from the policy and framework perspective, as noted by Mlambo & Ezeuduji (2020) these are compelled to take the initiative in terms of claiming their share of an already dwindling market, characterised by fierce competition from better resourced hospitality establishments.

The above context justifies the need for smaller hospitality establishments to look at cost effective ways to improve their marketing, amplify their presence on international platforms, and capture international markets with better buying propensity.

1.6 Social media marketing in hospitality

In MEDC, consumer generated content (CGC) on SM such as photos, videos, reviews and blogs are widely used and trusted by tourists as valid and reliable sources of travel tips and information (Aydin, 2020). Even though there is widespread usage of SM by tourists the world over, as noted by Chieh-Heng (2021) Budree, Fietkiewicz & Lins (2019) in their investigation on the usage of SMP in Africa, highlight a lack of adequate research on the adoption and utilisation by micro-hospitality establishments of SMP for marketing in LEDC, such as South Africa. Chieh-Heng (2021) on the other hand explains that the popularity of CGC posted on SMP in MEDC is infiltrating into LEDC and is gaining momentum the world over. This means that opportunities for utilisation of these SMP by micro-hospitality businesses in KwaZulu-Natal are putting them in a better position to tap into these international source markets. Also within South Africa,

Mosweunyane, Rambe and Dzansi (2019) in their study on the use of social media by tourism SMEs in the Free State, noted that small hospitality businesses are well suited to utilise social media for marketing due to their huge flexibility and the need to minimise marketing costs.

In addition to the above rationale, Shu-Chuan, Tao and Hong (2020) highlighted a shift from the conventional Google, and other search engines, to looking at social media platforms specifically for travel information by tourists. Tourists nowadays increasingly make use of user reviews on travel review sites such as TripAdvisor, to find out about the hospitality establishment they wish to visit. In a similar way, Siti-Nabiha, Nordin and Poh (2021) believe that SM presents an opportunity for building lasting relationships between the guests and the hospitality business, based on trust. These scholars add that this was not possible with the traditional marketing media, such as hard copy flight magazines and newspapers and it may be more successfully used by small establishments than by larger ones.

1.7 Research site

The research focuses on KwaZulu-Natal province. Geographically, the province occupies 94361km² in terms of land size while housing 7.7% of South Africa's total human population (Wyllie & Tifflin, 2020). According to Luxury Hotels Guide (2021), rural KZN (+25km from cities or urban areas) has 53 hospitality establishments classified small 'luxury' lodges, hotels and guesthouses. These, by location are referred to as within the rural or remote category, which is the focus of this study. Bookings.com (2021) has listed 198 hospitality establishments that are classified as small 'middle-class' lodges, hotels and guesthouses in a rural or remote setting. The hotel booking engine also listed 352 hospitality establishments that are classified as small 'budget' lodges, hotels and guesthouses within the rural or remote setting. These are the three classes of small hospitality establishments this study focused on. Additionally, the province

according to Dube-Ncube (2020) has numerous hospitality support services which include wedding disc jockeys (DJs), florists, caterers, and wedding planners. These are also included in this study.

Table 1.1: Distribution of small hospitality establishments registered on booking sites in KwaZulu Natal

Type of establishment	No. of establishments in KZN	Description of the establishments
Luxury establishments	53	High-end service, 5 star graded, high per person per night rates, signature hotels, lodges & guesthouses
Middle-Class establishments	198	4 and 3 star graded establishments, mid-range rates, high quality service
Budget establishments	352	Mostly ungraded but good quality accommodation, value for money option. Mostly self-catering and mostly suited for families and pet friendly.
Total number of registered establishments on booking sites	603	

Source: Researchers' compilation from literature (Booking.com, 2021; Safarinow, 2021; Wyllie & Tifflin, 2020).

The province has many advantages that stand to promote its prosperity in tourism (Dube-Ncube, 2020). These include the King Shaka International Airport, which serves as a gateway to the Province for regional and international tourists (Wyllie & Tifflin, 2020). These scholars further highlight that air travel into many other tourist destinations within the Province is made possible and promoted by the availability of other airports across the province such as the Oribi in Pietermaritzburg, Richards Bay Airport, Margate and Ulundi Airports. Dube-Ncube (2020) notes that KwaZulu-Natal has a wide variety of tourist attractions which makes it a preferred destination by tourists. These include the rich culture, World Heritage sites such as the iSmangaliso Wetlands Park and the uKhahlamba Drakensburg Park, beaches, and private game reserves such as Mkhuze, and National Parks such as Hluhluwe Imfolozi. The beauty of the province is widely acknowledged and includes the Drakensburg Mountains and the popular Midlands which are the most preferred terrestrial tourist regions in the province (Nkosana, Skinner & Goodier, 2016). The region, which is located in the middle of the province is synonymous with day visitors and short stays because of its wedding venues, and generally good weather. (The Midlands Meander, 2020).

The downside of this research site as a tourism destination are many social ills bedeviling the country as a whole. KwaZulu-Natal recorded a rise in sexual and violent crimes committed in the 4th quarter of the year 2020/2021 with 197 murder cases recorded for only 3 areas of Durban namely Plessislaer, Inanda and uMlazi (Naidoo, 2021). Although these crimes in the urban areas which are outside the scope of the study, travel warnings, as noted above, are issued in a blanket approach which disadvantage the rural areas or remote areas with less crime (Businesstech, 2020). The uneven infrastructural development such as poor road networks in the remote or rural areas is another challenge the province is faced with (Dube-Ncube, 2020). This is a particularly serious challenge for the target population for this study as they are all in rural settings. Nkosana et al (2016) add

lack of IT knowledge amongst employees in the hospitality industry in KZN as well as poor internet connectivity, to the problems faced by small hospitality businesses in KZN. This has improved in recent years but remains an issue.

1.8 Research problem

Thus evidence emerging from the literature clearly highlights the challenges as well as the advantages which rural micro-hospitality establishments experience in terms of running profitable businesses. Although the government is doing its part in trying to revive the sector with a blanket approach through mechanisms such as tourism relief fund, Temporary Employee Relief Scheme (TERS), and the Tourism Recovery Strategy, small hospitality establishments clearly need to do their part to stimulate business and growth if they are to survive and prosper.

Sibanda, Ndlela and Nomlala (2020) in their study on the drivers of tourism in South Africa single out effective marketing as the major driver for business success in tourism. Many scholars (Mosweunyane, Rambe & Dzansi, 2019; Molina, Gomez, Lyon, Aranda & Loibl, 2020; Shu-Chuan, Tao & Hong, 2020; Pogorevich, 2020; and Kapoor, Balaji, and Jiang, 2021) highlight social media as a key marketing medium that small businesses should employ in this era of targeted marketing approaches. Michopoulou and Moisa (2019) concur. The use of social media appears however to be still in its infancy in most industries, although less so in tourism. The BMI Research (2018) indicated, however, that while the potential of the tourism industry in South Africa is huge, there is still a need for a collective approach from both the government and the business sector so that this potential can be fully exploited, and they emphasise that more marketing is needed to create more awareness.

1.8.1 Gaps in literature

Looking at a global scale, the phenomenon of social media marketing has been widely researched, but generally more in MEDCs (Siti-Nabiha, Nordin, and Poh,

2021). Chu, Deng and Cheng, (2020) demonstrate how much research has been done in the context of social media utilisation by businesses, although the research was based in Asia. The findings based on journals reviewed for a period of 15 years from 2004 to 2019 revealed that researchers had focused mostly on three major topic areas which were: the use of social media from the organization's perspective, the use of social media from the consumer's perspective, and effects of social media. The results of this study highlight a general uptake of social media by both the customer and organisation. The study also demonstrated that the early adapters of social media gained market share growth and business success. However, there is limited specific research on the utilisation of SMM by small hospitality establishments in the context of LEDC, and none which focus on the region of KZN in recent, challenging, times

More research has also been conducted recently in Malaysia (Siti-Nabiha, et al, 2021) on social media usage in business decision-making focusing on small hospitality organisations. The circumstances under which small businesses in Malaysia, an MEDC, conduct business differ however from those of South Africa which is a LEDC. Findings suggest that SMEs in hospitality use social media more for customer relationship management rather than as a marketing tool. Results also highlight that the businesses use social media to understand activities of their key competitors. Similarly general adoption and utilisation of social media in the hospitality industry by Yost, Zhang & Qi (2021); Chieh-Heng (2021) and Roque & Raposo, (2016) take a generalised approach and industry-wide examination, cutting across establishments of all forms and sizes, based on MEDCs.

In the South African context, scholars such as Duffett & Wakeham (2016); Matikiti, Kruger & Saayman (2016); Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard & Mpinganjira (2016); Oji, Iwu, & Tengeh (2017); Budree, Fietkiewicz, & Lins (2019) and Mosweunyane, Rambe & Dzansi, (2019) have investigated the adoption and utilisation of social media in general while Budree, Fietkiewicz, & Lins, (2019) highlight that social

media platforms are useful tools for collaboration and sharing information among users in South Africa but emphasise that there is a need for them to be tailored for specific audience needs.

The study by Oji, Iwu, & Tengeh, (2017) on social media adoption challenges of small businesses focusing on restaurants in the Cape Metropole is closer to what this study is pursuing, but the context is different and the focus is narrowed to an area thriving in terms of visitor preference.

An information gap thus exists in the hospitality industry in KwaZulu-Natal Province pertaining to the role of social media in effectively marketing small hospitality businesses. The research problem may thus be summarised as: the need to understand how effective social media is as a marketing strategy for small rural hospitality establishments in the context of a LEDC and during the aftermath of the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, using, in this study, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, as a case study.

As articulated by many scholars (Mosweunyane, Rambe & Dzansi, 2019; Molina, Gomez, Lyon, Aranda & Loibl, 2020; Shu-Chuan, Tao & Hong, 2020; Pogorevich, 2020; and Kapoor, Balaji, and Jiang, 2021), social media is a cost-effective marketing method that has boundless advertisement reach suitable for small businesses in the tourism industry. It is for the above reason that this study focuses on how this could be enhanced as well as its limitations as a key marketing tool within the small hospitality businesses in rural settings such as KZN. The focus was on restaurants, game lodges, guest accommodation establishments, events centres, formal service hotels and hospitality support services such as caterers, florists and wedding DJs.

1.9 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was thus to understand how widespread the usage of social media marketing is among micro-hospitality businesses in the Midlands,

KwaZulu-Natal South Africa, how effectively it is being used, and how SMM could be advanced further amongst this sector in ways specifically advantageous to this sector.

This study examines the effectiveness of social media as a marketing strategy which could be adopted and utilised by micro-hospitality establishments particularly in the context of a developing country facing a recovery situation. Both the challenges and the benefits are taken into consideration. According to Kapoor et al (2021) Marketers in more economical developed countries (MEDC) use a number of social media platforms to engage with actual and potential guests throughout the decision-making process. What happens and is projected as a success in MEDC could be imported and applied for use by these small establishments in the LEDC, with modifications specific to their particular context.

1.10 Objectives of the study

This study has four research objectives:

- **Objective 1**

To explore why and how small hospitality businesses strategically employ social media to market their businesses.

- **Objective 2**

To investigate in what ways social media is effective and where it is less effective as a marketing tool for small hospitality businesses in KZN'.

- **Objective 3**

To identify and explore the challenges of social media as a marketing tool in small hospitality establishments in the selected context.

- **Objective 4**

To draw conclusions and make recommendations with regards to the adoption and effective use of social media for marketing by small hospitality establishments in KZN (with implications for similar contexts globally)

To meet these research objectives, this study reviews literature on social media adoption and utilisation by micro-hospitality businesses in South Africa and other countries. The study examines social media adoption and utilisation by the chosen sample and draws conclusions. Recommendations are made based on the conclusions drawn from the research findings.

1.11 Research questions

1. Why and how do micro-hospitality businesses employ social media to market their businesses in KZN currently?
2. How effective is social media as a marketing tool in the context of small hospitality businesses in KZN'?
3. What are the challenges of adoption and utilisation of social media marketing by small hospitality establishments and how could these be incorporated into an effective 'marketing mix' for businesses in the selected context?

1.12 Research methodology summary

A mixed methods research design was chosen for this study. The study employed a non-probability sampling technique in form of purposive sampling to select a sample of 70 managers or owners of small hospitality establishments (Establishments with a turnover of not more than R5 000 000 per year, not part of a franchise or hotel chain group, and also not urban located) in KwaZulu-Natal. The population consists of 603 small hospitality establishments, a sample of 70 participants was selected as being above the recommended minimum for a sample, that is, above 10% of the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This

study applied a triangulation of data collection instruments which included the following; interviews with 15 managers and owners, questionnaires through an online survey (QuestionPro) and hard copy questionnaires with a total of 55 managers and owners. All targeted respondents participated in the scheduled interviews.

Of the 70 questionnaires distributed to respondents as hard copies and through emailing the survey link, 55 were completed thoroughly and returned which was a 78.6% response rate. Observations were also done with five of the 15 respondents interviewed. This involved on sight observing of quality standards, location and the business activity during the covid-19 pandemic. Observations were also conducted on social media platform uptake and usage by these establishments.

1.14 Delimitation of the study

The study was carried out only in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. KZN has a varied concentration of hospitality establishments such as hotels, wedding venues, restaurants, game lodges, guesthouses and backpackers' venues. The whole of KZN was purposefully chosen as it has a dense concentration of hospitality establishments in varied forms. A total of seventy micro-hospitality establishments were invited to participate in the study. In order for the samples to be fairly representing the whole area (KZN), the researcher chose to involve six categories of operators in the hospitality industry which are (as mentioned above) restaurants, game lodges, events centres, guest accommodation, formal service hotels and hospitality support services such as wedding DJs, florists and event caterers.

The study only focused on hospitality establishments which are smaller operators with an annual turnover of not more than R5 000 000. ILDP (2014) highlights that 'small enterprise' definitions are categorised into two, one being that of

“economically” oriented while the other one is “statistically” oriented. For this study, the economic definition is adopted.

Therefore a ‘small hospitality’ business is regarded as small if it meets the following three criteria: (one) it has a relatively small share of their market place; (two) it is operationally managed by owners, or partners, and that the business is run in a very personalised way and not through formalised management structure; and (three) it is an independent operation in that it is not part of a corporate or some form of franchise. These are establishments located in the peri-urban to rural/ farmland areas. It excluded all establishments in urban locations. The study cannot be generalised to the rest of the country but establishments operating in similar contexts, both within South Africa and in other countries, will find the findings and recommendations of interest.

1.13 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the results of the study will:

- help rural micro-hospitality businesses identify and adopt appropriate SMP to effectively market their establishments as a recovery strategy from the COVID-19 impact,
- demonstrate the significance as well as the limitations of social media marketing (SMM) to micro-hospitality establishments in a developing country context,
- motivate micro-hospitality business operators to have a closer look at the challenges of SMM adoption and utilisation, and develop strategies to improve on the existing problem areas, where necessary.

The study will enable the small hospitality business operators to review their marketing strategies as well as to assess the benefits of adopting SMM towards recovery and sustainable business operations.

1.15 Limitations of the study

Some logistical difficulties were experienced in conducting the study. Most of the challenges faced can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in alert levels 5 to 1. The hotel industry was flagged as one of the high-risk sectors that posed the threat of a spike in infections, and as a result, the industry was barred from operating in alert level 5 and 4 which was about two months, and partly level 3 which was about two and a half months with only a few places identified and selected to accommodate people in quarantine.

The main limitations were:

- The study focused only on KZN which might not have similar circumstances as other provinces, which might pose a bias risk.
- Distributing survey link was easy but to get the responses was very difficult. Participants took a long time to respond and this was after following up a number of times. Face to face interviews were all cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations, and zoom and telephone interviews had to be conducted instead. However, due to the efforts of the researcher, all targeted respondents finally agree to be interviewed.
- Due to the nature of the targeted respondents, it was a challenge to get bigger sample size as the bulk of the hospitality venues are located in urban areas which was outside the scope of this research.
- Eight of the selected respondents withdrew from participating in the survey as their businesses were closing down and they were selling the properties. However, other respondents were selected and interviewed to replace those that withdrew.

1.16 Outline of the chapters

This thesis is presented in seven chapters as outlined below:

- **Chapter one** provides the background to the study. It presents brief information about SMM application in the hospitality industry and its significance, with specific reference to small hospitality establishments in KZN. The subsections provide a problem statement, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the scope and limitations of the study, as well as the contents of the dissertation chapters.
- **Chapter two** presents the adoption of social media, its significance to small hospitality establishments in rural areas with specific reference to a less economically developed country (LEDC). The chapter highlights all platforms that are being adopted and how they are being used and combinations thereof.
- **Chapter three** explores the effectiveness of SM as a marketing tool for small hospitality businesses in South Africa and elsewhere. It discusses in detail the application of SM and benefits accruing to adopters in terms of effective marketing while also highlighting the challenges and disadvantages of this marketing medium for small rural hospitality establishments in this locality.
- **Chapter four** explores the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the South African economy. It further underscores the specific impact on small rural hospitality establishments. The chapter also looks at the measures the government, as well as businesses, have put in place to circumvent the impact of the pandemic.
- **Chapter five** presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Relevant theories were explored and presented in relation to social media adoption and utilization in general, and their possible application to the

phenomenon under study. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Technology Organisation and Environment (TOE), Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2 (UTAUT2), Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), and the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) are discussed in detail. The UTAUT2 and the TOE theories were selected as the most appropriate frameworks to support this study.

- **Chapter six** explores the methodology employed in the research. It details the research design and the steps taken in conducting the research. It explores the study area as well as the population and the sampling techniques used in the research. The data collection procedures, research instruments and the data analysis used are discussed and justified. A mixed methods research design was chosen for this study.
- **Chapter seven** covers the analysis and discussion of the results obtained from the data collected. The research findings obtained from the field are presented and discussed. These are displayed as charts, graphs and tables. The findings of the interviews are given through content analysis, including detailed descriptions and direct quotations from respondents. Findings are also summarized in various forms for ease of reference.
- **Chapter eight** develops from Chapter seven, exploring detailed conclusions from the research findings. In this chapter findings from the literature are related to the primary data obtained from the field. These conclusions and recommendations are presented in this final chapter of the thesis. Suggestions for future research as well as the limitations of the study are also discussed.

1.17 Summary

This is an introductory chapter which explains the background and direction of the study. The researcher highlights the factors that motivated him to pursue the study. The adoption, application and utilization of SM for marketing by hospitality

establishments in the context of a LEDC (RSA) were outlined and the research problem explained. A gap in the literature was also revealed, indicating the contribution which the study will be able to provide. An outline of the chapters included in the study was provided.

The next chapter explores the adoption of social media, its significance to small hospitality establishments in rural areas with specific reference to a less economically developed country (LEDC). The chapter highlights all platforms that are being adopted and how they are being used and combined.

CHAPTER TWO

The adoption and utilization of social media for marketing

2.1 Introduction

The last chapter introduced the entire study and its structure. It outlined the formation of each of the subsequent chapters making up this thesis. This chapter presents the literature reviewed on the adoption and utilisation of social media for marketing. Saunders, (2018) highlights that a literature review is an important part of a research process. Researchers have defined literature reviews as a survey of scholarly information sources such as journal articles, theses, books and conference papers, that are related to a specific research subject or specific topic (Machi and McEvoy, 2016). This study adopts Hart's (2008) definition of a literature review as the analysis, synthesis and critical evaluation of existing knowledge relevant to one's research problem.

A review of literature is concerned with examining materials, both published and unpublished, that have a bearing on the subject of the study. The information that the review provides also enables the researcher to identify any gaps in literature that his research can help to fill. Relevant literature pertaining to social media adoption for marketing were reviewed. The literature discussed will illuminate the field of research in order to further develop the principal claims of the thesis.

The variety of social media platforms available on the market in general, and those that have specific reference to the hospitality industry, are also explored. The chapter surveys existing views, knowledge and other information relevant to the theme, objectives and research questions of the study. The review therefore focuses on the adoption and utilisation of social media for effective marketing by micro-hospitality establishments, thereby illustrating the benefits and challenges of social media marketing (SMM) for this sector. It provides information on how hospitality establishments use social media marketing, highlighting some lessons

learnt from previous research on social media marketing in the hospitality sector and identifying existing gaps in SMM research in this industry sector.

2.2 Defining social media and social media marketing

Social media (SM) is defined as a collection of applications based on the Internet and existing on Web 2.0 platforms. These applications enable Internet users across the world to communicate, interact and share content, ideas, thoughts, information and experiences (Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). These communities, according to Hays, Page & Buhalis, (2013), gather online to share information on travel experiences, knowledge and opinions through conversational media. This increasingly popular phenomenon is based on 'consumer generated content' (CGC) (Gupta, 2019; Kim, Yoo and Yang, 2020; Mao, Li, Yang, Fu, and Yang, 2020) and is commonly referred to as 'conversational', 'participatory' and 'fluid' content involving online communities. Literally translated, it is modern media designed to afford users the opportunity to socialise anytime over a platform. Matikiti (2015) maintains that, at inception, SM platforms were developed without any expectation of them being used for commercial purposes. Developers then discovered the potential of the platforms amid their rising popularity, and seized the opportunity of making them into marketing platforms – a move that resulted in platforms such as Facebook being listed on international stock exchanges.

Following from SM, social media marketing (SMM) is defined as a modern marketing trend conducted through social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2006). The rapid growth in the implementation of the SMM concept and its attraction as offering a valid experience, has been recognised for over a decade now. Canovi and Pucciarelli, (2019) and Kim et al, (2020) argue that the inception of WEB 2.0 and the subsequent rise in user generated content, has shifted control of marketing information from organisations to users, giving more control to users. This is

supported by Alansari, Velikova and Jai, (2018) who relate the concept to the tourism industry in that, as SMM rises in popularity, users (tourists) gain more authority over relationship marketing of content, while organisations' authority over the same declines. Scholz and Smith, (2019) agree, and regret the loss of ultimate control by marketers and organisations over the image of their product, destination or establishment.

2.3 The genesis of social media

The interactivity of Web 2.0 has brought about the development not only of social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter) but also of travel review sites (such as TripAdvisor). According to Seo, Jin-Woo and Yu, (2020), the introduction of these social media platforms has led to the development of 'socialnomics' a term coined to define economies revolving around social media platforms. Omnicore (2020), confirms that most businesses across the world are tapping into socialnomics through adoption of social media platforms for marketing their businesses.

These platforms emerged for the first time in 1997 (Matikiti, 2015), and became more popular from 2010, and hence they are regarded as new modern marketing tools that have grown exponentially during the past decade. Several scholars (Seo et al, 2020; Michopoulou and Moisa, 2019; Xu and Zhou, 2020) have investigated the application of social media as a marketing tool which can be traced back as far as 1997 when the first interactive social media platform, SixDegrees.com, was launched. The platform allowed users to create personal online profiles and list their friends on the platform. A year later, in 1998, the platform introduced a feature that enabled users to surf their friends' lists as well.

The nature of 'interactiveness' in the Web 2.0 based websites, has promoted the introduction of many other social media platforms (Wiese, Martínez-Climent, and Botella-Carrubi, 2020). Below is a social media revolution timeline, showing the introduction of social media platforms in chronological order.

Table 2.1: Social media evolution

Social Media Platform	Year Established	Founders/ Creators
SixDegrees.com	May, 1996	Andrew Weinreich
TripAdvisor	February, 2000	Stephen Kaufer
LinkedIn	December, 2002	Reid Hoffman, Konstantin Guericke, Eric Ly, Allen Blue & Jean-Luc Vaillant
Facebook	February, 2004	Mark Zuckerberg
YouTube	February, 2005	Steve Chen, Chad Hurley & Jawed Karin
Twitter	March, 2006	Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone & Evan Williams
WhatsApp	May, 2009	Jan Koum & Brian Acton
Instagram	October, 2010	Mike Krieger & Kevin Systrom
Pinterest	January, 2010	Evan Sharp, Ben Silbermann & Paul Sciarra

Source: Researcher's own compilation

As highlighted in the table above, from the year 2000, social media gained momentum and seven more platforms were successfully introduced. The trend highlighted above shows that this revolution took place between 2000 and 2010 with a total of 8 major platforms coming into existence. It is important to note that in the African context all the platforms can be referred to as 'imported' as no significant or popular SM platform has been developed in Africa, in order to blend with, and represent, the African business and social context specifically. According to Akiode, (2020), economically developed countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia, are more actively involved with web platform developments as they are more technologically advanced than less developed economies. The

slow pace in technological advancement in Africa, according to Nkosana (2016), can be largely attributed to factors such as poor policy frameworks that do not promote investing in technology and ICTs. However, Ohei & Brink (2019) report that there is an emerging trend, notable in institutions of higher learning, where adoption and utilisation of information technology is being promoted. These are promoting the adoption and utilisation of new ICTs in communities and businesses alike. Overall however, Akiode, (2020) laments the wholesaling of internationally produced technologies to less economically developed states, instead of promoting manufacturing locally. This approach hinders meaningful development in technology in Africa. As early as the year 2000 Hasan argued that imported technologies discourage local efforts to develop new domestic technology. As in India, firms utilize imported technologies that do not require that they undertake significant research and development. While this approach may have helped to minimise the cost of research and development, it fails to give the less developed countries control over licences, further development and more customisation.

2.4 Significance of social media marketing

The exponential growth and popularity of social media sites has rapidly changed the manner in which businesses interact with their customers and potential customers alike, as well as changing the way business is conducted online (Leung et al., 2015). The introduction of Web 2.0, as noted above, has progressively changed online experiences from passive to interactive – that is, changing from the traditional, searching and reading, to modern user-friendly interactive interfaces that allow users to create information, connect with other users, and exchange information on a real-time basis. In the same context, Taylor et al. (2015) agree that Internet users, via social media, have become active generators of online content, collaborators, and distributors of content, through easy sharing of experiences (including travel information).

It is against this background that authors such as Leung et al (2015), Youn and Jin (2017) and Turnsek and Janecek (2019) highlighted the potential social media poses as a marketing strategy in the broad spectrum of relationship marketing, primarily for small hospitality businesses. Besides it being a cost-effective marketing option, the researchers note that SMM has the ability to reach potential customers worldwide by a click of a mouse.

Varkaris, & Neuhofer, (2017) reported that a study conducted by Hubspot, an Internet-based marketing agency, revealed that in 2015 about 95% of total global internet users visited at least one social networking site each month. This research also noted that, of the total time spent on internet (online), 33% was spent on Facebook and, as a result, 60 billion minutes were spent on Facebook by its over 2 billion users. Rauniar et al (2014) also showed that social media is significantly transforming how businesses and users (potential customers) communicate with each other. This business transformation process is fuelled by the speed of the 4G internet and by connectivity expanding worldwide.

Investigating the significance of social media in modern-day communication and marketing, Rauniar et al (2014) established that a new communication concept, termed the social media based 'voice of the masses,' had created a new mass communication paradigm. The concept is being used in promoting mass communication in our societies and businesses alike. Within the context of the 'voice of the masses' Rauniar et al (2014) illustrates the widespread usage of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, in the context of political revolutions with a specific mention of Tunisia. The scholars report that the then President of Tunisia, Mr Zine El Ebidine Ben Ali, was overthrown in January 2011 substantially assisted by the spreading of protest information and plans in real time on Facebook. In Haiti during an earthquake that happened in 2010, Keim, and Noji (2011) report that the wide usage and availability of social media allowed the trapped and vulnerable to let their rescuers know where they were – thus

discovering a valuable tool for disaster management. Lessons drawn from the two case studies support the notion by Morrell, (2019) points to the endless potential in South Africa in particular and the African continent in general, that social media has. On the other hand, it is important to highlight that social media has been used significantly in spreading fake news in the political space, also noting the negative impact to society that it has brought about (Andersen and S e, 2020).

Noticing the potential of social media in bringing in meaningful business, Michopoulou and Moisa, (2019) reported that business organisations across the globe are investing substantial portions of their marketing budgets in social media marketing, cutting down on traditional forms of print (newspapers), billboards and televised advertisements. The decision is informed by the potential reach of social media as opposed to the traditional methods such as a bill board that will only be seen by those that pass by that location. As noted by Xu and Zhou (2020), social media platforms cut across national and international barriers in terms of content accessibility hence they have huge customer reach, much more than the traditional modes of communication.

2.5 Global investment in social media

According to The Global Digital Report (2018), global social media usage grew by 13% between 2017 and 2018. This SM usage growth aligns with the increase in investment in social media from \$55 billion to over \$80 billion for the same period, as predicted by Chaffey (2018). Companies the world over, particularly SMEs are adopting and tapping into SMM as a promotion and advertising channel extending from the traditional print and television advertising (Lepkowska-White, 2017). Businesses have responded to SM user growth by investing more in their marketing efforts in order to grow their market share.

Leung et al. (2015), report that amongst all social networks, Facebook has the most active online users daily. This is supported by findings in the Global Digital Report (2018) which confirmed Facebook as the leading social networking site in

terms of paid online advertisement streaming. This however portrays a global picture rather than the specific South African or African context.

Investigating the context of Facebook popularity, Ramsaran-Fowdar and Fowdar, (2013), detected the huge potential outreach of the platform in promoting businesses and products alike. The Global Digital Report (2018) revealed that the number of SM users worldwide stood at 3.196 billion people in 2018, an increase of about 13 percent from 2017. Companies are taking advantage of these projections and realities of user growth rates in aligning their investments in SMM. Budgets and expenditure figures are justified by these recorded growths; it is also a basis for estimating return on investment as businesses lobby for more capital injections from investors when considering SMM expansion (Chang, Ku and Chen, 2019).

Therefore it is clear that world has become a global village and connectivity has enhanced business transactions, and revolutionised the way people socialise across the globe, as well as enabling better communication channels (Wiese et al, 2020). According to Sproutsocial, (2020), 56% of the world's total population of 7.676 billion people is urbanised. The publication further highlights that 67% of the world population (5.1 billion people) use mobile phones. Furthermore, 4.38 billion people access and utilise the internet and nearly half of the world population (3.48 billion people) are active users of social media. Looking at these summarised statistics, businesses are compelled to adopt social media for marketing processes. Moreover, as noted, businesses across the globe are increasing their investments in social media, while marketing budgets are actively reflecting this trend, indicating an awareness that this is where the potential customers are to be found nowadays (Mao, Li, Yang, Fu, and Yang, 2020). Although the picture painted here still represents a global perspective, South Africa has a notable share in the entire composition. This is supported by Morrell, (2019) who found that by 2019, South Africa had a little over 21 million Facebook

users, which is about 36% of the total South African population of 58.78 million people.

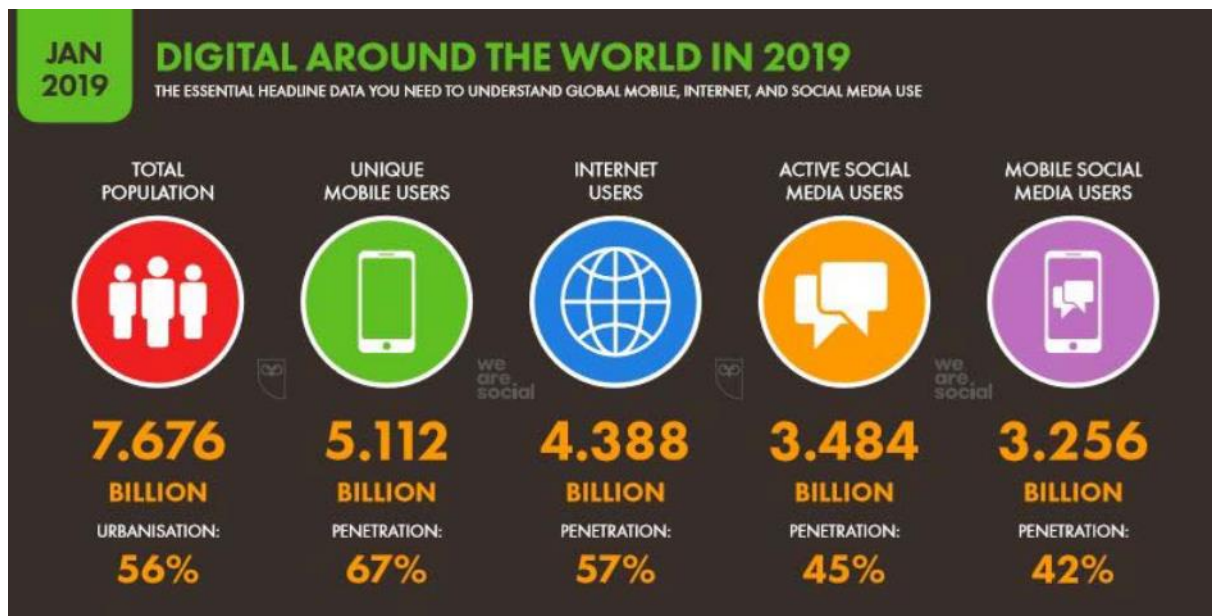


Figure 2.1: Global digitalisation landscape

Source: Adapted from Sproutsocial (2020)

The global digitalisation landscape, painted by the figure above, sums up the extent to which the world is gearing towards fully adopting and utilizing SM. A quick analysis of the illustration indicates that about 57% of the world population access and use internet while 45% of the total population are active social media users. These statistics confirm the significance of SMM for businesses, as the masses, from which customers are drawn, are now on SM. Scaling down to the South African context, the ratios of total population versus SM users, bear a close resemblance to the global pattern, as both have users below the half mark of the entire population, although the South African scenario has a slightly lower ratio of 36% of the total population on SM, while globally 45% of the world's population is on SM.

2.6 Significance of social media marketing in big businesses

Burson-Marsteller (2018) confirms that about 80% of the top hundred companies in the list of the Fortune 500 Global Index have at least adopted and utilised one social media platform for marketing purposes. These are big businesses operating in both more and less economically developed countries. These conglomerates are deemed as trend setters and pioneers in research and development in the business arena.

McMullen (2020) reveals that 70% of global revenue, or economic activity, happening through SMM is directly linked to large corporates, while the remaining 30% is linked to SMEs. In monetary terms, worldwide advertising revenues on SM platforms surpassed a total of \$8 billion back in 2012 alone. In the USA it was estimated to have been \$4 billion in 2012 (Facebook social networks, 2018). In the same year, Facebook was the leading platform in social media advertising revenues, recording an estimated \$5.78 billion in revenue, representing about 72% of all social media advertising revenues (Facebook social networks, 2018). The statistics above help to illustrate the magnitude of commerce evolving around SMM. Although the data drawn highlight one platform, the argument remains the same that SMM is revolutionizing business and marketing processes and any business looking at marketing cost efficiency and improved customer relationships, will automatically adopt SMM.

Although the corporates are pacesetters and leaders in the adoption and utilisation of social media marketing, they also face major failures and challenges in the adoption of these platforms. According to Kropfl, (2019), IBM was responsible for a social media disaster in 2015 when they attempted to promote the employment of women who had science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) background into technical jobs. Their hashtag #HackAHairDryer went viral with a serious contestation because of a hidden contradictory message in their advertisement. This caused huge reputational

damage rather than promoting greater gender balance in the workplace as intended.

Similarly, in 2016, Coca Cola caused a political storm over the inclusion/exclusion of Crimea from a map of Russia in a Christmas message (Kropfl, 2019). The lesson learnt was that marketers should be cognizant of local politics, conflicts and hot spots. These incidents portray a picture of how SMM can damage a brand reputation if not executed sensitively.

2.7 Social media marketing (SMM) in the hotel industry in general

The adoption and utilisation of SM in the hotel sector, according to Moore (2011), dates back to 2006 when hotel chains such as the Starwood Hotels & Resorts were one of the pioneer groups to harness SMM. In that year the hotel group encouraged travellers to share their personal travel experiences online, in a promotional campaign where guests would win a vacation at one of their resorts. Three years later, the hotel group launched a social media platform called Sheraton Shared Moments, through sites such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and blogging platforms in an effort to afford guests an opportunity to share their travel experiences (Lanz, Fischhof, & Lee, 2010).

In a similar study in the UK in 2010, Friebe & Campbell, (2010) established that Facebook and Twitter were the two most popular platforms adopted for marketing purposes in the hospitality industry in the early days of SM introduction. Their applicability in the hospitality industry is confirmed by Alansari, Velikova and Jai (2018) in their study on the effectiveness of hotel Twitter accounts. They show that SMM in hotels enables real-time and two-way communication between potential guests and the hotel. In addition, SM affords hotels an interface to communicate at the point-of-need. This means that interaction with guests and potential customers takes place as and when required. Unlike emails, that are attended to from time to time, the engagements on SM are real-time enabled.

Despite the ever-increasing subscription to social media platforms as noted by Moa et al, (2020), scholars such as Yan, Watanabe, Shapiro, Naraine, and Hull, (2019): Dillette, Benjamin and Carpenter, (2019) and Gupta, (2019) note discourses of social media resistance in the public arena, indicating its volatile nature. This is linked to the fact that social media is also a place where views and preferences can clash. A simple example being within the travel review site TripAdvisor, where opinions about a hotel or restaurant clash between users, based on opposing personal preferences (Ahani, Nilashi, Ibrahim, Sanzogni and Weaven, (2019).

Despite this inevitable shortfall, the rapidly increasing importance of SMM in the hotel industry has been acknowledged by numerous researchers (Scholz and Smith, A.N. 2019; Minazzi, 2015; and Gupta, 2019). These researchers all find that hotels can reinforce their marketing message, and that it can go viral on these platforms, in turn generating electronic word-of-mouth awareness. Taylor et al. (2015) added that SMM does not only increase hotel room sales, but in addition improves hotel brand awareness, and monitors online brand reputation, as well as improving customer relations.

From another angle, Kim, Yoo and Yang, (2020) confirm that the exponential growth in popularity of social media platforms has changed the ways in which tourists search for, and evaluate, travel and destination information online. That finding aligns with the result of a study by Cervellon and Galipienzo (2015), who found that tourists will change their travel arrangements and decisions or travel behaviour, based on current and trending information obtained from social media platforms. This shows that travellers increasingly consult social media for travel tips, alerts and recommendations before they make a decision on which holiday packages to take. Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, and Buultjen (2014), confirmed that SM had become an important element in tourist travel information gathering processes, influencing their accommodation-choice and destination-choice

decisions. As early as 2009, Cox et al. (2009) established from their study, that about 90% of respondents thought that their travel and holiday choices had been influenced by the customer-generated content provided on social media platforms such as Facebook.

From the business perspective, however, social media adoption and utilisation has inherent challenges. Litvin and Sobel (2019) single out social media 'firestorms' as a serious challenge that business operators face. Mate, Trupp, and Pratt (2019) note that these are being triggered by a number of factors, one of them being consumers' perceptions that a business or brand has violated some moral norm. This is a scenario where consumers, or social media users, attack a brand or business and the attacks become viral while hashtags are used to identify the keywords of the firestorm. The firestorms usually cut across social media platforms as they go viral and are re-tagged. Xu and Zhou (2020) note that these can also be triggered by problems related to the core business of the marketers, such as poor product quality, communication issues such as lack of transparency, and unethical organisational behaviour, such as unfair labour practises. From the consumer or users' point of view, moral principles and the desire to enforce social norms in society, have been identified as key motivators inducing them to participate in these 'firestorms' (Mate et al, 2019).

2.7.1 Significance of SMM in SMES and micro hospitality businesses in RSA

According to Oji et al (2017) South Africa has more than 850 000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs), accounting for the employment of a considerable proportion (60%) of the labour force, and contributing up to 50% to the national GDP. The above statistics demonstrate that SMEs are highly significant for any country's economic development and growth, in addition to their unique ability to create permanent employment opportunities. Despite these acknowledged positive attributes, Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen, (2014), show that SMEs in any

economic sector are still faced with many challenges when it comes to business success and growth. Canovi and Pucciarelli, (2019) explain that poor technological skills amongst management, often a lack of basic education and business training, as well as insufficient knowledge of modern marketing trends, all contribute towards the failure of SMEs, including a failure to adopt and utilise social media marketing effectively. It therefore appears that SMEs have poor market penetration and global market access on social media, despite the fact that authors such as Vij, (2017); Ristova and Dimitrov, (2019); Gupta, (2019) Knoblich, Martin, Nash and Stansbie, (2017) all believe that potential customers are widely available for them on social media.

On the other hand, Gamboa and Gonçalves as early as 2014, could attest to social media platforms becoming a popular marketing concept, being utilised by small businesses across the world to link with their customers or potential customers, more effectively than through the traditional search engines such as Google and Yahoo. The common denominator for both big and small businesses is that they both compete for the same market place in which they wish to claim niches and shares (Ahani, Nilashi, Ibrahim, Sanzogni and Weaven, 2019). Gamboa and Gonçalves (2014) also estimate that in more economically developed countries, about 65% of SME companies adopted Facebook, followed by 47% that are using Twitter, just over 38% using LinkedIn, and a minority (23%) using YouTube.

The same cannot be said for less economically developed countries. In South Africa, Oji, Iwu and Tengeh, (2017) noted that, apart from travel review sites such as TripAdvisor, where subscription is overwhelming, the adoption of SM for marketing by business in South Africa (with a particular reference to hospitality businesses) is in its infancy. TripAdvisor has in effect become an unavoidable platform for businesses in the hospitality industry (De Pelsmacker et al, 2018). Travellers' known reliance on this platform compels businesses to list and

participate in the reviews posted by travellers. If they fail to participate, reviews, bad or good, will be posted anyway, and as a result the business may lose control of their brand image, with negative effects.

Many scholars (Ahani et al, 2019: Chang et al, 2019: Litvin and Sobel, 2019; Wiese et al, 2020), lament the loss of control over brand image by business operators as one of the challenges early SMM adopters experienced. Simply put, business operators have lost control of their business image to users and, in most cases, that image is now being determined by what users think of the business. Chang et al (2019) confirm that user generated content (UGC) now has more influence on consumers' decisions to buy than the official website. Travellers in this case show more trust in information generated by users on TripAdvisor than on mainstream marketing information, usually posted on a company's website or traditional booking sites, such as Booking.com.

Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013) maintain that 80% of hospitality businesses in more economically developed countries adopted Facebook and acknowledged that it was the most effective platform in relationship marketing, being ahead of Twitter, Instagram and other social media platforms. The statistics of their submission are composed of both large corporates and SMEs. This illustrates the competition dynamics of trend-following – what big businesses do to further their success, smaller businesses copy or adopt and may even become more competent in the same market place (Hays et al, 2013).

Stelzner, (2009) compiled an annual social media marketing report which highlighted that Facebook and LinkedIn were among the top four social media platforms adopted for marketing, with Twitter leading in that pack of four. Stelzner's subsequent annual reports in 2010 and 2011, reported that things had changed. Facebook and LinkedIn overtook Twitter to become the top two social media platforms used by businesses as marketing strategies in those two years. Facebook rose in popularity for two major reasons: low cost advertising and its

huge potential advertising reach. These two variables prompted small businesses to consider adopting these platforms which also suited their limited marketing budgets, while allowing them to attain bigger market coverage. Investigating the challenges of SMM adoption by micro restaurants in South Africa, Oji et al, (2017) confirmed that the trend noticed in more economically developed countries, is evident in less economically developed countries including South Africa. The researchers noted that even in South Africa, adoption of SMM is motivated by its attractiveness and effectiveness, especially to SMEs that aim at achieving a double advantage by working within their limited marketing budgets and yet achieving huge market coverage.

Oji, Iwu and Tengeh, (2017), noted the following factors as some of the challenges to social media adoption and its effective usage amongst SMEs in less developed economies: unavailability of internet facilities such as smart phones and poor computer based internet connections; also business operators being ignorant of the marketing capabilities that SM platforms can offer, and of the available social media platforms; operators who are not aware of appropriate marketing strategies, and lastly, operators who simply lack interest in social media adoption – and this list is not exhaustive according to these authors. They generalised the challenges relating to SMEs as often being owner managed, with low revenue turnover and a lack of marketing strategies or specialised employees such as a dedicated marketing manager.

It is important to note is that, unlike conventional goods and products, Matikiti, (2015) labels hospitality and tourism experiences as ‘intangible’ and ‘cannot be evaluated prior to consumption’ – hence personal recommendations are very influential. This is supported by Gökhan, (2020) who explains that tourists nowadays rely on other tourists’ advice, based on personal experiences, as opposed to the traditional travel information sources such as travel magazines and other conventional print advertisements. As a result, destination marketing

organisations and other hospitality establishments, regardless of size, are adopting SMM to take advantage of this marketing drift (McMullen, 2020).

Marketers can now use social media in stimulating conversation with their potential customers, and encourage personal interaction and engagement in ways that were not possible with traditional marketing concepts such as television advertisements and magazines (Ramsaran-Fowdar and Fowdar, 2013). This, according to Özgen and Kozak (2015) is very valuable in developing guest loyalty and increasing customer awareness of the hotel's product offerings, as information is shared quickly amongst guests wherever they may be. More importantly, the interactions between businesses and guests (customers) happening on SM can ideally develop and strengthen mutual relationships, which can then turn into repeat business, lessen customer complaints and provide more satisfied guests (Scholz and Smith, 2019). The interactions can result in 'a happy ending' where both parties are satisfied.

Gökhan, (2020) also highlights one of the common challenges SMEs face with SMM which is deliberate reputational damage caused by unsatisfied and disgruntled guests. He notes a tendency by hotel guests not to raise their concerns while at the hotel, but rather to keep quiet and write a bad review about the hotel on platforms such as TripAdvisor, when they return home. The danger of this is that it can go viral, negatively influencing decisions of travellers who otherwise may have wanted to book – and the damage may be irreversible even if management could respond, as the review is recorded. This clearly affects the ratings negatively.

Although Leung and Stahura, (2015) noted an increase in popularity, adoption and utilisation of social media platforms by businesses in their marketing efforts, which is concurrent with the increase in expenditure on social media marketing, Kim, Yoo and Yang, (2020) found that from the consumer, or potential consumer's, side the economic disparities have led to inequitable access to digital

media, global cyberbullying and misinformation being widely spread on social media platforms, thus posing serious risks and presenting challenges for users who engage in genuine dialogues, or information sharing, on these 'user generated information' platforms. Such challenges have understandably slowed full adoption and utilisation of social media by the general populace, thereby shrinking the potential client base of businesses marketing on social media (Roth-Cohen and Lahav, 2019)

2.7.2 Social media platforms for adoption by micro hospitality establishments

Since the introduction of the first social media platform, SixDegrees.com, in 1997 by Andrew Weinreich (Matikiti, 2015), as discussed earlier, many other platforms have mushroomed and have grown in popularity. For the purposes of this study, social media will be classified as follows;

Table 2.2: Social media classification

Class	Social media platforms
Blogs	Twitter
Social networking sites	Facebook, LinkedIn
Content sharing communities	Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest
Travel review sites	TripAdvisor
Instant Messengers	WhatsApp

All the above five classes of social media have been selected for this study. The classification is important for the reader to understand what each platform does and where it belongs (Akiode, 2020). According to Wiese et al (2020) Social network sites and content sharing communities highlighted above are more favourable when it comes to direct marketing functions. Travel review sites such

as TripAdvisor highlighted above are the most preferred UGC sites for travel advise and testimonials before holidays makers can make a decision to book (Chang, Ku and Chen, 2019). The above classification has a narrower scope as compared the more elaborate classification (7 classes) proposed by Akiode (2020) below. The downside of the classification in figure 2.2 below is that it does not cover travel review sites such as TripAdvisor, which is a very important platform for the targeted respondents of this study. Chang et al, (2019) claim that the tourists and business travellers, who are the primary clients of hospitality establishments rely more on TripAdvisor for genuine reviews of a hotel or place of interest in order for them to make the right choice about where to book.

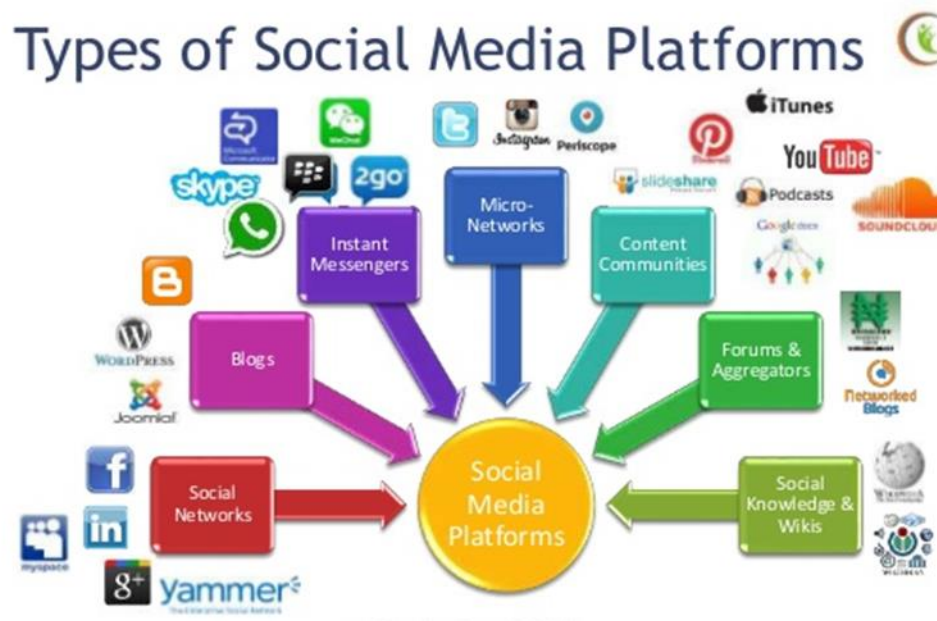


Figure 2.2: Types of social media (classification) in general

Source: Adapted from Akiode, (2020)

Figure 2.2 above highlights a general classification of social media by Akiode (2020). The social media platforms as per the classification above are put into seven major classes:– namely Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn); Blogs; Instant Messengers; Micro Networks; Content Communities; Forums &

Aggregators and Social Knowledge & Wikis. Classification is based on many variables but the backbone of classification is the purpose of the platform (Akiode, 2020). For the purpose of this marketing focused study, only SM platforms that are relevant to marketing will be considered and discussed.

The most popular and successful social media platforms will be described briefly in the following section.

2.7.2.1 Facebook

Facebook was created by Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes in 2004, primarily as a social site for Harvard University students only. With further passage of time (the period between 2005 and 2006), access to Facebook was granted to other colleges, high schools and then everyone else, professionals included, as long as they had a valid email address and were above the age of 13 years (Omnicores, 2020). The platform enables users to create online personal and business profiles where information such as names, gender, age (date of birth) occupation, political affiliations, religion and interests are posted for friends or anyone to see (depending on the settings one chooses to limit privacy). According to Wiese et al (2020) Facebook makes it possible for people to communicate frequently and cost effectively with their family, friends and workmates.

After 16 years of existence, Facebook has grown exponentially and has become the largest social network in the world (Omnicores, 2020). According to a survey conducted by Oncore (2020) Facebook had an estimated 2.4 billion active monthly users by December 2019. The study further reports that Facebook also records about 1.6 billion active daily users globally, with 88% of its user activity being from mobile devices. Users spend an average of 58 minutes on Facebook every day.

Morrell, (2019) reports in the South African Social Media Landscape survey that in 2019, Facebook had 21 million South African users, up from 19 million users recorded in 2018.

With approximately a third of the world's total population using Facebook (Morrell, 2019) it is justifiable to infer that Facebook is the world's most preferred and used social media platform. Because of its fame and popularity, Facebook, as noted by Akiode (2020) presents opportunities for businesses to advertise effectively in a customer targeted and personalized manner and therefore, businesses are allocating a substantial portion of their advertising expenditure to Facebook. Unlike traditional website advertisements, which are delivered through banner advertisements, sponsored links, or clear marketing communication messages, Facebook advertising is often indistinguishable from user content. This is so because Facebook advertisements are designed to resemble a typical social post, which is what consumers are comfortable with, and as such, advertisements will appear as any other user-generated content (Wiese et al, 2020). In this manner, advertising content is not as intimidating as mainstream advertising material. Akiode (2020) further argues that the content posted on these platforms with the intention to advertise sometimes is easily regarded as leisure posts where travellers use social media platforms to keep personal information and photographs for future reference, rather than to be appealing for marketing purposes.

Although Facebook is often commended for revolutionising online advertising as detailed above [in what is clearly also a form of deception] (Akiode, 2020; Matikiti, 2015; Morrell, 2019; Wiese et al, 2020), Fylan, (2018) highlight challenges associated with its marketing. The first challenge identified is the change in Facebook algorithms that was implemented in 2018. Algorithms are user specific settings done automatically by Facebook to sort posts (normally advertisements)

on a user's feed, based on relevancy. Content more relevant to the user will be prioritized to appear on their feeds each time they refresh the feeds. This resulted in a sharp decline in the organic reach of content and social sharing has been reduced by half since 2015. The rising cost of advertising on Facebook is also highlighted as a challenge that small businesses are facing in choosing this form of marketing. Lee, (2018) adds that targeted advertising on Facebook has increased quite significantly and this is also eliminating struggling SMEs, who have limited resources to channel advertisements towards effective marketing. Fylan, (2018) adds that Facebook advertising space is also now overcrowded so that it is becoming increasingly difficult for SMEs to get noticed. As a result, they end up spending more pushing for dominance and visibility on this platform. The cost of advertising on Facebook thus increases exponentially as there can now be three separate costs split as follows: the cost paid to Facebook for the advertisement, the cost of paying a social media manager or other personnel to oversee the marketing, and often, in addition, the cost of paying an influencer to tag, share and make the content popular on Facebook. This becomes too much for micro-hospitality businesses and hence some are restricted to posting on their pages and do not go for targeted advertising.

2.7.2.2 YouTube

YouTube was created in 2005 by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim, who were all former PayPal employees (Turnsek and Janecek, 2019). YouTube is considered the third most popular website worldwide and as far as social media platforms go, it is ranked number two after Facebook.

After 15 years of existence, YouTube has more than 1.9 billion 'logged-in' user visits every month, with about 149 million users who login to YouTube daily, (Omnicores, 2020). On average, users spend about 40 minutes per day watching YouTube videos, while 300 hours of videos are uploaded online every minute on

YouTube. In total, there are over 5 billion video views recorded each day (Omnicores, 2020). This demonstrates the popularity of YouTube as well as the extent of the daily activity on the website.

According to Turnsek and Janecek, (2019) online videos, unlike past media forms, offer unique attributes such as the ability for users to self-select and consume imagery of their choice, making them a distinct form of communication. The popularity of YouTube is clear, but how online videos influence and shape the perceptions of potential customers about products and services is an emerging field of research (Jakopovic, 2015). Turnsek and Janecek, (2019) point out that videos are a more powerful story teller than static images. For example, a tourist destination depicted in a colour photograph may not accurately reflect what a video clip is able to show. Joy and surprise are the mostly targeted emotions in advertising according to Turnsek and Janecek, (2019). Using video communication in marketing has targeted effects on these emotions, hence it is a preferred marketing mechanism.

Although YouTube has more than one billion users and 100 million active users every week, Foley, (2021) regrets the uneven distribution of viewership and audience. He notes that a study carried out on travel agencies revealed that half of the videos they post get less than 500 views despite the advertisers having spent tens of thousands of rands on their creation. As an example, Ritz Carlton Lodge uploaded 14 videos over a period of 4 months with an average viewership of only 536 impressions on YouTube. This is a narrow reach in terms of targeted marketing.

Foley, (2021) explains further that it is difficult to implement call-to-action (CTA) especially for users viewing videos from mobile devices which do not support CTA during the video play. He adds that 50 percent of respondents to a survey done

by Software Advice preferred watching videos on the hotel's website which integrates the content with useful information such as room rates and room availability. This could actually lead to a confirmed booking, or at least an enquiry, rather than viewing such content on YouTube.

Yeoman, (2016) highlights that in 2015 YouTube users lost significant advertising money for advertisements that were platformed, condemned and taken down. This became a controversy, popularised as the 'Ad Inappropriate controversy', meaning that the advertisement was inappropriate and could not be played on the platform. YouTube withdrew those advertisements that were seen to be violating the 'Ad Inappropriate' Policy. All users who had posted content that YouTube deemed inappropriate, thus lost the money that they had spent on creating the advertisements.

2.7.2.3 Twitter

Twitter was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone and Evan Williams. Initially, it was just an experiment but it quickly became a messaging addiction for many users (Matikiti, 2015). It was officially launched in March 2006. By 2019, Twitter had more than 330 million monthly active users, 145 million active daily users generating about 500 million tweets per day (Omnicores, 2020). The report further highlights that 63% of Twitter users are the economically active people (between the age of 35-65 years old) These statistics highlight an important aspect in terms of Twitter advertisement reach – as these users also have a propensity to spend.

As a marketing platform, Omnicore, (2020) reports that about 40% of Twitter users purchased something after seeing it advertised on Twitter. This is encouraged by Twitter's wide accessibility and convenience as 80% of its users access the application on mobile devices. Because of this, marketers are keeping mobile

optimization in mind when developing and creating marketing content for Twitter. This, as noted by Omnicore (2020), is creating content that is compatible with mobile devices and slower internet connections. Although the growth curve for Twitter has flattened, both globally and in South Africa, the platform grew with over 300 000 new followers between 2018 and 2019 to take it to 8.3 million users in South Africa by mid-2019 (Morrell, 2019). This means that Twitter has grown positively by the same amount of users consecutively for the past three years.

According to Britton (2021) however, Twitter also faces significant challenges as a social media platform for marketing. The first challenge, just like many other social media platform, is that it is difficult to ascertain the return on investment for Twitter-based marketing. Additionally, there is significant potential for negative word of mouth (WoM) through running marketing campaigns on Twitter. Should the content attract negativity, it can go viral and seriously damage the reputation of the organisation. Britton (2021) also regrets the lack of usage in Twitter. He explains that Twitter reported in its statistics that it had 65 million users in the USA, while an independent study by BI discovered that only 15 million people were actually using the platform. This does not only show inaccurate reporting, but portrays it as desperate to prove relevance and popularity.

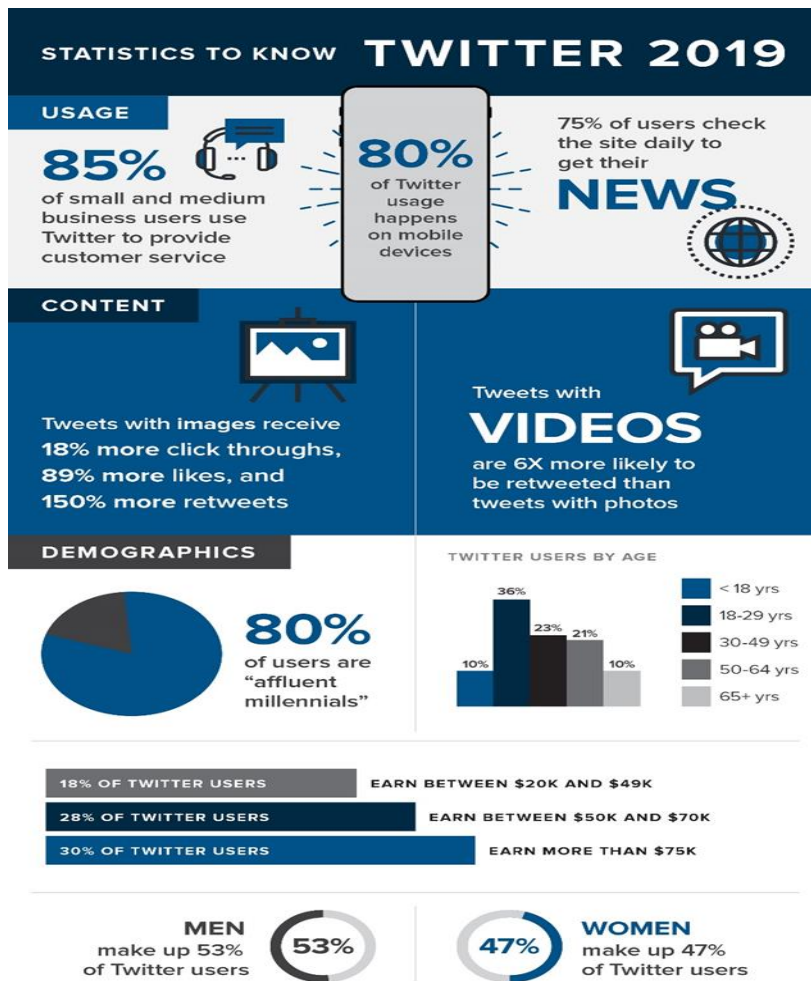


Figure 2.3: Twitter statistics, 2019

Source: Adapted from Omnicore (2020)

A summary of the picture painted by the figure above shows that demographically, more men use Twitter than women, although the margin is only 6%. About 80% of Twitter users are the economically active, which again means that the platform is subscribed to by customers with the potential to buy. The statistics also highlight that 85% of small and medium businesses use Twitter to provide customer service.

2.7.2.4 LinkedIn

LinkedIn was created in 2002, as a professional networking service by Reid Hoffman, Kostantin Guericke, Eric Ly, Allen Blue and Jean-Luc Vaillant (Omnicores, 2020). The platform was developed to link professionals from different disciplines across the globe. Despite LinkedIn being the second oldest social media platform, Morrell (2019) noted that it has struggled to grow its user base over the past 18 years. This is attributed to the platform's specific focus on professionals, rather than the general public.

Since its launch 18 years ago, LinkedIn has achieved over 560 million registered users, with an estimate of approximately 303 million active monthly users (Omnicores, 2020). Its user base is gradually increasing as the platform registers about 5.3 million new accounts per month. Marketing activity on the platform is also on the rise with over 30 million company pages active. Although LinkedIn is regarded as the 'serious social platform' for the obvious reason that its intent is for business and career networking, Morrell, (2019) reports that it had 6.8 million users in South Africa as of 2019, up 11% from 2018. Most of its growth in South Africa is coming from users employed in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), showing that the initial 'corporate focus' of LinkedIn has now spread out across businesses of all sizes and different sectors (Morrell, 2019). Also noted is that in South Africa, women user figures have almost caught up with men in their use of the LinkedIn platform. According to Morrell, (2019) LinkedIn had 2.2 million female users and 2.4 million male users in South Africa as of 2019.

Like any other social media platform, LinkedIn has its challenges when it comes to marketing small businesses. Milan, (2018) explains that LinkedIn marketing works by targeting an audience. This is done by uploading lists for contact targeting through 'Lead gen forms'. The downside of this is that an active 'lead

gen form' cannot be edited and one can only choose a maximum of 12 form fields at a time which is very limiting. In addition, social sharing is made difficult by these 'lead gen forms' and it is known that audience targeting on LinkedIn is not accurate. Unlike Facebook, where you get notification if someone 'likes' or comments on your post or advertisement, LinkedIn does not send notifications. One has to check manually which is not ideal. This is inconvenient as compared other social media platforms in terms of sending notifications and keeping users updated on how their posts are doing online.

2.7.2.5 Instagram

Instagram was created by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom in 2010. At inception, it was mainly meant for sharing pictures and videos with other users, both privately and publicly (Omnicores, 2020). Instagram was acquired by Facebook in 2012.

After a decade of existence, Instagram had over 1 billion active monthly users as of 2019. Instagram is also a very busy social platform registering well over 600 million active daily users (Omnicores, 2020). Since its creation 10 years ago, Omnicore (2020) further reports that more than 50 billion photos have been shared on this platform, with an average of 95 million photos being uploaded daily. The platform records approximately 4.2 billion likes on posts per day. From a business and marketing point of view, Akiode (2020) reports that there are over 25 million businesses on Instagram and about 2 million monthly advertisers. The statistics suggest that Instagram is a good platform on which to advertise and reach potential customers and other businesses. Omnicore (2020) reports that at least one third of the 600 million active daily users visit at least one business profile daily. The potential advertising reach of Instagram was over 849.3 million users as of 2019. The platform also has over 500 000 active influencers (Omnicores, 2020).

Kropfl, (2019) argues that marketers on Instagram focus on rapid growth of followership as a measure of success for the platform in terms of marketing, rather than engaging more actively with current followers. In the rush to grow followership, marketers may therefore miss the opportunity to engage with followers and turn them into customers. Marketers on Instagram have a tendency to purchase likes and followers in an effort to help the brand establish itself as the most popular one in that niche (Lee, 2018). Kropfl, (2019) argues that buying likes on Instagram does not necessarily make the brand popular or well known. Social media police normally pick up such practices and the platform is taking action against marketers who purchase likes and followers, with the most severe action being banned from Instagram. Akiode, (2020) adds that engaging with inappropriate influencers can have a negative impact on brand image and reputation. Brands often pick inappropriate influencers based on the size of the followership which is problematic because they may not fit well into the brand's niche.

2.7.2.6 TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor, known to be the world's largest travel platform, was founded in 2000 by Stephen Kaufer, (TripAdvisor, 2020). According to Chang, Ku and Chen, (2019) TripAdvisor helps over 463 million travellers each month to make travel decisions. TripAdvisor is a travel review site that covers many hospitality businesses from hotels, restaurants, lodges, guesthouses, and safari operators, to airlines and theme parks (Chang et al, 2019). Travelers across the globe visit the TripAdvisor platform to browse through more than 859 million travel reviews and opinions of 8.6 million establishments listed (accommodations, restaurants, experiences, airlines and cruises). On this site, most of the information (apart from property descriptions) is user generated in the form of user reviews, ratings or comments about a hotel visited, an attraction or any hospitality service experienced (TripAdvisor, 2020). According to Ahani, Nilashi, Ibrahim, Sanzogni,

and Weaven (2019) travellers turn to TripAdvisor when planning for, or already on, a trip, to compare or seek low prices on hotels, flights and cruises, or even to book tours or reserve tables at restaurants. TripAdvisor is available in 49 world travel markets and is offered in 28 languages.

Although TripAdvisor is regarded as the best review site for the hotel industry (Ahani et al, 2019), the platform presents challenges to both businesses and users, as with other platforms. Calder, (2019) acknowledges the fact that TripAdvisor has a stated zero-tolerance policy on fake reviews, but acknowledges the problem of fictitious reviews of some non-existent establishments on TripAdvisor which is more like a spam, where a user creates a non-existent hotel profile on TripAdvisor and starts posting reviews for fun. The other problem is that with solicited reviews and bought reviews, where hotels will pay someone to create a significant amount of very good reviews and push the hotel's image up. It is against this background that users are constantly advised to use this site cautiously by filtering real reviews from fake ones, something that can be done by looking out for flagged reviews as TripAdvisor has algorithms that flag fake and suspicious reviews. Additionally, Calder, (2019) notes that TripAdvisor has a 'pay for a link' function where users pay to be able to be directed to a hotel website, while search engines like Google offer this function for free. It is for this reason that Google reviews are reported to have surpassed TripAdvisor over the last few years. TripAdvisor is also known to promote a lot of false advertising (Chang et al, 2019). For instance, a hotel would renovate a few rooms or one section of the property and shoot photos that will be posted on TripAdvisor as a major renovation project. Guests may then find on arrival that they are booked into old rooms, resulting in negative reviews being posted and a growing lack of trust in TripAdvisor.

2.7.2.7 WhatsApp

WhatsApp is an instant messaging application for smartphones and other mobile devices that comes with an end to end message encryption. It was created by Jan Koum and Brian Acton in 2009 and later bought by Facebook in 2014 (Omnicores, 2020).

In the 11 years since its inception, Omnicore (2020) noted that WhatsApp had grown to register approximately 1.5 billion monthly active users, with over 1 billion daily active users. On average, over 1 million users download WhatsApp and register daily and approximately 60 billion texts are sent daily (Omnicore, 2020).

Calder, (2019) distinguishes WhatsApp from the mainstream social media platforms and labels it an instant messaging application with limited marketing opportunities for SMEs. He also notes that WhatsApp has a weakness in accessing and storing customer data while it cannot provide full enterprise-grade encryption. Just like many other consumer applications, WhatsApp cannot guarantee that files sent and conversations made on the platform are confidential. Facebook, which is the parent company for WhatsApp, does not provide adequate personal data protection. Using either platform for marketing thus becomes a big challenge for businesses as they share the same weaknesses.

2.7.2.8 Pinterest

Pinterest is a social mobile platform that enables users to find information and ideas about products and services on the World Wide Web. It was founded by Evan Sharp, Ben Silbermann and Paul Sciarra in 2010 (Matikiti, 2015).

Although Pinterest does not regard itself as a social media platform, as noted by McMullen, (2020), it has grown to be a very powerful traffic driver. It took some time for Pinterest to get onto the social media marketing map. Statistics as recorded by Omnicore (2020) indicate that Pinterest is mostly used by women (80%). In the past 10 years, Pinterest has grown to register over 291 million monthly active users. The average Pinterest user visit lasts 14 minutes. The platform has recorded about 175 billion pins since its inception. Daily activity of the platform is very high with the platform recording over 1 billion Pinterest boards in a day. In the business context, Pinterest is visited by 2 million users each day who save shopping pins on their boards, and these will often successfully end up as purchases (Clarke, Murphy and Adler, 2016).

McMullen, (2020) finds functionality to be the major challenge of using Pinterest as a marketing platform by SMEs. This scholar explains that building marketing profiles for an establishment or brand based on Pins presents a challenge which marketers call a 'profiling challenge'. This is largely attributed to the way Pinterest is structured as a platform. Additionally, advertisement buyers do not have full control over their content. Often this results in conflicting advertising where buyers may end up viewing your advertisement pinned next to that of your competition. As noted above, Pinterest users are predominantly women, but marketers have failed to capitalise on this target audience.

2.8 Use of SMM and user review sites by micro hospitality establishments

This research explores Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as major SM platforms used by SMEs in general and micro-hospitality establishments in particular. The relevance of TripAdvisor as a review site will also be discussed in detail.

Many scholars (Ahani, Rahim & Nilashi, 2017; Aluri, Slevitch & Larzelere, 2015; Neirotti, Raguseo & Paolucci, 2016) have argued that because of their smaller size, business scope, and resource limitations, micro-hospitality establishments

should not be examined in the same manner as bigger businesses, such as hotel chains and franchises. For instance, Ahani, Rahim & Nilashi (2017) note that micro establishments tend to have unique attitudes and strategic behavioural approaches, and hence this study focuses specifically on micro-hospitality establishments in one province of South Africa. Some of the distinguishing attributes of micro-hospitality businesses are: low annual turnover, operating as standalone businesses (not being a part of a hotel chain or franchise), owner managed (which comes with flexibility in business decision making) and normally lacking specialized staff, such as dedicated marketing personnel.

2.8.1 Social media in brand promotion and advertising

Brand promotion has been synonymous with SMM in the hotel industry the world over, and this trend has been acknowledged by numerous researchers (Mao, Li, Yang, Fu and Yang, 2020; Ristova and Dimitrov, 2019; Kim, Yoo and Yang, 2020). Brand promotion is defined by Mao et al, (2020), as the way businesses inform, persuade convincingly, influence and constantly remind, consumers about their product in an effort to drive their decision towards purchasing the product or service. This engagement with customers is now largely performed through SMM. The growth and popularity of SMM is fuelled by the fact that it is the most affordable 'segment targeted' advertising and marketing method (Kim et al, 2020). This strength of SMM is particularly suited to micro-hospitality businesses with limited marketing budgets and fewer resources to channel towards brand awareness.

Recently, Tajvidi & Karami, (2017), who studied the effect of social media on firm performance, found that marketing on social media is not a 'one way' communication from business to consumers only, but that it also happens voluntarily from consumer to consumer. This concept is called the 'momentum effect' which happens when a customer personally refers a particular brand or forwards an advertisement to a friend or family member. This 'momentum effect'

according to Hays et al (2013), accounts for more than 50% of SMM effectiveness. In this manner, SMM advertisements are circulated among customers and potential customers whose numbers can increase exponentially. This concept aligns with the referral marketing principle noted by Canovi and Pucciarelli, (2019). In its context, the concept involves wide participation amongst customers as in the groups and pages on Facebook. The resultant compounded advertising reach can be very wide and effective, but it is important to note that the same potential could be equally disruptive if the experience being shared was a bad one.

2.8.2 Social media in brand and reputation development

Montalvo (2011), defines brand awareness as the customers' knowledge of a brand's availability and existence in the market place. SMM presents brand awareness as its first benefit to hospitality businesses regardless of their size. The process of brand awareness was outlined clearly by Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour (2011) in their study on 'the history of social media and its impact on business'. They pointed out that brand awareness begins with the actual experience consumers encounter with the brand. They add that SMM helps grow brand popularity and strength through the momentum effect and the facilitation of customer engagement. Regular posts and updates on SM platforms increase the brand's visibility (Montalvo, 2011).

Apart from brand awareness, the hospitality industry benefits from SM platforms through positive reputation building and strengthening. Recently, De Pelsmacker, Van Tilburg and Holthof, (2018) in their study on digital marketing strategies focusing on 'online reviews', confirmed that online travel review sites, such as TripAdvisor, are very successful in building a brand or a hotel's reputation. This is made possible by the manner in which TripAdvisor works. After visiting a hotel or restaurant, guests can then review the level and quality of service experienced during their stay and the business has an opportunity to respond directly to the

review. This then provides potential customers with an opportunity to evaluate the hotel or resort before visiting it. Good reviews build a strong brand, while developing the reputation of the business (De Pilsmaeker et al, 2018).

TripAdvisor (2018) claims that its American-developed, online-based, travel review system, operating globally, is a genuine and verified online travel guide which offers free user-generated reviews on travel-related content. Since its inception in 2000, TripAdvisor has rapidly grown and become the leading travel review website in the world, recording more than 460 million user reviews in the United States of America alone, and listing close to seven million hospitality establishments (restaurants, hotels, resorts and attractions) (TripAdvisor, 2018).

It is important to note for this study that TripAdvisor launched a domain in 2014, dedicated to South African hospitality businesses and consumers: www.tripadvisor.co.za. This platform will help South African hospitality businesses to strengthen their brand and reputation globally through reviews from visitors. This development of a dedicated, localised, TripAdvisor platform is confirmation that the tourism and lodging industry in South Africa has great potential and is a noticeable market on the global tourism stage.

Back in 2011, a decade after the launch of TripAdvisor in 2000, Ye, Law, Gu, and Chen (2011) predicted that a 10% improvement in a hotel's online reviewers' ratings may increase room sales by at least 4.4%. Reporting on the same context of hotel reputation strength, Anderson (2012) in his study on 'the impact of social media on lodging's performance' finds that a meagre one percent increase in an online reputation score for a hotel can result in up to a two percent room occupancy increase and a significant increase in hotel revenue. The combination of hotel online ratings and the volume of online reviews thus have a proven positive effect on hotel bookings (Torres, Singh, and Robertson-Ring, 2015).

2.8.3 Customer relationship management (CRM)

Apart from revenue-based benefits, SMM boosts business-customer relationships, commonly referred to as customer relationship management (CRM). Kumar (2015) defines CRM as a concept of maximizing product sales to existing customers while promoting a good continuous relationship through SMM. SM platforms afford hospitality businesses an opportunity to directly interact with their customers any time from all over the world (De Pelsmacker et al., 2018). Echoing O'Connor's (2010) views on managing hotel image online, De Pelsmacker et al. (2018) confirm that SMM does, overall, facilitate effective engagement between hospitality businesses and their customers through its unique characteristic of a 'direct two-way communication platform' between the two parties, and Kumar (2015), agrees that customers' control over their own posts and information helps increase their willingness to participate in SMM, as well as to continue close relationships with hospitality businesses.

This trend led Gamboa and Gonçalves (2014) to note that hospitality businesses were becoming increasingly concerned with customer relationship management due to 'customer power' on SM, facilitated by the increase in competition, deregulation of cyber space, and the availability and easy access to the internet worldwide. Litvin and Sobel, (2019) explain that users' control of their content puts the establishment in a difficult position as all that they can do will be to justify either why the clients (users) had a bad experience or apologise for that particular example of poor service. The down side of this platform is therefore that businesses are automatically put in a reactive rather than a proactive position in terms of dealing with negative publicity generated by customers. These authors explain further that, apart from lack of control in terms of content posted on the platform, there is a problem of solicited reviews by many hotels across the world. This claim is supported by Buckley (2019) who revealed that about one in seven reviews on TripAdvisor are in fact fake. This was first discovered by a UK

consumer group called 'Which Travel' that conducted a survey of almost 250 000 reviews of top 10 ranked hotels from 10 global destinations. As a result, six of these hotels were fined, while two received 'red badges' which alert travellers that the hotel is suspected of using fake reviews.

Hospitality businesses however continue to benefit in two ways from SM in terms of CRM. Firstly, it offers better service in that communication is not limited to trading hours, unlike other forms of interaction such as telephones and faxes. Secondly, it comes at a very low cost, customers being able to participate and engage with businesses on SM platforms (De Pelsmacker et al. 2018) very inexpensively. From the point of view of the business, Kumar (2015) points out that the business can obtain valuable information about their customers and their preferences, thereby formulating individualised services and products based on gathered information on their needs and preferences.

2.9 The South African context

2.9.1 Social media usage in SA

According to the estimate by Stats SA (2018), South Africa's mid-year population for 2018 had increased to 57,73 million people, showing a 1,55% increase between 2017 and 2018. The projections further break down the figures as follows: Gauteng continuously records the biggest share of the total population with an estimate of 14,7 million people which is 25,4% of the population. KwaZulu-Natal has the second largest population with an estimate of 11,4 million people which is 19,7% of the population, while the Northern Cape remains at the bottom with the smallest population, estimated at 1,23 million which translates to 2,1%. It is important to note that KwaZulu-Natal (from where the study population was drawn) has the second largest population in South Africa which makes it a significant and relevant province for this study. The province is also largely rural

and this works well for this study as the targeted hospitality establishments are drawn from remote areas (Statistics South Africa, 2020)

Stats SA also revealed in their General Household Survey (GHS) of 2016 that nearly 60% of South African households had at least one person who had access to the Internet either at home, work or school, or at Internet cafes, while an estimated 87% of South African households use cellular phones to access the Internet. Overall, South Africa shows an above average adoption and utilisation of SM for Africa. Thus, it can be claimed that social media use in South Africa is at an advanced stage.

In their executive summary of their study on the 'South African social media landscape' Goldstuck and Wronski, (2017), found that Facebook was still the most popular SM platform at that time with 16 million users, and 14 million people accessing SM on their mobile devices. The survey also affirmed that SM links people and businesses and that it facilitates communication and the subsequent flow of information and coordination of economic activities, with the associated economic development – a view also expressed by numerous researchers (De Pelsmaker et al., 2018; Kumar, 2015; Anderson, 2012 and Montalvo, 2011)

Table 2.3: Growth in most popular social media platforms in South Africa

Platform	2016	2019
Facebook	13.5 million	21 million
Twitter	7.7 million	8.3 million
LinkedIn	5.5 million	6.8 million
Instagram	3.5 million	6.6 million

Source: Researcher's own compilation

Table 2.3 above summarizes the growth in user numbers of the SM platforms used most widely in South Africa. Facebook, as discussed, is the most popular one with 7.5 million more people joining it over the last 3 years, followed by Instagram with about 3.1 million more people joining (a nearly 100% growth rate). LinkedIn came third in user number growth with about 1.3 million people joining the platform and Twitter came 4th with 600 000 new users in the last 3 years. This growth in user base supports Akiode's (2020) assertion that social media adoption in Africa is on the rise, and that the growth curve is set to continue. This makes it easy for marketers to access and segment potential and actual customers (Youn and Jin, 2017)

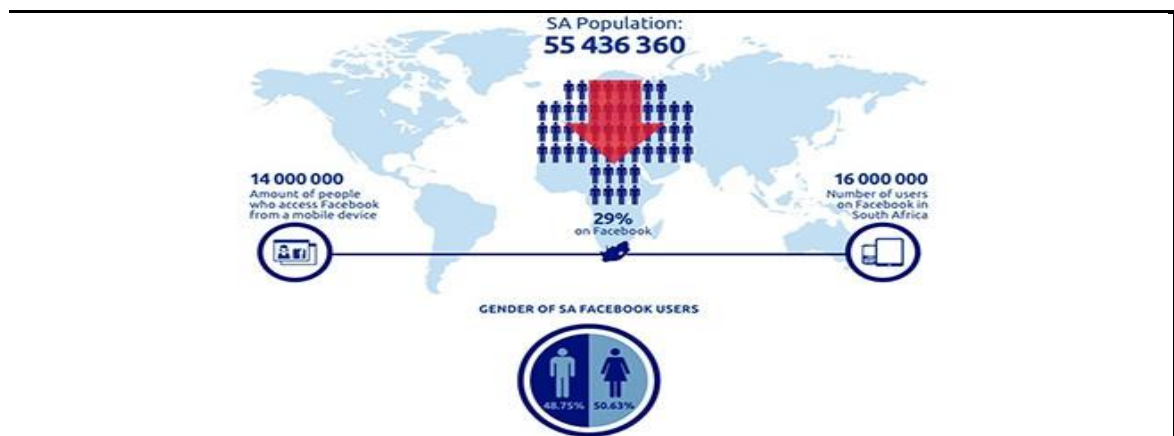


Figure 2.4: Facebook access in South Africa in 2016

Source: Goldstuck and Wronski, (2017)

Figure 2.4 above illustrates the proportion of the total population using Facebook in South Africa as of December 2016. According to Goldstuck and Wronski (2017), of the 16 million users, 14 million accessed it via mobile phones. The 48.75% male users and 50.63 female users combined represented about 29% of the total population of South Africa.

The same survey reported that Twitter user numbers grew marginally between the years 2016 and 2017, despite significant declines observed in countries such

as the USA. The number of active users grew from approximately 7.7 million people in August 2016 to about 8 million in August 2017. Twitter had 8.3 million users as of December 2019 (Morrell, 2019). Twitter user activity in South Africa, according to the report, continues moderately throughout the week, with Thursday being the most popular day of user activity. The report further breaks down the activity to daily activity, where it is reported that users tweet the most between 8:00 and 9:00 in the morning, and also in the evenings between 6:00 and 8:00pm. In between, the assumption is that people would be busy at work. The implication then for the business is to be able to have tweets live around the time when users are active on Twitter to be able to capture their attention

Substantial growth in Twitter user numbers in RSA has been facilitated by the advent of 'Twitter Lite', an application designed to use less data than the original Twitter application. It was built for more internet bandwidth-strapped regions and countries such South Africa (World Wide Worx, 2017). This development has enabled more people to use Twitter more regularly in South Africa. Similarly, Facebook developed a 'Facebook lite' application suitable for mobile devices and slower internet connections. Facebook also offers 'free mode' where users can access Facebook even if they do not have data. In this mode however, users cannot view pictures and videos but can read text content, (Wiese et al, 2020).

Goldstuck and Wronski, (2017), find that LinkedIn has over 562 million users globally. Its user base in South Africa grew by nearly 11% to 6.1 million between 2016 and 2017 and now stands at 6.8 million. As explained above, unlike Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn is used mainly by professionals and most content is industry specific. This aids in avoiding generalisation as a certain market segment is already available to the hospitality industry on LinkedIn: business travellers (Ristova and Dimitrov, 2019).

2.9.2 The contribution of the hospitality industry to the South African GDP

There is compelling evidence of the economic contribution of inbound tourism to South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP). Regardless of a slight decline in foreign tourists from 10.47 million in 2018 to 10.23 million in 2019 (South Africa Markets Insights, 2020), the tourism industry continued to record a steady revenue growth from Total Tourist Foreign Direct Spend (TTFDS) as listed below;

- 2016- R76 billion
- 2017- R81 billion
- 2018- R83 billion

The above figures paint a pre-COVID-19 scenario of the South African economy. The picture changed significantly for 2020 with a sharp drop in occupancy and revenue levels. According to The Department of Tourism (2020), tourism revenue (from accommodation establishments) dropped by almost 90.5% for the month of July 2020 as compared to July 2019. The monetary value of this income decline was R186.7 million from R1.9647 billion. This significant drop in occupancy and income was due to the COVID-19 level 3 lockdown regulations which prohibited the industry from operating except for accommodating essential services and quarantine services according to COVID-19 regulations. The broad tourism industry, which includes hospitality establishments such as hotels, lodges, wedding venues, guesthouses and restaurants, and services such as safari tour operators, camping sites, game reserves, and spas (Nieman & Nieuwenhizen, 2014) contributed 2.8% to the real GDP which amounted to R 139 billion in 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The sector also claimed a 4.2% share of the total employment in South Africa as of December 2019.

The significance of the hospitality industry in particular in contributing towards GDP is demonstrated by The South African Markets Insights (2020). The publication recorded that in December 2019 alone, over 2 million stay nights (2,020,200 bed nights) were sold (booked) in South Africa. The total average

accommodation occupancy rate was 51.3%. This midstream level of business is fair, given that December is traditionally a month where citizens travel home to be with family. The total income for the same month from the hospitality industry was R4.76 billion spread as follows:

- Revenue from accommodation: R2.496 billion
- Revenue from restaurants and bars: R734 million
- Revenue from other hospitality based activities: R1.533 billion

These statistics portray the potential of the South African lodging industry and affirm the position of the hospitality industry as an economic sector with unlimited potential for further growth, if supported and well marketed. The key players in this sector, according to Oji, Iwu and Tengeh, (2017), are the micro businesses that also account for about 40% of the total revenue recorded yearly. It is therefore important to take a closer look at the business performance of these micro establishments with an aim to help them do well in this heavily contested sector, where conglomerates and hotel chains tend to dominate the space (Michopoulou and Moisa, 2019)

2.10 Analytical tools on SMM activity measuring

Despite the widespread approval of social media as a marketing tool and its subsequent adoption by many establishments and businesses, measuring its effectiveness as a marketing tool remains difficult (Michopouloua and Moisa, 2019). The potential power of social media in revolutionizing marketing is however not debateable, given that the recent global statistics show the number of social media users worldwide as 3.484 billion in 2019 (Sproutsocial, 2020), which is nearly half of the world's population.

Michopouloua and Moisa, (2019) acknowledge that software can assist marketers using social media in measuring its effectiveness. While hoteliers remain somewhat sceptical about SM as marketing tools, their willingness to consider new measuring tools for social media activity which could add value, has been

found to be limited (Clarke, Murphy and Adler, 2016). Hesitation to adopt social media analytics is mainly caused by the costs associated with implementing them. This reluctance is also fuelled by the fact that business operators do not see the immediate value provided by them.

Revinat software is one of the prominent analytical tools used by hoteliers to measure activity or success of their social media marketing efforts (Schroeder, 2019). It is a centralized solution applicable to multi-hotel/multi-brand, that gives hoteliers a comprehensive picture of their performance on social media platforms. Hotel chains that have adopted Revinat report positive results on their social media marketing efforts (Michopoulou and Moisa, 2019). Positive gains after social media adoption for marketing have been recorded and established through return on investment analysis of social media metrics. Schroeder, (2019) attributes the success of these models to the manner in which they are structured. The structure is that, once SM is adopted, hoteliers are required to adopt in-house software that will help timing and posting of content, and to hire or train a dedicated SM Marketing person/ team while investing in analytics to help populate data on SM activity. This enables them to execute informed decisions.

Revinat software is clearly only applicable to hotel chains or multi-brands. This automatically excludes stand-alone SMEs such as micro-hospitality businesses. The challenge therefore still remains unresolved for micro-hospitality businesses when it comes to analytics for social media activity, be it to establish ROI or just to establish the level of activity. As noted above, to accommodate a wider spectrum of society, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have introduced lighter versions of their platforms, for example 'Facebook Lite' (Cervellon & Galipienzo, 2015). However, the applicability of Revinat to the micro-hospitality industry for analytics has the problem that the two are not structured to complement one another. Revinat would have to introduce a lighter version of the software, or a custom made application for the SMEs.

Back in 2011, investigating the concept of social media ROI, Blanchard, (2011) concluded that there was confusion and an inability to effectively measure the Return on Investment from social media activities by businesses. This led to a slowed pace in adoption of SM platforms for marketing and attempts to measure the ROI were also weakened. More recently, however, Michopoulou and Moisa, (2019), claimed that SM ROI has evolved sufficiently to be a useful yardstick for measuring the benefits of social media marketing. The metrics, particularly in more economically developed countries, demonstrated a direct link between SMM activities and financial results, and hoteliers confirm that determination of ROI is becoming easier with these customised in-house applications such as Revinate, SALT and UberVU.

Michopoulou and Moisa (2019) noted that although social media analytics within the hospitality business is still in its infancy, 'influencer' marketing on social media brings in extra business and greater brand awareness. According to Sproutsocial, (2020) influencer marketing is a recent phenomenon of social media marketing where endorsements and product mentions are used to market on social platforms. The mentions and endorsements are done by influencers, who are popular individuals (normally these are celebrities who are not experts in the hotel industry) who have a huge dedicated social media following and are regarded as experts within their niche or discipline (Schroeder, 2019).

Social media influencer marketing is effective because of the trust that influencers have earned and built up with their followers. Normally, recommendations from social influencers serve as good social proof of its quality to a brand's potential customers (Sproutsocial, 2020). Businesses that engage influencers report an increase in brand awareness and higher sales. According to Sproutsocial, (2020), about 40% of Twitter users have purchased a product or service due to an influencer's tweet or mention of that particular product or service. Stats SA, (2020) highlighted that 27.9% of the tourists in 2019 were the millennials (25-34 years

old), this being the age group of the newly wedded couples or engaged young couples. The scenario thus also works well for the wedding industry if they can use the influencer marketing strategy to capture this market – these also being referred to as ‘digital natives’ because of their constant presence on SM. Chatzigeorgiou, (2017) noted that the success of influencer marketing is based on the fact that there has been a shift from trusting other forms of marketing to believing recommendations made by friends, family and social media influencers. If, for instance, a wedding venue offers the venue for free to the influencer for their wedding, the marketing of that particular venue will go far and wide, should the influencer post photos from the venue and tag the venue, as well as start a discussion about it.

2.11 Summary

This chapter provided a detailed chronological exploration into the genesis of social media in the digital space. Furthermore, literature was reviewed on how early adopters involved social media in the digital marketing space as the opportunity presented itself. Applicable social media platforms were also interrogated exposing their order of significance through their popularity and usefulness in marketing, particularly in the hospitality industry.

The applicability of social media platforms was discussed within both the global and South African contexts, and further disaggregated to focus on KwaZulu-Natal Province as the study area of this particular research. Some figures concerning the magnitude of investments that have been put on social media were shown at a global level. The chapter also highlighted the potential of the hospitality industry in terms of its contribution to the GDP of South Africa, if well marketed, to attract an international clientele as well as domestic and regional markets which are equally important in the marketing matrix.

The chapter also highlighted the limitations of utilisation of social media for marketing at both the national and global levels. The next chapter highlights the

effectiveness of social media platforms that are being adopted for marketing by small hospitality businesses in KZN. It also looks at the challenges faced by both the businesses and consumers when utilizing these social media platforms as marketing tools.

CHAPTER THREE

Effectiveness and challenges of social media as a marketing tool

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of literature on the adoption of social media and its significance to small hospitality establishments in rural areas with specific reference to a less economically developed country (LEDC). This chapter highlights the effectiveness of social media platforms that are being adopted for marketing by small hospitality businesses in KZN. It also looks at the challenges faced by both the businesses and consumers when utilizing these social media platforms. The chapter discusses effectiveness versus challenges of these platforms from a broader approach narrowing to the specific research site of remote and rural KZN.

3.2 Effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool

The effectiveness of social media in marketing, as noted by Aydin (2020), is understood to focus on helping organisations improve brand awareness, enhance brand image and achieve better financial performance. He further points out that the great majority of early adopters and pioneers of social media marketing in the hospitality industry have done well financially, underscoring the value of this marketing tool. Wiese, Martínez-Climent & Botella-Carrubi (2020) add that early adopters have migrated from aggressive social media marketing to customer relationship management (CRM) via social media. The success of the approach, according to Chang, Ku & Chen (2019) is ensured by the fact that customers nowadays are on social media. It is easy to get them there and the fact that loyal customers will follow brands that they associate with, is a guarantee that CRM will target the appropriate market segments. From another angle, Kapoor et al (2021) highlights that social media marketing effectiveness is demonstrated by improved client relationships.

Budree, Fietkiewicz & Lins (2019) list variables that they have found to ensure the success and effectiveness of social media marketing in hospitality establishments of any size, that they argue marketers should put in place. Most important among these variables are: brand invitation for people to follow the brand on social media; the ability and presence of the organisation to entertain engagements with the customer on social media platforms, and the maintenance of vibrant and interactive platforms. Kapoor et al (2021) underscore the availability of an organisation's marketing personnel or social media agents to interact with clients through enquiries, complaints and compliments, as the most important variable that makes social media marketing effective. Successful hotel chains, such as Marriott and the Radisson Blu, have put in place social media marketing teams, working full time to attend to matters of customer relationship management, enquiries and overall running of social media platforms. According to Lepkowska-White (2017), this is now an essential investment should a hospitality establishment want to reap fully the benefits of social media marketing and realise a full return on their investment.

A study by Wiese, Martínez-Climent & Botella-Carrubi (2020) highlighted another aspect of social media marketing effectiveness. Their research revealed that there are 'ripple effects' from chain reactions. The chain reactions start with the customer experience on social media platforms which influences their attitudes towards the hotel's social media sites. This in turn will influence their attitude towards the hotel brand, and subsequently brand attitude will affect the customer's choice in terms of booking intentions and preferences. The last stage will be that of spreading the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) about the whole process. This indicates how early adopters have been able to record success around social media marketing. Key to note, according to these authors, is the part of the chain over which the organisation has control. This is the early stage which guests will experience on social media with the hotel brand. Aydin (2020) urges social media marketers to be available and make this stage a vibrant and

interactive experience which will keep guests to be intrigued and to develop a positive relationship with the hotel brand.

Kim et al (2018), show how the effectiveness of social media marketing has been demonstrated through improved hotel financial performance by early adopters. In a similar study, Aluri, Slevitch & Larzelere (2015) reiterates that adequate and proper use of social media for marketing in western countries' hotel chains has grown their profits and subsequent shareholder earnings by between 20% and 40%. This rise in economic activity around social media, evident in organisations fully utilising these platforms as noted above, has resulted in 'socialnomics' or the value created and shared via social media and its efficient influence on outcomes [economic, political, relational] (Alansari, Velikova & Jai, 2018). In line with progressive and positive financial improvements recorded by businesses due to social media marketing, Michopoulou and Moisa (2019) acknowledge the functionality of return on investment (ROI) accounting principle in helping business quantify the monetary value gains from social media marketing. The scholars however regret that the hospitality business operators' sometimes ignore non-financial ROI from social media marketing. Most businesses look at the principle from the view of monetary gains perspective, forgetting that in the hospitality business loyalty, good customer relationship management (CRM) and customer engagement are key to secure future business, as well as the creation of lasting relationships.

The success of social media as a marketing tool also depends on its ability to keep up with trends and calendar events (Aydin, 2020). The emergence of celebrative messages as interactive content on these platforms has magnified their relevance and favour with consumers (Kapoor et al, 2021). Marketers nowadays, as noted by Aydin (2020) create content around celebrative themes for certain significant calendar dates either cultural, religious or national. The author adds that such content creates better interaction than traditional

promotions and announcements or by sharing general news on these platforms. The same author notes that successful hospitality establishments are using these calendar events to stimulate conversations and activity on their platforms. As an indirect and unaggressive marketing approach (as noted by Kapoor et al, 2021), this strategy has created unsolicited interactions and traffic to the websites and social media platforms of hotels. The intention is that once people have been drawn to these sites and then into the website, intentions to interact are ignited as they see more content which, in one case out of three, ends up in enquiries for booking on specials (Alansari et al, 2018).

Aydin (2020) also points out that the success and effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool has been widely recorded in hotels using metrics such as guest and hotel interaction statistics. He attributes these successes to the type of content shared as the major determinant of the success or effectiveness of social media in marketing. Foley (2021) further clarifies that 89% of successful five star establishments post vivid, interactive content in the form of videos and images accompanied by text or audio. Similarly, Carpenter and Harvey (2019) note that static or text-only posts attract less attention, rendering them less effective. He explains that these successful establishments engage professional help in terms of preparing the visuals the subsequent follow-ups thus strengthening the brand and stimulating customer interaction and engagement.

Chang et al (2019) link the success of social media marketing in hotels in first world countries to the way this phenomenon is structured. Firstly, social media affects the decision-making journey for consumers, and this includes bookings and buying behaviour. Secondly, sound use of social media positively affects hotel brand relationship quality and, lastly, the superior quality and credibility of the user-generated content as compared to a one-way marketing communication (for example traditional advertising) has made social media a successful marketing tool. This leads to positive WOM which has the potential to go viral on

social media. The lesson learnt in the above matrix is that the success of this marketing tool is subject to internal controls and is largely influenced by what an organisation does with its social media space. For instance, any politically or religiously polarised posts, or social media interactions, may result in gross social media failures that also tend to go viral quickly, resulting in serious reputational damage to the organisation (Fylan, 2018). This is why Aydin (2020) has attributed the majority of social media marketing success to what the businesses do on social media, rather than to what customers do. Customers react either negatively or positively depending on what the organisation does as illustrated in this 'ripple effect' concept of SMM.

Kapoor, Balaji & Jiang (2021) in their research about the effectiveness of social media, challenge entrepreneurs to use the same entrepreneurial mindset and be more industrious with developing more active social media marketing plans. The scholars explain that entrepreneurs need to work towards self-sustained business practices as the government has failed to support SMMEs in their entrepreneurial journey. Although the above comes as good advice to SMMEs, and particularly small hospitality businesses, the current business situation for small businesses in the hospitality sector, which has been made worse by COVID-19 is not giving entrepreneurs much room to be enterprising but rather has forced them to fight for survival and break even (Rogerson, 2020). As an example, 5 businesses closed down in the Midlands, KZN due to the devastating effects of COVID-19 and lockdowns on the economy (Mphahlele, 2021)

3.3 Social media efficacy: monitoring and evaluation

Many scholars (Carpenter & Harvey, 2019; Chang et al, 2019; Michopoulou & Moisa, 2019 and Aydin, 2020) highlight a serious challenge in measuring the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool. Among other things cited as contributing factors to this complexity are the difficulty in ascertaining ROI, conversion of social activities on social media into money, and the general activity

on social media platforms (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2019). Therefore progressive businesses who are using social media for marketing (as noted by Foley, 2021) have become increasingly interested in measuring the efficacy of social media as a marketing tool. Developers of software and analytics companies have therefore introduced a number of tools and ways of monitoring activity on social media to assess the uptake and efficacy of these platforms (Perakakis, Mastorakis & Kopanakis, 2019).

Michopoulou and Moisa (2019) add that hospitality businesses concentrate a lot on content creation, circulation and engagements. In the process they neglect measuring the success brought about by engaging on social media for marketing. However, new technology that enables sophisticated ways of tracking and measuring marketing performance, can be done by using such tools as proprietary analytics software, simple google analytics or a mix of paid and free social media analytics tools (Chang et al, 2019).

According to Perakakis et al (2019) social media marketers have a wide range of analytical tools available to help them not only to understand their customers but also to monitor and analyse social media through vital insights provided by these tools. Michopoulou & Moisa (2019) explains that the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has made it possible for digital marketers to automate monitoring of social media activities, improve the accuracy in the analysis and reduce human error in the process. Perakakis et al (2019) further highlight that with the availability of many social media platforms and the huge volumes of data generated (UGC), it has become humanly impossible to manage, as it is far too time consuming. This is why AI and monitoring tools have emerged to help businesses manage these complexities in a cost-effective manner with regards to costs linked to social media marketing, monitoring and evaluation.

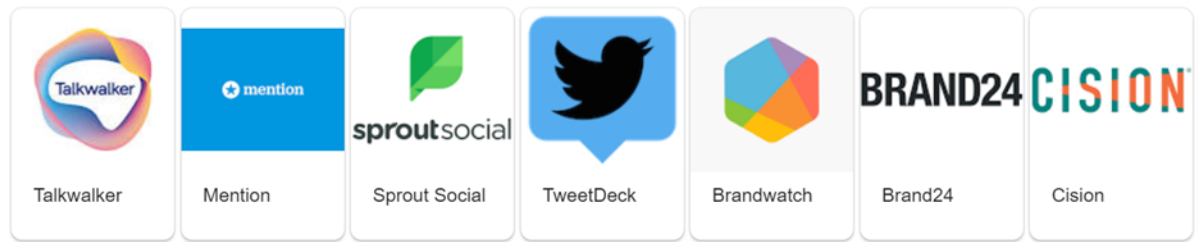


Figure 3.1: Social media monitoring and analysis tools

Source: google.com

The above figure shows some of the popular social media analysis tools available on the market for businesses to adopt. All of the above come at a fee. The business will create a profile with the website, pay the subscription and start to monitor activities across all their social media platforms. The good thing about these tools, especially mentionlytics.com, as noted by Perakakis et al (2019), is that one can also see activities of one's competitors on social media platforms as well as their level of activity.

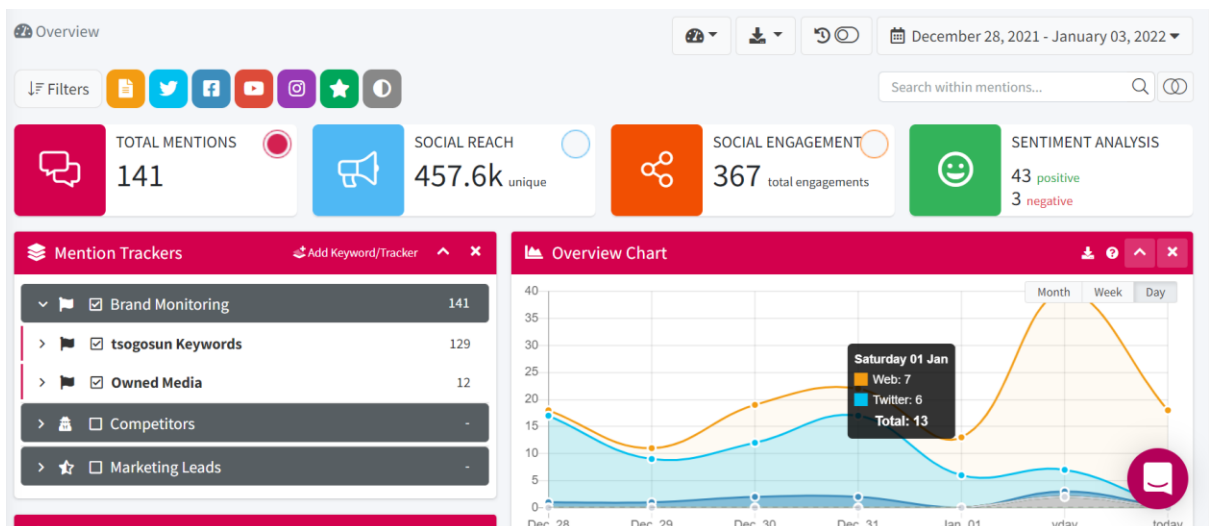


Figure 3.2: Mentionlytics dashboard for Tsogo Sun

Source: Mentionlytics.com

As illustrated above on the MentionItics dashboard for Tsogo Sun, one can easily see the level of engagements on social media, see which platforms are more active as well as the type of activity around those platforms. At a social interaction level, this then becomes a basis to measure how busy these platforms are apart from looking at the comments and 'likes' which is time consuming and hard. This summary brings the whole picture together by consolidating all platforms into one page, making it quick and easy to draw conclusions about the activities taking place on social media platforms.

Social media efficacy analysis is not only for tracking activity on social media but assists marketers in elevating their marketing power through social media data capabilities. This enables them to come up with more and better marketing approaches (Perakakis et al, 2019). Through understanding the customer better, the business is able to develop relevant marketing content, find the appropriate social media influencers, and refine the overall marketing approach (Foley, 2021).

3.4 Social media marketing challenges

It is therefore evident from literature that social media marketing has brought about a positive marketing option to businesses across all sectors (Alansari, Velikova & Jai, 2018; Fietkiewicz & Lins, 2019; Aydin, 2020; Budree, and Kapoor, Balaji & Jiang, 2021). The positive development which is widely commended, however comes with many challenges for both the business and the end users, who are the customers as well as potential customers (Foley, 2021).

For small businesses, the first inherent struggle is that of the business structure characterised by constraints in resources (both financial and in accessing skilled personnel) (Kotturi et al, 2021). These scholars explain that these two problems are not prevalent in large businesses that have dedicated teams to deal with the whole marketing function, including social media marketing. Although Kotturi et al (2021) highlight these as serious challenges for small hospitality businesses in effective utilisation of SMM, Oji, Iwu & Tengeh, (2017) argue that it is the small

businesses that stand to gain most from SMM as with small businesses, marketing on SM is more customised to suit the business model and involves targeted customers unlike the blanket approach usually used by hotel chains to cover all their hotels. Alansari, Velikova & Jai, (2018) adds that the struggle for small businesses in the pursuit of cost-effective marketing on Facebook in particular, is amplified by lack of readily available support on this social media platform. They explain that most social media platforms are not designed to offer readily available support particularly on marketing functions, where most communication is done via emails and responses that take long to come through. The scholar regrets a lack of sense of urgency in these situations.

Fylan (2018) underscores lack of capacity coupled by lack of will to adopt SM by small businesses, as the major challenges in terms of utilizing SM for effective marketing. The scholar also highlights lack of further training and unavailability of support in this regard from the government or the Department of Tourism and Economic Development, to assist particularly small businesses in the tourism sector to market themselves effectively and competitively.

Khasawneh et al (2021) add that these identified challenges in terms of effective marketing, not only adversely affect small business, but often specifically entrepreneurial women, who are trying hard to make ends meet. These scholars note that in 2019 nearly 90% of the active 2.4 million sellers on the Etsy.com platform (which is an online global marketplace) were identified as women. The bigger picture here is that the problem is also affecting the historically disadvantaged in terms of equal opportunities (Oji et al, 2017). Given the activities and publicity around the orientation towards equality and promotion of women's empowerment, it could be hoped that more would be done to support women in business.

A study carried out in 2014 in Spain by Sabate et al (2014) revealed that 54% of all posts by the travel industry had interactive content in the form of competitions,

questions and answers platforms, and sweepstakes which all increased interaction and customer engagement. It is such innovative initiatives that have proved social media to be an effective marketing tool in recent years (Aydin, 2020).

On the other hand, Carpenter and Harvey (2019) identify and classify two major challenges associated with using social media for marketing, from the end user's perspective. These are intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges. The scholars clarify that with intrapersonal challenges, the primary issue users face is the way they experience social media. It tends to be overwhelming. This is fuelled by the frustration users feel from trying to keep up with the quantity of content posted on social media. Hofacker & Belanche (2016) terms this dilemma as 'information overload' which ends up making social media content unenjoyable and less effective. Carpenter & Harvey (2019) express concern over users' frustrations around high frequency posts where they end up failing to find balance around SMM. The scholars further note the ultimate worst case scenario as user addiction to social media.

Interpersonal challenges are the second category of user related problems in SMM. This is a problem of user-generated content (UGC) resulting in other users feeling conflicted, frustrated or undermined by either the posts hotels circulate, or the posts of other users. Hofacker & Belanche (2016) exemplify this with political polarisation or religious insensitivity where posts created may undermine or offend other religions or cultures. They point out that this problem is normally prevalent around calendar celebrative posts. Fylan (2018) acknowledges that marketers are becoming more aware of their challenges and are toning down around polarisation and insensitivities in cultural diversity and religions as well as political affiliations.

Many scholars (Alansari et al, 2018; Budree et al, 2019; Chang et al, 2019 and Khasawneh et al, 2021), although they commend strides in effective marketing

through social media, bemoan the limited control marketers have when it comes to social media marketing. As noted above, Li et al (2019) highlight that marketers are no longer fully in control of the marketing that happens on social media. However, Foley (2021) notes that, although marketers do not entirely control activity around social media marketing, they still can drive and monitor traffic to these sites, stimulate activity as well as participate on social media. The scholar further confirms that the consumers are in charge of their pre-purchase and post-purchase experience through user-generated content and the major challenge remains that with negative eWOM there is the danger that it can destroy the brand once it becomes viral (Li et al, 2019)

While Alansari et al (2018) praise the value of social media platforms that have brought about novel opportunities for consumers and businesses alike, transforming the way business is done online these days, they lament that consumers and business have become easy targets of cybercrime due to the structure of social media. Thakur et al (2019) identifies the overwhelming amount of personal information shared on social media as the main driver of cybercrime on these platforms. Although businesses are investing more in safeguarding activities on these platforms through increasing budgets for information technology, and procuring tools to secure online information, Koigi (2020) argues that small businesses, such as hotels and lodges in remote and rural areas, are not well enough resourced to fight or protect themselves adequately from cybercrime and its associated dangers.

3.5 Cybercrime in South Africa

South Africa, according to Koigi (2020), is in the top 30 of countries in the world targeted for cybercrime. He notes that the country loses approximately R2.2 billion yearly due to cyber-attacks of various forms. Of this, 79.5% of the losses happen through ecommerce on payment platforms and gateways created on websites and social media sites, using credit card scamming (Thakur et al, 2019). This high

rate of criminality in the cyber space, according to Koigi (2020) was created by South Africa's slow pace in adopting legislation to tackle cybercrime in the past.

However this has since changed. Williams, Fourie and Siyaya (2021) report that South Africa enacted the Cybercrimes Act (Act No. 19 of 2020: Cybercrimes Act, 2020) on the 1st of June 2021 to create offenses of cybercrime. This Act defines cybercrime in South Africa as the unlawful access to ICT gadgets (USB & hard drives), illegal data interception, unlawful acquisition, use, possession of passwords, fraud, forgery and extortion online. The Act is an attempt to protect economic activity happening in this space (Williams et al, 2021) by ending or curbing online crime in South Africa with a particular concern for social media related crimes. In this Act, the South African government has created twenty cybercrime offenses and prescribed penalties. The Act makes reference to the POPI Act, making provision for offenses related to illegal possession and misuse of personal information which is very prevalent in social media platforms in South Africa (Williams et al, 2021).

Thakur et al (2019) note that social media platforms themselves have also done a lot recently to make social media accounts safer. These improvements include the adoption of the two-factor authentication (2FA) which has helped significantly in tightening security.

The main challenge at user level, highlighted by Koigi (2020), is user account credentials being leaked into database 'dumps' which often leads to account takeover. Thakur et al (2019) explains that, besides the frustration of losing an account and the invasion of privacy involved, users may end up opening new accounts thus losing all their information, shared media, and pages that they have followed on social media. All the history would be wiped out, and one would have to start again from the beginning. Koigi (2020) explains the complexity of cybercrime operations. He explains that the crime happens at a very technical level where criminals bypass or hijack 2FA and dominate the target account. This

is prevalent with Instagram due to its link with Facebook. The attackers will then have full control of the victim's account and can either use the access to defraud others of their money or damage their reputation or image. All these challenges are user-based, making it more uncomfortable for hotel customers to use hotel social media platforms' ecommerce portals for online bookings due to this high level of security compromise (Thakur et al, 2019).

3.6 Social Media effectiveness and challenges for small hospitality establishments in KZN- Literature gap

With regards to the research site for this study, there is a significant literature on the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool for small hospitality establishments. However, the literature available looks at South Africa as a country (Matikiti et al, 2016), and at metropolitan based establishments (Mosweunyane et al, 2019). At the country level, many scholars (Matikiti et al, 2016; Oji et al, 2017; Mosweunyane et al, 2019) note how social media has changed the way that hospitality businesses market their brands in South Africa. A few studies have been carried out with a blanket approach looking at South Africa as a whole (Budree et al, 2019), South and Zimbabwe comparison (Matikiti et al, 2016), the Cape metropole (Oji et al, 2017), Free State rural tourism SMMEs (Mosweunyane et al, 2019). The findings generally indicated that the majority of these businesses were using social media for marketing. The results from these studies also suggested that hospitality businesses utilised social media to promote their brands and services, track customer reviews, and engage with clients as a way to foster CRM (Matikiti et al, 2016; Oji et al, 2017; Mosweunyane et al, 2019). However, there is a paucity of information and research on the effectiveness of this phenomenon and the challenges created for small rural hospitality establishments - which is the focus of this study.

Although there is no specific study carried out on small hospitality businesses in KZN, those studies that have been done in other provinces such as Free State

(Mosweunyane et al, 2019) and Western Cape (Oji et al, 2017) on accommodation establishments confirm that they generally use social media to monitor consumer trends (65.3%), research new product ideas from what competitors are offering (65.2%), and determine the level of customer loyalty (64.2%). Results from the studies highlighted that 72.3% of these businesses considered social media as an effective marketing tool. Furthermore, the study by Oji et al (2017) suggests that social media is perceived more to be an effective marketing tool among star-graded hospitality establishments in the Western Cape Province of South Africa.

Some of the studies, for example, the one by Oji et al (2017) investigated whether social media marketing strategies were utilized by SMMEs in the hospitality sector in the Cape Metropole. The two studies are similar in the sense that they are both looking at small hospitality establishments. Oji et al find that most restaurants in the city of Cape Town use social media platforms for marketing purposes with Facebook and WhatsApp being the most common ones. The results also highlight that these social media marketing strategies are offering these business operators an effective platform for marketing through promotion, new product launches, customer loyalty management as well as socialising with customers. Results generally indicate that those that have adopted social media for marketing purposes confirm that it is an effective tool although platforms are not uniformly adopted. Budree et al (2019) found that 83.4% of respondents in their study will not book accommodation without reading its reviews on TripAdvisor.

To sum up, Michopoulou & Moisa (2019) confirm that about 92% of the biggest brands across all sectors in South Africa advertise on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and these businesses are gradually increasing their social media marketing budgets. This is a clear confirmation that marketing on these social media platforms has proved to be effective. Mosweunyane (2019) challenges SMEs in the hospitality industry to seriously considered majoring on social media

marketing as their main strategy as this is more affordable than many other available strategies. Chang et al (2019) adds that SMEs in hospitality have different metrics at their disposal to track the success of these platforms in real time for their marketing efforts.

3.7 Summary

This chapter highlighted how effective social media has been for businesses in the hospitality industry. Literature reviewed gave a largely positive picture of the successes that have been recorded in South Africa and elsewhere. The setbacks and dangers inherent in this form of marketing were, however, also noted. The chapter concluded that there remains an information gap as regards the success and potential success of this phenomenon with regards to small rural hospitality establishments in KZN, which are particularly vulnerable at this time, with many struggling to survive.

The next chapter explores the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has affected small hospitality businesses in KZN and the South African economy in general. The chapter also looks at the measures that have been put by businesses and the South African government to circumvent the impact of the pandemic and its subsequent national lockdowns.

CHAPTER FOUR

The impact of COVID-19 on small hospitality establishments in KZN

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool as well as the challenges around its utilization with particular reference to small hospitality establishments. This chapter explores the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the South African economy. It further discusses the specific impact on small hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter also discusses the measures the government as well as businesses themselves have put in place to circumvent the impact of the pandemic and its subsequent national lockdowns.

4.2 The South African outlook: Covid-19 impact

The COVID-19 pandemic started in the last quarter of 2019, in Wuhan, China and spread quickly across the world (Vergnaud, 2020). The disease is caused by the novel corona virus also known as the SARS-CoV-2. The name COVID-19 was introduced on the 11th of February, 2020 by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as an acronym which stands for CoronaVirus Disease of 2019 (Vergnaud, 2020)

Rogerson and Rogerson, (2020) report that the first case of COVID-19 in South Africa was recorded on the 5th March 2020, this being an infection imported from Italy by a man who had travelled back to South Africa. Thereafter, South Africa started reporting community transmissions within a week, following which the President declared a National State of Disaster on the 15th March, and the subsequent National Lockdown took effect from the 26th March, 2020. By 1st August, South Africa had reached over half a million confirmed COVID-19 cases, ranking 5th globally amongst the worst affected countries after the USA, India, Brazil and Russia. The national lockdown marked the economic shut down of

most economic activity in the country, including the hospitality and tourism businesses (SA Coronavirus, 2020).

4.3 Economic impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected the tourism and hospitality industry but has adversely impacted on the global economy in general and this widespread impact will be severe for several years to come (Melber, 2020). The tourism industry's catalyst for success is the promotion of movements of people within and amongst countries, and the outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in travel bans, and the closure of airports and borders resulting in zero revenue for this travel based sector (Ma et al, 2020). In the South African context, the 'no operation' period lasted for about five and a half months, between the end of March to mid-September, 2020. As noted by Lanz, Fischhof, & Lee (2010), the hospitality and tourism businesses generally have high operational fixed overheads, including electricity, rentals and labour leading to a huge bill accumulating without any revenue to service it. This has resulted in a number of businesses shutting down permanently.

While Ma, Zhao, Gong and Wengel, (2020) claim that the tourism and hospitality industry is the hardest hit by the pandemic, Rogerson and Rogerson (2020) see the industry as responsible for contributing significantly to the rapid spread of COVID-19 across the globe – this being as a result of the inherent structural architecture of the tourism system, along with all players in the value chain, such as tour operators, airlines, hotels and cruise ships, that fuel or promote movement of tourists from one place to another, thereby spreading the disease. Hence, to curb the spread of the pandemic, this industry had particularly stringent regulations imposed on it during the national lockdown.

A Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM) provided a 'barometer' to measure and establish how South African households have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown (Rogerson and Rogerson,

2020). In the very early stages of the lockdown and rapid increase in infections, this study reported that South Africa experienced an 18% decline in employment between February and April 2020. This resulted in about three million jobs being shed in South Africa. Ma et al (2020) predict that the impact of COVID-19 in Africa, as a less economically developed continent, will be particularly severe. With direct reference to South Africa, Rogerson and Rogerson (2020) highlight that since 1994, the tourism and hospitality sector has expanded remarkably, registering about ten million international arrivals in 2018, and placing it as Africa's leading tourist destination. This confirms that the industry is a major contributor to South Africa's GDP and that the effects of COVID-19 have been far-reaching, devastating the industry through company closures, liquidations and job losses. The Presidency, (2020) predicted a 5% decline in GDP by the end of 2020 due to the COVID-19 imposed economic shutdown. Overall, the lockdown was estimated to have cost the economy R13 billion a day while the economy was shut down completely.

4.4 COVID-19 statistics in South Africa as at December 26, 2021

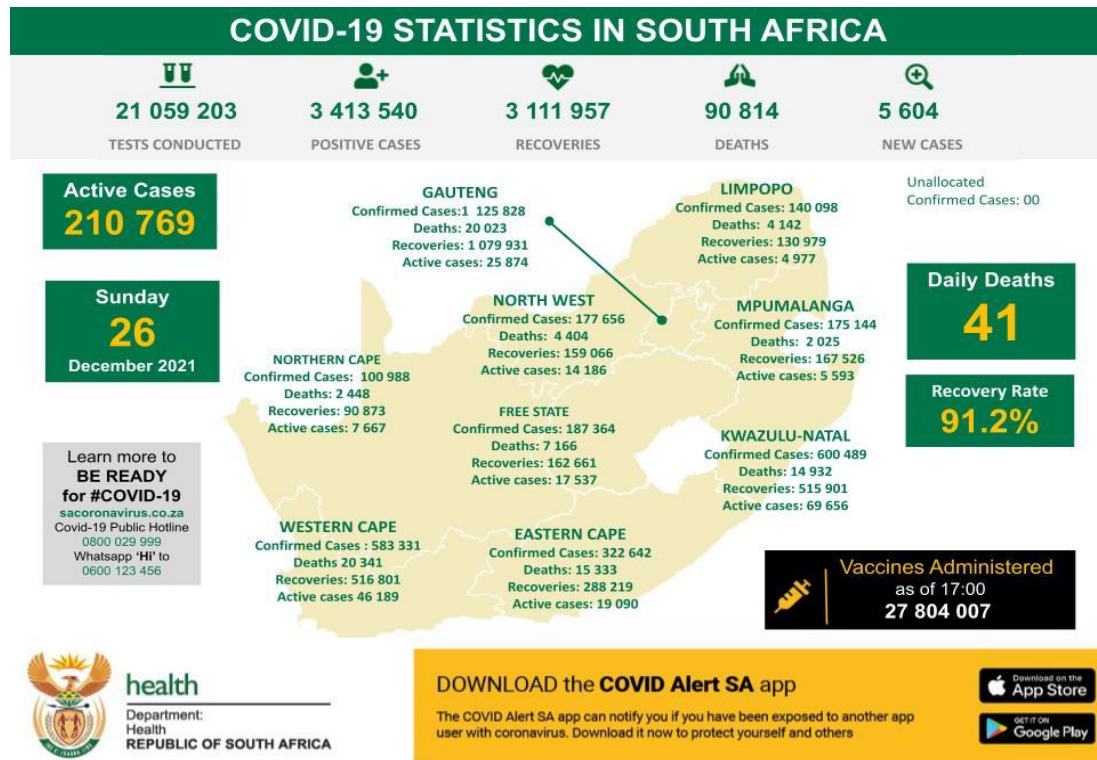


Figure 4.1: COVID-19 statistics for South Africa as at 26th of December 2021

Source: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2021/12/26/update-on-covid-19-sunday-26-december-2021/>

Looking at the figure above, statistics of people infected with COVID-19 in South Africa rose from 1 person on the 5 March 2020 to 3 413 540 cases on the 26 December 2021 making South Africa (as noted above) the fifth worst affected country in the world (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2020). KwaZulu-Natal, which is the study site, was the second worst affected province with 600 489 confirmed cases by 26 December, 2021 (SA Coronavirus, 2021). At provincial level, this means that the tourism and hospitality industry is proportionally more affected even though all provinces were put under similar lockdown conditions. Rogerson and

Rogerson (2020) explore the provinces most vulnerable to the pandemic through the relative share each local tourism economy contributes to the GDP. They noted that KwaZulu-Natal has 10 tourism-dependent local municipalities which the scholars highlight as being at risk of collapse from the impact of COVID-19. These municipalities are: Okhahlamba, Umdoni, KwaDukuza, uPhongolo, Nongoma, Jozini, Mtubatuba, Msinga, uMhlabuyalingana and uMngeni.

4.5 During and Post-COVID-19 tourism and hospitality sector recovery strategy

According to The Presidency (2020), South Africa took a phased approach towards return to normalcy in terms of withdrawal of strict national lockdown regulations. Central to this response is the framework for governance in terms of a 'risk adjusted strategy' for opening economic activity through 5 levels of alert, related to the severity of the pandemic

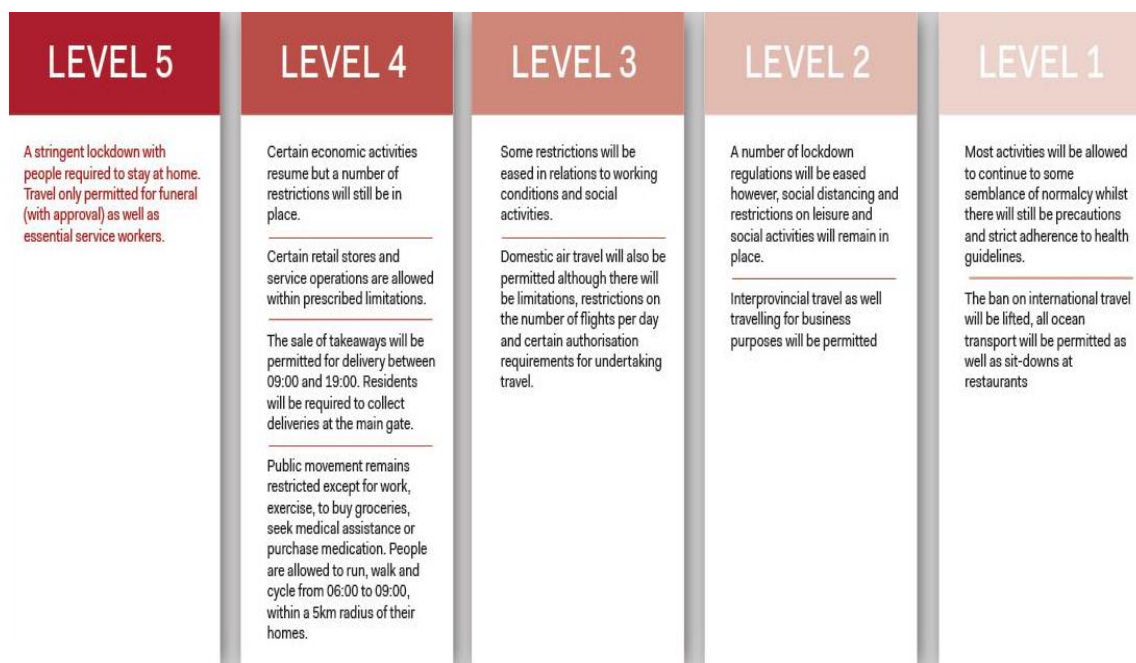


Figure 4.2: Levels of alert for Covid-19 in South Africa

Source: South African Government (2020)

The above figure illustrates the alert levels for the risk-adjusted strategy by the South African government for phasing out the national lockdown. According to The Presidency (2020) this was the basis of a strategy for returning to economic activity as well as part of the recovery plan for the entire economy. As the hospitality sector was identified as chief among the sectors that posed the highest risk in terms of COVID-19 spread and transmission, the sector was scheduled to only start operating again in alert Level 1, after a total shutdown of the entire sector for five months.

As was common practice by many governments in crafting response mechanisms to bail out economic sectors, El-Sadr, and Justman (2020), note that the South African government developed relief measures aimed at cushioning the effects of COVID-19. The government availed the hospitality industry of the Tourism Relief Fund, valued at R200 million, designed to offer support to 4000 qualifying applicants, and this small grant was capped at R50 000 for each recipient

(Department of Tourism, 2020). Although the grant introduction was a positive development in the difficult time of no business activity, Rogerson and Rogerson, (2020) regret the selective approach used to disburse the funds to successful applicants. The government disbursed this fund to support small, black-owned tourism businesses who would be required to prove that they were in distress because of COVID-19. This selective approach to supporting businesses after the pandemic does not take into account that the effects of the pandemic were not selective. All businesses, small, medium or large were equally affected as none were operational. Ajam, (2020) suggests that support should have been offered across the board to all affected businesses without selecting on basis of the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BEE).

Apart from availing funding for certain distressed SMEs, South African Tourism developed a Tourism Sector Recovery Plan (TSRP) to resuscitate the sector (Republic of South Africa, 2020). This was a high-level strategy at national level aimed at offering a recovery plan to the sector. It was mainly aimed at preserving jobs, and matching tourism demand and supply. This was done through collaboration with many stakeholders from government, social partners and the private sector. The TSRP was anchored in three strategic themes which are re-ignite tourism demand, rejuvenating supply (private sector) and strengthening and enabling capacity.

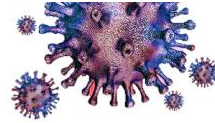
4.6 The impact of COVID-19 on small hospitality establishments in KZN

Small hotels and lodges in rural KwaZulu-Natal were necessarily severely affected by the impact of COVID-19 as noted by Makhaye & Mkhize (2020). A state of disaster was also declared on the 15th of March 2020 (Sucheran, 2021), the declaration coming with major consequences for the these small remote hospitality businesses as travelling for leisure was banned, visas cancelled, thirty-five borders and airports, and two sea ports were closed and foreign nationals, who constitute the bulk of international tourists, were denied visas. All businesses

were closed which meant that there was no revenue coming into the businesses despite their having overheads and many other operational costs to meet.

The Big 10

Coronavirus/Covid-19 Emergency Plan



National State of Disaster Declared



Travel ban and visa cancellations for visitors from Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, US, UK and China from March 18



Schools to be closed from Wednesday March 18 to end of Easter weekend (April 18)



Gatherings of more than 100 people prohibited



Visa denial to anyone who has visited high risk countries



Enhanced testing of SA citizens returning from high-risk countries and those who have visited since mid-February



35 land ports and 2 sea ports to be shut



Non-essential travel by all levels of government stopped



No prison visits for 30 days



Any foreign national who has visited high risk countries in past 20 days will be denied a visa

Source: GCIS/Pres Cyril Ramaphosa statement, March 15 2020, Graphic: Rudi Louw

Figure 4.3: The big 10 Covid-19 emergency plan

Source: Daily Maverick, Available online:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-03-15-president-ramaphosas-covid-19-address-in-23-bullet-points/>

The above illustration by the Daily Maverick (2020) highlights what the government announced as the COVID-19 emergency plan on the 15th of March, 2020. As illustrated and explained above, most of the measures put in place had a direct negative impact on the small hospitality businesses as they could not operate.

A temporary reprieve came around mid-June in 2020 when several hotels, particularly in Durban and Umhlanga, were used as quarantine centres and paid by the government for being used as official quarantine sites (Bhengu, 2020). However, Bhengu further explains that this reprieve was only beneficial to large city hotels which are outside the scope of this study. These hotels included among others, the Palace All-Suite Hotel, Umhlanga Sands, The Royal Hotel, Cabana Beach Resort, Coastlands, Onomo Hotel, Mackaya Bella Guesthouse and Wentworth Hotel which are classified as big hotels and are located in an urban area – Metropole of Ethekewini (Bhengu, 2020).

The disparity on the effects of COVID-19 between large and small hospitality establishments is also highlighted by Ramalepe (2021) who noted that Premier Hotels and Resorts procured land for R365 million in Umhlanga KZN, developed a four star hotel and another three star property. The group also procured two more properties in Sandton at an undisclosed amount, all this was done during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, small rural establishments like Cranford Country Lodge in Midlands, KZN was sold due to the impact of COVID-19.

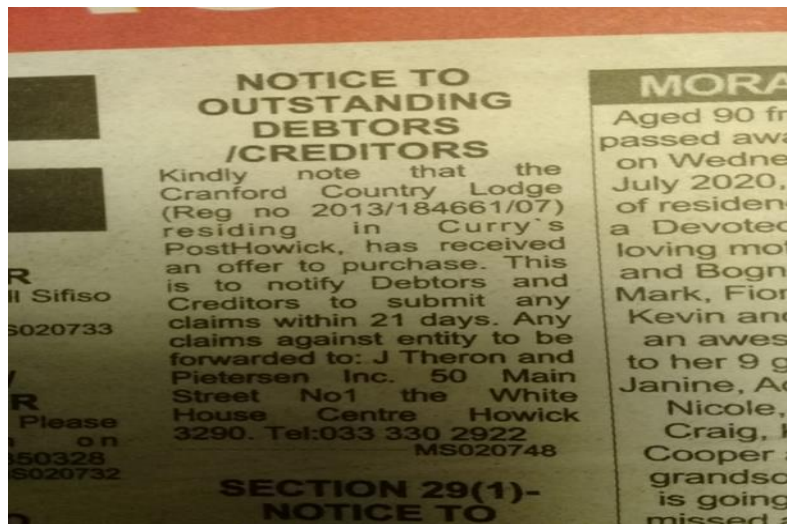


Figure 4.4: Notice to sell Cranford Country Lodge

Source: The Village Talk Newspaper

According to Businesstech (2020) 24.3% of the hospitality businesses in KZN had to permanently retrench employees due to COVID-19 impact. Although the impact was particularly hard in these small establishments, as noted by Dube-Ncube (2020), he also points out that the impact was relatively severe across board, small or big establishments being affected. He illustrates this by noting the closure of the five star Hilton Hotel Durban on the 11th of January, 2021.

Continued extension of the lockdown made it difficult for small rural hospitality businesses in KwaZulu-Natal to pick up and recover. Mphahlele (2021) estimated the revenue from tourism lost to be around R700m after the cancellation of the 2021 Comrades Marathon that takes place annually in KZN. This provides direct revenue to these small establishments in the form of accommodation bookings, food provision and other ancillary tourism services, such as shuttles.

KwaZulu-Natal hosts annual events that draw tourists from the local, national, regional and international markets to the province, as part of the province's tourism and hospitality sector development and promotional strategy. These are the events known to be stimulating tourism activity during off-peak seasons bringing in visitors and revenue for these small hospitality businesses in the province.

Figure 3 below gives an outlook of business lost, particularly in KZN, by tourism establishments due to prolonged lockdowns and regulations which prohibited certain activities such as mass gatherings deemed as potentially mass spreading vehicles for the virus (Mphahlele, 2021). These activities included any large gatherings such as funerals, sporting events, leisure activities, galas, parties and any other form of gathering. These were totally banned and the tourism industry was not spared hence they had to cancel all events that had to do with large numbers of people gathering at the same place at the same time (Rogerson, 2020).

Event	Venue	Regular number of visitors	Date	Current status
Midmar Mile swimming	Howick	12 000 swimmers (Sport24, 2020),	8-9 February 2020	Took place
Dusi Canoe Marathon	Pietermaritzburg - Durban	900-1600 peddlers (Dusi website), including a number of swimmers from Spain, the US, Austria, Denmark, etc. (Tatham, 2019)	25-27 February 2020	Took place
Highland Gathering	Amanzimtoti	10 000 visitors in 2019 (Amanzimtoti Lions Club, 2019)	25 April 2020	Cancelled
Bike Fest SA	Port Edward	R150-260 million in 2016, 13 427 patrons in 2018 (Aylward, 2019)	25-27 April 2020	Cancelled
Africa's Travel Indaba	Durban Exhibition Centre	1033 exhibitors, 6500 delegates (Tourism Indaba 2019)	12-14 May 2020	Postponed indefinitely
Comrades Marathon	Durban and Pietermaritzburg	27 500 runners, R335 million in 2018, (Comrades Marathon Website; Nxumalo & Newman, 2018; Ray, 2020)	14 June 2020	Cancelled
Vodacom Durban July	Durban Grayville Racecourse	43 874 people/R300 million in 2019 (Rajgopaul 2019)	04 July 2020	Postponed to July 25
East Coast Radio House & Garden Show	Durban Exhibition Centre	Over 350 exhibitors	26 June-05 July 2020	Postponed to 28 October 2020
Royal Show	Pietermaritzburg	450 exhibitors, 250 000 visitors (Royal Show Website)	24 July – 2 August 2020	Cancelled
Umkhosi Womhlanga/ Reed Dance	Enyokeni Palace, kwaNongoma	More than 10 000 maidens (Dawood, 2019)	31 August 2020	Date still stood

Figure 4.5: Events cancelled and postponed in 2020 in KZN

Source: Hlengwa (2020)

As illustrated in figure 3 above, these annual events were initially postponed indefinitely, and later cancelled, due to prolonged lockdown extensions. The implications were that the province lost millions of visitors as well as billions of rands that participants and visitors spend at these events (Hlengwa, 2021). This is direct business that cascades to small hospitality business in most of rural and peri-urban areas of KZN.

According to Dube-Ncube (2020), the impact of COVID-19 had employees in the hospitality and tourism sector being put on either unpaid leave, or temporary or permanent retrenchment due to lost business. KZN was the hardest hit province as illustrated by Hlengwa (2021) below.

	Average number of employees	Percentage on reduced wages	Percentage on unpaid leave	Percentage made redundant	Total number of employees affected
Eastern Cape	20.43	34.45%	16.55%	13.76%	2 315
Gauteng	14.71	25.00%	14.29%	17.86%	1 337
Western Cape	9.06	5.00%	11.25%	3.00%	153
Northern Cape	13.09	27.29%	16.40%	23.15%	788
Free State	10.85	33.55%	22.98%	22.08%	1 168
KwaZulu-Natal	30.81	64.00%	44.07%	31.62%	3 615
Mpumalanga	13.70	41.60%	31.11%	24.44%	945
North-West	17.12	33.44%	19.18%	16.60%	2 121
Limpopo	12.99	28.63%	16.50%	14.08%	5 928

Figure 4.6: Statistics of employees affected by Covid-19 in the Hospitality industry in 2020

Source: Hlengwa (2021)

The accommodation sector (namely lodges, hotels and guesthouses) came up with an option for guests to postpone their visits rather than refund them money for their bookings (Businesstech, 2020). However, many operators faced resistance from guests as they wanted refunds as no one knew when things would be back to normal again (Hlengwa, 2021).

4.7 South Africa's Tourism Recovery Plan

Table 4.1: Recovery plan for the South African tourism

Strategic Thrust	Recommendations
Protection and rejuvenation of supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sum up a comprehensive sector/ government recovery partnership for collaboration on every aspect of tourism recovery• Dispense a Tourism Supply Support package as a way of protecting core infrastructure and assets of tourism towards reopening of the economy and businesses.• Develop globally acceptable and recognised biosecurity screenings along the entire value chain of the tourism enterprise to rebuild traveller confidence as well as promote safe travel.
Re-ignition of demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The department of tourism to partner with other responsible departments and craft strategies that would promote inflows of tourists through removal of travel barriers through introduction of Visa free travel, reduce crime in tourist hotspots through providing safety guarantees• Promote domestic demand in all the phases of economic activity reopening through promotion of safe travel.• Initiate global marketing strategies targeting source markets with the highest potential and major spending on tourism.
Develop and enable capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote investment and new market entry for sector transformation• Promote regional cooperation with neighbouring destinations for seamless experience in the region

Source: Researcher's compilation based on a draft presentation by South African Tourism

The recovery plan articulated above is aimed at promoting survival of micro-hospitality businesses post the pandemic as they were among the most affected businesses. The survival of these small businesses as noted by OECD (2020) is at risk as well as the entire tourism ecosystem. There was seen to be a need for

the South African government to promote international travel influx by easing travel regulations while tightening COVID-19 compliance protocols to avoid a potential spike in infections. Although the South African government has shown a significant will to assist with the recovery of the tourism sector through the introduction of the temporary employer/ employee relief scheme (TERS), where the employer and employee received some money as a relief from the economic hardships brought about by the lockdown, the government has not as yet committed to introduce sustainable support for the recovery of the sector and survival of these small hospitality establishments.

According to BusinessTech (2021), the Covid-19 TERS was set up from the provisions of the unemployment insurance fund (UIF) to assist financially, businesses and employees affected by lockdown due to Covid-19. It also covered vulnerable employees with comorbidities and those above 60 years who could not be safely accommodated at work due to age, as well as those who were required to isolate and quarantine to curb infections. All these could claim for the monetary grant through the provisions of the TERS fund.

4.8 Summary

The chapter detailed the impact of the pandemic from a general national approach and focussed down on the actual impact the pandemic has caused on the province. The chapter acknowledged the impact the pandemic has caused on the economy in general and the hospitality industry in particular for South Africa as a destination and KwaZulu-Natal as the site of the study. Recent statistics were provided of the number of people who have since been affected by the virus at both national and provincial levels. The chapter also highlighted the severity of the impact particularly for small hospitality establishments noting those that had to close and those that faced business disruptions which resulted in retrenching staff due to financial hardships. A recovery plan was suggested at the end, for the tourism and hospitality industry to rejuvenate following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next chapter identifies and explores the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) will be examined as the background theory and Roger's (2003) Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) will complement the Technology Acceptance Model in unpacking the adoption of ICTs. The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2 (UTAUT2) Users and Gratifications Theory (UGT), and the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Model will also be examined in detail as theories that encapsulate significant aspects of social media research and are applicable to this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Theoretical framework for social media adoption and utilisation

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a review of the literature relevant to the subject matter of this study. The roles of various SM platforms in the context of this study were reviewed in both the international and South African contexts. This chapter explores the theoretical framework which underpins the study. Various theoretical models will be interrogated individually and an effort will be made to examine relationships and interdependence among some of the theories discussed and their relevance to this study.

5.2 Theories and models

The emergence of social media marketing as an active and preferred current way of marketing has attracted the attention of many scholars (Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017; Matikiti, Mpinganjira & Roberts-Lombard, 2018; Alansari et al, 2018; Gupta, 2019; Kim et al, 2020; Seo et al, 2020). However, the integration of social media into business marketing strategies remains controversial and a serious concern for hospitality businesses across the globe. This uncertainty has prompted the proposal of a range of theories and conceptual frameworks to help understand the nature of social media networking and how businesses and users adopt them.

These theories are important as they help businesses and researchers alike, in understanding, and eventually adopting, technology-based media. According to Kim, Lee & Contractor (2019), theoretical frameworks aid in the interpretation of data, and in discovering new avenues in the field, as well as neutralizing some of the dominance of technology in societies and businesses. For the purpose of this study, the following theories will be reviewed: The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM); the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) model; Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). It is

unfortunate, as noted by Matikiti (2015), that there are no direct theories related to social media adoption that have been agreed upon, as SMM is still a new phenomenon in the broad marketing spectrum. Theories to be used are borrowed from other disciplines such as technology and psychology.

5.2.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

According to Tropopsakul, (2018), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed by Fred Davis in 1986. It is regarded by many scholars (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang & Johnson, 2013; Matikiti et al, 2018; Purwanto & Juwita, 2017; Tropopsakul, 2018), as one of the most applicable theoretical frameworks for understanding the ever-increasing adoption and utilization of new technologies. Tropopsakul, (2018), explains that TAM was crafted on the primary principle of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action (TRA). According to Purwanto & Juwita, (2017), the construct of TRA was developed to help predict behavioural intention or the intention of behaviour. It is from this concept that Davis (1986) developed TAM with the assumption that the consumer's intention to behave in a certain way was determined by two variables namely: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU)

TAM, as explained by Davis (1989), hinges on these two sub-principles as the fundamental causes of users' adoption of new technologies. Davis (1989), defines the PU construct as the extent to which a user believes that using a certain technology or system would positively enhance their job performance, while the construct of PEOU is the extent to which the user believes that using a particular technology or system would be relatively easy. As such, the user's attitude would determine the intention to use the technology.

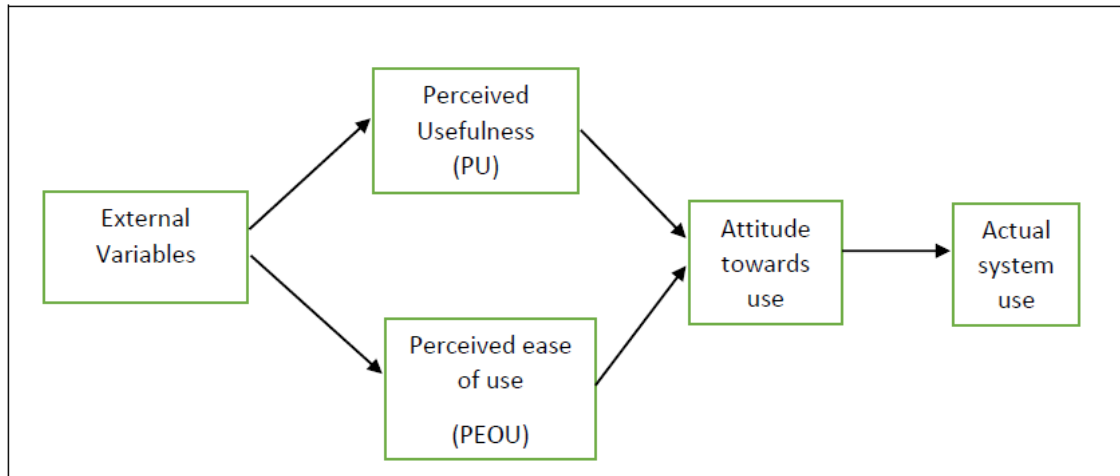


Figure 5.1: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Source: Adapted from Davis, (1989)

As noted by Matikiti et al (2018), the above model has been widely used across disciplines to predict new IT acceptance by users and businesses alike. Tropopsakul, (2018) confirms that researchers found that this model has also been consistent and reliable in explaining new technology acceptance behaviour across various disciplines.

- **Perceived Usefulness (PU)**

As defined earlier, PU is the extent to which the users believe that using a certain technology helps in meeting goal-driven needs, or that it enhances performance (Sharma & Bhatt, 2018). Looking at social media, each platform is developed to offer certain unique primary services to its users, for example, Instagram is for sharing photos and videos online, TripAdvisor is for sharing travel experience while LinkedIn is for building professional networks. In this fashion, the PU of social media adoption is that these various platforms all have these unique likeable and advantageous attributes.

Rauniar et al (2013) distinguish the construct of PU from PEOU in that the variables that determine the PU are less inclined towards social norms than they are to professional norms. The scholars were arguing that PU applies more to work related scenarios where one would want to know whether the technology will be useful in easing one's job or in accomplishing set goals. However, contrary to this understanding by Rauniar et al, Sharma and Bhatt (2018) believe that both PU and PEOU cut across social and professional contexts. Their argument is that even in non-professional situations, a technology such as SM (Facebook in particular) can be equally useful to both scenarios. While in a social context Facebook can be used to connect with friends and family, it can also be effectively used in a business situation to market a business brand and products alike.

- **Perceived ease of use (PEOU)**

Defined as the extent to which the use of a SM (technology) platform is effortless, PEOU has a continual effect on perceived usefulness (PU) and the intention to use systems (Sharma & Bhatt, 2018). The construct of PEOU borrows from Zipf's (1949) principle of less effort, which states that individuals tend to adopt courses of action that will require the least average input from themselves. This principle of 'least effort' is applicable in assuming that SM users will be more willing to adopt a platform whose applications require minimal effort to learn and to use, such as uploading photos and sharing media online effortlessly.

In a social media context, as noted by Matikiti et al (2018), users tend to assess SM platforms based on how easy they are to use, as well as their effectiveness in helping them to achieve their social media related objectives. This supports Sharma and Bhatt's (2018) assertion that the two

concepts of PU and PEOU are interrelated, with PEOU having an ongoing effect on PU.

Rauniar et al (2013) provided a linked idea, suggesting that social media platforms need to be 'user-centric'. Their suggestion was prompted by the fact that user demographics are wide, and hence sites need to be simple to use, with their applications and modules clearly designed. The user's experience will be enhanced by an easy-to-use website. A good example is that of Facebook which has over 2.4 billion active users. Rauniar et al, (2013) attribute Facebook's popularity to both principles of PU and PEOU.

Social media platforms have various applications and tools that can be packaged to enhance user experience, while they exchange and share information (Rauniar et al, 2013). In the South African context, for example, Morrell (2019) reports that Facebook has over 21 million active daily users sharing photos, videos and information. By its generic structure and form, Facebook allows its users to post photos, videos, hyperlinks and messages on friends' walls, as well as updating their status. This confirms the construct of perceived usefulness (PU) and it is enhanced by the SM tools and applications at the user's disposal. The continuously growing user subscription of such popular SM platforms as Facebook (as noted by Morrell, 2019), are attributed to the PU of the sites and their effective tools and applications.

Moreso, Rauniar et al (2013) acknowledge that SM users are likely to find platforms more useful if they enjoy them. Using Instagram to share a short video from a holiday with family can be both useful and fun for the user – useful in the sense that Instagram is now being used to store memories online in the form of photos and videos. This excitement will keep users frequenting the platforms many times a day, thus creating a buzzing traffic flow. In business terms, the high traffic activity on SM is good news, and useful for companies that have adopted

these platforms for marketing purposes. Interactivity adds additional fun and enjoyment which ultimately enhances the benefits of SM to the user (Matikiti et al, 2018)

According to Purwanto and Juwita (2017), TAM is consumer oriented as it presents a way to predict customer behaviour in accepting technology. The model thus makes it easier for business to understand potential consumer behaviour and what will motivate them to adopt and utilize technology. Although the model does not explicitly give reference to social media adoption, SM, according to Gupta (2019), is still classified as a new hybrid of recent marketing technologies and, as such, lessons on SM adoption can be learnt with reference to the TAM.

Through using TAM, businesses are able to understand the attitudes and behaviour of their targeted customers as well as the effectiveness of technologies and social media platforms being used to drive their online marketing strategies (Tripopsakul, 2018). For example, if customers are convinced that social media platforms (technology) such as Instagram and Facebook are easy to use and useful to them, this will increase their desire to buy the services and products being provided (Purwanto & Juwita, 2017). This sums up the assertion by Matikiti et al (2018) that TAM, amongst many other theoretical frameworks, stands out as one of the most useful bases for research on customer behaviour with regards to acceptance of online marketing technologies.

5.2.2 The Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Model

The Technology-organisation-environment (TOE) theory has been identified for this study to help to understand at organizational level how businesses embrace new technology. TOE was developed by Tornatzky & Fleischer (1990) as a model for assessing factors that influence new technology adoption by business organisations. According to Matikiti et al (2018), TOE is based on three fundamental aspects of a business that can influence the adoption and utilisation

of new technologies. These are its technology, its organisation and its environment.

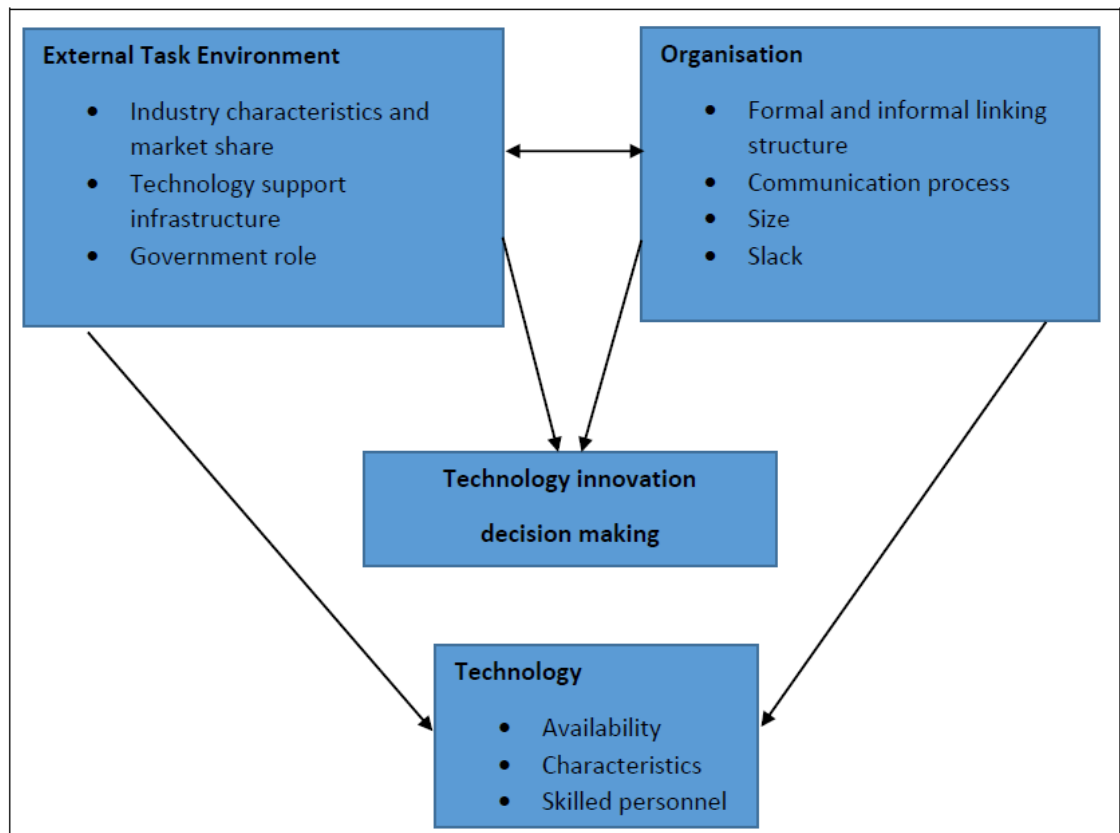


Figure 5.2: Technology- Organisation-Environment Model

Source: Adapted from Matikiti et al, (2018)

Matikiti et al (2018) describe the technological context as both the technology hardware, and the practices or processes available to complement the use of the hardware. This equipment is not only limited to internal (acquired) technology, but includes the external technological sphere, outside of the organisation. For instance, companies may have their own computer hardware and websites, but the advent of social media platforms has brought about useful external technologies of which no company, apart from the developers, can claim ownership. In this study, these now represent the most influential external

technologies available to firms. The internal technological context also refers to the necessary skills required to operate the technology.

The organisational context refers to the firm's internal processes and structures. This includes the firm's size and the scope of its operations, as well as its management structures (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). It also covers the internal communication processes and the company's resources. It is these variables that determine the ability of the company to acquire and make full use of the required technologies.

The environmental context refers to all the external factors that may influence a company's decision-making towards adopting new technologies. These traditional factors, according to Matikiti et al (2018), include the business' customers, its competitors, the government and the economy. According to Gupta (2019) global business has been transformed by the emergence of e-commerce and social media marketing. This combined revolution has led to the advent of 'socialnomics', which (as discussed above) refers to economic activity around social media. These developments mean that customers (an external factor) are now readily accessible on social media platforms, and businesses need to consider this development and find the means to embrace technology if they are to compete on the same market platform with other businesses.

The TOE model is ideal for this study as it presents a platform on which to interrogate the adoption of SM marketing for business purposes. The model identifies internal factors such as employees' technological knowledge, as well as external factors such as pressure from competitors who have already successfully adopted SMM. A company may be compelled to adopt SMM if most of its competitors have adopted it, and are gaining in market share as a result. The same applies to sites such as TripAdvisor, in that if travellers keep writing reviews about a hotel, especially negative ones, the hotel will be compelled to join

TripAdvisor and start responding or defending their business each time a negative review is posted (Mate, Trupp, & Pratt, 2019).

Internally, factors such as skills levels may negatively or positively influence an organisation's ability to adopt social media for Marketing (Matikiti, 2015). If none of the staff members has the necessary skills to run the social media platforms internally, the organisation may need to send selected staff for training on social media application utilisation.

5.3 The relationship between TAM and TOE models

Results from a study by Tripopsakul (2018), on social media adoption as a business marketing platform, using a TAM-TOE approach, noted a close relationship between TAM and TOE frameworks from a business perspective. Results from the study highlighted that the three contexts of technology, organisation and environment have significant influence on the adoption of social media for marketing purposes, using the constructs of perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) as mediating variables. This shows an interdependence among the contexts from both theories. A clear relationship is noted in the business SM adoption context by Tripopsakul, (2018). This indicates that the two theories were found to represent the adoption of SM very well in this business context.

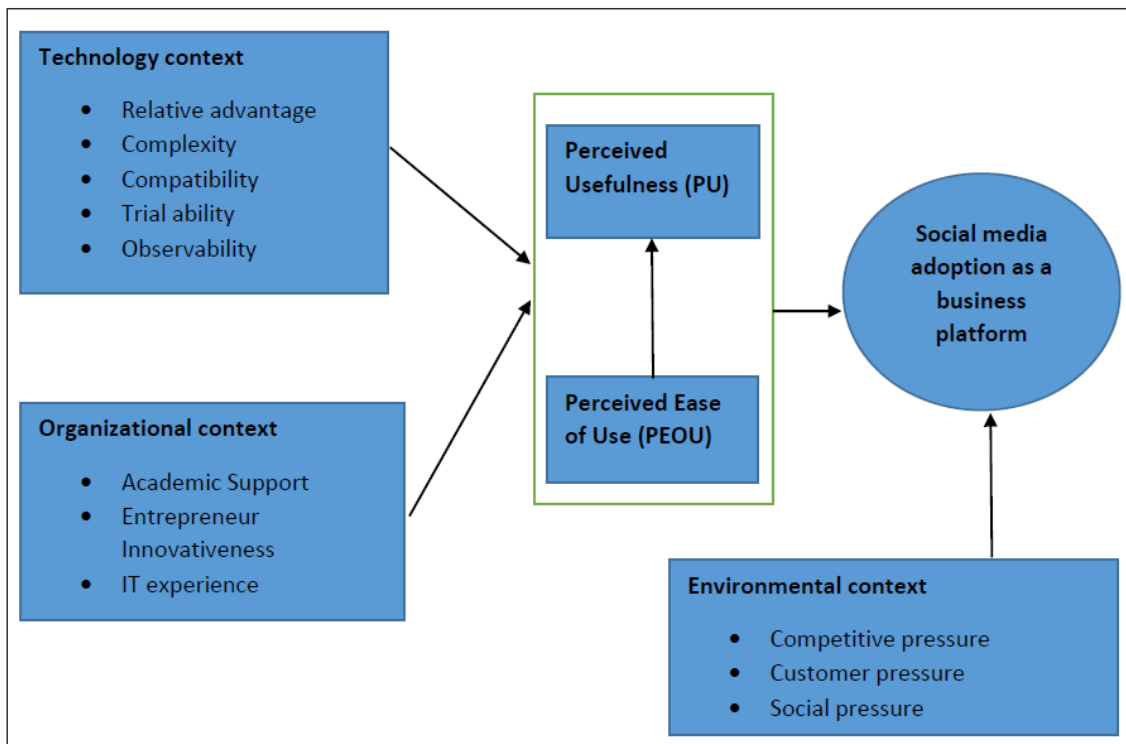


Figure 5.3: The relationship between TAM & TOE theories

Source: Adapted from Tripopsakul, (2018)

In the diagram above, the close relationship and interdependence of the two theories is clearly demonstrated by Tripopsakul, (2018). In the background, two major contexts from the TOE model, with an internal bearing (Technology and Organisational contexts) provide an internal platform for an organisation to interrogate the constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, facilitating a decision about adopting social media as a business platform.

Organisational aspects, such as the availability of skilled manpower to run social media marketing, are obvious yardsticks businesses can use to determine whether the organisation ticks the box on the ‘perceived ease of use’ construct. Although the environmental context of the TOE model seems independent, from both the PU and PEOU constructs within the TAM model, it has in fact a direct

influence on the actual adoption of SM as a business platform. These would be the external factors such as social pressure from customers and competitors.

5.4 Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT)

Kim et al (2019) define innovation as a process where new ideas, behaviours or new imaginative constructs are brought into reality. Diffusion is defined as a concept of communicating innovation, through various channels, to members of a social system over time. The Innovation Diffusion Theory was developed by Rogers in 1983 as a model to help understand how new innovations are communicated. According to Rogers (2003) technology adoption can be predicted through the following attributes: the advantage they present over existing options, their ease of use, their 'trialability' without having to procure them first, their compatibility with prior technology and the possibility of demonstrating the results of adoption, prior to adoption.

These attributes, as noted by Kim et al (2019), significantly influence the adoption of new technologies. The same can be said for social media adoption for marketing by businesses, if one takes a closer look at the identified attributes determining whether companies will adopt a new technology or not. For instance, an organisation would look at the compatibility of the intended SM with their existing systems, and the demonstrability of its return on investment, before adopting it, as well as the ease of using it. The ease of use attribute, however, might prompt organisations to invest in staff training should they recognise a lack of the skills necessary to effectively run social media platforms for marketing.

According to Agag & El-Masry, (2016) IDT and TAM theories present a compelling platform to demonstrate travellers' intention to participate in travel review sites and online travel communities, which will influence decisions to purchase and subsequently generate positive word of mouth approval. However, despite the significance of this model (IDT) in explaining technology adoption, Kim et al (2019) regret the scarcity of studies using it to directly explain the adoption of SM for

marketing by businesses in general. This study will help to fill that gap in terms of adding knowledge to the body of literature on how these theoretical frameworks help explain social media adoption by micro-hospitality businesses for marketing in the context of a LEDC.

5.5 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The uses and gratifications theory, as developed by Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1973) presents an audience-centred approach to explain how and why people actively use and continue to use certain media to gratify (satisfy) specific needs. In other words, UGT demonstrates the psychological needs that trigger the use of certain media, as well as highlighting reasons why people will choose certain communication mediums over others (Kim et al, 2019)

In discussing social media adoption by specific consumers and the general public, Chiang (2013) argues that the UGT is a well-developed model that has proved useful in unpacking the theoretical dimension of assessing internet usage, as well as e-commerce interfaces. In social media terms, the availability of these platforms triggers the gratification of consumers' needs for social connection, which will in turn result in their continued use. Use of SM platforms, as noted by Kim et al (2019), is sustained by the gratification of the following needs: social (which is the need for social interaction and social presence); hedonistic gratifications (which is fantasy, enjoyment and escapism) and utilitarian gratifications (which are practical attributes).

Kim et al (2019) add that people nowadays adopt, use and continue to use, SM simply because SM gratifies their need for immediacy and the easy access to real-time features presented by social media platforms. With reference to the literature reviewed above, this study sees that customers adopt and use SM primarily for social bonding, information, playfulness, participation (on travel platforms) as well as their need to seek recommendations (again specifically on travel platforms) in regard to holiday destinations.

5.6 Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2 (UTAUT2)

The original unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) was developed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis in 2003. Based on five constructs of: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions and intention, the theory is found to be accurate in predicting new technology adoption across many disciplines (Kim & Hall, 2020). Nearly a decade after its introduction, Venkatesh, Thong & Xu (2012) reinvented the original UTAUT with a more inclusive 'UTAUT 2' model. This new model, according to Assaker, Hallak & El-Haddad (2020), overcomes the original UTAUT and TAM models' limitation of being 'shallow'. The scholars add that the UTAUT 2 is more applicable to voluntary or consumer contexts than was its predecessor, meaning that the theory is more suited to understanding the adoption of new ICTs by users, taking into account both the 'intention to use' and the 'actual usage' of new ICTs. For the purpose of this study, the UTAUT 2 was selected as opposed to the original UTAUT model. Besides being current and reinvented, UTAUT 2, as explained by Assaker et al (2020), is an expansion of previously accepted models, especially Davis' (1989) TAM and Venkatesh et al (2003) original UTAUT models.

Many scholars (Kim & Hall, 2020; Iskandah, Haartoro & Hermadi; 2020; Assaker et al, 2020; Baishya & Samalia, 2020) note a rapid growth in the application of the UTAUT2 model in marketing and technology research, owing to the theory's accuracy in interpreting user behaviour. However, Assaker et al (2020) regrets the limited adoption of the UTAUT2 model in hospitality research. The researchers also acknowledge that the application of UTAUT2 in SM adoption provides an understanding of actual consumer behaviour in the use of these 'user-generated-content' platforms as opposed to usage intention. These are the attributes that have triggered its applicability to studies across many disciplines on ICTs adoption and utilisation. Iskandah et al, (2020) label the UTAUT2 model

as a ‘complete’ model because it covers both the user’s desire to use, and the actual usage, of new ICTs.

Table 5.1: Major theories of users’ acceptance of ICTs integrated into UTAUT2 model

Theory/ Model	Main Constructs	Similar UTAUT2 Constructs
Theory of reasoned action (TRA), Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975)	Attitude toward behaviour Subjective norm	Social influence
Theory of planned behaviour (TPB), Ajzen, (1991), Schifter & Ajzen, (1985)	Attitude, Subjective norm Perceived behavioural control	Social influence Facilitating conditions
Technology acceptance model (TAM), Davis et al, (1989)	Perceived usefulness Perceived ease of use	Performance expectancy Effort expectancy
Model of PC utilization (MPCU) Thompson et al, (1991)	Job fit, Complexity Long term consequences Affect, Social factors Facilitating conditions	Performance expectancy Effort expectancy Social influence Facilitating conditions
Innovation diffusion theory (IDT) Moore & Benbasat, (1991)	Relative advantage Ease of use, image, Visibility, Compatibility Results demonstrability Voluntariness of use	Performance expectancy Effort Expectancy Social influence Facilitating conditions
Motivation Model (MM), Davis et al, (1992)	Extrinsic motivation Intrinsic motivation	Performance expectancy Hedonic motivation
Combined TAM and TPB, Taylor and Todd, (1995)	Attitude, Subjective norm Perceived behavioural control perceived usefulness	Social influence Facilitating conditions Performance expectancy
Socio-cognitive theory (SCT), Compeau & Higgins, (1995)	Outcome expectations- Performance, Outcome expectations- personal, Affect, Anxiety	Performance expectancy

Source: Adapted from Assaker et al, (2020)

In the table above, Assaker et al (2020) demonstrate that the UTAUT2 model integrates elements borrowed from eight models to arrive at the following constructs: performance expectancy (PE), facilitating conditions (FC), effort expectancy (EE), social influence (SI), habit and price value (PV) as well as hedonic motivation (HM). These major constructs, as developed by Venkatesh et al (2012) are intended to capture actual acceptance and utilization of ICTs by consumers. Van Winkle, Bueddefeld, Halpenny and MacKay (2019), add that UTAUT2's constructs of EE, PE, PV, SI and HM are found to have a direct influence on customers' intention to use ICTs, while the constructs of FCs, habit and use intention, are found to be directly influential in the use of ICTs.

5.6.1 UTAUT2 core constructs

- **Effort expectancy**

This is one of the most cited constructs in the UTAUT2 framework. It refers to the degree of ease in using the new ICTs. Assaker et al (2020) liken this construct to Davis' (1989) TAM construct of perceived ease of use – both constructs focusing on the 'easiness' of using technology experienced by consumers. According to Van Winkle et al (2019), this variable is found to affect the intention to use social media within the hospitality context. In the context of this study, that would include the use of travel review sites such as TripAdvisor, social networking sites, such as Facebook, and micro-blogs, such as Twitter.

- **Performance expectancy**

Kim & Hall (2020) describe this construct as the extent to which the user believes that using new technology will enhance their performance. This variable is found to be less applicable in social media adoption in the hospitality industry. Baishya & Samalia, (2020) note that the construct is more suited in manufacturing industries and operational contexts where certain technologies are used in production.

- **Social Influence**

Van Winkle et al (2019) define SI as the degree to which users perceive that people important to them believe they should use a new technology. This construct is related to the 'social norms' variable of Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour. In the context of social media adoption in hospitality, Kim & Hall (2020) note that social influence does affect intention to adopt social media among consumers, and this becomes a trend where those that have adopted SM influence those that have not – with the ultimate goal being to be socially connected online.

- **Habit**

This variable is conceptualised by Van Winkle et al, (2019) as those repeated behaviours that have become normal and automatic. Habit is a post adoption variable that helps to explain continued use of social media by consumers. This construct helps illustrate why social media usage numbers do not shrink in most cases, but are ever increasing or, at least, maintain a certain level of usage. Alternatively, Wiese et al's (2020) view of social media's continued usage is pinned on 'addiction' to SM sites rather than on habit. These scholars attribute this to 'pull factors' rather than to habit. Such 'pull factors' include the urge to see what is new and current, to keep in touch with friends and family, and the pleasure gained from usage of SM (Kim & Hall, 2020).

- **Hedonic motivation**

Assaker et al (2020) define this construct as all the pleasure and gratification derived from using social media platforms. These are the same 'pull factors' attributed to SM's continued usage, as noted by Kim & Hall, (2020). Looking at this construct from the view of SM adoption for hospitality and leisure usage, entertainment and gratification derived from SM use is clearly an important influence on its adoption and continued use.

- **Price value**

This is one of the variables added to the original UTAUT in developing the new UTAUT2 model. Venkatesh et al, (2012) describes this construct as the balance between the perceived benefits of acquiring a product, and the actual cost of using it. In the context of this study, this is clearly a significant aspect. Seo et al, (2020) in their study on the effect of social media usage in hospitality, noted the users' concerns about the cost of adopting social media. Interestingly, as discussed above, developers of the SM platforms, have responded to these concerns by introducing 'Lite' versions of their sites such as 'Facebook Lite' and 'Twitter Lite' (Morrell, 2019), which are suitable for mobile applications and also save on data usage, which means users will save on the actual costs of SM usage.

5.7 Summary

This chapter explored theories of ICT acceptance and utilisation and how they can be linked to social media adoption. These theories include the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) Model, Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The relationship between TAM and TOE frameworks from a business perspective was also detailed. The current, reinvented, UTAUT 2, which is an expansion from previously accepted models of users' adoption and use of ICTs (especially Davis' (1989) TAM and Venkatesh et al (2003) original UTAUT models) was also explored. Lastly, a cross tabulation was used to illustrate the main constructs of each of the above-mentioned theories as well as their similarities. The next chapter (Chapter 4) explores the methodology used for this study in order to achieve the research objectives.

CHAPTER SIX

Research Methodology

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five presented the theoretical framework underpinning the research. This chapter describes the research framework and the research methodology selected to attain the research's objectives which are discussed in Chapter 1. Creswell & Creswell (2018) define research methodology as a framework that clearly outlines methods and processes to be followed in a research project. Kothari (2005) describes it as a way to systematically solve a research problem, through following various steps that are adopted by the researcher for conducting the research. Thus, in summary, this chapter outlines the various steps adopted by the researcher in conducting this study in order to address the research questions and objectives.

The structure of the chapter includes the focus of the study, research methods used, the scope of the survey, the measuring instruments used, and the data analysis procedures followed. Reliability and validity of the research instruments are interrogated in the last part of the chapter as well as ethical issues, and the limitations and delimitations to the study.

6.2 Research process summary

The Saunders (2007) 'research onion' is adopted to illustrate holistically the stages that have been followed in conducting this research. The model illustrates in detail each stage in the research journey, using onion rings to represent the actual stages. The research onion rings serve as a guideline in developing and executing an effective research methodology. According to Bryman (2012), this tool's applicability in multidisciplinary research has resulted in its frequent adoption in a variety of contexts. The onion ring by its composition, is applied inversely from the outside layer through to the centre circle (Saunders et al, 2012).

Following this approach, every layer of the onion represents and describes a stage of the research process.

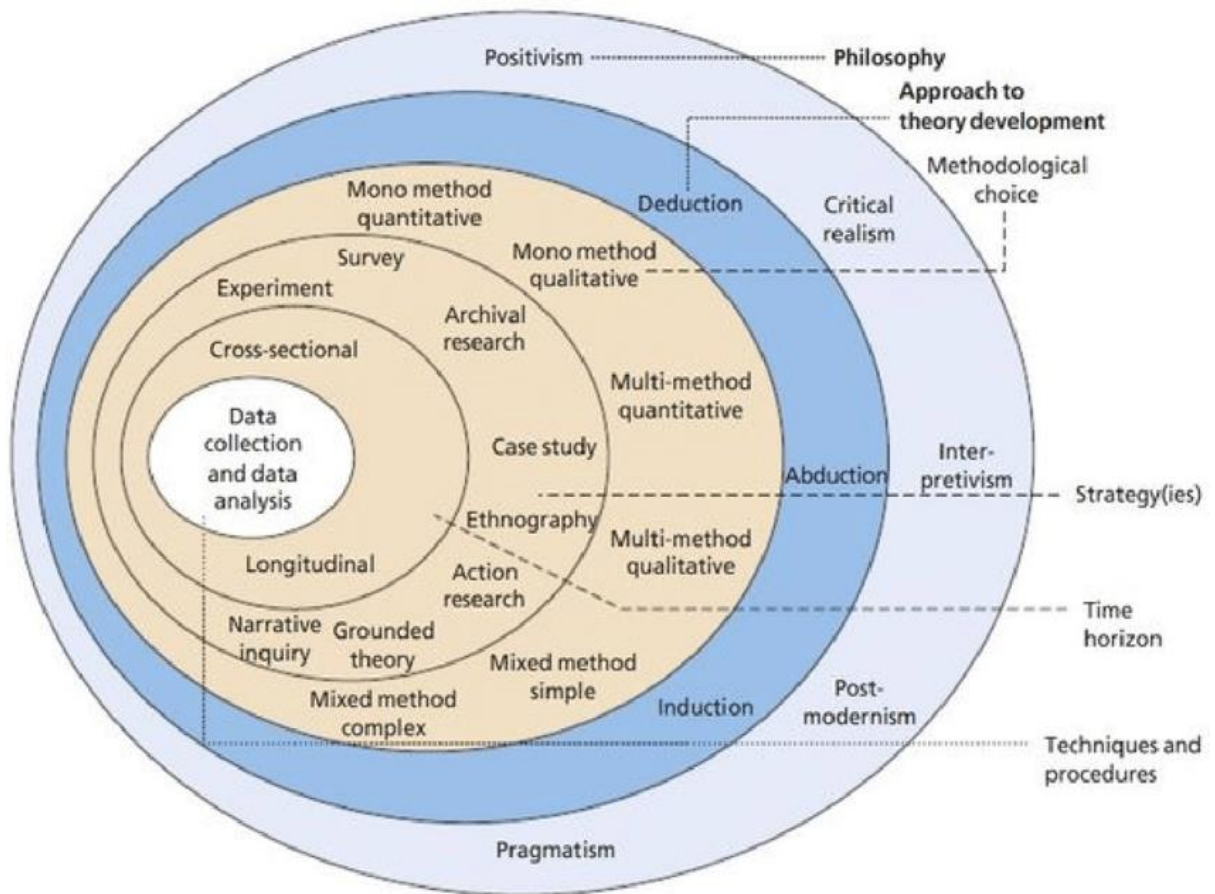


Figure 6.1: Research onion

Source: Adapted from Saunders et al (2016)

Looking at the figure above, it is clear that, moving from outside layers into the core or centre, research stages are displayed logically in the order presented. It is clear that the first step would be to establish the philosophy of the research, followed by developing an approach or theoretical framework. The next layer would be choosing the method to be followed and the strategy(ies) to be applied, the time horizon and, lastly, the data collection and analysis stages (Saunders et al, 2012).

6.3 Research methodology

Kothari's (2005) definition of research methodology is adopted for this study as it aligns with Saunder's (2007) onion ring approach. Kothari defines research methodology as a way to systematically solve a research problem, through following the various steps that are adopted by a researcher in conducting a research project. The steps can be likened to the onion rings in articulating the research process. Despite the widespread applicability of this approach and its attractive validity, authors such as Cooper & Schindler (2003) believe that the choice of a research methodology is normally informed by the research objectives and the type of information sought in the study, rather than by the dictates of such instruments.

The methods of research are generally classified into three broad categories, being either qualitative, quantitative or mixed. Many scholars (Bruce, 2007; Tewksbury, 2009; Patton & Cochran, 2002) also refer these two categories as 'research paradigms'.

For this study, a mixed-methods design was chosen. The approach combines both the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms which are explained in detail below. Although the study's design was biased more towards a qualitative approach, the quantitative element was brought in to help draw more accurate conclusions on the effectiveness of SM as a marketing tool. As noted by Lawrence-Neuman (2013), quantitative research method reduces subjectivity in case judgment, which results in high levels of data reliability. Graphs, figures, charts, tables and statistical computations were used from the quantitative research approach in order to quantify the variables for purposes of drawing more accurate and valid conclusions.

As the aim of the study was to understand how widespread the usage of social media marketing is among micro-hospitality businesses in the Midlands, KwaZulu-Natal South Africa, how effectively it is being used, and how (and if)

SMM could and should be advanced further amongst this sector, qualitative data was valuable. The research questions were mostly addressed through recording the detailed views of the respondents through interviews conducted in their natural setting, recording detailed observations and extracting and presenting rich data obtained from surveys conducted online through QuestionPro platform. The two paradigms of qualitative and quantitative which are put together to come up with the mixed methods applied for this study are explained further below.

6.3.1 Quantitative research paradigm

A quantitative research paradigm, according to Leedy (1997), can be defined as a theory-based inquiry into social or human problems, composed of variables that are measured using numbers and analysed using statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predicted generalizations of the theory and hypothesis hold true. Patton & Cochran (2002) simplify the definition of quantitative research by stating that it involves the generation and rigorous quantitative analysis of data in a formal way. According to Bruce (2007) the quantitative approach is the more scientific of the two approaches and focuses on the collection of quantitative data, which are numeric in nature. This is also supported by Creswell (2007) who explains that the quantitative research paradigm involves the counting and measuring of data, followed by the performance of statistical analysis of the same numeric data. This paradigm, according to Lawrence-Neuman (2013), is relatively common in social science research because it provides for more accurate predictions than the qualitative paradigm is able to offer. Quantitative research poses minimal subjectivity in case judgment, which results in high levels of data reliability. These advantages justified its use in this study.

6.3.2 Qualitative research paradigm

Leedy, (1997) defines the qualitative research paradigm as a more subjective inquiry and assessment of social or human problems in their natural settings.

More recently, Noble & Heale (2019) suggested that qualitative research designs focus on understanding human behaviour with a strong underpinning of being a descriptive and inductive approach to research. Furthermore, Patton & Cochran (2002) add that the qualitative research paradigm generates results that are non-quantitative and that cannot therefore be subjected to quantitative analysis. In most cases techniques such as focus group interviews and in-depth one-to-one interviews, are used with small population samples which poses a challenge of not being representative of the broader population (Monette, Sullivan & DeJong, 2005).

The major disadvantage of qualitative research, according to Burns (1997), is that the results can be significantly biased due to the researcher's own opinions on the subject matter. A qualitative research design uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings – normally a real-world setting, where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Lawrence Neuman, 2013).

To juxtapose the two paradigms: Sekaran and Bougie, (2010) highlight that quantitative research sets out to examine the relationship between variables. It is measured numerically and analysed using a range of statistical techniques. In contrast, Lawrence Neuman (2013), explains that qualitative research draws on multiple realities and socially constructed meanings that exist within every context, and which could go undetected through the use of more standardized measures such as the quantitative approach.

6.4 Research design

A research design is defined by Chisnal (2005) as a blueprint of research methods and techniques used to answer the research question or questions posed by a researcher. There are a variety of research methods along with their procedures and sampling techniques from which a researcher may choose. Neuman (2003) explains that determining a suitable research design is influenced by the research

objectives and the specific data requirements in the study. This simplifies the process of choosing a design.

A descriptive research design was chosen for this study. Descriptive research, as noted by Neuman (2013), is the best option when the research seeks to identify a range of trends, characteristics, frequencies, and categories concerning a phenomenon. This design was selected as the most appropriate in studying the adoption of social media for effective marketing by micro-hospitality businesses. Questions such as what motivates adoption? when do establishments choose to adopt? how do they adopt and use? and what are the challenges of adoption? are answered by this research design. May (2011) adds that a descriptive research design accurately and systematically describes a situation, phenomenon or population under study.

More recently, Creswell (2018) pointed out that in a descriptive research design the researcher does not necessarily control any of the variables or manipulate them, but only records and measures them. The researcher is able, in this case, to draw inferences about social media adoption and utilisation for effective marketing by micro-hospitality businesses in order to investigate their significance for social media marketing, without in any way controlling or manipulating them.

6.4.1 Scope of the survey

In this section, the survey population used in the study is described. The area in which the study was conducted is also discussed, and the sampling technique that was used to arrive at the actual target population is presented. The figure below illustrates in brief, the scope of the survey used.

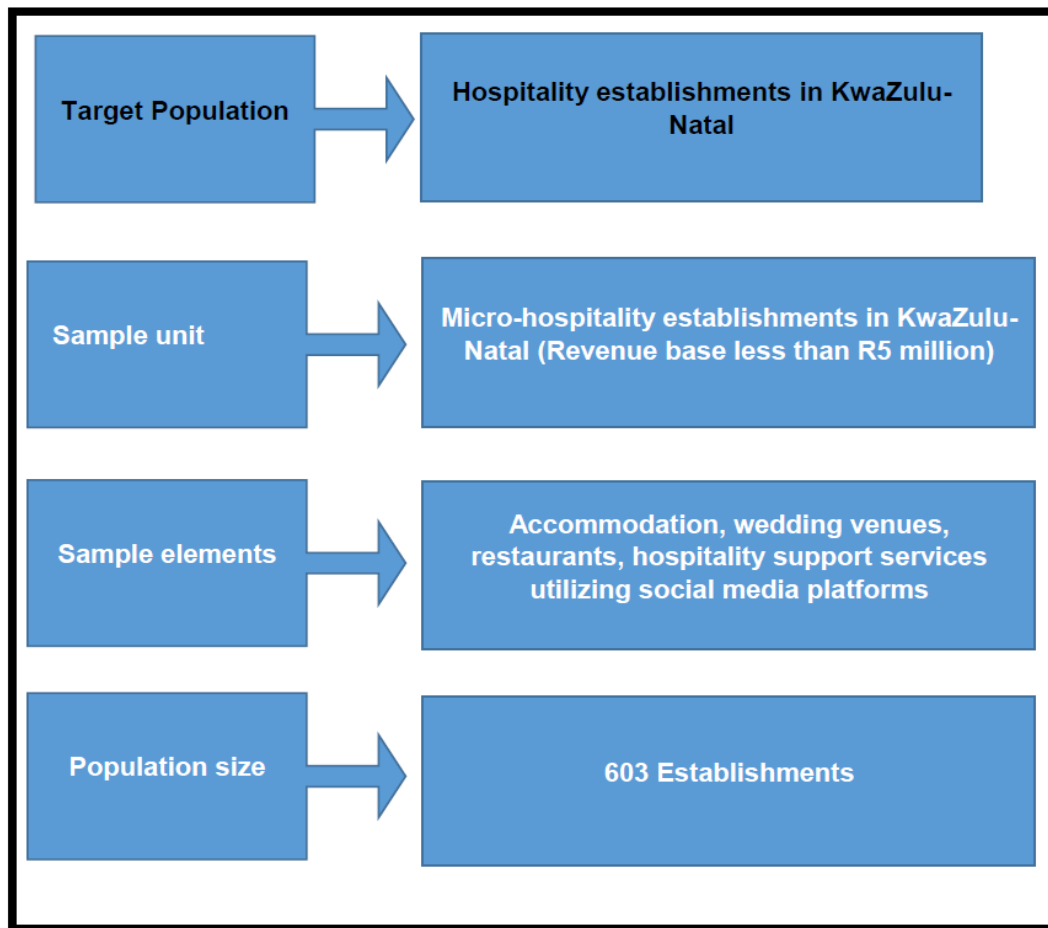


Figure 6.2: The scope of the survey

Source: Researcher's own compilation

6.5 Population

KwaZulu-Natal has a variety of hospitality establishments of various sizes and types. These establishments include, among others, hotels, game and country lodges, guesthouses, restaurants, wedding venues, hospitality support services (wedding décor hiring, DJs, make-up artists, catering suppliers). The study population is drawn from the entire province of KwaZulu-Natal. According to Rooms for Africa (2020), KwaZulu-Natal has eight tourist regions, classified as follows: The Battlefields, The Midlands, the South Coast; North Coast; Zululand;

Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg; eThekweni-Durban and the Elephant Coast. These eight regions have a total number of registered establishments of 2092 (Rooms for Africa, 2020). (This figure does not represent all of the establishments as some do not subscribe to Rooms for Africa). In addition, the larger portion of this figure includes large hospitality establishments such as hotels and conference centres, resorts, fast food franchises, and hotel chains which are not part of this study. As discussed above, the study focuses on small hospitality establishments whose income is less than R5 million per annum, and establishments which are not part of a franchise, hotel chain group nor urban located. This brings the number of establishments in the study population to just over six hundred (603). The map below shows the province of KwaZulu-Natal where this study was carried out. The map also shows the demarcations and exact locations of the eight tourist regions of KwaZulu-Natal as highlighted above.



Figure 6.3: Kwazulu Natal map

Source: Adopted from: www.sa-venues.com

6.6 Sampling

Sampling is defined by Babbie, (1998) as the process of selecting participants to a survey or selecting a portion of a population that is considered representative of that population. A target sample, on the other hand, is a group of individuals sharing some common defining characteristics that the researcher has identified

and wants to study (Creswell, 2008). Specific sampling techniques, as noted by Lawrence Neuman (2013), allow the researcher to determine or control the likelihood of specific participants being included or excluded in the study. Within the same context, Monette, Sullivan, & De Jong, (2005) note that the most basic consideration in sampling is the size and representativeness of the sample. A sample is considered representative if its aggregate characteristics closely approximate to the same characteristics of the population relevant to the research in question (Babbie, 1998).

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique. According to Babbie (2012) non-probability sampling refers to a collection of sampling approaches which share the distinguishing characteristic that subjective judgement can play a role in selecting the sample. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 95 managers or owners of micro-hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal, each having the characteristics given above. In this type of sampling the researcher targets a sample of participants purposefully and, in this study, participants with the expertise required to answer the research questions were purposively selected (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). In purposive sampling, it is their relevance to the research topic, rather than their representativeness which determines the way in which the people to be studied are selected (Lawrence Neuman, 2013). This was important for this particular study since data gathered from such a sample could advance the researcher's interests in social media marketing and potentially explore new perspectives in marketing for smaller establishments in general. The study aimed to study micro-hospitality businesses, so choosing establishments according to general representativeness could have resulted in picking up establishments that are outside the micro bracket.

6.7 Data collection methods and instrumentation

This study applied a triangulation of data collection instruments which included the following: interviews with 15 managers and owners, questionnaires through

an online survey (QuestionPro), and paper (hard copy) questionnaires completed by a total of 55 managers and owners, and 5 observations from the 15 that were interviewed to get more insights on the respondents. A methodological triangulation is defined by Bogdan, & Biklen (2006) as a research strategy using a combination of several research methods, tools and theories in a study of the same phenomenon. Creswell (2008) additionally explains that when different data collection methods are used, researchers overcome the weakness and imminent biases that are problematic in single method utilisation. The advantage of triangulation is also noted by Saunders et al (2007) who argue that this approach leads to greater confidence in the findings of those studies that employ it.

The triangulation of data collection methods was considered appropriate for the current study because the strength of one method usually makes up for the shortcomings of the other method (Creswell, 2008). The interviews conducted with business owners and managers strengthened information gathered from the online questionnaires as the interviews were very rich in information that was sometimes missed by the questionnaires. As explained above, observations were done on social media absorption and activity on these platforms. Observations were also done on sight to establish and understand service quality as well the business set up.

Numerous scholars (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Noble & Heale, 2019; Leedy & Omrod, 2005) emphasize the importance of ensuring that the procedures employed, as well as the instruments used, should have acceptable levels of objectivity, and that the data gathered should be reliable and valid. In quantitative research, the quality of the study is judged by these three standards of objectivity, reliability and validity (Noble & Heale, 2019). Creswell (2008) defines the objectivity standard as involving the relationship between the researcher and the research participant.

6.7.1 The questionnaire

The study employed a questionnaire (see Appendix A) that was administered through an online survey. This instrument is particularly important in data collection where the phenomena sought (such as motivation for social media adoption, and attitudes towards the use of social media platforms, as well as other self-concepts, such as operators' perceptions of the benefits of social media marketing) are not easy to observe in the day-to-day operations of a hotel's administrative routine (Creswell, 2008). According to Saunders et al (2007) questionnaires have the major advantage of self-administration, which is time economic and also not intimidating to respondents, as compared to interviews and other data collection methods that involve the researcher probing for responses. On the other hand, Bryman (2012) notes that respondents to questionnaires may lack motivation to participate in the study and end up not returning completed questionnaires. In this regard, the researcher in this study received help from a research assistant who assisted with administration and the completion of the online survey, and with paper questionnaires.

The other reason for choosing a questionnaire as a data collection instrument in this study was because the research was conducted across the whole of KwaZulu-Natal, so questionnaires made it easy to do data collection on a large scale. Many scholars (Saunders et al,2007; May, 2011; Lawrence Neuman, 2013; and Creswell, 2018) promote the value of questionnaires in research, citing that, if properly structured, a questionnaire will intrigue the respondents, while at the same time minimising common errors in data collection and thus result in good quality data gathering.

As mentioned above, the study looked at a number of hospitality establishment types (the formal service hotels, game lodges, restaurants, wedding venues, guesthouses and hospitality support services such as wedding DJs, florists, event caterers and décor suppliers). The questionnaire developed covered all of these

establishments in terms of social media platforms' adoption for marketing purposes. Identification of the type of establishment being reviewed was the first question in the questionnaire. This was one of the easiest questions as it only required the respondents to tick the appropriate box representing the type of their organisation.

The instrument consisted of four main sections: Section One was about the background information of the establishment; Section Two was about the social media platforms available or adopted by the establishment; the third section was about the significance and benefits of social media marketing; and the last section was about the challenges of using these social media platforms as a marketing tool. In each section, the questionnaire consisted of four major question types: a Likert rating scale, Yes/No response, open ended questions, and rank ordering.

Monette, Sullivan & DeJong (2005) noted that the Yes/No response approach, besides being an easy exercise, affords the respondents a chance to make a choice from the given variables. Additionally, Gulati, (2009) states that this approach directs the flow of questioning towards the subsequent questions in the questionnaire. Although May (2011) regrets that the use of the Likert rating scale does not result in meaningful statistical calculations if administered to smaller study populations, the responses obtained from subjects often project intensity of feelings on the study topic, which can suggest reasons behind these opinions and perceptions. The major advantage of the Likert rating scale is that it allows for both a flexible response and the ability to underscore correlations, frequencies and other quantitative analysis methods. In so doing, Leddy and Omrod (2005) argue that the researcher is able to link measurement with opinions, quality and quantity. Creswell and Creswell (2018) commend the Likert rating scale in surveys in that it is not based on subjective opinions of respondents' judgement but mainly on empirical data recorded from subjects' responses. This study was not primarily concerned with scores but was rather concerned about hospitality operators'

social media adoption and their platforms of preference such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp. This made the Likert rating scale in the questionnaires very relevant as it covers this flexibility very well.

On the downside, Saunders et al (2007) note that questionnaires pose a challenge in data collection especially in a second language study, as respondents often face challenges in comprehending exact meaning and providing accurate or reliable answers. This implies that there is little assurance that the subjects will adequately understand and answer the question. In light of this serious challenge, and the need to gather accurate and reliable data, the questionnaire for this study was structured in such a way that most questions were closed-ended as these are generally deemed more efficient than open-ended questions in data collection (Gulati, 2009). On the other hand, Bryman, (2012) argues that closed ended questions do not give much scope in terms of capturing rich data and providing descriptive experiences of the respondents, and for this reason some questions, aimed at capturing the respondents' opinions, were left open-ended. It was noted however that most of the respondents for this study did not struggle with the questionnaires including those whom English was not their mother tongue. All respondents were very competent in the English language.

6.7.2 Administration of the questionnaire

The questionnaire survey was administered to 55 managers and owners of hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal. The research assistant helped with sending the survey link to participants as well as following up on those who did not complete the survey within agreed timeframes. This was a suitable instrument for the study as it was not time consuming and could be administered even without the presence of the researcher. The response rate from the 70 questionnaires that were sent out was 78.6% (55 out of 70). These were completed thoroughly and returned via survey and hard copies. According to Leedy and Omrod, (2005) a return rate of 50% of questionnaires sent out is scientifically acceptable. Taking

note of this standard of acceptability, the rate of return for this study of 78.6% is above the acceptable level, and was therefore suitable to be applied for scientific deductions.

6.7.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with owners of the hospitality businesses deliberately selected (see Appendix B). These were operators who had been in the industry since the inception of social media and had experienced the social media revolution and had rich information in terms of the early adopters' experiences. This was the main reason why these interviews were deemed necessary. Apart from being semi-structured, the interview questions followed the same pattern as those of the questionnaires. Creswell and Creswell (2018) maintain that semi-structured interviews stay within the scope of the conversation. This is made possible by the guidance of the list of issues being focused on in the interaction. Monette et al (2005) add that this list of questions forms the basic structure of the interview and that, if the interviews are well structured, they flow smoothly following the thinking process of the interviewee. However, May (2011) points out that interviews have the disadvantage of creating certain expectations which can result in interviewees giving answers they consider to be best, most 'correct' or acceptable.

The researcher kept the interviewees focused on the core of the interview purpose. This approach helped avoid the common problem with interviews of the interviewees being taken up in the conversation and ending up losing focus. Noble and Heale (2019) advise that interviews work hand-in-hand with, or as an additional method to, questionnaires in gathering data through going deeper into what is in the respondent's mind, as well as measuring what the interviewee knows. Creswell (2018) adds that interviews by their nature, seek clarification as well as capturing rich data, particularly (as regards the present study) on the

perceptions of hospitality operators concerning the benefits of social media adoption and utilisation for purposes of marketing.

The interviews were also used to gather information on the challenges these pioneers had faced in both the adoption and the utilisation of social media platforms for purposes of marketing. As discussed by Creswell and Creswell (2018), interviews facilitate access to data that cannot be directly observed, and these interviews probed the hospitality business operators' own point of view with regards to the perceived usefulness of online digital marketing through social media. May (2011) adds that, by allowing freedom of discussion to interviewees, the researcher often gathers unexpected information throughout the discussion. However, Saunders et al (2007) also warn that although this approach yields much unanticipated information, the researcher must guard against gathering large amounts of information not directly relevant to the study. To circumvent this challenge of a 'high drop rate' in this study, the researcher prepared a limited number of open-ended interview questions (See Appendix 2) to guide the interview process, while the interview schedule was designed to control the interviewee to only respond to the interview questions, as a way to avoid irrelevant information and subsequent 'data overload' which could have compromised the quality of data and the final analysis by the researcher.

6.7.4 Conducting the Interviews

Creswell, (2018) argues that interviews, as compared to questionnaires, are meant to gather richer data on the same topic by focusing on a different portion of the sample population. Fifteen operators of micro-hospitality businesses in KwaZulu-Natal were interviewed as follows: 2 hotel owners, 2 support services providers, 2 guesthouses, 2 lodges, 3 wedding venues, 2 self-catering units and 2 restaurant owners. Interview requests were sent via email to each of the interviewees, and the questions were also sent in advance for them to prepare beforehand.

A follow-up call was made to check if they had received the invitation and the questions, as well as scheduling the interview in terms of a date and time suitable for the interviewee. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and its subsequent health and safety regulations, data collection was affected as there were restrictions in terms of traveling and physical interactions. All interviews were therefore conducted over the telephone, with all calls being recorded. Data gathered was typed manually into text data after all the interviews had been conducted. On average, interviews took between 20 and 30 minutes.

6.7.5 Observations

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) explains that observations are ideal when one wants to watch and monitor a situation or process that is being evaluated as it occurs. Given that social media is an ongoing process and that the pandemic is also ongoing, it was considered valuable that observations be carried out on five establishments to augment the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. Although observations are susceptible to the observer's bias (Saunders et al, 2018) their main advantage is that they do not rely on respondent's willingness or ability to participate and provide information. They add that observations also aid in getting the information directly rather than relying on what respondents are willing to say. The major downside of this data collection method as noted by Sekaran & Bougie (2016) is that it is very expensive to conduct. This was the experience of the researcher as he had to travel from Mbombela to the Midlands in KZN and stayed for nearly a week doing observations. The observations were carried out in the last week on November, 2021.

6.7.6 Operationalisation of observations

Observation guide

This was developed to guide the observation process for consistence and validity of the process. Saunders et al (2018) highlight that observation guides assist in standardising observation for all sites that are to be observed as without guides, data collected may not be valid across sites as there were no guidelines to help standardise the process. The guide was structured to cover the following aspects of the study: demographics (including location), impact of covid-19, social media adoption and service quality.

Field notes

These were taken on all of the five establishments that were being observed. Sekaran & Bougie (2016) explains that field notes are a systematic way of collecting data from observation and that it does not include any pre-set responses or questions. Field notes were recorded as handwritten notes which were then typed for analysis.

6.8 Data handling procedure

Saunders et al (2007) define data analysis as an integral process of data gathering and transformation, aimed at highlighting useful information from the results and suggesting conclusions. In this process, data editing, data entry and coding become successive stages in data analysis. These are the stages gone through by data obtained from the field. The figure below illustrates the stages.

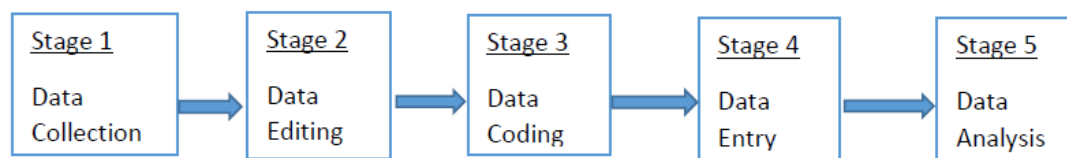


Figure 6.4: Data handling process

Source: Saunders et al (2007).

6.8.1 Data collection

The process of data collection, as defined by Leedy & Omrod, (2005), is the gathering of information on variables of interest by the researcher and the subsequent systematic measuring of the same information for purposes of answering research questions and testing hypotheses, in order to achieve the set research objectives in a particular study. According to Saunders et al (2007) data collection is the basis for any research across all fields, using collection methods such as interviews, observation, questionnaires, reviewing of records and many other methods. In this study, questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The questionnaires were administered through an online survey called QuestionPro while interviews were all conducted telephonically. As explained above, this was because of the COVID-19 travel regulations that restricted travel and face-to-face interactions and promoted online and contactless meetings and associations.

6.8.2 Data Editing

This exercise comes immediately after data collection is finalised. Sonquist & Dunkelberg (1997) define the data editing process as a thorough check and adjustment exercise of all the responses gathered from the data collection process. May (2011) notes that information gathered from surveys often lacks uniformity, especially where questionnaires are used as the collection instrument. Respondents may choose not to answer some of the questions, and the researcher will need to edit before coding. Creswell (2018) advises that the application of the 'plug value', which is an answer the editor plugs in place of the missing value for analysis, be considered carefully when editing data. This approach poses a risk of data errors and scholars (Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al, 2007; Gulati, 2009) advise that the method should be used only with extreme caution. In this particular study, plugging was not used and questionnaires that

had a number of unanswered questions were put aside to minimise the risk of errors. Only those that were fully answered were included in the analysis.

6.8.3 Data coding

Coding is generally performed for qualitative research and is defined as analysing raw data, such as sentences and paragraphs, assigning labels or codes as well as finding relations between them (Noble & Heale, 2019). Although the process is deemed as one of the most difficult phases of the data handling process in qualitative data analysis, Creswell and Creswell, (2018) maintain that coding of data is very important for effective analysis. In this particular study, number coding for responses was employed in, for example, questions that had a yes/no answer. These were replaced by 1 or 2 coding to represent the answer.

6.8.4 Data entry

This process involves the storage of data systematically in electronic form such as spreadsheets where columns and rows would represent sampling units and variables used in the study respectively (Creswell, 2018). Generally, the data is stored in Excel spreadsheets as one of the acceptable ways of storing data. Creswell, (2018) adds that the choice of Excel spreadsheets in storing data is encouraged by the fact that popular statistical analysis programs such as SPSS and SAZ are compatible with Excel. For this study, the downloaded files in Excel format from the QuestionPro website had all the data filed automatically on the spreadsheets, which made it easy for the researcher to store the data.

6.8.5 Data analysis

Data collected from the field was analysed systematically for the purposes of coming to conclusions as to the objectives set for the study. This process primarily seeks to establish patterns in responses provided, as well as identifying causal

connections in the responses which assisted in providing some solid narratives of subjects' perspectives on social media adoption for marketing. Data that was collected for analysis in this study consisted of:

- Completed questionnaires via an online survey
- Telephone recordings of interviews

The quantitative data was captured and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Data was presented using graphs, pie charts, histograms or bar graphs as well as tables. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis. This process involves discovering and reporting on themes from the interview transcripts.

6.9 Reliability and validity

To determine validity, the questionnaire was designed in line with the supporting objectives of the study. The term 'validity' refers to how well the instruments measure what they are supposed to measure (Lawrence-Neuman, 2013). Furthermore, Lawrence-Neuman (2013) notes that validity ensures the significance of the data and that it needs to be accurate enough to meet the research objectives. The validity of the study relies on the study reliability and vice-versa. According to Babbie, (2012) when validity is tested, reliability is also tested.

As a way of ensuring reliability of the instruments used in this study, (questionnaires and interviews) administration was consistent to all respondents, for example the questionnaires were administered electronically through QuestionPro.com. Additionally, a Cronbach alpha test was conducted to check the internal reliability of the variables employed for this research. Babbie, (2012) explains that a Cronbach alpha test was first introduced by Lee Cronbach in 1951 to measure the reliability of instruments internally. By its principle, the test should produce a higher alpha coefficient value which means that there are fewer errors in the measuring instrument. Babbie, (2012) suggests that an alpha coefficient

value of between 0.7 and 1 is most acceptable in social sciences research. For this study, a Cronbach alpha test cut-off point was put at 0.7.

6.9.1 Pretesting

A pilot study was undertaken to determine whether the selected research design, methodology and the measuring instruments (interviews and questionnaire) were feasible based on the study. The questionnaire that was designed to be used in the main study was first used in pre-testing. Ten participants were selected randomly from the six categories of micro-hospitality establishments, and agreed to participate in the pilot study. Results of the test indicated issues such as unclear questions. For example, the number of years in operation had overlaps and that was corrected. The Likert ranking scale on the online survey had a technical issue which needed correction: selecting one variable would not deactivate other variables, leaving respondents with an option to select multiple answers. This was corrected to make sure that once one variable was selected, other options became unavailable. This test of the instruments allowed for corrections to be made at an early stage of the research. The respondents who took part in the pilot study were not involved in the main study.

6.10 Limitations from data collection

The major limitation for this study was that the data collection period coincided with the national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, data collection became very challenging as most businesses in the hospitality industry were shut down. This also led to an extended data collection period, delaying the project's completion by at least eight months. It was also a challenge to get respondents to reply on time, as they were at home and would often only have stable internet connections at work. In some instances, the researcher would send data packages to respondents allowing for connectivity, which was an extra cost not anticipated at the inception of the study. A research assistant was also

employed to help manage and administer data collection, which also depleted the initial budget and resources before the project could be finalised. More resources were made available by the researcher from his own savings, and research work was able to continue consistently. The research assistant engaged with respondents until all responses were obtained.

6.11 Delimitations of the study

This study does not cover the whole of South Africa but is limited to KwaZulu-Natal which is primarily a rural province. As is highlighted in the statement of the problem, the research sought to examine establishments in remote rural settings, hence including the whole of South Africa would have been inappropriate as that could have included largely metropolitan provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape. This study was also limited to micro-hospitality establishments and only those that do not belong to franchises and hotel chains. Including large corporates would have been problematic since hotel chains have allocated marketing budgets and centralised marketing, usually done outside of South Africa. Tourist offices were also excluded from the study as these are normally run by municipal and provincial governments. Their management matrix is different from private small businesses, and not directly relevant to the scope of the study.

6.12 Ethical considerations

Data collection for any research work should conform to high ethical standards. Ethics is defined by Creswell (2018) as observation of the principles, morals and general values that underpin the way people conduct their activities. Data collection for this study was done after obtaining permission from all respondents to participate. Ethical clearance was also obtained from DUT when the proposal for this study was ratified by the DUT Higher Degrees Committee. As the study required the participation of business owners or managers of micro-hospitality establishments, a letter informing them of the reasons for carrying out the study

was sent to them. Basic principles of ethics in any research, focus on the responsibility of the researcher to protect the respondents from any possible harm. In this study, voluntary participation by the respondents, the right to withdraw at any time, issues of no harm to participants, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were all addressed in the letter sent to participants before data collection, to ensure that they were all comfortable about participating in this research. Participants were told about the aims of the research and that the results could be shown to interested parties. The right to privacy was also ensured by not sharing completed questionnaires with anyone apart from the research assistant. Actual names of respondents were not used in the data presentation chapter to protect their privacy.

6.13 Summary

This chapter explained the framework that was used for the research in order to achieve the objectives which had been set. The motivation for the research design which was chosen, the population of the study, and the sampling and data collection methods used, were also discussed and justified. The chapter also discussed the data collection instruments used (questionnaires, interviews and observations) and how these instruments were administered. Furthermore, the chapter touched on issues of credibility and validity of the findings and the limitations and delimitations of the research were noted. The following chapter presents the data gathered from the study in both descriptive and graphical forms, together with interpretations of the same, discussed within the framework of the relevant, current theories discussed previously.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Data presentation and analysis

7.1 Introduction

As stated in the introductory chapter of this study, the research is predicated upon the researcher's desire to understand the level of value brought about by the adoption and utilization of social media in promoting micro-hospitality businesses in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. Given the fact that KwaZulu-Natal is a coastal province receiving a lot of local and international tourists yearly, the researcher spread the scope and focus of the research participants to include restaurants, lodges, bed and breakfast establishments, wedding venues, hotels and hospitality services such as caterers, florists and wedding DJs. The decision to focus on this wide spectrum of hospitality service providers was due to the researcher's desire to provide findings that will be as close as possible to a representative selection of the many hospitality service providers in KwaZulu-Natal Province.

As indicated also in the earlier sections of the study, KwaZulu-Natal has eight tourist regions classified as follows: The Battlefields, The Midlands, South Coast, North Coast, Zululand, UKhahlamba-Drakensberg, eThekweni-Durban and Elephant Coast (Rooms for Africa, 2020). The eight regions have a total number of registered micro-hospitality establishments of 603. This figure only represents the micro-establishments that are located in remote, and fairly remote, rural areas. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 70 managers or owners of micro-hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal, each having the characteristics given above. Data collected are presented according to following objectives as highlighted in the previous chapters:

- Social media utilisation by micro-hospitality businesses for marketing.

- The significance of social media marketing and its major benefits and drawbacks for adoption by micro-hospitality businesses.
- Operators'/ owners' perceptions in terms of the effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool.
- The challenges of adoption and utilisation of social media as a marketing tool in micro-hospitality establishments.

In order to achieve data triangulation, the researcher adopted a multiple data collection approach which involved the following: interviews with 15 managers and owners of micro-hospitality businesses; questionnaires through an online survey called QuestionPro.com; and paper questionnaires with a total of 55 managers and owners of micro-hospitality businesses. For interviews, 20 invitations were sent out and 15 participated resulting in a response rate of 75%. For the questionnaires, 20 hardcopies which were identical to the online survey were distributed and 18 responses were collected/ received. 50 online survey requests were sent via email and after telephone follow ups, a total of 37 responses were received. Interviews and surveys did not overlap. The overall response rate was 78.6%

7.2 Data Presentation

7.2.1 Participants' biographical data

In the preliminary stages of data collection, the researcher sought answers to certain key questions that would serve as a viable database for the study and as reference material for future studies. Questions were the following:

a. Type of Establishment

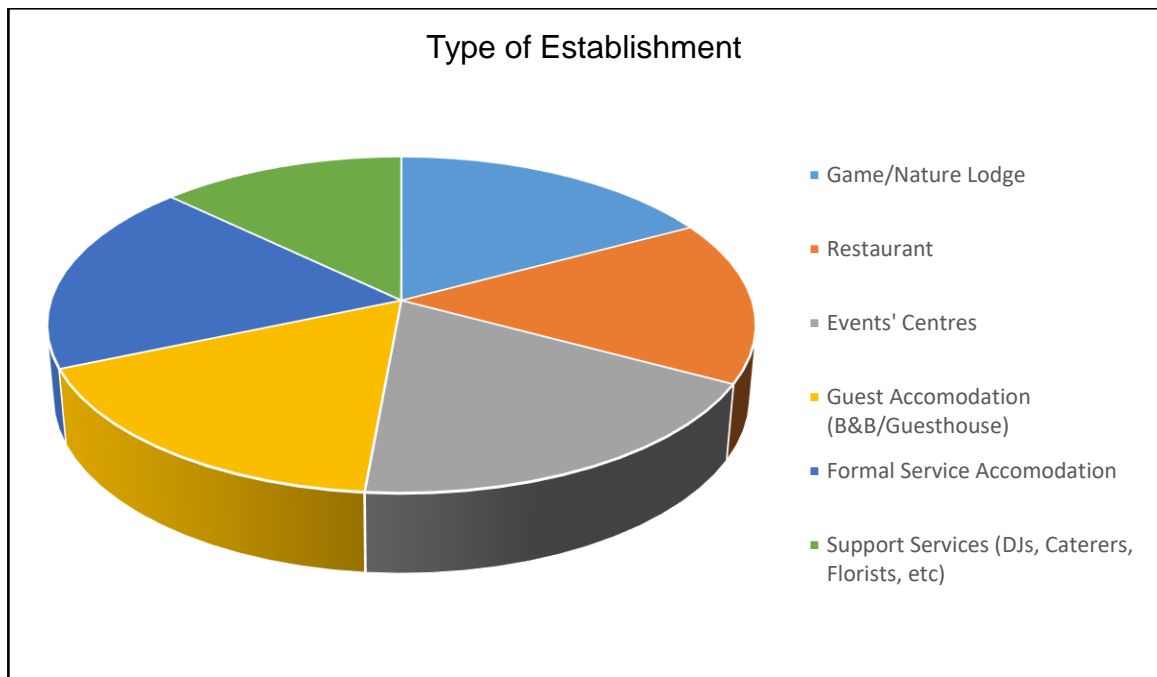


Figure 7.1: Type of establishment

As can be observed from figure 1, the percentage of sample establishments were evenly spread, suggesting that KwaZulu-Natal has a very robust tourism sector that allows for a multiplicity of players providing services to tourists and also contributing to job creation and the overall economy of the province. Seventeen percent of the sampled establishments are game/nature lodges providing accommodation to local and international tourists visiting KwaZulu-Natal's many game reserves, sixteen per cent are in the restaurant business; events centres make up nineteen percent of the sampled establishments, while formal service accommodation and support services accounted for nineteen and thirteen percent of the sampled establishments respectively.

b. Years in business

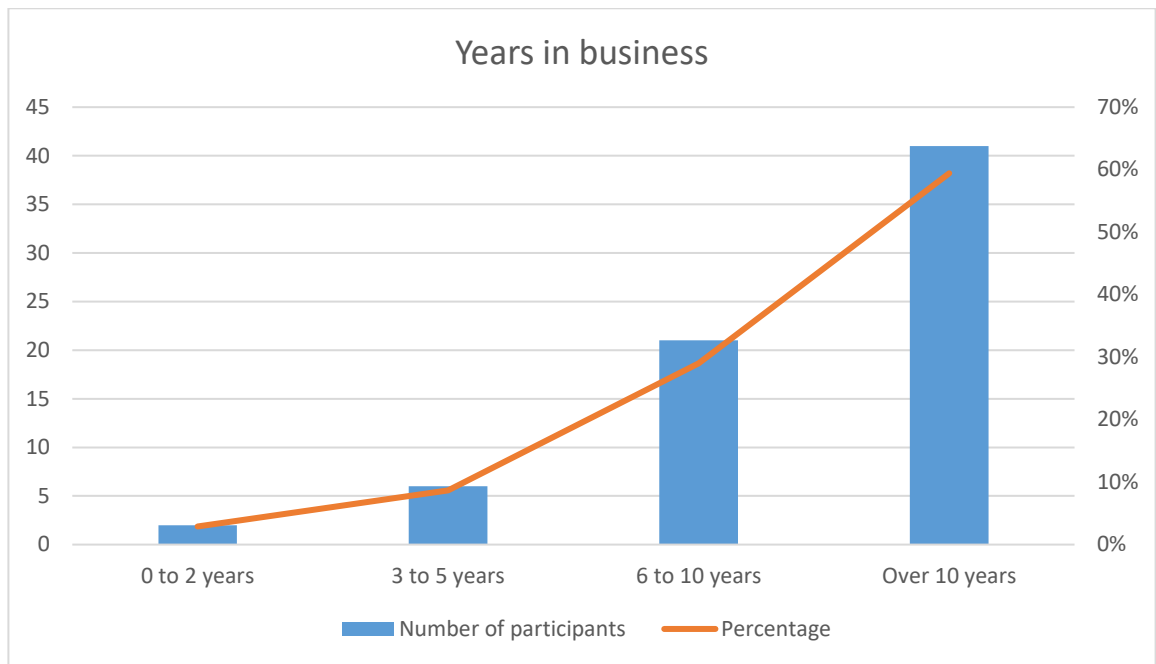


Figure 7.2: Years in business

One of the positive aspects of the researcher's fieldwork was, in the course of his interviews, to be given the opportunity to hold discussions with hospitality operators with several years' experience in the industry. As noted above, the importance of many years of experience cannot be overemphasized. Such practitioners have experienced the ups and downs of the industry, vis-à-vis changes in government legislation, changes in governments, economic upturns and downturns, as well as a range of sociopolitical issues.

The high number of experienced operators in the selected establishments also portends positive possibilities for intergenerational learning. As Leon (2020) notes, experienced hospitality industry operators can share their years of experience with younger operators through mentoring, on-the-job education, and storytelling. The industry is better off in the end. It was thus gratifying for the researcher to note that 60 percent of the sampled participants in the study had worked in their establishments for over 10 years. Just two percent had worked for

less than three years, while 29 percent had worked for six to ten years. Six respondents, accounting for nine percent, had worked for three to five years.

It can also be noted that those respondents with over 10 years of experience or business existence had all introduced social media marketing platforms, while those with below 10 years' experience were split between those that introduced SMM themselves and those that inherited it from previous business owners. Establishments that reported to have been in operation for more than 10 years (beyond the year 2010) saw the introduction of social media in the days of sixdegrees.com that was introduced in 1997 (Xu and Zhou, 2020).

The statistics indicate that 93% of the targeted businesses are family run micro-hospitality establishments. This means that the business may stay in the family for a long time, being passed from one generation to the next. This characteristic aligns with the prescripts of the TAM theory, particularly the perceived usefulness (PU) variable. As noted below in figure 7.5, only 6% of the respondents inherited social media while 94% introduced it. Although the number of those that inherited SM is less significant, it is important to note that those that inherit and choose to continue with SM confirmed that they find SM effective and useful. This aligns with perceived usefulness construct from the TAM theory as noted by Van Winkle (2019), on the continued use of these platforms by those that inherited them. The author explains that once users establish usefulness (PU), they are more likely to adopt and continue using SM. This has been the case with the 6% that inherited and continued using the inherited platforms. Since this should be a seamless handover, perceived ease-of-use (PEOU) as highlighted by Kim and Hall (2020) is also relevant as the incoming generation will be at ease knowing that the social media inherited will be easy to use as they are familiar with it, with an option to train further using a readily available support system. Acceptance of social media achieved within these micro-establishments has been made easy because of the above circumstances.

c. Grade of Establishment

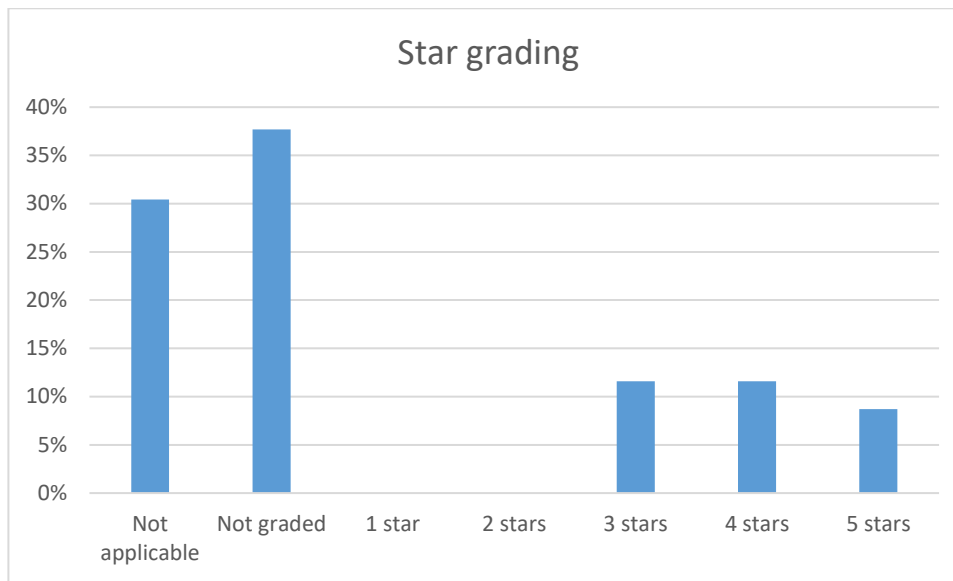


Figure 7.3: Star grading of establishments

Figure 3 shows that only 9 percent of the sampled establishments are 5-star graded. Twelve percent indicated that they were 4-star graded, while another 12 percent were 3-star graded. The remaining 67 percent stated that they were either not graded, or that star grading did not apply to them – these being mainly restaurants and wedding venues. These responses motivated the researcher to probe further into why the majority of establishments did not appear to pay much attention to star grading. One of the interviewed managers (No actual names were used in the interests of maintaining anonymity) responded thus:

“It is okay to be graded, star ratings are good, especially for marketing purposes. However, for us, we focus more on exceptional customer service as our effective marketing strategy. It is our firm belief that a happy customer who refers our establishment to other people is more valuable than any star grading we can get. The challenge we have now is that people do not pay much attention to star grading but to online reviews posted by other guests on platforms such as TripAdvisor. You can have 5 star grading but if your reviews are bad or poor, people will not stay at your

establishment. As indicated earlier on, we focus on good service and that in turn attracts good reviews and by good reviews, we have already marketed effectively as the good reviews will go viral and build our reputation and brand image (S'fiso, Manager of an ungraded Guesthouse on the South Coast)."

S'fiso's position was corroborated by another interviewee, Donaldson, who argued that his establishment had never pursued any star grading. Instead, they have focused on providing the best possible service without any additional accolades or service affiliation. He said:

"The problem with star grading is that it keeps you focused on maintaining your star grading, rather than focusing on improving service delivery. Sometimes, out of the desire to maintain the same stars, some establishments focus on the ambiance of their establishments. Our focus here is good service to our clients so that they always leave fulfilled and happy whenever they stay with us." (Donaldson, Manager of an ungraded Private Game Lodge in the Zululand)

The researcher further probed for the correlation between star grading and social media as they both are used for marketing hospitality establishments. Donaldson explained that he cannot confirm any correlation between the two, as his establishment has never experienced any benefits of grading. Donaldson further explained that he believed that social media is a better solution, as you can actually get enquiries that will nearly always turn into bookings from social media. He remarked:

"My understanding is that star grading works hand in hand with service quality in terms of marketing and the turnaround is sometimes not immediate. With Social media, interactions that happen online in real time turn into enquiries and then bookings. Marketing return happens fast and

is actually recorded and can be quantified. With star grading as a marketing strategy it is not easy to isolate bookings that came because of star grading from other bookings and that is a challenge, in short I think even if the business is not star graded, but having a good service quality, it can adopt social media and effectively compete with graded establishments. Online reviews are now more trusted than star grading” (Donaldson, Manager of an ungraded Private Game Lodge in the Zululand)

The correlation between SM adoption and star grading hints at the applicability and relevance of the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) model to those 33% of the sample that are graded between 3 and 5 stars, and have successfully adopted and are utilizing SM for marketing. The TOE theory according to Matikiti, (2018), as explained as well in Chapter 3, hinges on three aspects of (i) external task environment, for example industry characteristics, which in the case of micro-hospitality establishments is star grading for service quality; all graded establishments showed a clear pattern of fully adopting SMM as it complements their establishments to have a service-oriented marketing strategy. The second (ii) aspect is that of organization which in this case is the size of the businesses. These businesses are small in nature and do not have extensive marketing budgets, hence they seriously consider SMM as a better and more affordable option to market internationally. Most of the 4 and 5 star graded establishments have a foreign clientele of between 10% and 35%. They all agree that SMM is an effective marketing strategy particularly for their foreign market segment. The third (iii) aspect is that the acceptance of new innovations, such as user review sites like TripAdvisor, is now unavoidable in the hospitality industry. These new technologies are the reason why most progressive star-graded establishments have fully adopted social media. For all of the above to have been successfully executed, Matikiti (2018) underscores external environment

construct of the TOE, who are clients using social media as the driver for SM adoption by many small hospitality businesses. The availability of people on social media (as the key external environment factor of the TOE) as noted by Matikiti (2018) has lead businesses realizing perceived usefulness (PU) of SM as a marketing tool (Van Winkle et al, 2019).

In summary, grading is applauded by those that are graded (33%) while the larger component of the population is not graded (67%) and have mixed feelings about its relevance and effectiveness as a marketing tool towards successful business operation. Chief among the raised concerns around grading was that it has strict requirements with less room to be creative. The second major downside highlighted is the cost of maintenance billed yearly which is variable according to size of the hotel.

d. Clientele Composition

One of the most revealing findings was the preponderance of local tourists over foreigners in the sampled establishments. The research revealed that 80 per cent of all clients in the sampled establishments were local tourists visiting from other provinces. The other 20 per cent identified as foreigners. The results are highlighting strong local tourism activity and dominance of the local market as opposed to international or foreign clients who are deemed as high spenders in the tourism clients' matrix (Matikiti, 2018)

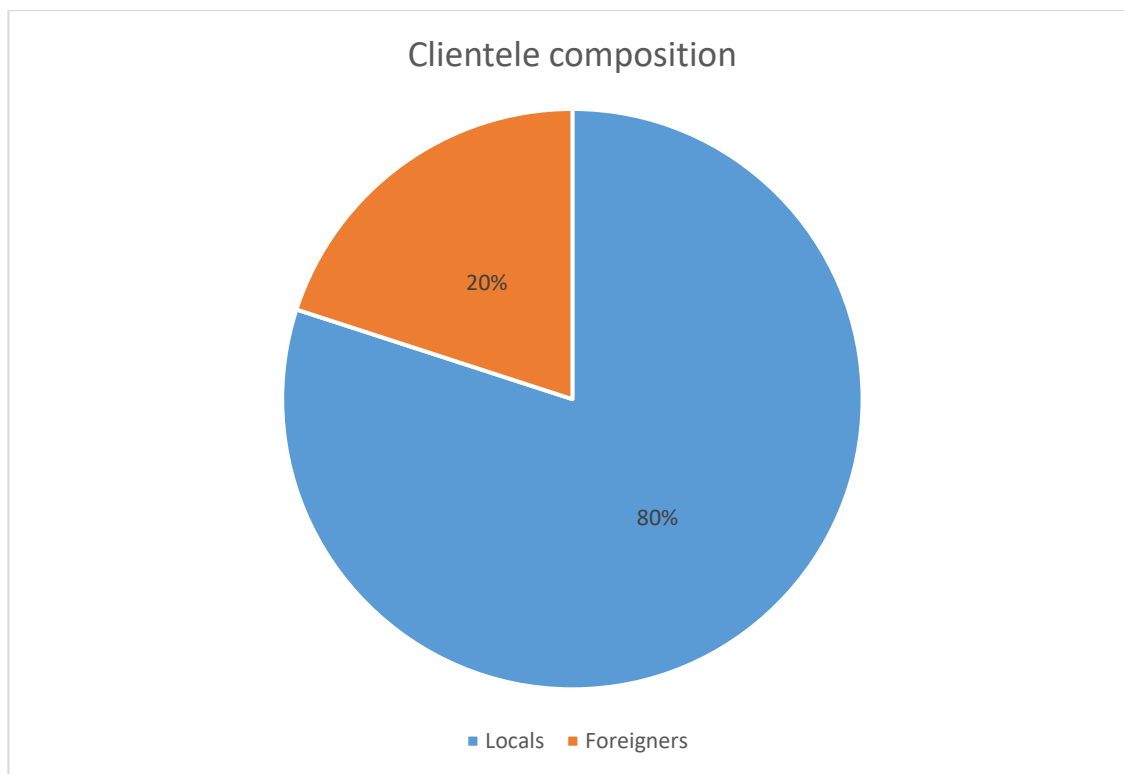


Figure 7.4: Clientele composition

It is important to restate that the figures as seen in figure 7.4 are for sampled establishments in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa, and may not be representative of other provinces. For example, figures from STATS SA (2019) suggest that there has been a marked increase in the number of foreign visitors in the country who identify themselves as tourists. According to the report, the number of foreign visitors to South Africa between May 2018 to May 2019 rose by 1.5%. Given the diversity of South Africa and the many tourist locations in the country, it is possible, however, that tourists visiting other provinces accounted for this increase. It is also important to highlight that the scenario portrayed in terms of visitor composition represents a pre-COVID-19 era. Due to the travel restrictions during the lockdown levels 5 to 2, travel for leisure, or general travel between provinces, was restricted, while inbound travel from foreign nationals

was totally barred. Statistics gathered during this time would have painted a totally different picture.

7.3 Addressing specific research objectives

7.3.1 Objective 1: *The adoption of social media by establishments*

One of the key objectives of the study was to explore why and how micro-hospitality businesses from non-urban areas strategically employ social media to market their businesses. As part of the process of generating data to aid in achieving the objective, the researcher asked study participants to explain how they adopted social media in their establishments.

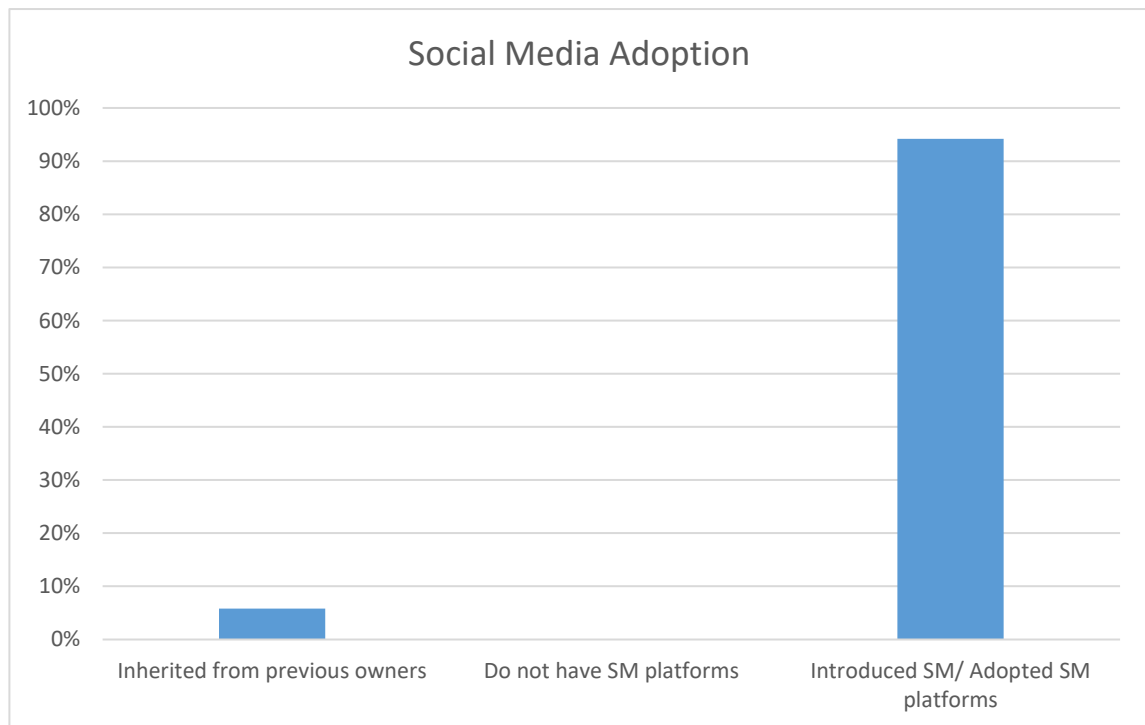


Figure 7.5: Social media adoption (n=70)

As shown in Figure 7.5 above, 100% of the respondents use social media for marketing and 94 percent of the respondents said they did not inherit any social

media platform – they had to introduce it from scratch. Six percent said they built on already existing social media platforms. Interestingly, all the sampled establishments had a social media presence, whether inherited or floated by the new management. The six percent that reported that they had inherited their social media platforms, indicated that in the early days few people were keen to adopt social media for marketing. This is supported by Gamboa and Gonçalves (2014), who found that at inception, social media marketing was not understood by many, and most people did not perceive any immediate gains from its use.

7.3.1.1 Adoption of specific social media platforms

The researcher thereafter sought to find out from the respondents the specific social media platforms they adopted for their establishments. All 70 respondents said that they were on Facebook, 41 percent were on Twitter, 58 percent were on Instagram, 67 percent were on TripAdvisor, and 33 percent were on Pinterest, while 67 per cent said they were on WhatsApp. Seven percent of the respondents said they were on other social media platforms not listed in the options by the researcher.

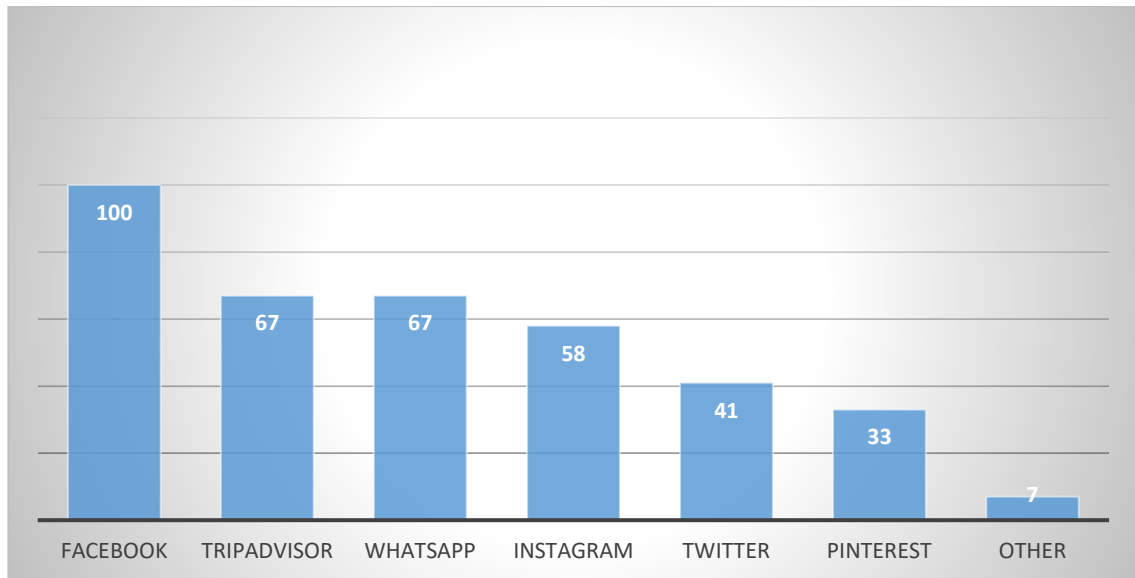


Figure 7.6: Social media platforms adopted by sampled establishments

The participants' response confirms the position of Beatie (2016), who finds that the most common social media platforms for the hospitality industry are Facebook and Instagram. The researcher observed that all the sampled establishments used Facebook to further enhance their business presence. Cartwright (2017) argues that Facebook is the chosen social media platform for the hospitality industry because of its potential to provide a platform to reach an audience much larger than traditional hotel marketing avenues. With over 1.8 billion users, and five new profiles created every second on Facebook, it means that the majority of the future guests of hospitality establishments are active on the network. When asked why Facebook was the preferred social media network for the sampled establishments, some of the interviewed hospitality operators explained that it was cost-effective and has a very wide reach. One respondent explained it this way:

"Sometimes you would think that everyone is on Facebook because even my young child has a Facebook account. So you can see that it is a very unique marketing tool. Also, unlike some social media platforms that may

require hands-on experience, Facebook is user-friendly. That means that the information we post is easily accessible to our desired audience (Nick, Restaurant owner in Fort Nottingham)."

Another respondent felt similarly:

"Facebook is an easy choice, to be honest. Although we are on almost all the platforms, it is on Facebook that we get the most engagements. Facebook allows you to start a conversation and get honest feedback, while also providing the opportunity to post pictures and videos. It is a whole combo. The most interesting part of it all is that it cuts across all strata of society. Some social media platforms like Twitter come across as elitist and people are unwilling to share or retweet business-related posts. With the advent of social media influencing, it has even become harder. But Facebook does not have that much complication. That is why we focus more on our engagements on the platform" (Pretorius, Co-owner of a 4 star graded wedding venue in the Midlands).

Unlike Beatie's (2016) observation, the next most used platform from the researcher's findings was TripAdvisor and not Instagram. Although social media usage differs from one geographical location to another, the high percentage of establishments' presence on TripAdvisor in the researcher's area of studies is connected to the customer's reliance on the platform for feedback on the reputation of hospitality industry establishments. According to Nicoli and Papadopoulo (2017, 317), 35 percent of travelers change their decisions about hotels or lodges after browsing through TripAdvisor. They found that 53 percent of respondents in their study claimed they will not book a hotel that does not have any reviewers, especially if they do not have TripAdvisor reviews. The high adoption rate of TripAdvisor by hospitality establishments is made necessary by

the fact that travelers nowadays rely heavily on other travelers' past experience with the destination or hotel, hence they seek for reviews from other users. This trend, according to Chang et al (2019) has motivated most hospitality establishments to subscribe to TripAdvisor. Despite the drawbacks, results and literature suggest that all small hospitality businesses should be on TripAdvisor as it is the most trusted travel review site.

The popularity of these SM platforms aligns with their classification by micro-hospitality businesses in terms of their effectiveness. This classification is largely based on the extent to which SM satisfies their marketing needs, as well as their popularity with their clientele in source markets. This scenario resonates with the assertion by Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1973) through their uses and gratifications theory (UGT). Adoption and utilization of these SM platforms by these micro-hospitality businesses is motivated by their usefulness and the satisfaction both the business and clients get from adopting them.

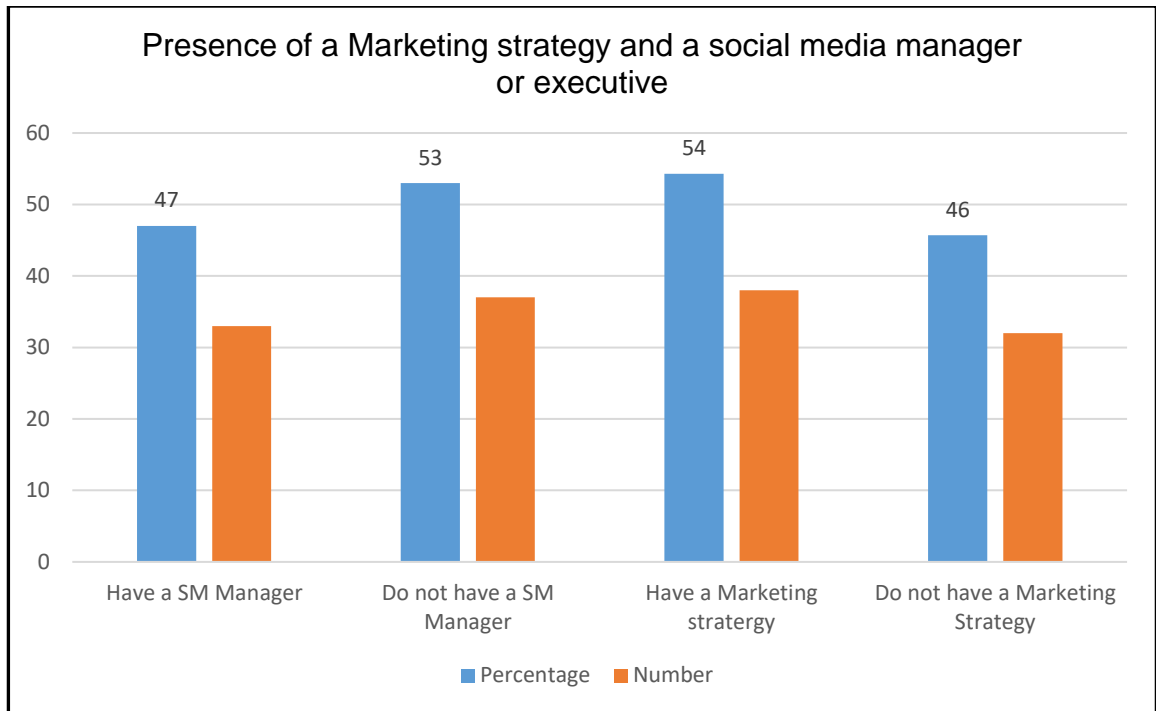


Figure 7.7: Presence of a social media manager or executive

According to Figure 5.7 above, although all the sampled establishments claimed to have an active social media presence, a very sizeable percentage said they do not have a social media manager or executive. Forty seven percent of the respondents (33) said their establishments have a social media manager, while 53 per cent (37) said their establishment does not have a specific social media manager or executive. More importantly, 54 percent of these establishments have a marketing strategy while 46 percent say that they do not have a marketing strategy. The difference between the 47 percent that have a marketing manager running SMM and 54 percent that have a marketing strategy indicates the 7 percent that outsource the services of social media marketing to a consultancy company who run it as per the company's marketing strategy. In brief: the statistics show that although 54 percent of the establishments have a marketing strategy, only 47 percent have a dedicated manager executing this strategy as

well as managing social media. The remaining 7 percent use social media consultancy firms.

When the researcher probed further for answers during the interview sessions, the reasons given reflected the differences between the respondents and establishments. For example, a manager of an ungraded guesthouse responded:

“We have active social media pages as I have told you earlier, but we do not have a social media manager or a marketing executive. Why should we incur an extra cost when all we need to do is post pictures and adverts? Is there anyone who doesn’t know how to use Facebook or Instagram? As the manager, I have access to the social media login account and password, so you may say I am also the social media manager. Other than that, there is no specific position for that” (Sipho, Manager of a 36 sleeper ungraded Guesthouse in St Lucia).

The failure to appoint a dedicated marketing and social media manager by 54 percent of the sample resonates with the claim by Kumar (2015) that bigger and more established hotels and businesses are more organized in terms of digital marketing, hence they can afford to employ a full-time marketing executive, together with marketing support staff.

Another respondent remarked:

“Our establishment has a social media manager. At first, we thought it was something we could handle as a group. But after a series of errors and misinformation, we decided to employ a marketing and social media manager. What happened was that employees were posting conflicting information online, thereby making our establishment look unserious and unreliable. With a marketing and social media manager, we know that whenever there is misinformation, we know where to turn to. We are also

sure that the person handling it is trained in that field. It has saved us a lot of stress that comes with having to delete posts and consistently apologizing for misinformation” (Richard, Owner of a five star graded private game lodge in the Zululand).

Richard’s position resonates with those held by Bossio et al. (2019) who argue that since organisations have become increasingly reliant on social media for realising effective public engagement strategies, as well as managing branding and reputation, it becomes pertinent to hand over the process to individuals or groups with the requisite skills such as social media managers and/or executives. They argue that this is even more important when one considers that traditional organisational external communications have proven to be unwieldy in developing and managing social media content.

As explained in Chapter 3, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and use of Technology (UTAUT2) covers more scope than any other theory on acceptance of technology. Exploring the benefits of SM adoption and its significance to micro-hospitality businesses highlighted alignment of causes and benefits of adoption to the five constructs of the UTAUT2 model which are performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitation condition and the intention. As recorded above, the construct of effort expectancy summarizes the ease in using SM. It is for this same reason that platforms such as Facebook have over a billion users and all micro-hospitality businesses examined in this study have adopted Facebook, along with other SM platforms, as they are relatively easy to use. Interviews conducted with owners of these businesses indicate a common belief in SMM bringing positive growth. This aligns with the performance expectancy construct of the UTAUT2 model, where the user believes that using a new technology will enhance their performance, in this case its business performance through effective marketing. The adoption of user review sites by both the clientele and micro-hospitality businesses links very well with the construct of social

influence of the UTAUT2 model. Under this construct, the researcher noted how early adopters have influenced the rest of the users to be socially connected online. In this instance, the habit construct of UTAUT2 is noted relatively as a post adoption variable that helps to explain the continued use of the SM platforms for marketing as well as a source of travel tips for the clientele. This also explains why the following on these micro-hospitality business pages is not shrinking but consistently increasing. As noted with the UGT model, the hedonic motivation construct of the UTAUT2 helps explain the pleasure and gratification derived from using SM. This is a post adoption scenario for both the business and the clientele. This is of particular reference to the 81% of the examined micro-hospitality businesses who said that SMM is effective and that they are happy with it.

It is evident from the results that proper utilization of social media has helped successful hospitality businesses reach wider clientele and increase business activity. Small hospitality businesses due to their limited resources will not be able to hire a dedicated manager, but can hire services of a social media marketing specialist to attend to their SMM once a week. This will be more affordable while ensuring them of a professional approach to SMM.

7.3.1.2 Frequency of social media updates

The researcher also sought to determine from participants the frequency with which they update their social media accounts. Lee (2019) warns that if a proper balance between what is shared and when it is shared is not achieved, social media may have a negative impact. Lee argues that social media managers face the dilemma of wanting to connect with followers without at the same time 'driving them away'. According to Lee, there must be a perfect balance of sharing and listening.

Twenty three percent (16) of the sampled respondents said they updated their social media accounts daily, 66 percent (46) said they updated weekly, while 11 per cent (8) said they updated their platforms monthly.

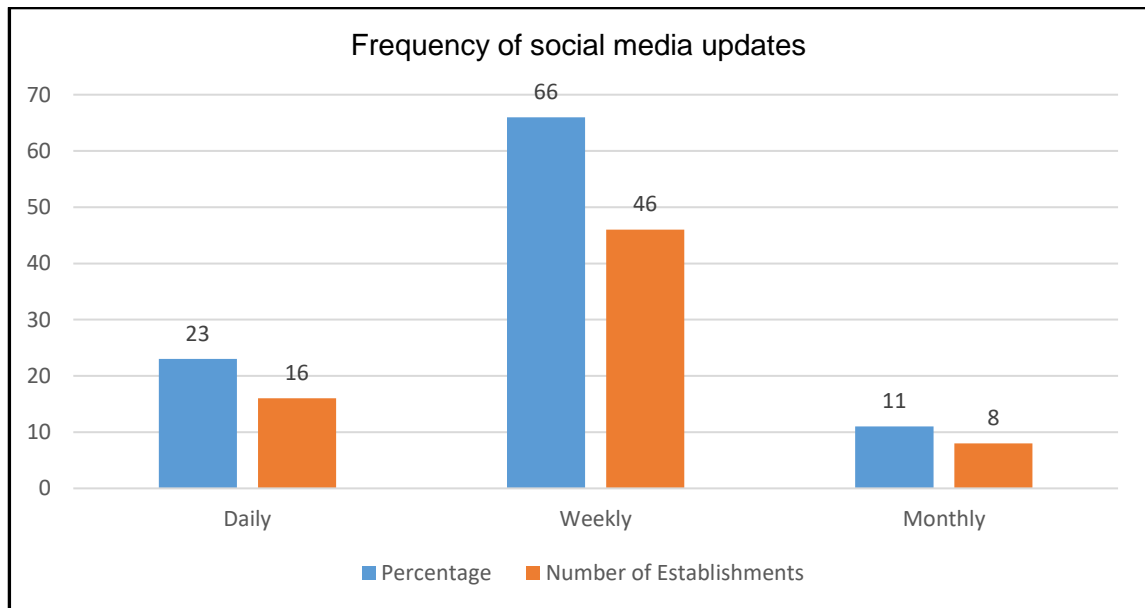


Figure 7.8: Frequency of social media updates

During the interview session, the researcher sought to determine from the participants the factors that influenced the frequency with which they updated their social media platforms. Although, as can be observed in figure 8 above, most of the respondents claim to update their platforms weekly, they nonetheless stated that it can change to daily, depending on the season.

One respondent remarked:

“We update our platforms weekly – you do not want to be everywhere on social media. Then you may end up getting involved in sociopolitical issues that do not concern you. So, we make it a point to give our clients, and would-be clients, updates every week. For our establishment, it is every Monday morning. However, during peak seasons like July when guests start coming in preparatory for Durban July, or during the Christmas season, we update daily. We need to compete with other establishments

in our locality” (Sisanda, a manager at a 20 bed 3 star Lodge in the Midlands).

One of the respondents gave reasons why her establishment, a very successful lodge, serving mainly international clients (80%) and fewer local clients (20%), updates its social media platforms daily. It is also worth noting that the Lodge is 4 star graded. She claimed it is a strategic way of engaging with clients and would-be clients consistently, beyond business transactions:

“The thing is because we have a social media manager, our platforms are updated daily. Our social media team have daily nuggets for living, lifestyle tips and even beauty regimens on display. We run our platforms like mini-blogs, that way, our clients see us as partners. I agree that daily updates may be too much, but it has consistently worked for us” (Jolene, Manager at a 12 bed 4 star private game lodge that has been running for over 10 years, located in Zululand).

When further probed for the correlation of star grading, social media and effective marketing in their lodge, Jolene had this to say:

“For us we target foreign clients who constitute 80% of our clients while locals constitute 20%, and with international tourists quality is primarily determined by your star grading unless its repeat guests who have become loyal to the lodge. We had to be graded in order to appeal to this market. Also, in our source market travel reviews especially on TripAdvisor and social media marketing particularly on Facebook are big things. By adopting SMM we were keeping pace with modern marketing trends in our source markets hence you see that we have very interactive platforms that we update almost daily” (Jolene, Manager at a 12 bed 4 star private game lodge that has been running for over 10 years located in Zululand).

7.3.1.3 Social media platforms' update frequency

- **Facebook**

The researcher also sought to determine the frequency with which respondents updated specific social media platforms. Twenty one percent of the respondents said they update their Facebook accounts daily, 30 per cent said they updated weekly, while 49 percent said they updated randomly. The researcher then probed further to understand what the respondents meant by 'random' updates. One of the respondents remarked:

"Look, the world we live in right now is too fast. You can go to bed with the earth flat, and wake up to find out that it is cylindrical. Nothing is predictable anymore. So, we keep our options open regarding the regularity with which we update our Facebook platform. There may be changes in weather conditions, public holidays, protests, etc. that would require that we immediately update our status. We will not wait for weekly updates, simply because we have scheduled it that way. We will act as occasion demands" (Lorene, Events Coordinator at a 4 star graded intimate wedding venue in the Battlefields).

Caroline, one of the sampled respondents, also remarked in the same vein:

"I honestly do not think that we should be rigid about the time and dates of social media updates. Like I told you earlier, we update our platforms weekly, but we also update them as occasion demands. Especially Facebook where over 1 billion active users are busy. If you are not up and about, the world will pass you by before you know it. (Bistro and Pancakes Restaurant owner, Ilembe).

Although the above two establishments are not the same (one is a restaurant and the other one is a 4 star graded wedding venue) they both agree to giving an allowance of flexibility when it comes to posting on their social media platforms.

Caroline, the restaurant owner, further explains that sales may slow at any time and that might require immediate promoting of a 'special'. Thus she will always post randomly when the need arises. On the other hand, Lorene, who is an events coordinator, points to factors like unpredictable weather in the Battlefields. She argues that in case a storm is forecast for the weekend, she will post on the social media so that wedding guests may come prepared for wet weather, as well as helping the bridal couple to change plans. For instance, if they were planning an outdoor ceremony, they might decide to change to indoors.

- **Twitter**

Three percent of the respondents said that they updated their Twitter account daily, 6 percent said they updated weekly, 33 percent said they updated their Twitter account monthly, while 58 percent said they updated their accounts randomly. When probed further, the respondents gave the same reasons as for updating their Facebook accounts randomly: "as occasion demands". Interestingly, 58 percent of the respondents said they have never posted on their Twitter accounts. This result confirms the position held by some scholars (Chung & Buhalis, 2008; Leung, Lee and Law, 2011) who are of the opinion that, despite the wide adoption of social media and its potential to positively transform businesses, many establishments, especially those in the hospitality industry, still do not understand the practice of manipulating and managing social media for business growth and development.

- **Instagram**

The researcher found that social media updates frequency for Instagram had almost the same rate and spate as that of Facebook and Twitter. Twelve percent of the respondents said they updated their Instagram accounts daily, 12 percent said they updated weekly, 36 percent said they updated randomly, while 41 percent said they had never updated their Instagram accounts since it was set up.

- **WhatsApp**

The researcher found that respondents' use of WhatsApp was slightly higher than the other social media platforms, except for Facebook. For example, 36 percent of the respondents claimed to update their establishments' WhatsApp status daily, 1 percent said they updated weekly, 20 percent said they updated randomly, while 42 percent said they do not post any information, pictures or videos on their status on this platform. The popularity of WhatsApp in terms of communication between hospitality establishments and their guests is directly linked with WhatsApp's ability to ease communication between clients and establishments. WhatsApp comes in primarily as a communication platform, a cheaper and more convenient way of communicating with clients while it has limitations in terms of marketing. These limitations, as noted by Li, Robinson and Oriade, (2020) are attributed to the way WhatsApp is structured and works, in that it does not allow interactive advertisements and cannot reach people outside the user's contacts, unless content is shared externally. According to Hotel Tech Report (2020), text messaging has proven to be the preferred way to communicate with businesses, with WhatsApp being the easiest, most affordable, and most accessible platform. Hotel Tech Report (2020) further claims that:

"Studies show that text messaging is a preferred way to communicate with businesses for 9 out of 10 consumers - and that people read their texts. Compared to emails, which around 20% of recipients open, text messages garner an astounding 82% open rate. Rather than dedicating time and energy to optimizing your email subject lines, a forward-thinking hotelier should instead leverage a communication method with which guests are much more receptive, that is text messaging (Hotel Tech Report, 2020).

Respondents demonstrated a mixed approach to posting frequency as well as consistency in doing so. Results highlight that those who are doing well are consistent in posting and that their engagements on SM are very regular. The key

take away here is that more active pages are attracting more attention, which results in more followership and bookings. Although all respondents have adopted SM for marketing, results highlight a poor application of SM for marketing by 77% of the respondents who either post once weekly or once monthly.'

7.3.2 Objective 2: Social media effectiveness

The second objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the hospitality industry in KZN. It is very important to determine whether or not a particular technological adoption is effective. As has been presented in the last section, social media adoption is unique to sociocultural and even sociopolitical milieus. This means that what works in a particular part of the globe may not work in another.

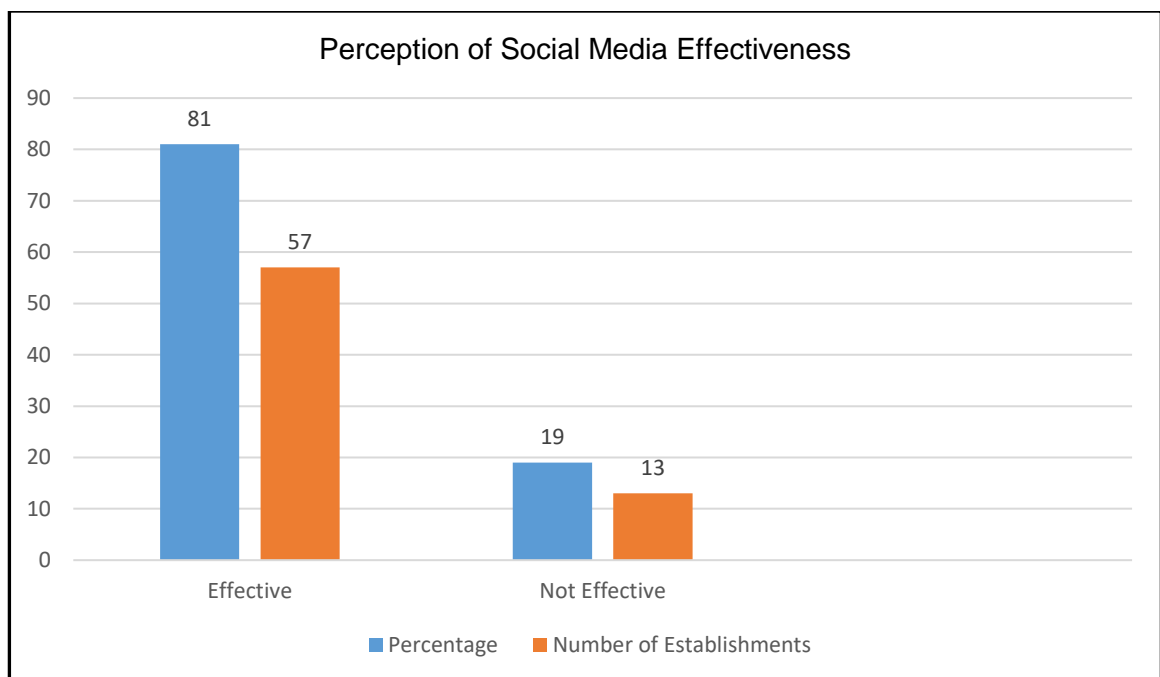


Figure 7.9: Perception of social media effectiveness

When the researcher asked the respondents whether or not they thought social media in general, is effective in their establishments' quest to attract and maintain a sizeable clientele, 81 percent (57 respondents) affirmed that social media is an

effective tool in building and maintaining their clientele, while 19 percent (13 respondents) said it was not an effective tool. Although some of the respondents insist that word of mouth and referrals are still the most tried and trusted methods of gaining and maintaining new clients, they agreed, nonetheless, that more millennials are exploring the globe through travel, and that social media can provide them with all the information they need about establishments.

One of the respondents observed:

“In the past, most of our clients used to be married couples and people in their late 30s or early forties upwards. But the times have changed. In recent years, we have seen an upsurge in the number of young people exploring the tourism potentials that abound in South Africa and beyond. Our establishment has also witnessed a growth in the number of young tourists, and most of them say that they got to know about us through the social media” (Melinda, owner of a 4 star boutique hotel in the Midlands).

The respondents' views are confirmed by Head (2019) who states that demographics of travelers into South Africa have changed over the years. Head says that millennials and 'mid-lifers' are leading the new surge of tourists in South Africa (whether local or foreign). According to Stats SA (2019), the majority of tourists are aged between 35 and 44 years (29%), followed closely by the age group 25 to 34 years (27.9%), 45 years and above 22.1% and 24 years and below accounted for 20%.

One of the respondents interviewed remarked that lately, their main source of revenue has been young people between the ages of 25 and 34 years. These clients are brought to their platforms by social media champions who have made a career out of social media influencing, commonly referred to as “social media influencers”, whom they follow very closely. He remarked that many of their 'new' clients are people who visit hotels to shoot videos which they upload on their social media pages for followership. He further remarked that:

“Social media has been very effective in helping us reach places and people who we never would have been able to reach, or who we probably would not have the right communication skills to reach. For example, the advent of social media influencing has improved our clientele beyond imagination. These days we find young people who come to lodge for days and then shoot videos about our Lodge which they post on their social media accounts. Although they do it to build up social media followership, they also invariably help promote our Lodge. It is a win-win for everybody (Sam, manager of an ungraded Lodge in the North Coast).

The rise of social media influencers is another vital way through which hospitality industry establishments are using social media's immense reach and influence. Although the impact of social media influencers is not part of this study's scope, it is pertinent to note that some of the respondents, like Sam, mentioned the positive impact they have on their establishments. Social media influencers measure the successes of their posts by follower counts, likes, retweets or shares, and the number of people a post will reach. When an influencer senses that a particular post is not generating the much-needed metrics, he/she 'pushes' the post by asking friends, family and colleagues to engage with it.

The respondents also stated that social media has made it a lot easier for them to be able to pass across important messages to their clients, or would-be clients, quickly and in a very cost-effective manner not possible in the past. Akhona, one of the respondents said this:

“One of the most vital ways in which social media has been very effective has been in the ease with which we pass our messages across. I have been in this establishment for many years and I can tell you that social media, especially Facebook, has played significant roles in helping us reach our clients on time. Sometimes we want to change the menu or cancel earlier announced events, we just post the information on our

Facebook page and more often than not, it reaches the target audience. Sometimes, we get calls from people seeking to clarify something they read or saw on one of our social media platforms. It is indeed very effective, it is a lifesaver” (Akhona, restaurant manager in the Midlands).

Interestingly, although most of the sampled participants in the study stated that their establishments had several social media platforms, almost all the respondents claimed that Facebook is the most effective for their establishments’ marketing and public relations goals. They stated that most of their clients were comfortable to ‘relate’ with them through Facebook – more than any other site. This finding resonates with the views of Leung, Bai and Stahura (2015) who state that hotel customers’ social media experiences influence their attitudes towards social media sites, which in turn influences their attitude towards the tourism establishments, and that attitude spirals and affects their decisions or intentions to book or even spread their experiences by electronic word of mouth.

7.3.2.1 An Effective Feedback Loop

Apart from gaining and maintaining new clients, the interviewed respondents also remarked that social media has helped them to understand the latest trends in hospitality industry management and customer service. They remarked that the feedback they get from their social media posts in the form of comments, gives them insight into what clients expect of them, and what their competitors are doing differently to gain a comparative advantage. Alex, one of the interviewed respondents remarked:

“You know, in the past, the only way we got feedback from our clients was through feedback forms we used to give them after their stays or through their word of mouth face-to-face conversations. These days, some guests don’t say anything to you, but then they go to your platforms and register

their displeasure or gratitude for great service. Either way, we are made aware of areas where we are doing well, or areas where we need improvements. That is one important way through which social media has been effective in helping us move our establishment forward.” (Alex, manager of a 3 star graded small hotel in the Battlefields)

As part of efforts aimed at proffering answers to research Objective 3, the researcher also sought to find out from respondents whether or not they subscribed to review sites such as TripAdvisor.

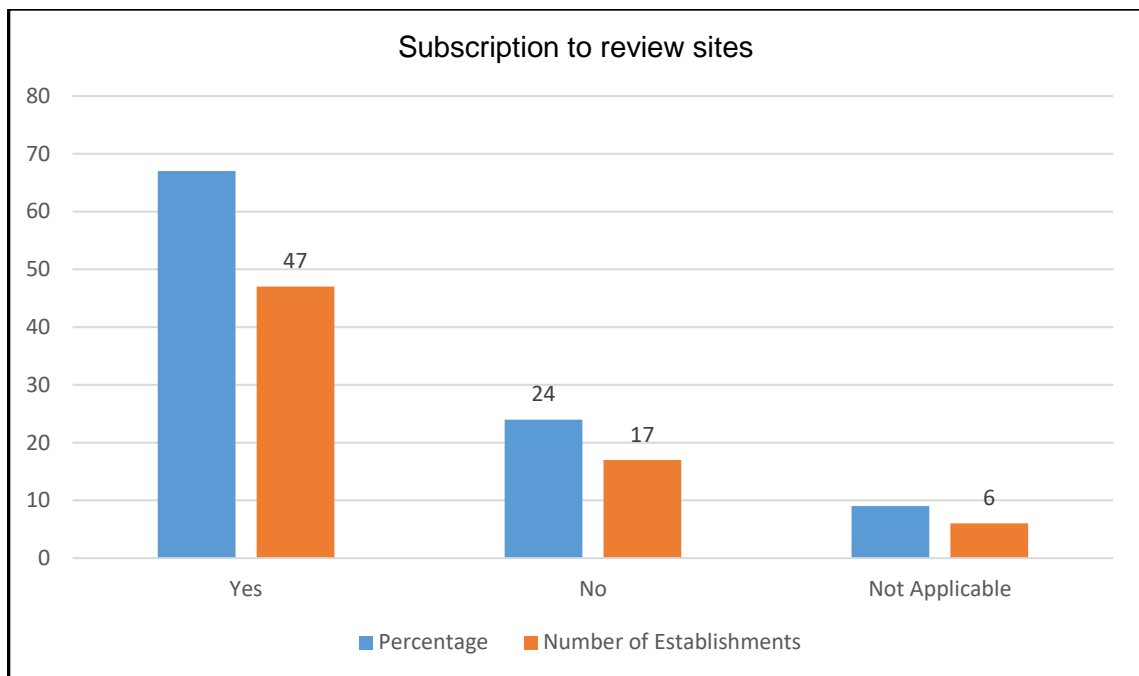


Figure 7.10: Subscription to review sites

Review sites such as TripAdvisor play a significant role in highlighting guests' perceptions of hospitality establishments. According to Lee et al (2016), guests will respond favorably to an establishment when they find that they not only have good ratings on TripAdvisor, but also when they can see that such establishments

make an effort to correct or improve shortcomings noted by the guests on the platform.

It did not come as a surprise to find out that a sizeable percentage of the respondents (67 percent) subscribe to TripAdvisor, while 24 per cent did not subscribe and 9% said that review sites do not apply to them. When the researcher probed further to ascertain why some establishments did not subscribe to TripAdvisor, the most common response was that they do not trust the veracity of reviews on the site. The respondents' position correlates with those held by Longwell (2020) who claims that fake reviews are common on TripAdvisor to the extent that the platform has become a ground for settling scores by competing establishments or brands. It is not uncommon to find competitors attacking each other with poor ratings, and business owners responding by posting their over-the-top praise, which can be fake or paid for. For example, according to Longwell (2020), in 2014, TripAdvisor had a \$600,000 fine imposed on it in Italy for fake reviews. One of the interviewed respondents remarked, when asked why his establishment did not subscribe to TripAdvisor:

“The problem with sites like TripAdvisor is that you cannot trust their ratings. I have read ratings of some lodges that I know personally, and could not help but laugh. They exaggerated everything, it was shocking! We were even once approached by someone who claimed he could help us get good reviews from TripAdvisor for a fee, of course, we refused”
(Joseph, Manager for an ungraded hotel in Mtubatuba).

Joseph's views are similar to those of Longwell (2020) who reports:

“...In September 2018, a high-profile investigation by The Times of London found that one in three (33%) of TripAdvisor reviews are fake. The

company has denied the results of the independent investigation. However, from our experience, this seems pretty accurate. A second, broader, independent investigation in September 2019 combed through 250,000 reviews and found 15% of them were fake. More troubling, when fake reviews were pointed out to TripAdvisor, they acknowledged that 93% of the hotels engaging in fake ratings had done it previously. Translating this, hotels engaging in this practice have been allowed to remain on the TripAdvisor site to continue engaging in the practice” (Longwell, 2020).

Results above confirm that most of the respondents (81%) agree that SMM is indeed an effective marketing tool. This confirms why 100% of the respondents have adopted SM platforms. Although the most trusted SM review site (TripAdvisor) is marred by controversy, particularly where claims are made to the effect that one in three of the reviews are fake, travelers still prefer it as the most reliable source of travel reviews. Effectiveness according to the results is however not proportionally conforming to the usage of these platforms as only 12% actively use their platforms on a daily basis to effectively market their businesses as opposed to the 81% that say SMM is indeed an effective marketing tool.

Table 7.1: Cross analysis of findings: An overview of Events Centre Establishments

Establishment	Years in business	Star Grading	Percentage Composition of Clientele		How SMM was adopted		Availability of SMM Manager	Travel reviews rating out of 10	Most popular SMP	Frequency of posting on SMPs	Perception of owners on the effectiveness of SMM
			Locals	Foreign	Introduced	Inherited					
Establishment 1	10+ years	4 Star	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 2	10+ years	4 Star	95%	5%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 3	3-5 years	Not graded	85%	15%	Yes		No	7	Facebook	Randomly	Not Effective
Establishment 4	3-5 years	Not graded	90%	10%		Yes	No	7.5	Facebook	Monthly	Not Effective
Establishment 5	6-9 years	Not graded	85%	15%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 6	6-9 years	Not graded	80%	20%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 7	10+ years	Not graded	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 8	10+ years	Not graded	95%	5%	Yes		Yes	8.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 9	10+ years	4 Star	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 10	10+ years	Not graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	7.5	Facebook	Monthly	Not Effective
Establishment 11	3-5 years	4 Star	80%	20%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 12	10+ years	5 Star	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 13	10+ years	5 Star	85%	15%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective

The above overview highlights a relationship between age of business, service quality promise (star grading) and customers' perception on the service quality they experienced. Establishment 3 has been in business for less than five years and is not star graded. The establishment also has no manager or dedicated SMM personnel. Customers also rate this as 7 out of 10 which is the lowest as compared to other establishments such as establishment 13, who are 5 star graded, have a SMM manager, and have high rating of 9 out of 10 from customers, post on their SM platforms daily and affirm that SMM is indeed effective. On the other hand, establishment three randomly posts and management are of the view that social media is not an effective marketing strategy. It is clear that the two have distinct differences, although they both share a similar clientele source matrix, characterized by the majority being locals (85% locals for both and 15% for foreign clients). As highlighted above, Chang et al (2019) question the validity of the online reviews citing the scandal of fake reviews by TripAdvisor where

establishments buy reviews and likes. The positive scenario of having a SMM manager, good reviews and actually seeing SMM as an effective strategy for marketing by establishment 13, can be attributed to the early adopters' advantage as noted Bossio et al, (2019) who argue that those that adopted early, and built structures around proper functionality of SMM, tend to be a step ahead of new adopters. Results above demonstrate that those who have been in business the longest were the early adopters of SM. Those that are graded 5 stars are particularly doing well as they have dedicated SMM Manager and post regularly on their SM platforms.

Table 7.2: Cross analysis of findings: Game/ Nature Lodges

Establishment	Years in business	Star Grading	Percentage Composition of Clientele		How SMM was adopted		Availability of SMM Manager	Travel reviews rating out of 10	Most popular SMP	Frequency of posting on SMPs	owners on the effectiveness of SMM
			Locals	Foreign	Introduce	Inherited					
Establishment 1	10+ years	4 Star	80%	20%	Yes		Yes	9.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 2	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	7.5	Facebook	Randomly	Effective
Establishment 3	10+ years	4 Star	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 4	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 5	10+ years	3 Star	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Randomly	Effective
Establishment 6	10+ years	Not Graded	85%	15%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 7	10+ years	Not Graded	80%	20%	Yes		No	7.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 8	10+ years	5 Star	75%	25%	Yes		Yes	9	TripAdvisor	Daily	Effective
Establishment 9	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 10	10+ years	3 Star	95%	5%	Yes		No	8.5	Facebook	Randomly	Effective
Establishment 11	10+ years	3 Star	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 12	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Randomly	Effective

The above cross tabulation for game lodges confirms the patterns observed with the Events Centres above, of a close relationship between business age, service quality and customers' perception about the lodge brand. Although all 12 lodges said that they had been operating for more than 10 years and that they all introduced SMP, only half of them have a dedicated manager for SMM. Unlike the Events Centres that all said that Facebook was the most popular SMP, one lodge differed (establishment 8) seeing TripAdvisor as the most popular SMP. A closer look at this establishment shows that it is a five star lodge, with a different ratio of 25% foreign clients to 75% local. The Lodge also has a dedicated SMM manager and the management are of the view that SMM is a very effective marketing strategy. Management of this lodge attribute the popularity of TripAdvisor over Facebook to their clientele source matrix. The Lodge, as highlighted above, draws 25% of its clientele from foreign clients who trust travel review sites for advice and past experience from other travelers. The good reviews, as management explains, are pushed up by the fact that foreign clients always post each time they stay. The excellent service quality that they offer has also helped them maintain favor with the clientele and get positive reviews. According to the management of establishment 8, the higher ratio of more foreign guests is attributed by the fact that this is a safari lodge hosting trophy-hunters coming from the USA. Chang et al (2019) finds that most western countries, which are source markets for tourist destinations, post travel warnings and urge travelers to review destinations before travel. This conforms with the management's view that their foreign market clients rely more on travel review sites than on Facebook and other SMPs. Although all lodges examined have been in business for more than 10 years, establishments two and seven have not been graded, do not have a dedicated SMM manager and have the lowest ratings of 7.5 out of 10 each. Both establishments are of the view that SMM is effective although their frequency of posting on Facebook (their most popular site) is not the same. There is an evident positive relationship observed between not being star graded and low ratings. Those that have high reviews have high star grading, while the ungraded have low ratings. Those with a higher rating are characterized by the availability of a specialist to manage SM and regularly interacting with clientele.

Table 7.3: Cross analysis of findings: An overview of formal service accommodation establishments

Establishment	Years in business	Star Grading	Percentage Composition of Clientele		How SMM was adopted		Availability of SMM Manager	Travel reviews rating out of 10	Most popular SMP	Frequency of posting on SMPs	Perception of owners on the effectiveness of SMM
			Locals	Foreign	Introduced	Inherited					
Establishment 1	3-5 years	Not graded	75%	25%	Yes		No	7	Facebook	Weekly	Not effective
Establishment 2	6-9 years	Not graded	70%	30%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 3	3-5 years	Not graded	80%	20%	Yes		No	7.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 4	3-5 years	Not graded	90%	10%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 5	6-9 years	Not graded	85%	15%	Yes		No	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 6	10+ years	Not graded	70%	30%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 7	10+ years	Not graded	65%	35%	Yes		Yes	7.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 8	10+ years	3 Star	60%	40%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 9	10+ years	3 Star	70%	30%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 10	10+ years	3 Star	65%	35%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 11	10+ years	4 Star	20%	80%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 12	10+ years	5 Star	10%	90%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 13	10+ years	5 Star	40%	60%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective

The above cross analysis presents an overview for formal service accommodation, predominantly small hotels in KZN. Data shows that 61.5% of the hotels have been in operation for over 10 years and 53.8% of them are not graded while the remainder are graded from 3 to 5 stars. The pattern portrayed here conforms approximately with the one observed with game lodges in terms of the graded hotels having a dedicated SMM manager and better reviews. The clientele source matrix however shifted in that the graded hotels have a larger composition of foreign clients. A probe into the demographics of the hotels popular with foreign clientele reveals that establishment 11, 12, and 13 are exclusive hotels located in private game reserves, with a solid market of German tourists coming in groups all year round. Apart from marketing on their SMP, they have marketing and reservations offices in Germany and the United States of America from where the bulk of their foreign clients come. The

same hotels are of the view that SMM is a very effective marketing strategy and they all have dedicated SMM managers located in their source markets (Germany and USA). The 3 hotels also have high reviews as compared to the rest of the hotels in the study. The manager for establishment 13 attributes this to the fact that most of their guests are regulars who come every year. A relationship has been developed and they now know their exact requirements such as preferred seating in the restaurant (on the deck or near the fire place) favourite local meals on the buffet, and many other personalized service functions. As observed with other types of establishments (lodges and events centres) the new entrants and ungraded hotels have lower ratings and do not have dedicated SMM managers. It is evident that review sites have emerged again as with above scenarios, as complimenting an effective SMM strategy. This demonstrates that actively engaging in user review sites and having a dedicated SMM Manager will assist the small hospitality business execute sustainable SMM strategies.

Table 7.4: Cross analysis of findings: Guest accommodation

Establishment	Years in business	Star Grading	Percentage Composition of Clientele		How SMM was adopted		Availability of SMM Manager	Travel reviews rating out of 10	Most popular SMP	Frequency of posting on SMPs	Perception of owners on the effectiveness of SMM
			Locals	Foreign	Introduced	Inherited					
Establishment 1	10+ years	5 Star	70%	30%	Yes		Yes	9.5	TripAdvisor	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 2	10+ years	3 Star	95%	5%		Yes	Yes	7.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 3	10+ years	4 Star	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 4	10+ years	Not Graded	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 5	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Randomly	Effective
Establishment 6	10+ years	Not Graded	85%	15%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 7	10+ years	Not Graded	75%	25%	Yes		Yes	9	TripAdvisor	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 8	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	8.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 9	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		Yes	8	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 10	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	9	Facebook	Randomly	Effective
Establishment 11	10+ years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 12	6-9 years	Not Graded	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Randomly	Effective

The above overview shows that the guest accommodation segment (guesthouses) are taking social media marketing more seriously than any other type of establishment as 66.6% of the guesthouses confirmed that they do have a dedicated social media marketing manager. Looking at their sizes, the assertion that they have a dedicated SMM manager made the researchers probe for more information to check how they manage when bigger establishments were struggling. The managers explained that they have all outsourced the services from social media consultancy firms that allocate, depending on the arrangements, two days a week to work on their platforms or more frequently. The manager for Establishment 11 explained that:

“Because of our size, we cannot afford to do star grading, firstly because the annual subscription is too high, and secondly their stipulations go against our idea of opulence and a luxury style that is rustic. We have worked hard on developing a service quality outside grading and marketed ourselves well. That is why we have a rating of 9 out of 10. We are also very active on Facebook which is our popular site, our consultancy post twice a week that is on Tuesday and Thursday.”

Establishment 1 is a 5 star hotel which has a similar profile to the other 5 star graded establishments in the lodge and events centre categories. The clientele rates the hotel 9.5 out of 10 and the hotel has a dedicated SMM manager. The management agrees that SMM is an effective marketing strategy. Although all hotels have been running for more than 10 years, 75% are not graded for service quality, the reason being the cost of subscription and the expectation of exceptional service that comes with stars. Sixty six percent have a dedicated SMM manager and these ones have better reviews than those without a

dedicated SMM manager. As with other categories, Facebook and TripAdvisor are the most popular sites with guest accommodation. Majority (75%) are not graded and the category has a fairly mixed up activity level on SM.

Table 7.5: Cross analysis of findings: Restaurants

Establishment	Years in business	Star Grading	Percentage Composition of Clientele		How SMM was adopted		Availability of SMM Manager	Travel reviews rating out of 10	Most popular SMP	Frequency of posting on SMPs	Perception of owners on the effectiveness of SMM
			Locals	Foreign	Introduced	Inherited					
Establishment 1	10+ years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 2	10+ years	Not Applicable	80%	20%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 3	10+ years	Not Applicable	90%	10%	Yes		No	7	Facebook	Randomly	Not Effective
Establishment 4	10+ years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 5	10+ years	Not Applicable	75%	25%	Yes		Yes	8.5	Facebook	Daily	Effective
Establishment 6	10+ years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 7	10+ years	Not Applicable	90%	10%	Yes		No	7.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 8	10+ years	Not Applicable	90%	10%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 9	10+ years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 10	10+ years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 11	10+ years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective

The table above highlights that none of the restaurants were graded. This is because they are small establishments and star grading is primarily for accommodation service providers. Although all restaurants have adopted, and agree, that Facebook is their major SMP, only two restaurants have a dedicated SMM manager. These, as noted with guesthouses, are also outsourced services supplied by social media consultancy firms, who assist these restaurants with social media marketing. It is also clear that those that have SMM managers have better or higher online reviews than those who do not and that they are very active on SM, posting content daily. Establishment 3 does not have a SMM manager, has the lowest ratings and

management are of the view that SMM is not an effective marketing strategy – hence they post content randomly and are not very active on SMP. Generally, all restaurants have an average of 90% of their clients being local and 10% being international.

Table 7.6: Cross analysis of findings: An overview of support services

Establishment	Years in business	Star Grading	Percentage Composition of Clientele		How SMM was adopted		Availability of SMM Manager	Travel reviews rating out of 10	Most popular SMP	Frequency of posting on SMPs	Perception of owners on the effectiveness of SMM
			Locals	Foreign	Introduced	Inherited					
Establishment 1	3-5 years	Not Applicable	90%	10%	Yes		No	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 2	10+ years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 3	3-5 years	Not Applicable	90%	10%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Randomly	Effective
Establishment 4	3-5 years	Not Applicable	90%	10%	Yes		No	9	Facebook	Monthly	Effective
Establishment 5	6-9 years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	9	Facebook	Randomly	Effective
Establishment 6	6-9 years	Not Applicable	85%	15%	Yes		No	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 7	6-9 years	Not Applicable	90%	10%	Yes		Yes	9	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 8	6-9 years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8.5	Facebook	Weekly	Effective
Establishment 9	6-9 years	Not Applicable	95%	5%	Yes		No	8	Facebook	Weekly	Effective

The above overview highlights that support services do not subscribe to star grading. As previously stated, this segment includes florists, DJs, décor hiring, mobile caterers and photographers. As they all started the businesses themselves, they also introduced the SMP and all of them agreed that SMM is an effective strategy for marketing micro-hospitality establishments.

It is interesting to note that their client source matrix conforms to that of the events centres, as they draw much of their business from the weddings happening in these centres and 88.8% of these businesses are less than 10 years old. An interview with one of the service providers, a florist, revealed the following;

“Most of us support services are professionals somewhere else and this is our part-time business, hence my business is new. Our businesses depend on the wedding venues as we service their couples who are mostly South Africans. Due to the nature of my business, I cannot afford a social media person. It is something I do on my own once a week, for example when I post photos from a previous wedding I would have worked at. So after posting and tagging the venue I worked at that particular weekend, the venue shares my post and then my business goes viral. I am finding Facebook being more effective in this manner” (Florist)

In summary, evidence gathered from the field about SM effectiveness helps conclude that SMM is deemed as an effective marketing tool by 81% of the respondents. Facebook and TripAdvisor emerged as the most popular and effective platforms. The effectiveness of these platforms is linked to the availability of a SM manager and the frequency of posting content. Those that have a SM manager post frequently and attest to the effectiveness of SM as a marketing tool, while those without a SM manager post randomly and some (19%) are not convinced that SM is an effective marketing tool. SM Usage patterns are not even or the same across different establishments as highlighted in the cross analysis of findings above.

7.3.3 Objective 3: Challenges of adoption and utilisation of social media

The fourth objective of this study was to investigate the challenges of adoption and utilisation of social media as a marketing tool in micro-hospitality establishments. Mwai (2016) finds that micro-hospitality establishments are faced with steadily changing business environments, especially with the growth and adoption of ICTs in all spheres of endeavour. The researcher asked the participants in the study to state the challenges they face in their specific establishments, and the following themes emerged:

- i. Lack of adequate funding.
- ii. Lack of specialized human resources.
- iii. Difficulty in measuring the actual positive impact of social media adoption.

7.3.3.1 Lack of adequate funding

Most of the interviewed respondents explained that the management of their hospitality establishments is often reluctant to provide the funding required for setting up and running an efficient social media unit. More often than not the focus is on improving hardware instead of software. Melinda, one of the interviewed participant remarked:

“See, when you have a business owner who is struggling to break even after paying salaries and maintaining business infrastructure, it is hard to ask him or her to invest money into social media optics. The argument is always that the establishment is already doing well, there is no need to spend any money.”

In line with Melinda’s views, Panda (2019) argues that one of the reasons for a lack of funding for social media innovation by micro-businesses, such as hospitality establishments, is because of the perception that such investments have no tangible value. Therefore, it is assumed that investment in such ventures may be a waste of capital.

Similarly, Michael, another respondent, remarked:

“Funding is a big issue here. We don’t even discuss it. You don’t want to come across as insensitive to the plight of people who are struggling to keep the business afloat. Asking them to invest more money can be misunderstood. So we just maintain the status quo.”

7.3.3.2 Lack of specialized human resources

It will be recalled that in section 5.2.2 of the study, the researcher sought to determine from the participants whether or not they had a dedicated staff member managing their social media activities. Although 47 percent of the respondents said they had a dedicated executive, 53 percent said they did not have a dedicated executive. One of the main reasons for failing to appoint a dedicated social media manager was the issue of financial constraints. Most of the sampled establishments argued that social media staff would be an extra financial burden on the organisation.

One of the social media managers who was interviewed by the researcher remarked:

“My colleagues always tell me that it was difficult for them to convince the owners that the establishment needed a dedicated social media manager. So, in some ways, I feel lucky. Although I do the job of about 3 people. When I say I need assistants, people laugh. I get asked questions like: “you mean you need an assistant to help you post Facebook pictures?” They often think social media executives just get paid to surf the internet, but it is much more than that” (Johan).

The challenge posed by the absence of a dedicated social media manager also impacts greatly on the general capacity for innovation adoption in tourism establishments. The benefit of having a social media manager goes beyond updating statuses and posting pictures and/or videos. It can also potentially help other staff members to build their capacity through in-house training, thereby ultimately benefiting the establishment further.

7.3.3.3 Difficulty in measuring the positive impact of social media adoption

Another point raised by interviewees as a major challenge hampering the adoption of social media in their establishment, was the concern that actual impact of social media cannot be measured (or at least they have not been able to measure it). Rachel, one of the interviewees, remarked that although social media has been touted to increase clientele and improve clients' perceptions of hospitality industry establishments, there are very few, if any, ways of determining the actual benefits.

She remarked:

"I am not a researcher like you, but I understand that research has been conducted which shows that establishments that have an active online presence have considerably more clients and even better ratings. My question has always been: how did you arrive at that conclusion? Do you see where the dilemma lies? With fake ratings everywhere, how do you measure social media effectiveness?"

Middleton (2001) feels that it is not enough to have a social media presence as a micro-tourism establishment, the main goal should be to translate that presence into an improved number of clients and improved quality of service. Milner further remarked:

"Being present online represents the first step; for a hotel to be successful it has to be noticed by consumers. Every channel (even we speak about the website or the Social Media platforms) has a way to indicate support or just to keep in touch with their clients. A site can have a newsletter where the client can sign up, or on Facebook we can count the number of Likes, on Twitter the number of Followers and YouTube has the number of Subscribers (Middleton, 2001).

7.4 Results from inferential statistics

As highlighted in the earlier sections, this study examines the effectiveness of social media as a marketing strategy which could be adopted and utilised by small hospitality establishments particularly in the context of a developing country facing a recovery situation. In an effort to reach reliable conclusions primarily on SMM effectiveness, inferential statistical techniques were conducted to help draw conclusions. Saunders & Lewis, (2018) highlights that descriptive statistics should be augmented by inferential statistics in any research project so that reliable conclusions can be drawn. Inferential techniques include the use of correlations and chi square test values, which are interpreted using the p-values. The traditional approach to reporting a result requires a statement of statistical significance. A p-value is generated from a test statistic. A significant result is indicated with " $p < 0.05$ ".

7.4.1 Reliability of statistics

The two most important aspects of precision are reliability and validity. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.60 or higher is considered as "acceptable" for a newly developed construct.

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

Table 7.7: Cronbach's alpha score

	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Covid-19 Impact	3	0.658
Social Media	3	0.628
Location (KZN)	3	0.948

The reliability scores for all sections exceed the recommended Cronbach's alpha value. This indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the research.

7.4.2 Social media effectiveness

This section deals with the effectiveness of individual social media platforms as marketing tool. The table below summarises the scoring patterns regarding the effectiveness of social media platforms.

Table 7.8: Social media effectiveness

	Yes		No		Chi Square p-value
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	
Facebook	70	100.0%	0	0.0%	-
Instagram	54	77.1%	16	22.9%	< 0.001
TripAdvisor	62	88.6%	18	11.4%	< 0.001
WhatsApp	52	74.3%	18	25.7%	< 0.001
Twitter	17	24.3%	53	75.7%	< 0.001
Pinterest	27	38.6%	43	61.4%	0.034

The following patterns are observed:

- Some statements show (significantly) higher levels of agreement (Yes) on the effectiveness of social media platforms identified above whilst other levels of agreement are lower (but still greater than levels of disagreement (No))
- There are 2 statements with higher levels of disagreement namely Twitter and Pinterest (No)
- The significance of the differences is tested and shown in the table.

All of the respondents indicated that Facebook is indeed an effective marketing tool. Similar numbers of respondents (average = 80%) indicated that Instagram TripAdvisor and WhatsApp are also effective marketing tools.

A smaller number of respondents indicated that Twitter and Pinterest are effective marketing tools (average = 31.5%).

The popularity and favour of Facebook as the most effective tool is supported by the fact that 100% of all examined participants have adopted it as a marketing platform.

To determine whether the scoring patterns per statement were significantly different per option, a chi square goodness-of-fit test was done. The null hypothesis claims that similar numbers of respondents scored across each option for each statement (one statement at a time). The alternate states that there is a significant difference between

the levels of agreement (Yes) and disagreement (No). The highlighted sig. values (p-values) are less than 0.05 (the level of significance), it implies that the distributions were not similar. That is, the differences between the way respondents scored (Yes, No) were significant.

The popularity of Facebook as an effective marketing tool is highlighted by Lee (2018) who claims that most of the clients for any business are on Facebook. Xu and Zhou (2020) adds that business marketing nowadays are effectively run on social media with Facebook being the most preferred platform because of its wide reach and effectiveness. Similarly, its adoption aligns with Venkatesh et al's (2003) UTAUT construct of PEOU. Xu and Zhou (2020) highlights that the wide use of Facebook globally is necessitated by its simplicity in using the platform.

Twitter and Pinterest are at the bottom in terms of scoring for their effectiveness as marketing tools. The two platforms have a common weakness of being one sided in terms of online interactions when compared to platforms like Facebook Global Digital Report (2018). Unlike Facebook, where all interactions may end up in a hotel booking being finalised, Twitter will not finalise any engagement but rather direct one to the hotel's website and start a whole booking process again. The above does not demonstrate PEOU construct of the UTAUT theory (Venkatesh, 2003). The overall positive uptake of social media conforms with Venkatesh et al (2012) UTAUT2 hedonic construct. The construct prescribes that people will continue to use social media for the pleasure and gratification they get from using it. The high uptake can also be attributed to the UTAUT2 theory's principle of price value as most social media platforms are less expensive (Assaker et al, 2020). Although Assaker et al (2020) claim that the wide usage of social media is due to its low cost, Carpenter and Harvey (2019) laments social discourse brought by SM addiction which does not only cost one's time but concentration on more important things.

7.4.3 Crosstabulations

A Chi square test of independence was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables (rows vs columns). The null

hypothesis states that there is no association between the two. The alternate hypothesis indicates that there is an association.

For example: The p-value between “Was your business affected by Covid-19?” and “Type of Business” is 0.001. This means that there is a significant relationship between the variables highlighted in yellow. That is, the type of business (e.g. wedding venues, where gatherings were totally cancelled) did play a significant role in terms of whether it was affected by Covid-19.

Table 7.9: Chi-square Tests

Chi-Square Tests						
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	36.618 ^a	12	0,000	0,005		
Likelihood Ratio	19,806	12	0,071	0,001		
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	19,609			0,001		
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.369 ^b	1	0,124	0,129	0,080	0,017
N of Valid Cases	70					

a. 15 cells (71.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.

b. The standardized statistic is 1.539.

For the Pearson's Chi Square test, if the p-value (Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)) < 0.05, then it implies that there is a significant relationship between the variables. For the Fisher's Exact Test, if the p-value (Exact Sig. (2-sided)) < 0.05, it also implies that there is a significant relationship between the variables. If the p-value > 0.05, there is no significant relationship.

Table 7.10: Cross tabulation on Covid-19 impact

			Type of Business							Total
			Lodge	Restaurant	Hotel	Wedding venue	Guesthouse	Backpackers	Support Services	
Was your business affected	Yes	Count	23	9	6	11	3	3	11	66
		% within Was your business affected by Covid-19?	33.8%	13.2%	8.8%	17.6%	4.4%	4.4%	17.6%	100.0%
		% within Type of Business	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	75.0%	100.0%	94.4%
		% of Total	31.9%	12.5%	8.3%	16.7%	4.2%	4.2%	16.7%	94.4%
	No	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
		% within Was your business affected by Covid-19?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%

		% within Type of Business	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%	2.8%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	1.4%	0.0%	2.8%
	Not sure	Count	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
		% within Was your business affected by Covid-19?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Type of Business	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%
Total		Count	22	9	6	12	6	4	11	70
		% within Was your business affected by Covid-19?	31.9%	12.5%	8.3%	16.7%	8.3%	5.6%	16.7%	100.0%
		% within Type of Business	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	31.9%	12.5%	8.3%	16.7%	8.3%	5.6%	16.7%	100.0%

It is noted that all of the businesses (100.0%) listed as Lodges, Restaurants, Hotels Wedding Venues and Support Services indicated that they were affected. Guesthouses and Backpackers were affected to a smaller degree. Those that were less affected, had an opportunity to accommodate essential services provided when the government opened up the accommodation sector for purposes of accommodating essential services providers and also operate as quarantine centres.

Table 7.11: Do you observe any relationship between social media, location and service quality? *Is social media an effective marketing tool?

		Is social media an effective marketing tool?		Total	
		Yes	No		
Do you observe any relationship between social media and effective Marketing?	Yes	Count	50	13	63
		% within Do you observe any relationship between social media and effective Marketing?	79,4%	20,6%	100,0%
		% within Is social media an effective marketing tool?	88,1%	100,0%	90,3%
		% of Total	72,2%	18,1%	90,3%
	No	Count	4	0	4
		% within Do you observe any relationship between social media and effective Marketing?	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within Is social media an effective marketing tool?	6,8%	0,0%	5,6%
		% of Total	5,6%	0,0%	5,6%
	Not sure	Count	3	0	3
		% within Do you observe any relationship between social media and effective Marketing?	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within Is social media an effective marketing tool?	5,1%	0,0%	4,2%
		% of Total	4,2%	0,0%	4,2%
Total	Count	57	13	70	
	% within Do you observe any relationship between social media and effective Marketing?	81,9%	18,1%	100,0%	
	% within Is social media an effective marketing tool?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
	% of Total	81,9%	18,1%	100,0%	

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	1.708 ^a	2	0,426	0,451		
Likelihood Ratio	2,950	2	0,229	0,405		
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	0,689			1,000		
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.487 ^b	1	0,223	0,365	0,232	0,232
N of Valid Cases	70					

a. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .54.

b. The standardized statistic is -1.219.

Of the businesses that agree to social media being an effective marketing tool, 79.4% did observe a relationship between social media, location and service quality. Less than 7% (6.8%) indicated that they did not see a relationship between social media and the other three constructs, whilst 5.1% were unsure. All 13 respondents who did not agree to social media being an effective marketing tool also did see a relationship between social media, location and service quality as marketing tools. Overall, 90.3% of respondents agree that social media is indeed an effective marketing tool, irrespective of whether it is related or not with other constructs suggested for effective marketing.

7.4.4 Binary logistic regression

The logistic regression model is a type of predictive model that can be used when the response variable is binary—for example, Yes / No. The aim is to model the probability of getting a certain outcome, in effect modelling the mean of the variable (which is the same as the probability in the case of binary variables). A logistic regression model can be applied to predictor variables with more than two or more categories.

A binary dependent variable was identified as “Do you observe any relationship between social media, location and service quality?” The following variables were used as independent variables, one at a time: Did you have bookings cancelled?(1), Did you get TERS?(1), Did you have to retrench staff?(1), Instagram(1) and Pinterest(1).

The number (1) was coded Yes, and was compared to cases for No.

The overall **Classification Table** indicated a high accuracy in the prediction of Incidence (90.3%).

The "**Variables in the Equation**" table shows the contribution of each independent variable to the model and its statistical significance. This table is shown below:

Table 7.12: Binary logistic regression - Impact of Covid-19

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Did you have bookings cancelled?(1)	2.534	1.103	5.280	1	0.022	12.600	1.451	109.386
Did you get TERS?(1)	2.134	1.109	3.701	1	0.054	8.444	0.961	74.235
Did you have to retrench staff?(1)	1.195	0.873	1.872	1	0.171	3.304	0.596	18.297
Instagram(1)	2.303	0.892	6.659	1	0.010	10.000	1.740	57.479
Pinterest(1)	1.386	1.109	1.561	1	0.211	4.000	0.455	35.187

The Wald test ("Wald" column) is used to determine statistical significance for each of the independent variables. The statistical significance of the test is found in the "Sig." column. From these results, it is noticed that two of the variables are significant. (All other non-significant, low odds variables were not considered.)

The Variables in the Equation Table is used to predict the probability of an event occurring based on a one unit change in an independent variable when all other independent variables are kept constant. The odds are given by the column **Exp(B)**. The odds are compared as follows for the respondents for the independent variables: Yes, compared to No.

For example, the table shows that the odds of having bookings cancelled due to Covid-19 ("Yes" category) is 12.60 times greater than for No category (not having bookings cancelled), for respondents who did observe a relationship between social media and service quality (compared to those who did not observe a relationship). This variable was also significant ($p = 0.022$).

Even though there was a non-significant relationship between receiving TERS and observing a relationship between social media and service quality, the odds of a business receiving TERS (Yes) was 8.444 times that of a business not receiving TERS (No), for respondents who did observe a relationship between social media and service quality.

A positive coefficient (B) implies that a unit change in the independent will result in a positive change in the dependent. For example, a unit increase in using Instagram will result in an increase of 2.303 for respondents observing a relationship between social media and service quality.

7.5 Conclusion

The purpose of chapter seven was to present the results obtained from the field for this particular study. The major findings presented in this chapter can be summarized as follows:

- That 100% of small hospitality establishments in KZN are using SMM.
- The most successful establishments have a dedicated SMM manager and post daily on their platforms.
- The less successful ones are failing to post regularly and that they do not have a dedicated SMM Manager.

- There is significant difference which comes out from the different levels of establishments (star grading) in that the 5 star graded are more successful, have dedicated SMM manager and that they post daily, while the ungraded ones are struggling, do not have dedicated SMM manager and that they post randomly.
- Of the social media platforms being used by small hospitality establishments for marketing, it was observed that Facebook is the most popular, followed by TripAdvisor and Instagram.
- The majority of small hospitality establishments update or post on their social media platforms at least once a week.
- Most of the small hospitality establishments introduced social media platforms, while only a few inherited these platforms from previous business owners.
- The majority of small hospitality establishments believe that social media marketing is a very effective marketing strategy, although their poor activity on the platforms does not conform with this assertion. Only 23% of the respondents said that they update their platforms daily, while 77% post either weekly or monthly. Also, 47% of the respondents do not have a dedicated SM manager hence they are not extensively using these platforms.
- The challenges faced by micro-hospitality establishments in adopting and utilizing social media marketing are: lack of adequate funding, lack of specialized human resources, and difficulty in measuring the actual positive impact of social media adoption for marketing.
- Majority of establishments who participated in this study were affected by Covid-19 across the board in terms of their different levels (star grading).
- There is no positive relationship between location, SMM and service quality but that the three can be used together to effectively market small hospitality businesses.

The next chapter provides conclusions and recommendations. The chapter also highlights the limitations of this study, while noting the academic and practical contributions made, as well as suggesting areas for further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the detailed results obtained from the field. This chapter draws conclusions based on the empirical findings of the study. In addition, the chapter will also present recommendations both to the micro-hospitality establishments and for future studies.

The first objective of the study was to explore why and how micro-hospitality businesses strategically employ social media to market their businesses and to demonstrate the significance and major benefits of adoption as well as any significant drawbacks for this particular category of hospitality businesses. This research objective was achieved in Chapters 2, 3 and 5. The review of literature highlighted that social media has gained momentum in the last fifteen years in the more economically developed countries. In Africa, and South Africa in particular, social media gained momentum in the last decade and these platforms are now dominating other media traditionally used for marketing purposes. The hospitality industry is among the top industries that have recently embraced social media for marketing purposes. This is driven by the interactive nature, low cost, and by the word of mouth and viral potential, of SMM.

The second objective was to test the operators'/ owners' perceptions in terms of the effectiveness of social media as a marketing and communication tool in the hospitality industry in KZN. This was achieved in Chapters 2 and 5 of the study. The findings from the review of literature revealed that operators in more economically developed countries, and those that adopted early and are fully utilizing social media, acknowledge the effectiveness of social media platforms in marketing their businesses. While eighty one percent of respondents confirmed the effectiveness of social media, nineteen percent (mainly the game lodges) do not find social media such an effective marketing option. Their disagreement comes from the fact that their clientele is mainly composed of seasoned travelers in the age group of 45-64 years old. This claim is substantiated by the findings of De Pelsmacker et al (2018) who explain that social media as a marketing tool appeals more to millennials and those below the age of 44 years, who are very active on modern social platforms. It is

understandable therefore that the 19% who do not find social media effective are using different marketing strategies, such as the traditional print and television advertisements which appeal to their niche market segment, composed of those over 44 years who are not very active on social media.

Apart from these demographics, evidence from the primary data collected highlights that the effectiveness of SMM is challenging to measure and present. Respondents agreed that one could have a sizeable followership, for example Lodge A had 14327 followers on Facebook, recording an average of 1500 likes on their posts, but the problem highlighted was turning those likes, enquiries and positive comments into actual bookings that would bring in revenue. Aligned to this weakness of social media as a marketing platform, Michopoulou and Moisa, (2019) noted the challenge of isolating actual revenue obtained due to SMM from the total revenue received. The scholars highlight that it is not easy to measure the return on investment (ROI) in social media, hence 19% of the users from the primary data collected concluded that it is not necessarily effective.

Additionally, findings from the literature reviewed highlight that, although other marketing forms such as information brochures, travel Indabas (Exhibitions) and Expos, are still relevant and widely used in the hospitality industry, social media platforms are currently leading.

The third objective of the study was to investigate the challenges of adoption and utilisation of social media as a marketing tool in micro-hospitality establishments. This objective was achieved in Chapter 5. The challenges noted by the responding hospitality establishments in KZN include lack of adequate funding, lack of specialized human resources, and difficulty in measuring the actual positive impact of social media adoption. It was also concluded that, although social media platforms are effective in marketing, hospitality establishments in KZN are not using social media optimally for marketing purposes. As indicated by the primary data collected, this scenario is a result of the fact that 53% of these establishments do not have a manager dedicated for SMM. Additionally, 46% of these micro-hospitality businesses do not have a marketing strategy.

The last objective of this study was to draw conclusions from research findings and make recommendations with regards to the adoption and effective use of social media

for effective marketing by micro-hospitality establishments in KZN, based on the results of the study. This current chapter will conclude the findings of the research project and use the results and findings obtained from the empirical analyses to make recommendations for hospitality establishments in KZN on the adoption and effective use of social media for marketing purposes.

8.2 Study contributions

This research project contributes in two ways. Firstly, the research provides practical solutions in terms of social media adoption and utilisation to micro-hospitality establishments. Secondly, the research provides theoretical baseline data on the effectiveness of social media for marketing purposes to hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal. This is done through proposing a framework which can be adopted for social media marketing. These two areas of contribution by this research are further explained in the following sub-sections.

8.2.1 Theoretical and literature contribution

This research provides empirical evidence on the adoption, utilisation and the effectiveness of social media in the marketing of micro-hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Most of the literature reviewed in this study is about studies in more economically developed countries and little has been researched in South Africa and KZN in particular, which is where this study was carried out. This study is the only recent or current study which examines the specific group of small rural hospitality establishments in KZN with a specific focus on their use of SMM at a time of urgent need for recovery. This indicates a gap in the literature in terms of social media adoption for marketing in South Africa as a country in general. More specifically in the context of micro-hospitality businesses in a LEDC, a niche area that also serves international clients who are likely to assume that technology has spread across the globe, as in their home countries. The Technology Organisation and Environment (TOE) theory conforms with the characteristics of these micro-hospitality businesses and their behavioral patterns with the adoption of SMM for marketing. The environmental context where competitive pressure, customer pressure, and social pressure have motivated social media adoption by micro-hospitality businesses, is not well documented in the context of a LEDC. This research therefore addresses this literature gap through the evidence gathered from the field of hospitality in the context

of a less economically developed country. This study finds that social media marketing is not uniform or evenly utilized across the Province by micro-hospitality establishments despite the fact that they are in the same setting. The results from this study may be used for future reference by other academics and hospitality businesses in the field of social media marketing, particularly in the less economically developed countries of Africa.

8.2.2 Practical contribution

Small-hospitality businesses are able to benefit from this study in terms what other successful businesses are doing in other countries and within South Africa as highlighted by literature reviewed. For example, data gathered from this study highlights that only 58 percent were on Instagram and 67 percent were on TripAdvisor. The data shows selective approach in adopting SM platform. Small hospitality establishments will be encouraged to adopt TripAdvisor and other travel review and booking sites such as booking.com so that potential guests can easily see reviews and make bookings. All the successful establishments were on TripAdvisor and benefited from its preference from travelers despite the fact that it has been red flagged for having fake reviews. It is also important to note that the study is highlighting other important things businesses need to do to support successful SM adoption. Nicoli and Papadopoulou (2017) emphasizes that for TripAdvisor reviews to work in favour of the hotel, the hotel needs to have excellent customer service in place. The lesson to be learnt here is that SM adoption and utilization is not enough if not supported by other variables such as good customer service.

8.3 Conclusion

This study's overall findings suggest that participants are unanimous in their opinion that social media can and does positively transform the hospitality industry in KwaZulu-Natal, the study area, and in South Africa more widely. Evidence from empirical data recorded in the previous chapter (5.2.3) together with Figure 9 on the "perception of social media effectiveness" shows that 81% of participants affirmed that social media is an effective tool with potential to significantly grow businesses. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, COVID-19 disrupted a lot of businesses and the small hospitality businesses were particularly badly affected. Primary data from the field indicates that wedding venues (events centres) which constituted 16% of the

respondents to this study (See 5.1.1 and Figure 1) were the most severely affected in the hospitality industry because of their business structure. Applicability of the TOE theory resonates well with this type of micro-hospitality establishment in that the environment has high competitive pressure and customer pressure in adoption and utilization of SM as all the wedding venues have adopted every popular social media platform owing to competitive and customer pressure. Their business structure is that they operate on a one-year cycle system where weddings for 2021 as an example, would have been booked in 2020. As noted above, South Africa went into a total lockdown from 27 March 2020 with all hospitality businesses prohibited from operating. The wedding venues were allowed to operate again only in alert Level One which began on 21 September 2020, after six months of shutdown. This meant that no bookings were made for weddings for 2021 and all bookings for those 6 months were cancelled. The effect of this is that wedding venues received no revenue and did not secure business for the following year while business marketing continuity stopped. Four of the eleven wedding venues included in this study were being sold by October 2020, due to the business collapse caused by the COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions. Although all four venues had a presence on major social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TripAdvisor) with high activity (see insert below for one of the wedding venues) the effects of lockdown were stronger than the impact of social media marketing.

All the above highlight that there is no correlation between this business' closure and inadequacy of social media marketing but that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this business model resulting in its failure. Recovery should still learn from the success of social media. Furthermore, it is worth noting that empirical data collected from this study shows that none of the wedding venues were star graded but all had adopted social media for marketing. This further confirms that although star grading positions an establishment in its preset standard category, high star grading does not necessarily translate to popularity or success of the business. All 13 wedding venues examined in this study have an average of 4 out of 5 (80%) on Facebook reviews.

Data from the survey indicates that 20% of the guests visiting these micro-hospitality establishments are foreigners, while 80% are locals. Stats SA (2020) indicates that

the majority of tourists in 2019 were aged between 35- 44 years (29%) followed by the age group of 25-34 years (27.9%). These statistics indicate that 57.9% of the tourists received in 2019 are the young, active, often professional, class who actively engage on social media, and this rising number of social media savvy young to middle aged adults has led to a realignment of most organisations' social media policy (Head, 2020). These age groups, it seems, are permanently active on the internet at work and at home. Thus, it is appropriate for micro-hospitality organisations to exploit social media platforms' potential to reach this specific segment of techno-savvy young adults who now see the whole world as their stage.

The study confirms the immense influence social media wields in today's society. It has the potential to provide an avenue for hospitality establishments to engage with their existing and would-be clients suitably. The researcher found that the sampled participants were unanimous that social media is a positive game-changer for their establishments. The study also revealed that social media adoption by the sampled establishments cut across different platforms such as Facebook (100% subscription by respondents), Instagram (58% subscription by respondents), WhatsApp (67% subscription by respondents), Pinterest (33% subscription by respondents), Twitter (41% subscription by respondents), and TripAdvisor (84% subscription by respondents). SMM offers a broad opportunity to interact with their clientele, as well as other stakeholders and with similar establishments. It was also revealed that the adoption of these platforms cut across the different kinds of hospitality businesses and their levels of service from 5 stars to the ungraded ones.

Social media platforms' growth has meant that organisations (both public and private) desirous of change and meaningful impact must adopt social media or miss its immense potential. According to Živković, Gajić and Brdar (2014: 758), social media has opened up tourists' worlds in previously impossible ways. Data from this study indicates that 100% of the examined establishments had at least one social media platform. These statistics confirm that micro-hospitality businesses acknowledge the important role social media plays in the hospitality industry in improving relationships with their clientele by adapting to their needs.

At the onset of this study, the researcher explored why and how micro-hospitality businesses strategically employ social media to market their companies and demonstrate the significance of social media marketing and its benefits for adoption by micro-hospitality businesses. The researcher also sought to test the operators'/owners' perceptions in terms of the effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool in the hospitality industry in KZN and investigate the challenges of its adoption.

The findings, discussed in detail in the previous chapter, reveal a somewhat passive approach to social media adoption by the sample organisations and selected participants. For example, while participants generally acknowledged that social media is a vital aspect of their growth plan, there is still a propensity to maintain the status quo. Ninety four percent of participants who took part in the study had created their organisations' social media pages. Only 6% of the sampled participants had built their social media image on existing pages, inherited from previous owners. This finding is instructive. It suggests that most organisations in the hospitality industry recognise the immense potential that social media wields.

Paradoxically, while most of the sampled establishments subscribed to TripAdvisor (84%), many did not consider it a valuable tool for measuring feedback. When the researcher asked why some establishments did not subscribe to TripAdvisor, the most common response was that they did not trust the integrity of site's reviews. The finding is intriguing, especially when one considers the views of Nicoli and Papadopoulou (2017, 317). They say that 35% of travelers change their decisions of hotels or lodges after browsing through TripAdvisor.

8.4 Recommendations

8.4.1 Recommendations for further research

South Africa is one of the world's most diverse nations. The nation's nine Provinces have unique characteristics, some unique to the country and some unique to that Province. The country is also home to one of the world's most racially diverse populations. There are eleven official languages. The diversity is noticeable as you

move from one province to another, and thus it is imprudent to assume that the findings of studies like this can be generalised. Therefore, future studies could examine how micro-hospitality businesses strategically employ social media to market their companies in at least three provinces to make a comparative analysis. A broader study will help future hospitality industry clients understand South African society's socio-cultural dynamics, potentially leading to more clients and better service delivery.

A similar study by Bennaciri (2012) recommended that future research consider the factors that might impact public perceptions of review blogs like TripAdvisor. Given that most respondents in this study said that they do not trust review sites, especially TripAdvisor, the researcher also recommends that future research examine the impact reviews from blogs have on the hospitality industry. The findings could be critical in helping hospitality industry managers decide on how and when to use blogs or other social media platforms. A specific version of platforms such as TripAdvisor for South Africa could be considered which would highlight aspects specific to the country and which would be really hard on any establishment found to be misusing the site for example fake reviews.

As stated in earlier sections of the study, social media 'influencers' are increasingly used in marketing products and services. Social media's growth has led to increased opportunities for individuals who can now reach a large, diverse and heterogeneous public from the comfort of their homes. It would be interesting to examine the social media of choice for social media influencers. Future research could explore social media influencers' impact on clients or public perceptions of service delivery at hospitality establishments. The study could provide pointers into the most prevalent social media platforms adopted by influencers, why they embrace them, and how hospitality establishments can leverage this knowledge in deciding on the appropriate and most-effective social media platform(s) to adopt.

Chang, Ku and Chen, (2019) affirm online reviews as a better measure of hotel service quality than star rating. They further explain that travelers now rely more on online reviews than on star grading. This is also recommended for further research as hospitality establishments should be abreast with current trends in their industry.

Future research may also focus on the role of 4th industrial revolution and social media in small hospitality businesses.

8.4.2 Recommendations for hospitality establishments

Although this study's findings suggest an appreciation for social media's potential to drive business growth in hospitality establishments, it nonetheless revealed a general sense of apathy regarding a holistic adoption of social media in the sampled establishments. For example, 53% of the sampled establishments said that they did not have a dedicated social media manager. However, businesses can work together for example, the wedding photographer can market his own business and the venue where the ceremony takes place simultaneously on social media for the mutual benefit of both.

If the novel coronavirus taught the world anything, it was that many human activities can occur online without actual human contacts. The global regulations to curb the spread of coronavirus have led many organisations to move their services online. Social media is no longer an option – it is a whole new realm of opportunity. Hospitality establishments must consistently reinvent themselves and adapt to the changing times. Results from the study shows that 97% of the respondents were affected by Covid1-19. Fifty six percent of those that were affected managed to get the temporary employee/ employer relief scheme (TERS) while the rest did not get it. Small establishments must look at saving more for unknown future catastrophes such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Business can set up individual relief funds through their investors to cover for such unfortunate circumstances.

Table 8.1: The proposed framework for effective social media marketing

<u>STEP 1:</u> Social media (SM) strategy formulation	<u>STEP 2:</u> SM platforms selection and training	<u>STEP 3:</u> Service quality development and standardization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a social media marketing strategy, a blue print on how the business will harness SM for marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify suitable SM platforms for your region/ country/ continent and one that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create service quality standards For accommodation establishments, star

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish marketing objectives, target market Source/ allocate funds (budget) for SMM 	<p>will be best applicable to your target clientele</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start/ develop the SM pages for your organisation on the chosen platforms Hire/ appoint a SMM manager responsible for executing SMM and for smaller businesses, engage a SM marketing company to handle SMM once weekly. Train the SMM Manager on digital marketing through SM 	<p>grade for visibility and booker preference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the standards set for the establishment to receive good reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google reviews and Booking.com
<p>STEP 4:</p> <p>Link social media marketing and service quality</p>	<p>STEP 5:</p> <p>Identify and mitigate SMM challenges in time</p>	<p>STEP 6:</p> <p>Services and product improvement</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service quality to and social media marketing to be linked through complimenting each other What is posted on social media should be what guests experience upon arrival at the hotel or establishment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through use of SM for marketing, businesses should look out for challenges experienced and address them timeously Standard operating procedures (SOPs) put in place for SMM should have guidelines on how to deal with SMM challenges that are common so that issues do not take too long to be addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The end process of the framework Budget allocation for necessary product/ service reinvention Reinventing the product to correct what has been identified by clientele as poor Management's commitment to research and investment in SMM as well as service quality maintenance.

Source: Researcher's own compilation as adapted from literature reviewed and empirical data collected.

The framework proposed in Figure 6.1 (above) details six steps that can be followed in sequence by businesses when adopting and utilising social media for marketing. The operational recommendations below to micro-hospitality businesses are suggested based on the framework proposed in Figure 6.1 above. (The applicability of these recommendations is limited to the social media platforms that were referred to in this study).

8.4.3 Formulate your social media marketing strategy

Empirical evidence from this study shows that 100% of the micro-hospitality establishments adopted social media but 53% do not have a dedicated social media marketing manager, 11% confirmed that they post on social media randomly once a month. This shows lack of a clear social media marketing strategy. Evidence from the literature review suggests that effective marketing is always backed by a detailed strategy. According to Cartwright (2017) developing a marketing strategy will aid the marketers, and the implementer of the marketing plan, with a step-by-step guide that will work as a blue print for the timeframes, resource allocation and the overall flow of work in terms of social media marketing. Micro-hospitality establishments will have to develop a specific social media strategy, and specialist consultancy firms in marketing may be engaged to assist with this. A social media strategy for these businesses should be crafted to be short and precise, highlighting the SMM objectives, including the standard operating procedures with regards to posting on social media (guidelines), funds allocation and key performance areas for the dedicated social media personnel. In the case of micro-hospitality businesses, rather than employing a dedicated new person to handle SMM, one of the existing staff could be selected to receive SMM training then adding this role to his/her existing work – perhaps with pay incentives. Lastly, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the SMM strategy should be done and corrected where necessary.

8.4.4 Select the relevant SM platforms and conduct training as well

This study shows that 33% of the micro-hospitality establishments examined are on Pinterest, while 7% were on other platforms that are not even considered for this study due to their obscurity. Micro-hospitality businesses should avoid such platforms as this

may prove to be waste of time and resources. In our African context, Facebook, Instagram and TripAdvisor are ranked by Sproutsocial, (2019) as the most popular platforms which can therefore be confidently adopted by these micro-hospitality establishments to reach their local and international clientele base more appropriately. After selecting their platforms, the establishments should create their pages or accounts on them. The next step will be to hire or appoint staff responsible for social media marketing. If the scope of operations does not warrant the employment of a dedicated SMM manager, micro-hospitality businesses should consider sourcing services of a social media consultancy who will only work certain days (spread) per week, developing and posting content, for example every Monday and every Thursday. The latter should be considered as giving sufficient time before the weekend to attract clients in cases where there are 'weekend specials'. Lastly, training in social media marketing for the appointed staff. This will help equip them with the requisite skills for their new roles.

8.4.5 Develop and service your virtual communities

Sixty eight percent of the establishments examined in this study have very low numbers of followers, averaging around 2000. Micro-hospitality businesses should therefore be actively creating followership through targeting the right audience. This is also referred to as 'driving traffic' to the platforms by Bossio, McCosker, Milne, Golding and Albarran-Torres (2019) who advise that meaningful engagements on social media platforms between businesses and clients are achieved when the pages have a good sizeable followership that is vibrant and participative. Empirical data collected also highlights that 80% of clients overall for these micro-hospitality businesses are locals, while 20% are foreign nationals. This indicates where these businesses should apply a split approach in getting social media influencers to grow numbers of followership on both markets. They should engage an influencer from South Africa to drive the local followership to the platforms and use an international influencer or an influencer from the source markets for international clients. Micro-hospitality business should grow the number of relevant followers through means such as sending requests to like the business' page to potential clients and past clients for repeat business. Although a good size of followership is desirable, Leung et al (2015), noted that a very large followership often comes with the inclusion of less desirable followers who only want

to take advantage of large followership to advertise their own businesses, without the consent of the platform owner. The list of followers should therefore be cleaned regularly, removing problematic followers who pose a reputational risk to the business by posting spam messages and irrelevant advertisements.

8.4.6 Develop and manage content

Results from the study highlighted that some establishments rarely post on their social media platforms. Empirical data collected highlights that 11% post once a month while only 23% post daily. The 11% who post once a month represent the 5% who did not introduce social media but inherited from previous owners, or else those establishments that do not have dedicated SMM personnel and do not see the effectiveness of social media as a marketing strategy. Micro-hospitality businesses need to generate social media marketing content that brings value to the targeted audience. This is supported by De Pelsmacker, van Tilburg and Holthof (2018) who explain that the buy-in of clients to social media transmitted marketing material is dependent on whether the targeted clientele perceive value from the content. The businesses should use the services of a professional photographer to capture photos to be used on these platforms. The 11% that post only once a month are more likely to miss important calendar events and occasions such as Valentine's Day specials, Mother's and Father's Day, Christmas day and New Years' day. Micro-hospitality businesses should also follow the posting intervals stipulated in the social media marketing standard operating procedure (SOP) proposed above – for instance, posting once or twice a week will help avoid missing such important calendar events. Key to note is that they should also be consistent when it comes to posting content to keep the pages lively and interactive all the time.

8.4.7 Evaluate and monitor

As already discussed, only 53% of the respondents have a dedicated SMM manager. Management of feedback received through social media platforms in this situation will be poor as 66% of respondents are only posting once a week with 11% posting as seldom as once a month. Micro-hospitality businesses should focus on the feedback obtained from social media platforms by checking daily for feedback, enquiries and

general activity on their platforms. Only 23% post or attend to their platforms daily and this is less than a quarter of the total respondents. Again, this suggests that micro-hospitality businesses should consider the development and implementation of a standard operating procedure (SOP) for posting on platforms, handling and processing feedback received via social media platforms. Evidence from data collected in this study reveals that 19% of the respondents believe that SMM is not an effective marketing strategy. Ideally to ascertain the effectiveness of these platforms, businesses should adopt analytics to analyse social media marketing activity regularly. A return on investment (ROI) computation by social media analytics companies will help to highlight the value of monetary returns obtained as a result of social media marketing.

8.4.8 Product and service improvement

Empirical results from the study showed that although there is relatively active interaction between guests and micro-hospitality business owners in KZN on sites such as TripAdvisor, owners focus more on responding and apologizing to those clients who might not have enjoyed their services or stay. This is an opportunity for businesses to reinvent the service quality and products so that they can focus on the retention of their clients. Management should commit to a culture of corrective and constant product development.

8.4.9 Policy recommendations

It is a prevalent understanding that governments should not interfere with private businesses. However, given the significant role that hospitality establishments play in attracting tourists and revenues to municipalities and provinces, the government cannot wholly ignore their operations. As stated in the discussion of the findings section, one of the study's objectives was to investigate the challenges of adopting and utilising social media as a marketing tool in micro-hospitality establishments. The researcher asked the participants in the study to state the challenges they face in their specific establishments, and the following themes emerged:

- Lack of adequate funding

- Lack of specialised human resources

While it would be unrealistic to expect the government to solve the challenges above, it can provide policy direction or subventions that would lessen the impact or ameliorate the challenges, while preventing other organisations from facing similar issues.

For example, the government could provide a more enabling environment by providing low-interest loans to establishments in the tourism industry and offering tax holidays. How would these impact social media adoption? Given that lack of funds was a challenge some participants mentioned as a possible impediment to their quest for social media adoption, adequate government support could 'free up' funds for other uses such as hiring social media managers. Although internet penetration in South Africa is relatively high compared with most African countries, many people still cannot access it. One manager interviewed attributed low figures of followership to internet inaccessibility. If the internet is not readily accessible, the platforms will be accessed by fewer people, there will be less sharing of content and posts, and the net reach of content will be low (Bossio et al, 2019). The government should therefore endeavor to make fast, reliable, affordable and accessible internet readily available to businesses, especially those in the hospitality industry. The 4IR is going to be entirely driven by internet connectivity and accessibility. If the government is serious about job creation and mitigating growing poverty, it must take internet connectivity seriously. For example, national infrastructure development such as fibre optic internet connectivity lines (which are very fast and stable, as noted by Mirza, Ghafoor & Hussain, 2020) will enable reliable internet for micro-business establishments. It is a win-win for all. The government invests in ease of doing business and reaps bottom-up growth and poverty alleviation.

The government may also look into introducing a tourism relief fund tax which all businesses in tourism will be required to contribute periodically. The funds can be invested and made available as relief funds for businesses in distress due to pandemics or any other unforeseeable circumstances. Those that do not contribute will automatically be excluded. Results above highlighted that only 56% of the

respondents received TERS which is problematic as most business were affected moderately (16.2%) or severely (79.2%) by covid-19.

8.4.10 Limitations of the study

Any academic work will always have inherent limitations. For this study, the following limitations were experienced:

The study faced a challenge during the time allocated for data collection. A national lockdown was announced on the 23 March 2020 and all hospitality establishments were shut down and travel was restricted. Data collection became a challenge as most establishments were closed and respondents were not going to work. This slowed the process but data collection was done successfully.

Most interviews and scheduled data collection visits were therefore postponed. The problem was magnified when the President kept postponing opening of the hospitality businesses. However, despite several postponements and travel restrictions, the researcher managed to change the data collection strategy by changing planned face-to-face interviews to telephonic and zoom interviews. Questionnaires were also circulated online via the QuestionPro survey. To increase the response rate to the surveys distributed online, the researcher made constant telephone calls reminding the respondents to answer the survey and to send feedback. The overall response rate was 78.6% which is good given the circumstances. The data collection process took longer than was scheduled (from January to September 2020).

8.4.11 Recommendations for further research

The researcher makes the following recommendations for future research:

It was established from this study that not all micro-hospitality establishments in KZN, whether graded or not, new or old, have adopted social media for marketing.

- It is recommended that a broader study should be carried out across the whole of South Africa to establish the adoption and utilization rates of social media marketing at national level.

- Social media platforms are forever changing their algorithms and their settings around functionality. It is therefore recommended that another study be conducted after 5 years to incorporate new technological changes and potential merging of such platforms.
- COVID-19 has disrupted many businesses and the normal way of doing things. Marketing has intensified to revive micro-hospitality businesses. It is recommended that a study should be undertaken to establish how/ if the negative effects of COVID-19 to business performance could be addressed by other marketing strategies for these micro businesses.
- Other studies could look at having clientele (from different source markets) and travel agents being included as additional respondents to get a better perspective of the issue at hand.
- It is also recommended that an analysis of other marketing strategies of both those that are most successful and those that fail during this recovery period be done.

8.5 Conclusion

The study revealed the current status of SMM adoption and utilization by micro-hospitality establishments in KwaZulu-Natal. The results of the study revealed that although these businesses have adopted SMM, they are not uniformly using these platforms effectively. It was also concluded that although micro-hospitality establishments agree that social media is an effective marketing strategy for their businesses, there remain major challenges in the adoption and utilization of SMM. Overall therefore the researcher concludes that social media marketing is not an all-round solution for effective marketing for these micro-hospitality businesses but that an effective marketing strategy for the micro-hospitality establishments should include a combination of SMM, star grading (as an assurance of service quality) and a clear marketing strategy as the best comprehensive marketing approach for micro-hospitality establishments in the context of a less economically developed country.

REFERENCES

- Adebayo, J., Thakur, C., & Makwambeni, B. 2020. Covid19, Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Future of African Elections. *Journal of African Elections*, 19(2): 1-14. DOI: 10.20940/JAE/2020/v19i2a1
- Agag, G., & El-Masry, A. A. 2016. Understanding consumer intention to participate in online travel community and effects on consumer intention to purchase travel online and WOM: An integration of innovation diffusion theory and TAM with trust. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 60, 97-111. DOI:10.1016/j.chb.2016.02.038
- Ahani, A., Nilashi, M., Ibrahim, O., Sanzogni, L. & Weaven, S. 2019. Market segmentation and travel choice prediction in Spa hotels through TripAdvisor's online reviews. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 80, pp.52–77.
- Ahani, A., Rahim, N. and Nilashi, M., 2017. Forecasting social CRM adoption in SMEs: A combined SEM-neural network method. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 75, pp.560-578.
- Alansari, M., Velikova, N. & Jai, T. 2018. Marketing effectiveness of hotel Twitter accounts: the case of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 9(1), pp.65-79.
- Aluri, A., Slevitch, L. and Larzelere, R. 2015. The effectiveness of embedded social media on hotel websites and the importance of social interactions and return on engagement. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27(4), pp.670-689.
- Assaker, G., Hallak, R., & El-Haddad, R. 2020. Consumer usage of online travel reviews: Expanding the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2 model. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 26(2), 149-165. DOI:10.1177/1356766719867386
- Ataguba, J., Ayo-Yusuf, O., Greeff, M., Hofman, K., Lutge, E., Madhi, S., Mathee, A., McKerrow, N., Moshabela, M., Norris, S., Rataemane, S., Reid, S., Richter, L., Rooyen, H. v., & Wright, C. 2020. COVID-19 statement: The unanticipated costs of COVID-19 to south africa's quadruple disease burden. *South African*

- Journal of Science*, 116(7/8), 1-2. Available from; <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2020/sta0321> [2 February 2021]
- Ayeh, J. K., Au, N., & Law, R. 2013. Predicting the intention to use consumer-generated media for travel planning. *Tourism Management*, 35, 132-143
- Aydin, G. 2020. 'Social media engagement and organic post effectiveness: A roadmap for increasing the effectiveness of social media use in hospitality industry', *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 29(1), pp. 1–21. Doi: 10.1080/19368623.2019.1588824
- Babbie, E. R. 2016. *The basics of social research*. 7th ed. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Baishya, K., & Samalia, H. V. 2020. Extending unified theory of acceptance and use of technology with perceived monetary value for smartphone adoption at the bottom of the pyramid. *International Journal of Information Management*, 51. DOI:10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2019.11.004
- Ban. O., I and ȚARCĂ, N. 2020. 'Romanian Balneary Resorts Promotion on Social Media', *Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series*, 29(2), pp. 28–41. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=bth&AN=148177984&site=eds-live&scope=site> [13 November 2021].
- Bandura, A. 1977. *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. 2008. Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4):544-559.
- Bhengu, L. 2020. KZN hotels to get cash injection for providing quarantine sites. Available from: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2020-07-13-kzn-hotels-to-get-cashinjection-for-providing-quarantine-sites/> [13 November 2021]
- Bennacciri, M., 2012. *The effect of Social Media on the Hotel Industry Customer Decisions*. PhD Thesis, Northwest Missouri State University Maryville, Missouri.
- 'BMI Research: South Africa Tourism Report' (2018) *South Africa Tourism Report*, (1), pp. 1–35. Available from:

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=bth&AN=126730297&site=eds-live&scope=site> [19 November 2021].

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. 1998. *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. 3rd ed. Boston, Mass: Allyn & Bacon.

Borkan, J.M. 2004. Mixed methods studies: A foundation for primary care research. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 2(1), 4-6.

Bossio, D., McCosker, A., Milne, E., Golding, D. & Albarran-Torres, C. 2019. Social media managers as intermediaries: Negotiating the personal and professional in organisational communication. *Communication Research and Practice*, 6(2): 95-110.

Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. 2008. Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210–230.

Britton, E. 2021. 4 challenges to growth Twitter may face on the road ahead. Available from: <https://www.businessinsider.com/4-challenges-to-growth-twitter-may-face-on-the-road-ahead-2010-12?IR=T> [06 February 2021].

Bryman, A. 2015. *Social research methods*. 4th ed. Oxford; Oxford University Press.

Budree, A., Fietkiewicz, K. J., & Lins, E. 2019. Investigating usage of social media platforms in South Africa. *African Journal of Information Systems*, 11(4), 314–336

Buhalis, D., & Law, R. 2008. Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet—the state of eTourism research. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), 609–623

Burgess, S., Sellitto, C., Cox, C. & Buultjens, J. 2014. Strategies for Adopting Consumer-generated Media in Small-sized to Medium-sized Tourism Enterprises. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 17(5), pp.432-441.

Businesstech, 2020. Pay cuts, retrenchments and closures – how hotels, lodges and B&Bs have been hit by the coronavirus lockdown. Available from: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/407233/pay-cuts-retrenchments->

[and-closures-how-hotels-lodges-and-bbs-have-been-hit-by-the-coronavirus-lockdown/](#) [08 December 2021]

Calder, S. 2019 Why you shouldn't treat TripAdvisor reviews as gospel. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/tripadvisor-reviews-trust-denthecard-restaurants-hotels-a8808636.html> [08 February 2021].

Canovi, M. & Pucciarelli, F. 2019. Social media marketing in wine tourism: winery owners' perceptions. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 36(6), pp.653–664.

Carlitz, R. D., & Makhura, M. N. 2021. Life under lockdown: Illustrating tradeoffs in south Africa's response to COVID-19. *World Development*, 137, 105168–105168. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105168> [08 February 2021]

Carpenter, J.P. & Harvey, S., 2019. "There's no referee on social media": Challenges in educator professional social media use. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, p.102904.

Carter, D., 2016. Hustle and brand: The sociotechnical shaping of influence. *Social media + society*, 2, 1–12.

Cartwright, S. 2017. How the hospitality industry is embracing social media. *Insights* Available from: <https://insights.ehotelier.com/insights/2017/04/27/hospitality-industry-social-media/> [29 October 2020].

Cervellon, M. & Galipienzo, D., 2015. Facebook Pages Content, Does it Really Matter? Consumers' Responses to Luxury Hotel Posts with Emotional and Informational Content. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 32(4), pp.428-437.

Chang, Y., Ku, C. & Chen, C., 2019. Social media analytics: Extracting and visualizing Hilton hotel ratings and reviews from TripAdvisor. *International Journal of Information Management*, 48, pp.263-279.

Charles, M. 2020. SA tourism sector is slowly 'bleeding to death' as the lockdown drags on. Available from: <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/sa-tourism->

[sector-is-slowlybleeding-to-death-as-the-lockdown-drags-on-50995164](#) [08
December 2021]

Chatzigeorgiou, C. 2017. Modelling the impact of social media influencers on behavioural intentions of millennials: The case of tourism in rural areas in greece. *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing*, 3(2), 25-29. DOI:10.5281/zenodo.1209125

Chitanana, L. 2021 'The role of Web 2.0 in collaborative design: An ANT perspective', *International Journal of Technology & Design Education*, 31(5), pp. 965–980. DOI: 10.1007/s10798-020-09578-x.

Christou, E. 2015. Branding Social Media In The Travel Industry. *Procedia Social | Course Hero*. Available at: <https://www.coursehero.com/file/p5r6u3q/Christou-E-2015-Branding-Social-Media-in-the-Travel-Industry-Procedia-Social/> [7 November 2020].

Chu, S.-C., Deng, T. & Cheng, H. 2020. 'The role of social media advertising in hospitality, tourism and travel: A literature review and research agenda', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(11), pp. 3419–3438. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edb&AN=146976688&site=eds-live&scope=site> [13 November 2021].

Clarke, T.B., Murphy, J. & Adler, J. 2016. Celebrity chef adoption and implementation of social media, particularly Pinterest: A diffusion of innovations approach. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 57, pp.84–92.

Coleman, L., J., Jain, A. Bahnan, N. & Chene, D. 2019. 'Marketing the Performing Arts: Efficacy of Web 2.0 Social Networks', *Journal of Marketing Development & Competitiveness*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 23–28

Cooper, D. R., and Schindler, P. S. 2008. *Business research methods*. 10th ed. Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Creswell, J.W., Fetters, M.D, & Ivankova, N.V. 2004. Designing a mixed methods survey in primary care. *Annals of Family Medicine* 2(1), 7-12.

- Ćurlin, T., Jaković, B. & Miloloža, I., 2020. Twitter Usage In Tourism: Literature Review. *Business Systems Research*, 10(1), pp. 102–119. DOI: 10.2478/bsrj-2019-0008.
- Davis, F. D. 1989. Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance in Information Technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319-340.
- De Pelsmacker, P., van Tilburg, S. & Holthof, C. 2018. Digital marketing strategies, online reviews and hotel performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 72, pp.47-55.
- Deelmann, T., & Loos, P. 2002. Trust economy: Aspects of reputation and trust building for SMEs in e-business. *Proceedings of the Eighth Americas Conference on Information Systems*, pp. 2213-2221.
- Demydov, I., Baydoun, N. A., Beshley, M., Klymash, M. & Panchenko, O. 2020. 'Development of Basic Concept of Ict Platforms Deployment Strategy for Social Media Marketing Considering Tectonic Theory', *EUREKA: Physics and Engineering*, (1), pp. 18–33. DOI: 10.21303/2461-4262.2020.001101.
- Dillette, A. K., Benjamin, S., & Carpenter, C. 2019. Tweeting the black travel experience: Social media counternarrative stories as innovative insight on #TravelingWhileBlack. *Journal of Travel Research*, 58(8), 1357-1372. DOI:10.1177/0047287518802087
- Dube-Ncube, N. 2020. Impact of Coronavirus on business in KZN, Available from: <https://www.gov.za/speeches/mec-nomsa-dube-ncube-impact-coronavirus-business-kzn-23-mar-2020-0000> [21 November 2021].
- Duffett, R. G. & Wakeham, M. 2016. 'Social Media Marketing Communications Effect on Attitudes among Millennials in South Africa', *African Journal of Information Systems*, 8(3), pp. 20–44. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=bth&AN=116347515&site=eds-live&scope=site> [21 November 2021].
- Foley, I. 2021. 3 Challenges with using video as a marketing tool. Available from: <https://www.marketingdive.com/ex/mobilemarketer/cms/opinion/columns/20645.html> [06 February 2021].

- Foroudi, P., 2019. Influence of brand signature, brand awareness, brand attitude, brand reputation on hotel industry's brand performance. *International journal of hospitality management*, 76, pp.271-285.
- Fylan, J. 2018. The top 5 social media marketing challenges of 2018. Available from: <https://www.falcon.io/insights-hub/topics/content-marketing/top-5-social-media-marketing-challenges-2018/> [06 February 2021].
- Global Digital Report. 2020. Digital in 2018: World's internet users pass the 4 billion mark - We Are Social. Available from: <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/globaldigitalreport2018#:~:text=The%20new%202018%20Global%20Digital,the%20world%20using%20the%20internet.&text=The%20number%20of%20internet%20users%20in%202018%20is%204.021%20billion,7%20percent%20year%2Don%2Dyear> [24 October 2020].
- Gretzel, U. 2006. Consumer generated content – trends and implications for branding. *E-review of Tourism Research*, 4(3), 9–11
- Gulati, R. 2009. *Reorganize for resilience: Putting customers at the center of your business*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Press.
- Haarhoff, R. & De Klerk, B. 2019. 'Destination South Africa: Analysis of Destination Awareness and Image by International Visitors', *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 24(1), pp. 201–211. DOI: 10.30892/gtg.24116-353.
- Harrigan, P., Evers, U., Miles, M. & Daly, T. 2020. Customer Engagement With Tourism Social Media Brands. *Tourism Management*, 59, 597-609. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.09.015> [7 February, 2021]
- Hasan, R., 2000. [The Impact of Imported and Domestic Technologies on Productivity: Evidence from Indian Manufacturing Firms](#). *The Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 69(1), pp. 23-49
- Hays, S., Page, S. & Buhalis, D. 2013. Social media as a destination marketing tool: Its use by national tourism organisations. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 16(3), pp.211-239.

- Head, T. 2020. Tourism in South Africa: New data reveals who our “favourite visitors” are. *The South African*. Available from: <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/travel/tourism-in-south-africa-where-do-most-visitors-come-from/> [01 November 2020].
- Heo, P. S. & Lee, D. H. (2019) ‘Evolution of the linkage structure of ICT industry and its role in the economic system: the case of Korea’, *Information Technology for Development*, 25(3), pp. 424–454. DOI: 10.1080/02681102.2018.1470486.
- Hofacker, C.F. & Belanche, D., 2016. Eight social media challenges for marketing managers. *Spanish Journal of Marketing-ESIC*, 20(2), pp.73-80.
- Hvass, K.A., & Munar, A.M. 2012. The take off of social media in tourism. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18, 93 –103.
- Ip, C., Lee, H.A., & Law, R. 2012. Profiling the users of travel websites for planning and online experience sharing. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 36, 418–426.
- Jackson, D., 2018. Top 8 influencer marketing trends for 2018. *Sprout Social*. Available from: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/influencer-marketing> [13 January 2021].
- Jakopović, H. 2020. YouTube's role in destination image creation. *Journal of Education, Culture and Society*, 6(1), 217-226. DOI:10.15503/jecs20151.217.226
- Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. 2019. Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(5), 567-579. DOI:10.1108/MIP-09-2018-0375
- Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), pp.59-68.
- Keim, M. E., & Noji, E. 2011. Emergent use of social media: a new age of opportunity for disaster resilience. *American journal of disaster medicine*, 6(1), 47–54.
- Ki, C., Cuevas, L. M., Chong, S. M., & Lim, H. 2020. Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive

- marketing results by fulfilling needs. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, 102133. DOI:10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102133
- Kim, M. J., & Hall, C. M. 2020. Can sustainable restaurant practices enhance customer loyalty? the roles of value theory and environmental concerns. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 43, 127-138. DOI:10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.03.004
- Knoblich, S., Martin, A., Nash, R., & Stansbie, P. 2017. Keys to success in social media marketing (SMM) – prospects for the German airline industry. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 17(2), 147-164. DOI:10.1177/1467358415610415
- Kothari, C. R. 2005. *Research methodology: Methods & techniques*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd.
- Kotler, P., Bowen, J. T., & Makens, J. C. 2006. *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall
- Kropfl, C. 2019. Social media campaign fails. Available from: <https://swat.io/en/learn/social-media-campaign-fails/> [06 February 2021].
- Kumar, V. 2015. Evolution of marketing as a discipline: What has happened and what to look out for. *Journal of Marketing*, 79(1), 1-9. DOI:10.1509/jm.79.1.1
- Lee, H., Jai, T.-M., and Li, X. 2016. Guests' perceptions of green hotel practices and management responses on TripAdvisor, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 7(2): 182-199.
- Lee, K. 2018 How to master Facebook Ad targeting and zero-in on your audience. Available from: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-ad-targeting/> [06 February 2021].
- Leon, R. 2020. Fostering intergenerational learning in the hotel industry: A multiple criteria decision-making model. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 91(1).
- Lepkowska-White, E. 2017. Exploring the Challenges of Incorporating Social Media Marketing Strategies in the Restaurant Business. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 16(3), pp.323–342.

- Leung, D., Lee, H. A., & Law, R. 2011. Adopting Web 2.0 technologies on-chain and independent hotel websites: A case study of hotels in Hong Kong. *Information and communication technologies in tourism* .pp. 229–240.
- Leung, R., Dong, G., Qin, X. & Lin, S. 2016. Capturing Parent–Child Interactions With Social Media. *Psychological Reports*, 118(3), pp.710–713.
- Leung, Y., Bai, B. & Stahura, K. 2015. The Marketing Effectiveness of Social Media in the Hotel Industry: A Comparison of Facebook and Twitter. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 39 (2): 147-169.
- Li, R, Crowe, J, Leifer, D, Zou, L & Schoof, J. 2019. 'Beyond big data: Social media challenges and opportunities for understanding social perception of energy', *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 56, Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edselp&AN=S2214629619305195&site=eds-live&scope=site> [13 November 2021]
- Li, S., Robinson, P. & Oriade, A., 2020. Destination Marketing: The Use Of Technology Since The Millennium. *Journal of destination marketing & management*, 6(2), pp.95-102
- Litvin, S. W., & Sobel, R. N. 2019. Organic versus solicited hotel TripAdvisor reviews: Measuring their respective characteristics. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 60(4), 370-377. DOI:10.1177/1938965518811287
- Longwell, L. 2020. What's Wrong with TripAdvisor, and What to Do About It. *Travel Addicts*. Available from: <https://traveladdicts.net/tripadvisor-fake-reviews/> [01 November 2020].
- Kapoor, P. S., Balaji, M. S. & Jiang, Y. 2021. 'Effectiveness of sustainability communication on social media: role of message appeal and message source', *International Journal Of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(3), pp. 949–972. DOI: 10.1108/IJCHM-09-2020-0974.
- Khasawneh, A, Madathil, KC, Zinzow, H, Wisniewski, P, Ponathil, A, Rogers, H, Agnisarman, S, Roth, R & Narasimhan, M. 2021. 'An Investigation of the Portrayal of Social Media Challenges on YouTube and Twitter', *ACM Transactions on Social Computing*, vol. 4(1), pp. 1–23, Available from:

https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=eds_cma&AN=edscma.3444961&site=eds-live&scope=site [18 November 2021]

- Koigi, B. 2020. South Africa has third-highest number of cybercrime victims globally, report. *South Africa Tech*. Available from: <https://africabusinesscommunities.com/tech/tech-news/south-africa-has-third-highest-number-of-cybercrime-victims-globally-report/> [31 December 2021]
- Kumar, V. and Reinartz, W., 2018. *Customer relationship management*. Germany: Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany.
- Ma, S., Zhao, X., Gong, Y., & Wengel, Y. 2020. Proposing “healing tourism” as a post-COVID-19 tourism product. *Anatolia* 32(1), pp.136-139.
- Mao, Z., Li, D., Yang, Y., Fu, X. & Yang, W., 2020. Chinese DMOs’ engagement on global social media: examining post-related factors. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 25(3), pp.274-285. DOI: 10.1504/ijwgs.2020.10027862
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. 2006. *Designing Qualitative Research*. United Kingdom: Sage publications.
- Mate, M. J., Trupp, A., & Pratt, S. 2019. Managing negative online accommodation reviews: Evidence from the cook islands. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 36(5), 627-644. DOI:10.1080/10548408.2019.1612823
- Matikiti, R., Mpinganjira, M., & Roberts-Lombard, M. 2018. Application of the technology acceptance model and the Technology–Organisation–Environment model to examine social media marketing use in the south african tourism industry. *South African Journal of Information Management*, 20(1), 1-12. DOI:10.4102/sajim.v20i1.790
- May, T., & Perry, B. 2011. *Social research & reflexivity: Content, consequences and context*. London: SAGE.
- Michopoulou, E. & Moisa, D., 2019. Hotel social media metrics: The ROI dilemma. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 76, pp.308-315.
- Middleton, V., 2001. *Marketing for travel and tourism*. 3rd Ed. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

- Milan, K. 2018. The 7 issues you will face on LinkedIn advertising. Available from; <https://mfgtribe.com/the-7-issues-you-will-face-on-linkedin-advertising/> [06 February 2021].
- Miller, R., & Lammas, N. 2010. Social media and its implications for viral marketing. *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 11(1), 1-9.
- Mirza, J., Ghafoor, S., & Hussain, A. 2020. A full-duplex ultra-wideband over multimode fiber link for internet of things based smart home applications. *Transactions on Emerging Telecommunications Technologies*, 31(10), DOI:10.1002/ett.4050
- Mlambo, S.S. & Ezeuduji, I.O. 2020. South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal tourism destination brand essence and competitiveness: Tourists' perspectives. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 32(4), pp.1195–1201.
- Molina, A, Gomez, M, Lyon, A, Aranda, E & Loibl, W. (2020) 'What content to post? Evaluating the effectiveness of Facebook communications in destinations', *JOURNAL OF DESTINATION MARKETING & MANAGEMENT*, 18. doi: 10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100498
- Montalvo, R., 2011. Social Media Management. *International Journal of Management & Information Systems (IJMIS)*, 15(3), p.91.
- Morse, J. 2003. Principles of mixed methods and multimethod research design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teedlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research* (pp. 189-208). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Mosweunyane, L., Rambe, P. & Dzansi, D. (2019) 'Use of social media in Free State tourism small, medium and micro enterprises to widen business networks for competitiveness', *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 22(1). doi: 10.4102/sajems.v22i1.2780.
- Mphahlele, M. (2021) KZN faces staggering R700m in lost tourism revenue after Comrades Marathon cancellation. *Times Live* 23 February. Available from: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sport/2021-02-23-kzn-facing-staggering-r700m-in-lost-tourism-revenue-after-comrades-marathon-cancellation/> [10 December 2021]

- Muchenje, B. 2011. The significance of hotel grading in service delivery in zimbabwe. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Systems*, 4(1), 52
- Mwai, E. 2016. Factors Influencing the Adoption of ICT by Small and Medium Enterprises in the Hospitality Industry in Kenya. *Journal of Mobile Computing & Application*, 3(2): 12-19.
- Naidoo, J. 2021. KZN Premier Zikalala appalled by latest crime stats. *IOL*. Available from: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/kzn-premier-zikalala-appalled-by-latest-crime-stats-8fd8213f-3452-5a7c-93c1-cd1956108b1e> [20 December 2021]
- Nafiu, A. T., Akuh, J. I. & Peter, U. N. (2020) 'Determinants of the Actual ICT Adoption among Small and Medium Enterprises in Kogi State', *Economic Insights - Trends & Challenges*, (3), pp. 47–58. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=bth&AN=147376242&site=eds-live&scope=site> [2 December 2021].
- Neirotti, P., Raguseo, E. & Paolucci, E., 2016. Are customers' reviews creating value in the hospitality industry? Exploring the moderating effects of market positioning. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(6), pp.1133-1143.
- Nepelski, D. & De Prato, G. 2018. 'The structure and evolution of ICT global innovation network', *Industry & Innovation*, 25(10), pp. 940–965. doi: 10.1080/13662716.2017.1343129.
- Neuman, W. L. 2011. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 7th ed. Boston, Mass: Allyn & Bacon.
- Newman, J. 2013. *Social Media for Internet Marketers: How to Take Advantage of Facebook, Twitter and Google+*. USA: Papaplus
- Newsome, D. (2021), "The collapse of tourism and its impact on wildlife tourism destinations", *Journal of Tourism Futures*. 7(3), pp. 295-302. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-04-2020-0053> [11 December 2021]

- Nguya, J., Kariuki, A. & Muthengi, S., 2021. Influence of tour guide service quality on customer satisfaction in Narok County, Kenya. *African Journal of Emerging Issues*, 3(1), pp.149-170.
- Nicoli, N. & Papadopoulou, E. 2017. TripAdvisor and reputation: a case study of the hotel industry in Cyprus. *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 12(3): 316-33.
- Nkosana, T.; Skinner, J. & Goodier, C. 2016. Challenges of ICT adoption and utilisation in small rural restaurants : A case study of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*. 5(4): 1-11.
- Noble, H., & Heale, R. 2019. Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 22(3), 67-68. DOI:10.1136/ebnurs-2019-103145
- Nunkoo, R., Teeroovengadum, V., Ringle, C.M. & Sunnassee, V. 2020. "Service quality and customer satisfaction: The moderating effects of hotel star rating", *International journal of hospitality management*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.102414> [21 February, 2021]
- OECD, 2020. "Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and supporting recovery", *OECD Tourism Papers*, No. 2020/03, OECD Publishing, Paris, Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/47045bae-en>. [8 January 2021]
- Ohei, K. & Brink, R., 2019. A framework development for the adoption of information and communication technology web technologies in higher education systems. *SA Journal of Information Management*, 21(1).
- Oji, O., N., E., Iwu, C., G., & Tengeh, R., K. 2017. Social media adoption challenges of small businesses: The case of restaurants in the cape metropole, South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 6(4)
- Özgen, S. H. & Me, K. 2015. Social media practices applied by city hotels: A comparative case study from Turkey. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*. 7. 229-241. DOI: 10.1108/WHATT-03-2015-0010.
- Panda, I. 2019. 'Innovation in the Service Industry'. Available from: <https://ivypanda.com/essays/innovation-essay-2/#ivy-csf-section> [2 November 2020].

- Pasumponpandian, A., 2020. A Hybrid-Algorithm for E-project Selection on Social Media. *Journal of Information Technology*, 2(02), pp.116-122.
- Pentina, I., Koh, A.C., & Le, T.T. 2012. Adoption of social networks marketing by SMEs: Exploring the role of social influences and experience in technology acceptance. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 7(1), 65-82.
- Perakakis, E., Mastorakis, G. and Kopanakis, I., 2019. Social media monitoring: An innovative intelligent approach. *Designs*, 3(2), p.24.
- Pogorevich, A. V. 2020 'Research of tools influencing the engagement of potential customers in social media as one of the ways to improve the effectiveness of SMM in organisations through the example of the Instagram community. *Economic Consultant*, 32(4), pp. 28–40. DOI: 10.46224/ecoc.2020.4.4.
- Prinsloo, D. & van Antwerpen, S. 2015. *Managerial functions in event management*. Juta & Co. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=cat08969a&AN=dut.d7c54e13.c1da.47e9.aae7.e7d162c1540d&site=eds-live&scope=site> [18 December 2021].
- Qualman, E. 2009. *Socialnomics: How social media transforms the way we live and do business*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons
- Ramsaran-Fowdar, R.R. 2013. The Implications of Facebook Marketing for Organizations. *Contemporary Management Research*, 9(1), pp.73–84.
- Rauniar, R., Rawski, G., Yang, J., & Johnson, B. 2014. Technology acceptance model (TAM) and social media usage: An empirical study on Facebook. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 27(1), 6-30. DOI:10.1108/JEIM-04-2012-0011
- Ren, D., Zhang, X., Wang, Z., Li, J., & Yuan, X. 2014. Weibo Events: A crowd sourcing Weibo visual analytic system. Paper presented at the IEEE Pacific Visualization In 2014 *IEEE Pacific Visualization Symposium* (pp. 330-334). IEEE

- Ristova, C., & Dimitrov, N. 2019. The value of social media as digital tool in hospitality. *International Journal of Information, Business and Management*, 11(3), 155-162.
- Rocco, T.S., Bliss, L.A., Gallagher, S. & Perez-Prado, A. 2003. Taking the next step: Mixed methods research in organizational systems. *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*, 21(1), 19-29.
- Rogers, E.M. 1995. *Diffusion of innovations*. 4th Ed. New York: Free Press.
- Rogerson C. M. 2019. 'Business tourism under apartheid : The historical development of South Africa's conference industry', *Urbani Izziv*, 30, pp. 82–95. Available from:
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edsj&AN=edsjsr.26690825&site=eds-live&scope=site> [19 November 2021].
- Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. 2020. Covid-19 tourism impacts in South Africa: Government and industry responses. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 31(3), 1083-1091. DOI:10.30892/gtg.31321-544
- Roque, V. & Raposo, R. 2016. 'Social media as a communication and marketing tool in tourism: An analysis of online activities from international key player DMO', *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Research*, 27(1), pp. 58–70. doi: 10.1080/13032917.2015.1083209.
- Roth-Cohen, O., & Lahav, T. 2019. Going undercover: Online domestic tourism marketing communication in closed and open Facebook groups. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 25(3), 349-362. DOI:10.1177/1356766718796054
- Ryan, D. 2017, *Understanding digital marketing: marketing strategies for engaging the digital generation*. 4th Ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Ryan, D. & Jones, C. 2012, *Understanding digital marketing: Marketing strategies for engaging the digital generation*. 2nd Ed. Philadelphia; Kogan Page.
- SA Corona Virus Online Portal. 2020. Update on Covid-19 (22nd September 2020) - SA Corona Virus Online Portal. Available from:

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/09/22/update-on-covid-19-22nd-september-2020/> [15 Nov. 2020].

- Saleh, Y. 2021. 'ICT, Social media and COVID-19: Evidence from informal home-based business community in Kuwait City', *Journal of Enterprising Communities*, 15(3), pp. 395–413. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edb&AN=150986232&site=eds-live&scope=site> [10 December 2021].
- Saunders, M., & Lewis, P. 2018. *Doing research in business and management: An essential guide to planning your project*. 2nd Ed. England: Pearson
- Scholz, J., & Smith, A. N. 2019. Branding in the age of social media firestorms: How to create brand value by fighting back online. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(11-12), 1100-1134. DOI:10.1080/0267257X.2019.1620839
- Schroeder, R. 2018. Towards a theory of digital media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(3), 323-339. DOI:10.1080/1369118X.2017.1289231
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. 2016. *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach*. 7th Ed. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Seo, E., Park, J. & Choi, Y., 2020. The Effect of Social Media Usage Characteristics on e-WOM, Trust, and Brand Equity: Focusing on Users of Airline Social Media. *Sustainability*, 12(4).
- Shu-Chuan, C., Tao, D., & Hong, C. (2020) 'The role of social media advertising in hospitality, tourism and travel: A literature review and research agenda', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(11), pp. 3419–3438. DOI: 10.1108/IJCHM-05-2020-0480.
- Sigala, M., Christou, E., & Gretzel, U. 2012. *Social media in travel, tourism and hospitality. Theory, practice and cases*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Silva, J. D. Sharmeen, F. and de Ona, J. (2021) 'Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), social media and (un)sustainable mobility', *Travel Behaviour & Society*, 24, pp. 279–281. DOI: 10.1016/j.tbs.2021.04.010

- Silver, L. & Johnson, C., 2018. Internet use is growing across much of sub-Saharan Africa, but most are still offline. *Pew Research Centre*, Available from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/09/internet-use-is-growing-across-much-of-sub-saharan-africa-but-most-are-still-offline> [14 January 2021].
- Siti-Nabiha, A.K., Nordin, N., & Poh, B.K. 2021. 'Social media usage in business decision-making: The case of Malaysian small hospitality organisations', *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 13(2), pp. 272–289. DOI: 10.1108/APJBA-08-2020-0276.
- Smith, J. L. 2021. 'Continuing processes of uneven development in post-apartheid South Africa', *African Geographical Review*, pp. 1–21. DOI: 10.1080/19376812.2020.1860098.
- Soboleva, A., Burton, S., & Khan, A. M. 2015. Marketing with Twitter : challenges and opportunities. In *Social Media Marketing: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 285-322). IGI Global.
- Soko, M. S. 2004. 'Re-engaging with the global trading system : The political economy of trade policy reform in post-apartheid South Africa, 1994-2004'. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edsble&AN=edsble.412896&site=eds-live&scope=site> [6 December 2021].
- Sprout Social. 2020. Social Media Analytics and Reporting Tools. *Sprout Social*. Available from: <https://sproutsocial.com/features/social-media-analytics/> [20 October 2020].
- Stelzner, M., 2020. Is Social Media Marketing Measurable? The Big Debate. *Social Media Examiner | Social Media Marketing*. Available from: <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/is-social-media-marketing-measurable-the-big-debate/> [7 November 2020].
- Sucheran, R. 2021. Preliminary Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Hotel Sector in South Africa, *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 10(1), pp. 115-130

- Tajvidi, R. & Karami, A. 2017. The effect of social media on firm performance. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 115 (3). DOI:10.1016/j.chb.2017.09.026.
- Tham, A., Croy, G., & Mair, J. 2013. Social media in destination choice: Distinctive electronic word-of-mouth dimensions. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(1-2), 144–155.
- The Department of Tourism. 2020. summary analysis of South Africa's travelers (arrivals and departures) during July 2020. Available from: <https://www.tourism.gov.za/AboutNDT/Publications/Summary%20Analysis%20of%20Tourist%20Arrivals%20-%20July%202020.pdf> [15 January, 2021]
- Thakur, K., Hayajneh, T. & Tseng, J., 2019. Cyber security in social media: challenges and the way forward. *IT Professional*, 21(2), pp.41-49.
- Torres, E., Singh, D. & Robertson-Ring, A., 2015. Consumer reviews and the creation of booking transaction value: Lessons from the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 50, pp.77-83.
- Turnsek, M. & Janecek, P., 2019. "America First, the Netherlands Second" on YouTube: "spoofing" destination marketing with political satire. *The European Journal of Humour Research*, 7(3), p.26.
- UK.GOV. 2021. Foreign travel advice: South Africa. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/south-africa/safety-and-security> [19 December 2021]
- Vallury, K.D., Baird, B., Miller, E. and Ward, P., 2021. Going Viral: Researching Safely on Social Media. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 23(12), p.e29737.
- Van Winkle, C. M., Bueddefeld, J. N. H., Halpenny, E. A., & MacKay, K. J. 2019. The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2: Understanding mobile device use at festivals. *Leisure Studies*, 38(5), 634-650. DOI:10.1080/02614367.2019.1618895
- Varkaris, E., & Neuhofer, B. 2017. The influence of social media on the consumers' hotel decision journey. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 8(1), 101-118. DOI:10.1108/JHTT-09-2016-0058

- Venkatesh, V., James Y. L. Thong, & Xu, X. 2012. Consumer acceptance and use of information technology: Extending the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 36(1), 157-178. DOI:10.2307/41410412
- Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. 2003. User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(3), 425-478. DOI:10.2307/30036540
- Vergnaud, D. 2020. Comment on "efficient and secure outsourcing scheme for RSA decryption in internet of things". *IEEE Internet of Things Journal*, 7(11), 11327-11329. DOI:10.1109/JIOT.2020.3004346
- Vidaković, M. 2018. 'Web 2.0, social media and the new paradigm of information media', *Kultura*, 160, pp305-327. Available from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edsbas&AN=edsbas.2CF7659F&site=eds-live&scope=site> [2 December 2021].
- Wenger, A. 2008. Analysis of travel bloggers' characteristics and their communication about Austria as a tourism destination. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 14 (2), 169-176
- White, N., & White, P. 2007. Home and away: Tourists in a connected world. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(1), 88–104.
- Williams, G., Fourie, T., & Siyaya, S. 2021. The newly enacted Cybercrimes Act and what it means for South Africans. *GoLegal*. Available from: <https://www.golegal.co.za/newly-enacted-cybercrimes-act/> [31 December 2021]
- Wiese, M., & Akareem, H. S. 2020. Determining perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards social network site advertising in a three-country context. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(5-6), 420-455. DOI:10.1080/0267257X.2020.1751242
- Wiese, M., Martínez-Climent, C. & Botella-Carrubi, D., 2020. A framework for Facebook advertising effectiveness: A behavioral perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 109, pp.76-87. DOI:10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.041

- World Health Organisation. 2020. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Available from: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1 [18 December 2021]
- World Wide Worx. 2020. Two-thirds of SA SMEs struggle for tech talent - World Wide Worx. Available from: <http://www.worldwideworx.com/small2020/> [24 September 2020].
- Wyllie, R., & Tifflin, W. 2020. Tourism KwaZulu-Natal statistics report. Available from: <https://www.kznedtea.gov.za/documents/Tourism%20KZN%20Statistical%20Report%20-%20December%202020.pdf> [19 December 2021]
- Xiang, Z. & Gretzel, U. 2010. Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), pp.179-188.
- Ye, Q., Law, R., Gu, B., & Chen, W. 2011. The influence of user-generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e-word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(2), 634-639. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2010.04.014
- Yin, R. 1994. *Case study research: Design and methods*. 2nd Ed. Beverly Hills: Sage
- Yoeman, M. 2016. The worst problems of YouTube that marketers should know about. Available from: <http://www.iamwire.com/2016/11/the-worst-problems-of-youtube-marketers-should-know-about/143759> [06 February 2021].
- Yoo, S., Kim, D., Yang, S., & Jeong, O. 2020. Real-time disease detection and analysis system using social media contents. *International Journal of Web and Grid Services*, 16, 22-38. DOI: [10.1504/ijwgs.2020.10027862](https://doi.org/10.1504/ijwgs.2020.10027862)
- Zaidah, Z. 2003. *An Investigation into the effects of Discipline-Specific Knowledge, Proficiency and Genre on Reading Comprehension and Strategies of Malaysia ESP Students*. Ph.D Thesis, University of Reading Malaysia.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: University Ethics Clearance Letter



22 September 2016

RE: FEEDBACK ON PROPOSAL: Tenson Nkosana

Dear Dr Mnguni

The abovementioned was recently reviewed by a team of experts in the faculty. Reviewers have made constructive comments and guidelines which are intended to assist in streamlining your students' proposal.

It is imperative that you take note of these comments /suggestions and work on the respective corrections with your student.

The proposal has been approved subject to moderate changes being made

The Reviewers have indicated that these changes should not take more than **30 days to amend**. Please ensure that the proposal is signed off by yourself and forwarded to us by no later than **22 October 2016**

Please ensure that the following has been amended as required by the reviewers. This is indicated by a tick (✓) below.

	ITEM	
1	Field of Research & Provisional Title	✓
2	Context of the Research	✓
3	Problem statement	✓
4	Research Aims and objectives	✓
5	Literature Review	✓
6	Research Methodology	✓
7	Plan of Activities	✓
8	Structure of Dissertation/Thesis Chapters	✓
9	Potential Output	✓
10	Key References	✓
11	Technical Aspects of The Proposal (Grammar/Spelling/Layout)	
12	Budget	✓
	ETHICS	
	Completion of Letter of Information.	
	Completion of Consent letter completed?	
	Submission of draft questionnaire and/or interview schedule	✓
	Submission of a Gatekeeper's letter.	✓

PLEASE NOTE: The response to the PG2a reviewers report will NOT be accepted if the declaration is not signed by the Supervisor.

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Micro-Hospitality Businesses



Questionnaire for Micro-Hospitality Businesses

As you know, social media platforms have taken off exponentially as an advertising medium in the hospitality industry – and there is evidence that small businesses like yours stand to gain the most from these developments. However, the uptake appears to have been quite limited amongst small and medium businesses in KZN. In this research I hope to investigate why this is, and how small hoteliers could gain maximum benefit from the latest social media promotional ideas. Your input will help a lot towards achieving this, and all findings will be shared with you. The responses will be confidential and anonymous. We will approximately take 15 minutes to get through the interview

Please fill in your opinions in all the applicable areas, and please ensure that you do not omit any of the questions, as incomplete questionnaires have to be discarded.

Interviewee Personal Details

Occupation.....

Gender.....

Background Information

1. Select the type of your establishment (Tick where appropriate)

Type of Establishment/ Service	Tick
Game/ Nature Lodge	
Meetings, Exhibitions & Special Events (MESE) Venues	
Caravan/ Camping/ Backpackers and Hostelling Accommodation	
Self-Catering Accommodation (Exclusive or Shared purpose)	

Guest Accommodation (B&B/ Country House/Guesthouse)	
Formal Service Accommodation (Hotel/ Lodge)	
Hospitality support services (specify e.g. Catering Services, Wedding DJ, Florist, décor hiring)	

2. How many years have your business been in operation? Tick where appropriate.

Less than 3 years	3 to 5 Years	6 to 10 Years	Over 10 years

3. Location of Establishment.....

4. Number of Employees working at your establishment.....

5. How is your clientele composed? Fill in below

Locals	Foreigners
%	%

6. Is your establishment Star graded? If yes how many stars is your establishment.....

Social Media platforms

7. How did you embrace your social media platforms in your business? Tick where appropriate

Inherited from previous owners	Do not have SM platforms/ Have not adopted yet	Introduced SM/ Adopted SM platforms

8. Does your establishment subscribe to any of the following platforms?

Tool	Yes	NO	N/A
Facebook			
Twitter			
Instagram			
TripAdvisor			
Pinterest			
WhatsApp			
Other (Specify)			

9. Does your establishment have a dedicated marketing executive/ officer responsible for running social media (SM) platforms? Tick where appropriate

Yes	No	N/A

10. How often do you update your SM pages/ sites?

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	N/A

11. How many followers have you gathered on your pages?

Platform	Number of Followers
Facebook	

Twitter	
Instagram	
WatsApp	
Other	

12. How frequently do you post on your pages?

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Randomly	Never post

13. How active is your page and postings?

Very active	Active	Moderate	Below average	Poor

Significance and benefits of Social Media marketing

14. How significant is SM adoption to your business? Explain briefly

15. What are the benefits of using SM platforms for marketing your business

- i) _____
- ii) _____
- iii) _____
- iv) _____
- v) _____
- vi) _____

16. Has your business witnessed any changes since you adopted SM as a marketing tool?

Yes	No	N/A

If the answer above is yes, please explain how. (You may use profit growth rate in percentage as an illustration)

User review sites

17. Does your establishment subscribe to any user review site such as TripAdvisor?

Yes	No	N/A

18. If the answer to the above is yes, which sites do you utilise?

19. How effective are user review sites in marketing your establishment? Tick where appropriate and explain your answer below

Very Effective	Effective	Average	Poor

Challenges of using SM as a marketing tool

20. What are some of the challenges of using SM as a marketing tool?

21. What do you think could be done to minimise or solve these challenges?

Thank you kindly for your time and cooperation.

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Micro-Hospitality Businesses operators



Interview questions for Micro-Hospitality Businesses operators

Introductory remarks

As you know, social media platforms have taken off exponentially as an advertising medium in the hospitality industry – and there is evidence that small businesses like yours stand to gain the most from these developments. However, the uptake appears to have been quite limited amongst small and medium businesses in KZN. In this research I hope to investigate why this is, and how small hoteliers could gain maximum benefit from the latest social media promotional ideas. Your input will help a lot towards achieving this, and all findings will be shared with you. The responses will be confidential and anonymous. We will approximately take 15 minutes to get through the interview

1. What is your occupation at this business unit?
2. What type is your establishment (Lodge, Hotel, service etc) and location?
3. How many years has your business been in operation?
4. How is your clientele composed in terms of local and foreigners based on percentages?
5. Is your establishment Star graded? If yes how many stars is your establishment?
6. How did you embrace your social media platforms in your business? Did you introduce or inherit?
7. Which social media platforms does your establishment subscribe to, and what is the followership for each platform?
8. Does your establishment have a dedicated marketing executive/ officer responsible for running social media (SM) platforms?

9. How often do you update your SM pages/ sites and how active are your pages?
10. What are the benefits of using SM platforms for marketing your business?
11. Does your establishment subscribe to any user review sites such as TripAdvisor?
12. How effective are user review sites in marketing your establishment?
13. What are some of the challenges of using SM as a marketing tool?
14. What do you think could be done to minimise or solve these challenges?

Thank you kindly for your time and cooperation.

Appendix D: Observations guide for Small Hospitality Business in the KZN



Observations guide for Small Hospitality Business in the KZN

Demographics/ Introductions

1. Establishment?

Lodge	
Restaurant	
Hotel	
Wedding venue	
Guesthouse	
Backpackers	
Support Services	

2. Targeted clientele?

Leisure	
Business	
Functions	

3. Rates per room per night (rand value)?

500 to 1000	
1001 to 2000	
2001 to 3000	
3001 to 4500	

Impact of Covid-19

4. Business affected by Covid-19?

Yes	
No	
Not sure	

5. Did the business permanently close?

Yes	
No	

6. Did the business drop rates to attract business?

Yes	
No	

Social Media

7. Social media platforms adopted and followership?

Facebook	
Instagram	
Twitter	
TripAdvisor	
WhatsApp	
Pinterest	

Service Quality

8. Level of service?

Luxury	
Middle class	
Budget	
No Class	

9. Star Grading?

5 stars	
4 stars	
3 stars	
Not graded	
Not applicable	

Location

10. Establishment location?

Midlands	
Other	

11. Location advantages?

12. Any other relevant information for the study

The End

Appendix E: Informed Consent letter for participants

PG 2a



CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, **Tenson Nkosana** about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: TBC,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Alex Drew
Full Name of Participant
Thumbprint

11/07/16
Date

14:03
Time

Signature / Right

I, TENSON (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

TENSON NKOSANA
Full Name of Researcher

11-07-16
Date

Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

Date

Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)

Date

Signature

Appendix F: Gatekeepers research approval letters



20 July, 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT PhD RESEARCH

This letter serves to confirm that Tenson Nkosana has been granted permission to enter and conduct his PhD research work at our establishment.

Please feel free to contact us should you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

R.I.Blackburn
Founding Trustee
The Blackburn Family Trust
T/A Cranford Country Lodge

THE BLACKBURN FAMILY TRUST
NO. 1760/2006/PMB

P.O.BOX 1196
HOWICK
3290

Tel: (033)3302182 Fax: (033)3308330
E-mail: info@cranfordcountrylodge.co.za

07 July 2016

To whom it may concern

Permission to conduct research

This letter serves to confirm that Mr. Tenson Nkosana has been granted permission to conduct his PhD research work in our member establishments across the Midlands region.

Permission to access all establishments is also granted for the duration of his research.

Kind regards,





15 August, 2016

Dear Tenson

As discussed over the phone, Bosch Hoek Lodge will participate in your research project. This letter serves as authority for you to access our property for the purposes of your data collection as well as to conduct interviews with any of our staff members.

I will hear from you about your interview schedules

Kind regards

Michael Senke
Lodge Manager
Bosch Hoek Lodge

Tel: 076 792 5288

Email: accommodation@boschhoek.co.za

Website: www.boschhoek.co.za

Bosch Hoek Golf & Country Estate, Balgowan, 3275



Tel: 033 007 0549; Cell: 082 9277 623; Email: info@hawkle.co.za Website: www.hawkle.co.za

05 August, 2016

Dear Mr Nkosana

This letter serves to confirm our willingness to participate in your research study. By copy of this letter we also authorise you to access our property for the purposes of your data collection.

Kindly let us know when you will be coming through

Best regards

Belinda Lentz



Appendix G: Language editor certificate

126 Sandown Village

27 Harvey Road

Manors

Pinetown

3610

24 March 2021

Proof of Editing

This is to confirm that the attached thesis by Mr Tenson Nkosana has been formally edited for language by Dr Jane Skinner, who is a qualified teacher of English with several years' experience in editing academic dissertations and theses.

Dr Jane Skinner

083 658 5951