

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**EXPLORING INNOVATION IN PROMOTING TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, KWAZULU
NATAL**

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**EXPLORING INNOVATION IN PROMOTING TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A
CASE OF UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, KWAZULU NATAL**

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DECLARATION

I, Brian Vika Simelane, do hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own work and findings, except where indicated. All sources used have been duly acknowledged and referenced.

10/11/23

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Chili S.N

Date

DEDICATION

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

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Firstly, I would like to praise the Almighty God for giving me the courage, wisdom and strength to pursue my studies thus far. Indeed, he is the true provider.

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ABSTRACT

According to Marchesani, Masciarelli and Ceci (2024), municipalities that are doing well and becoming more competitive are responding to new emerging trends and specific traveller preferences, the growing importance of social media, and mobile internet marketing. Calitz and Cullen (2017:1) state that a key component of a municipality's expansion to promote economic development is the recognition of trends in destination marketing, to increase marketability when compared to world-class municipalities. The aim of the current study was to explore the innovative ways used by the uMkhanyakude District Municipality (UKDM) to promote tourism and sustainable development. Evidence shows that there is increased responsibility on local governments in tourism destination planning and management to facilitate and promote local tourism in rural communities through the lens of innovation. In this day and age, it is not enough for tourism businesses to rely solely on the traditional media for marketing and promotion. An influx of tourists in UKDM can be achieved through the usage of innovative tourism promotion strategies (internet, mobile phones, social media, viral marketing, mobile commerce, and video marketing etc.) and capacitating tourism practitioners at local government level to undertake effective tourism promotion and marketing to effectively respond to increasingly sophisticated market needs and trends.

Analysing the market needs thorough research to disclose all the challenges that the municipalities may come across in promoting and growing the tourism industry in the UKDM and the adjacent communities to expedite their welfare through promotion and sustainable economic development to enhance tourism promotion and development. Moreover, an information gap exists in UKDM on the use of innovative ways to promote sustainable tourism development, as the district seems to rely mostly on the conventional ways of promotion (district-wide state-of-the-art information centres, glossy Elephant Coast destination brochures, and attending domestic and international trade and consumer shows). New tourism promotion efforts are essential for tourism businesses and the municipalities in the area for enhancement in tourism development which will boost the municipality's ailing economy. This research explored the innovative ways used by the UKDM in promoting sustainable tourism

development and the challenges they encounter in promoting and growing the visitor numbers in uMkhanyakude District Municipality. A qualitative research methodology was utilised to collect primary data through semi-structured interviews for this study and a case study approach was used to explore innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development from uMkhanyakude District Municipality's tourism practitioners.

The study reveals that social media can be used more efficiently than traditional communication channels, with executives in the tourism industry declaring that, like any other business, tourism organisations need to participate in social media marketing platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, blogs, forums, and media sharing sites. These media sharing sites are facilitating communication between tourism stakeholders and municipality managers on issues such as improving the images of tourism destinations. They also assist in making past or future tourism plans and establishing direct communication with tourism destinations. The main reason for this is that travellers are constantly using social media before planning their trips, during their trips, and at the end of their trips to share their travel experiences. As a result, social media tools are regarded as effective means of publicising tourist destinations.

Findings from the primary study revealed that most of the municipal entities do not use social media as part of their promotion techniques. There is a need for full adoption of the contemporary mechanisms used by tourism municipal destinations around the world. The few tourism entities that use contemporary mechanisms of promotion are only using it for Integrated Development Plan (IDP) roadshows and where tourism is blended with other municipal activities for example in a website, the mechanisms are hardly visited and updated with new and interesting information. In light of the current lack of adoption of the contemporary mechanisms, this reveals a dire need for adoption and usage of such promotion methods as they are cost-effective and suitable for promotion, development and improvement of tourism in uMkhanyakude District Municipality. The results suggest that social media is of strategic importance in promoting tourism.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

4IR = Fourth industrial revolution

AMA = American marketing association

CTO = Community tourism organisations

DMO = Destination marketing organisations

ECPTA = Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Authority

EDTEA = Economic development, tourism, and environmental affairs

GDP = Gross domestic product

IDP = Integrated Development Plan

ICT = Information and Communication Technology

KSDM = King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality

NDP = National Development Plan

NTSS = National Tourism Sector Strategy

SMME = Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise

TALC = Tourism Area Life Cycle

TKZN = Tourism KwaZulu-Natal

UDM = UMkhanyakude District Municipality

UNWTO = United Nations World Tourism Organisation

WOM = Word-of-mouth

eWOM = Electronic word-of-mouth

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Innovation is a 'creative destruction' which has become a prerequisite for sustainability and future growth in a competitive economy (Disvissekera and Nguyen 2018:157). It is a crucial component for the success of a destination that competes for visitors. Innovation can be described as a set of actions associated with the process of collecting ideas, marketing, technological development, the production of new or improved products, and the tools and methods of production (Zach and Hill 2017:196). Tourism innovation is needed in the UKDM as the province and the area are faced with a decline in visitor numbers. This is emphasised by Madondo, Chiguvi and Tadu (2019:36) who state that tourism promotion is required to go to considerable efforts to lure more tourists to KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), as the number of visitors has been falling steadily.

This decrease in the volume of tourists has negatively impacted employment, financial returns, private sector capital investment, and revenue-generating prospects. This is supported by the KZN's Tourism Master Plan Strategic Development 2020/2021 - 2024/2025 which calls for more promotion to position the province as a top tourism destination in the world and to reach 21 million visitors by 2030. Blaga (2013: 31) supports this by emphasising that the effectiveness of a communication system is determined by how tourist organisations produce messages, select the target audience, and choose the medium (means) by which the information is transmitted to the target population. Promotion of the tourism industry is necessary for the success of tourist destinations like UKDM in order for it to stay competitive and keep improving the welfare of the populace. Internet technologies and the internet are being more widely used, with businesses worldwide turning to online (internet) promotion to boost their business's sales and brand recognition as well as draw in additional customers online (Bezuidenhout 2020:2). This study argues that municipalities become valueless

in the absence of innovative mechanisms that extend to the promotion of tourism offerings. Disruptive tourism innovation which entails introducing innovative ideas, technology, or business models that significantly modify how tourism operates, creating new markets and potentially displacing established companies. This study observed that disruptive tourism innovation is one of the most serious problems facing the uMkhanyakude District Municipality (UKDM) when it comes to tourism development today. Issues engulfing economically impoverished urban areas in the Global South are occurring locally too and have become a full-blown crisis for UKDM, which has, over the years, been on the edge of chaos as the institution battles to find newer and better ways for dealing with innovative tourism as a strategy towards contributing to tourism development. Disruptive tourism causes displacement, increased local costs, loss of access to resources as well as social and cultural disruption to the surrounding society of this municipality (Glup 2021:51).

Ultimately, UKDM's operations have become unfit for purpose in that its current disruptive tourism strategies (trade shows, schools tours, word of mouth and inactive Facebook page) fail to invite the outside world to see the need to visit South Africa due to the lack of innovative ways of promoting tourism. The above-mentioned challenge highlight that the municipality needs to devise new strategies that are supposedly geared towards attracting visitors to the most prominent tourism destinations of UKDM. UKDM is struggling with a declining tourism economy which poses a wide range of challenges that fuel poverty across the sector (uMkhanyakude District Municipality 2023: 39). Chapter 1 navigates the discussion of promotion, development, and sustainable tourism of UKDM and its importance to the developmental welfare state of this municipality.

The chapter also discusses the importance of using innovative ways to promote sustainable tourism development in the surrounding areas as a mechanism to alleviate poverty and job scarcity. Several social scientists such as Abrahams (2019), Ramukumba (2019), and Strydom, Mangope, and Henama (2019), have debated tourism as being a significant tool for enhancing local economies in sub-Saharan Africa, with tourism development strategies being accepted as a substantial part of local economic development projects by various local authorities in South Africa.

Solvoll, Alsos and Bulanova (2015), the World Travel and Tourism Council (2017:10), and Kallmuenzer and Peters (2018), regard tourism as being one of the fastest-growing businesses and most significant sources of revenue in most countries. Sutono *et al.* (2018) concurs with the aforementioned scholars as the author postulates that tourism promotion is critical to the economy and is crucial for local communities, understanding that tourism has the potential to revitalise areas around tourism destinations. Innovating tourism attraction instruments will compel UKDM to understand tourism in the context of being an important component of South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), given its potential to enhance growth and create jobs in the larger economy.

Madondo (2018:1) also comments on the need for the municipalities to flex their muscles in promoting the tourism industry as they proceed towards ensuring that the municipality remains competitive as part of contributing to people's well-being. Tourism is a way to transform the well-being of local communities (MacKenzie and Gannon 2019:25). However, UKDM's usage of innovative mechanisms had been hampered by numerous challenges. These included access to finance, as municipalities work on strict budget, insufficient training for tourism practitioners and lack of capacity as the CTOs lacked skills. Municipal regulations and bureaucratic procedures also inhibited the growth of innovation in UKDM. However, the most serious limitation in fulfilled innovative tourism potential is the lack of cohesiveness and unity between the municipalities and its stakeholders (tourism businesses). Therefore, the current study sought to determine whether municipalities are able to adequately embrace innovative ways of promoting tourism to enable good profit returns, preserve the prominence of destinations, and secure associated businesses for future generations through the use of natural and cultural heritage.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Bambi *et al.* (2019:11), rural areas including municipalities face major social, economic, demographic, and environmental issues, including depopulation, a lack of financial resources and innovations, a geographically isolated location, a lack of employment opportunities, and poor service quality. Although there are many issues in local communities, tourism brings revenue and other benefits to local destinations

for transformation and development. The UKDM (2019:15) integrated development plan (IDP) states that the Municipality is experiencing a high unemployment rate which perpetuates various types of crime, especially against women, the elderly, and children thus promotion is required to bring more visitors and investors in the area to change the conditions. Madondo (2018:12) states that to establish KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) as a top 20 tourism destination in the world by 2020, the province's Tourism Master Plan Strategic Development (2011) requires additional promotion. This is Tourism KwaZulu- Natal's (TKZN's) vision for promoting tourism in the province. Thus, promotion in municipalities is of vital importance for the growth and development of responsible tourism development in local communities.

Promotion is a marketing mix element that supports product placement in the tourism industry by raising awareness, creating an image, and ultimately positioning the product in the market (Cirikovia 2014:114). Despite all the benefits brought by tourism promotion, Gidlund and Israelsson (2009:1) state that "historically, municipalities have focused more on investing in economic development rather than marketing or promotion designated to attract people to the municipality". Ncamphalala (2019:5) argues that municipalities have recognised and prioritised the internet as a modern useful technology and channel for promoting local travel information and presenting important public services to visitors.

Pawlowska-Legwand and Matoga (2021:14) state that the effective use of modern means of marketing communication such as use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in tourist information and promotion may contribute to greater recognition of the currently lesser-known or unknown tourism destinations. Mukerji (2013:19) maintains that ICT is a widespread technology that enables an accommodating approach by conjoining municipalities with visitors to solve political, cultural, and tourism issues and to expedite the development of local communities. The innovative tools used to promote tourism such as social media assist in adapting to the ever-changing economy. Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013:7) assert that at a time when the public sector (including municipalities) are cutting their funding, the way in which budgets is spent must result in higher value, thus innovative tools such as social media are gaining prominence. Furthermore, this is even more crucial given today's

globalised and competitive world. Many studies maintain that the use or inclusion of innovative ways to promote tourism is imperative. One of these studies is by Svajdova (2019:21) which explains that in the last years, there is an incredible evolution of new tools of innovative marketing communication for tourism. According to Garabinovic (2019) modern information and communication technologies, especially the internet, have caused many changes that have influenced the development of society, the economy, and tourism. Milwood, Marchiori, and Zach (2013:165) explain that destination marketing organisations (DMOs) and businesses are being forced to adopt and integrate new technology so that they can better communicate with their online target audience. Tourism promotion through traditional media is already dead and such media will sooner or later disappear totally. Traditional media will succumb to technological innovations that are revolutionising the promotion industry (Chao et al. 2012:12).

The use of innovative ways of tourism promotion will produce an influx of tourism, thus sustainable development principles should be adopted. Cernat and Gourdon (2011:15) state that

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems.

This study explored the innovative ways used by the UKDM to promote tourism and sustainable development in its surrounding communities. More specifically, the study focused on determining and exposing innovation in promoting tourism in the municipalities and adjacent local communities by the uMkhanyakude District Municipality to expedite the local community's welfare through promotion and sustainable economic development to enhance tourism promotion and development.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Tourism is recognised as a crucial component of South Africa's National Development Plan due to its ability to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. For the tourism

business to remain competitive and contribute to the well-being of the people, continual efforts to promote it are required (Hanekom 2015:1). Due to the numerous advantages that social media provides, it has surpassed traditional marketing in effectiveness over the years. The study sought to determine and broaden knowledge about how online communication is used to promote travel in tourism destinations. Buhalis and Foerste (2015) supports the above-mentioned perception, asserting that tourism businesses which are knowledgeable about how online communication is used to promote tourism can help marketers make better decisions and help shape policy formulation. Travellers and tourism marketers both greatly benefit from effective social media use in promoting tourism. The UKDM has several excellent tourism products, which should be fully exploited. To maintain the effectiveness in promoting the travel industry, marketers in this sector must make use of the commercial prospects provided by social media. This is because the new digital age has created an extraordinary new set of consumer relationship-building tools, ranging from online advertisements, blogs, and videos to online communities and major social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram (Kotler and Armstrong 2018:41).

Businesses of the past relied heavily on mass marketing, whereas organizations of today employ mobile, online, and social media to target and engage consumers more interactively and profoundly (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018:41). Digital marketing has evolved into a necessary component rather than just an option for businesses (Clow and Baack 2018:28). According to Madondo (2016: 3), consumers rely on trustworthy information sources, such as those they already know, are acquainted with, or have a relationship with. Additionally, social media is a popular tool for travellers to use to review accommodation options, lay out their itinerary, discuss their experiences with others, and obtain information. Therefore, the motivation for this study was based on the need to understand the influence of innovation including social media in promoting tourism activities and development in UKDM.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Butler and Rogerson (2016:69), local governments involved in tourism destination planning and management have a huge responsibility to facilitate and promote local tourism especially in marginal areas through the lens of innovation. The

importance of investing in tourism development and marketing is not confined to advanced economies. However, not enough is done to promote and market tourism, especially in small towns and municipalities. The uMkhanyakude District Municipality's IDP 2008-2009 (UKDM 2009) states that serious marketing initiatives are being implemented in partnership with TKZN and the Elephant Coast Tourism Association. Innovative ways of tourism promotion are not mentioned or prioritised as one of their key tools of promotion enhancement. Evidence can also be drawn from uMkhanyakude District Municipality IDP 2018-2019 (UKDM 2018) which states that there is inadequate marketing of tourism offerings and heritage resources, and the district aims to market itself as a prime tourism destination.

This study is intended to explore the innovative strategies that uMkhanyakude District Municipality uses when promoting tourism to achieve sustainable development. Van der Bank (2015) state that nowadays it is rare and no longer enough for businesses engaging in tourism to rely only on traditional media for marketing and promotion. Furthermore, there is a need to capacitate tourism practitioners in local government to undertake effective tourism promotion and marketing. Capacitating tourism practitioners enables destination marketing officials to effectively respond to increasingly sophisticated market needs and trends (Department of Tourism 2013: 22). Tourism promotion and development in its entirety has been well researched and defined. Many studies have focused on promotion with the focus on tourism promotion through social media, promotion, and development of tourism (Dube 2006; Madondo 2016; Diposumarto *et al.* 2015; Kontsiwe 2018; Rogerson and Nel 2016). However, Haddad (2013), Kang and Scheutt (2013), Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) as cited in Rogerson (2015:25) argued that there are few studies in place that are looking at the usage of modern ways of promoting tourism businesses, nevertheless not much is researched on the above-mentioned components in municipalities located in previously marginalised locations. Currently, the prevailing problem is there is a need to explore innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development in the adjacent communities and the outside world by the uMkhanyakude District Municipality to expedite the adjacent community's welfare through the enhancement of the district's promotion and sustainable economic development strategies. Moreover, presently there is an information gap that exists in UKDM about the use of innovative ways of

promoting sustainable tourism development, as the districts seems to rely mostly upon the conventional ways of promotion (District-wide state-of-the-art Information Centres, glossy Elephant Coast destination brochures and attending domestic and international trade and consumer shows) (UKDM IDP 2008-2009:11).

This study seeks to address the lack of information about the tourist's future needs, which are always changing and fast-changing, which needs direct strategic marketing planning. It also seeks to draw conclusions and make recommendations on how the uMkhanyakude District Municipality and other municipalities use innovative practices on local tourism destinations and in their tourism promotion strategies, as well as providing guidelines for future innovative practice implementation.

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study was to explore the innovations used in promoting sustainable tourism developments in uMkhanyakude District Municipality, KZN.

The following research objectives assisted in narrowing down the study to key details:

- To investigate the level of understanding and awareness that UKDM has regarding innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development and the importance of adopting it.
- To explore the contemporary mechanisms used by UKDM to promote sustainable tourism development.
- To improve the existing mechanisms of innovation used by UKDM to promote tourism and sustainable development.
- To ascertain strategies to improve the usage of innovative ways of promoting tourism in UKDM and its local municipalities.

The following research questions helped to focus the study by narrowing it down to the most important facts. The study specifically addresses the following research questions.

- What is the level of understanding and awareness that UKDM has regarding innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development and the importance of adopting it and the benefits accrue to its usage?

- What are the contemporary mechanisms used by UKDM to promote sustainable tourism development?
- How can the innovative mechanisms used by the municipality to promote local tourism be improved?
- What strategies can be used to improve the usage of innovative ways of promoting tourism and improve awareness of tourism in uMkhanyakude District Municipality?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to explore the views and opinions of tourism practitioners in the usage of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality. This study used a qualitative research approach because it was suitable to provide insight into and interpretation of the research topic, eliminating the requirement to begin with a hypothesis (Noor 2008: 1602). According to Denzin (2009), a critical indigenous qualitative approach recognises that all inquiry is political and moral, employs critical methodologies for explicit social justice, and honours the transformational power of indigenous underutilised knowledge. Bishop (2012) adds that it should be ethical and participatory. It must be open to discourse and suit the perceived requirements of the people. The interview questions were designed to elicit knowledge and a deeper understanding of tourism practitioners' perspectives on the use of innovative methods of promoting tourism and sustainable development in the uMkhanyakude district municipality, so there were no closed-ended questions. Qualitative research approach has been used as it has the ability to provide insight into the interpretation of the research topic, therefore there was no need to start with a hypothesis in this study's research technique (Moser and Korstjens 2018:14). The interview questions were designed with the aim of obtaining a deeper understanding of the innovation mechanisms used by UKDM in promoting sustainable tourism development, so there were no closed-ended questions. According to Satishprakash (2020) the study population refers to an aggregate of subjects, individuals, groups, organisations, human products, and events that conform to set research parameters and specifications. A population is a collection of all human beings or complete customary elements that are the focus of the study and about

which the researcher wishes to control some of such attributes (Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee 2007). A population in qualitative research is the universe of units from which the sample is selected Satishprakash (2020).

The study identified participants that were of benefit to the inquiry and were available to respond. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that all the suitable population elements were represented in the study. The sample was drawn using purposive sampling from tourism practitioners involved in tourism development and promotion in the UKDM as well as four municipalities under its jurisdiction comprising five tourism managers from uMkhanyakude District and four local municipalities (uMkhanyakude District, Mtubatuba, Jozini, Umhlabuyalingana, and the Big Five False Bay), one tourism manager from uMhlosinga Development Agency, two tourism information officers from Mkhuze and Mtubatuba Local Municipality tourism information offices and four Community Tourism Organisation (CTO) chairpersons (from Mtubatuba, Jozini, Umhlabuyalingana, and the Big Five False Bay) were interviewed.

The sample type and size were easy to choose since the total number of respondents was determined by the fact the respondents had the necessary and applicable information that was desired to answer the research questions. The sample was chosen because no new information or themes were discovered in the data, and collecting more data no longer contributed to a better knowledge of the research issue. The researcher completely investigated all facets of the phenomenon being studied, and more data analysis shows no new insights, categories, or concepts pertinent to the research issue. Dawson (2002) suggests that when using purposive sampling strategies, researchers may struggle to estimate the number of participants needed during the proposal stage; they should stick to their sample practices until they reach a 'saturation point'. Interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. Interviewees could be probed when the researcher needed clarity. Purposive sampling was employed to choose respondents because it allowed the researcher to identify participants who were more likely to provide thorough and relevant data to the study questions. Individual themes were found and analysed once the obtained data was captured and analysed. The major data preparation techniques included data-capturing, data-editing and data-coding (McDaniel and Gates, 2010: 12). Purposive sampling was

chosen for this study due to its cost-effectiveness and ability to include respondents with relevant data to answer research questions.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations were implemented in order to ensure integrity of the researcher regarding the collection of data. The research proposal was submitted to the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Management Sciences for review and based on the evaluation the study was categorised as low risk under the following ethics number: **078/21**. Added to that, the following practices were evident during the research process:

1.7.1 To ensure informed consent is given by participants

The topic of the study, the nature of the research, and the participation of participants in the study were all discussed to ensure that participants provided informed consent. Participants were also assured that they were under no obligation to participate in this study.

1.7.2 To ensure that no harm comes to participants

During the data collection process, it was critical that the researcher ensured that participants were not harmed, injured, or uncomfortable by taking into account any safety and health concerns during the data collection process. All necessary precautions were followed, and no volunteers were psychologically or physically endangered.

1.7.3 To ensure anonymity and confidentiality

Participants were assured that their identity would be protected by restriction of access to all raw data, the secure storing of raw data, and that reporting would take place in a way that the identity of the participants would not be exposed.

1.7.4 To ensure the obtaining of permission

Before conducting the study, it was important to ensure that all official channels were clear. This was done by seeking permission letters in order to conduct the study and the negotiating of access to respondents.

1.7.5 Data management

1.7.5.1 Copyright

The data that was generated is owned by the institutional partners.

1.7.5.2 Backup and security

Because of hardware issues and viruses in developing countries, data must be backed up on a regular basis, which includes regular data sharing via email with the supervisor to ensure that up-to-date versions are stored on the University's server.

1.7.5.3 Storage and destruction

The data is the property of the University, and it will be stored as part of the data library for a period of five years.

1.8 STUDY AREA

UKDM is located in the far northern region of KZN province in South Africa. It continues to be a sought-after tourism destination. Covering an area of 12 818 km² square kilometres, the municipality is home to 625 846 people, making it the second largest district in KZN in terms of size, only surpassed by its neighbour, Zululand District Municipality (UKDM 2018). uMkhanyakude District Municipality, with its diversified society, struggled to fulfil the demands of a population that is expanding at an ever-increasing rate, posing several social, economic, environmental, capacity, and governance challenges. uMkhanyakude District's comparative advantage is its position as a popular domestic tourist destination. It attracts tourists from the Southern African Development Countries (SADC) and contains the world heritage site known as iSimangaliso Wetland Park which encompasses the entire coastline of more than 200 km. UKDM is one of South Africa's primary tourist destinations because of its wildlife

and conservation efforts and natural resources. As enumerated above the challenges facing UKDM held much potential for the growth of tourism in the district.

Figure 1.1 show that the District Municipality consists of the following municipalities:

- Umhlabuyalingana Municipality
- Jozini Municipality
- The Big Five Hlabisa Municipality
- Mtubatuba Municipality

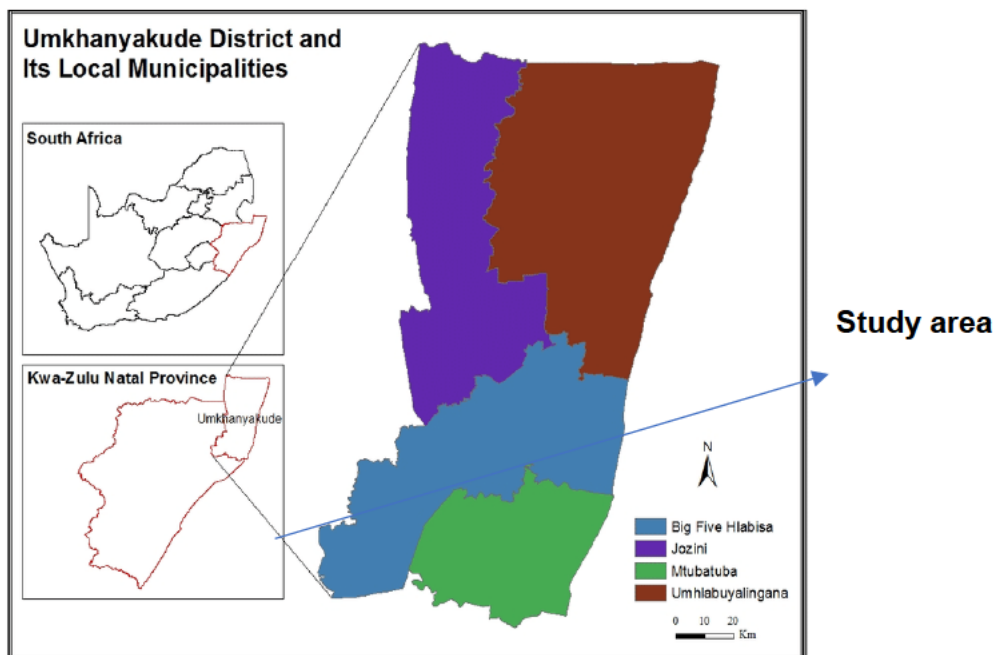


Figure 1.1: UMkhanyakude District Municipality
Source: Adapted from UKDMIDP (2018:18)

1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts are defined since they provide the conceptual framework that is used throughout the study. The researcher consulted some sources to define the terms and then specified the working definitions for this study.

1.9.1 Tourism

Tourism is regarded as an activity where people travel to and stay in places outside of their typical surroundings for less than a year for leisure, business, or other purposes

Camilleri (2018:5). Tourism can also be characterised as a service industry that caters to tourists. To meet the needs of tourists, these services include transportation, housing, and the provision of commodities and human resources (World Tourism Organisation 2002:15).

1.9.2 District municipality

A district municipality is a municipality having both legislative and executive responsibility over an area that is shared with other municipalities. Therefore, several local municipalities make up a district municipality (Steytler 2003:227).

1.9.3 Innovation in tourism

In the 1930s, Schumpeter and Nichol (1934) established the concept of innovation "creative destruction," which has since become the cornerstone of modern industry analysis. Innovation is considered a solution to both developed and developing countries' economic challenges in a variety of industries. The requirement for modern industries functioning in a highly competitive global marketplace to be innovative has practically become a necessity for their existence, sustainability, and future expansion. Damuri, Aswicahyono and Christian (2018:77) support this by describing innovation as just doing new things or doing things in a new way that are already being done. Moreover, innovation might take the form of improvements or upgrades in products, processes, technology, manufacturing methods, management, organisational structures, or the size of the markets served.

According to Jelincic and Tisma (2022:98), innovation in tourism typically includes product innovations (new products and services), process innovations (new ways of delivering tourist services), logistical innovations (new ways of providing products/services to tourists), and market innovations (new marketing methods or market behaviour). Booyens and Rogerson (2016:516) argue that tourism innovation encompasses the use of ICTs, eco-friendly techniques, and innovative hotel management. The above explanations means that tourism entities with marketing innovations are those that have implemented new or considerably improved marketing practices. Jelincic and Tisma (2022:98) postulate that marketing innovation refers to

implementing new or improved marketing practices, such as customer orientation, market expansion, or product positioning, to increase sales.

1.9.4 Promotion in tourism

According to Myeni (2018:23), promotion is the art of reminding, convincing, and enlightening people about a company's brands or products. It is a type of service that relies on a promotion and marketing mix, with promotion being the most important factor in this industry (Bujdoso, David and Uakhitova 2013:37). According to Esu and Ebitu (2010:23), tourism promotion is the conversational aspect of marketing. It fills the perception and information gap between tourism sector suppliers and travellers. Additionally, promotion entails providing tourists with necessary information to make purchasing and consumption decisions.

1.9.5 Sustainable tourism development

Streimikiene *et al.* (2021:260) states that sustainable development is the central idea of development. It has a significant impact on the economy, the environment, and social environment in the modern world, its growth is correlated with all three of the sustainability dimensions. Sustainable development relies on three pillars: protecting the natural environment, building links with the local economy, and considering the social and ethical well-being of the community (Kapera 2018:582). Kapera (2018) states that the concept of sustainable development is gradually becoming a component of human's decisions in numerous aspects of life and growth. Sustainable development is when a tourist destination is effectively managed to avoid uncontrolled tourism expansion degrading the destination's environmental resources as well as the sociocultural and economic standing of host communities (Iliopoulou-Georgudaki *et al.* 2017).

1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This section of this research study seeks to disclose the delimitations and limitations that were noted during the whole progression of the study.

1.10.1 Delimitations/scope of the study

This research study was delimited to one district municipality (uMkhanyakude District Municipality), although it represents a concern possibly faced by many district municipalities situated in tourism destinations across the entire country. The research specifically intended to address the use of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development in uMkhanyakude District Municipality. Thus, this research was restricted both in terms of the variables and the study area.

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study is presented in five chapters that are sequentially arranged from the introductory chapter to the concluding chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter's primary goal is to familiarise the reader with issues that are relevant to the study, including the study's aim, the research problem, and rationale of the study, as well as research objectives, questions, and guiding key concepts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter presents and review literature on sustainable tourism development and the promotion of tourism through the utilisation of social media platforms and other related innovative strategies. Challenges facing municipalities and tourism stakeholders will be presented.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. This chapter specifies the study type, research design, research approach, target population, sample size and selection, sampling technique, instrument design, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. The limitations of the study are also explained.

Chapter 4: Results Analysis and Interpretation. This chapter presents the outcomes of the fieldwork conducted. It sets out an analysis of the results and interpretation of data gathered from the semi-structured interviews in relation to the literature review.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations. In the final chapter the researcher discusses the findings and links them to the research objectives, questions and the

aim of the study. The conclusions are presented as well as recommendations arising from the study.

1.12 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 highlighted a number of issues regarding inadequate tourism development which weakens uMkhanyakude District Municipality. The chapter sets the tone on how this municipality can pronounce new and better modalities of local and global tourism differently. The chapter looked at the municipality holistically in relation to the modernising of tourism strategies as part of contributing to its tourism innovation. It was of particular importance that UKDM describes these local tourism mechanisms clearly because this will promote the institution's local and international horizontal relations for the better as envisaged in the objectives of this study. The aim is to help uMkhanyakude District tourism trendsetters navigate easily around the issues that weaken tourism promotion and sustainable development by putting forward the identifiers for South African tourism to keep up with tourism of other countries and other municipalities that are racing forward. This will enable South African and this local municipality to be found more easily and therefore visited more often.

One more important change is in the strategic direction of UKDM whereby the key objectives addressing the issues of poor communication lie in revamping media communication channels as part of enhancing the tourism care-centredness approach (tourism boost through innovation) which are currently not clearly described by the municipality. The truth is that uMkhanyakude District's institutional tourism outlay must be similar to that of thriving municipalities across the country in its areas of operation. This includes the municipality revisiting its tourism mission, vision, and objectives, which should be clear enough to satisfy the needs of all tourism beneficiaries who this institution is meant to serve. There also should be municipality front-runners across the globe through the internet to drive these new approaches that are meant to change associated tourism narratives in different countries (tourist's way of looking at South Africa, in particular, uMkhanyakude District tourism areas), as in circumstances different from those the municipality will continue to face disrepute and an uphill battle of poor tourism which then exacerbate poverty.

1.13 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter sets the conceptual and contextual background that underpins the study, highlighting its importance. It describes the aim, objectives, and the significance of the study that guided this research. An outline of the chapters is provided. The following chapter is dedicated to reviewing the existing literature and the discussion of relevant literature that can explain how influential innovative mechanisms i.e. social media are in promoting tourism.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the introduction and background to this study. The theoretical framework relating to the South African tourism industry, the promotion of tourism in uMkhanyakude District, and the use of innovative mechanisms in promoting the tourism industry are presented in this chapter. The role of innovative mechanisms in promoting tourism business in municipalities and other elements of the promotional mix are explained in this chapter.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section seeks to highlight and provide an analysis of the subtopics that are discussed in the literature review. It consists of the background of South African tourism, the policy framework of tourism promotion and development in South Africa, practices of tourism promotion and development in municipalities, challenges faced by municipalities within tourism destinations and how they address these challenges, innovative promotional challenges and remedies.

Butler's (2006:21) tourism area life cycle lists the stages of a tourism destination product was used to assess which stage of the tourism lifecycle UKDM falls into, and what can be done to revive its tourism market. The researcher created the conceptual framework with the above-mentioned elements because they are relevant and can assist in responding to the research questions of this study to achieve the study's objectives. The conceptual framework for this specific study is presented in Figure 2.1 as a summary of the literature and is in line with the set objectives.

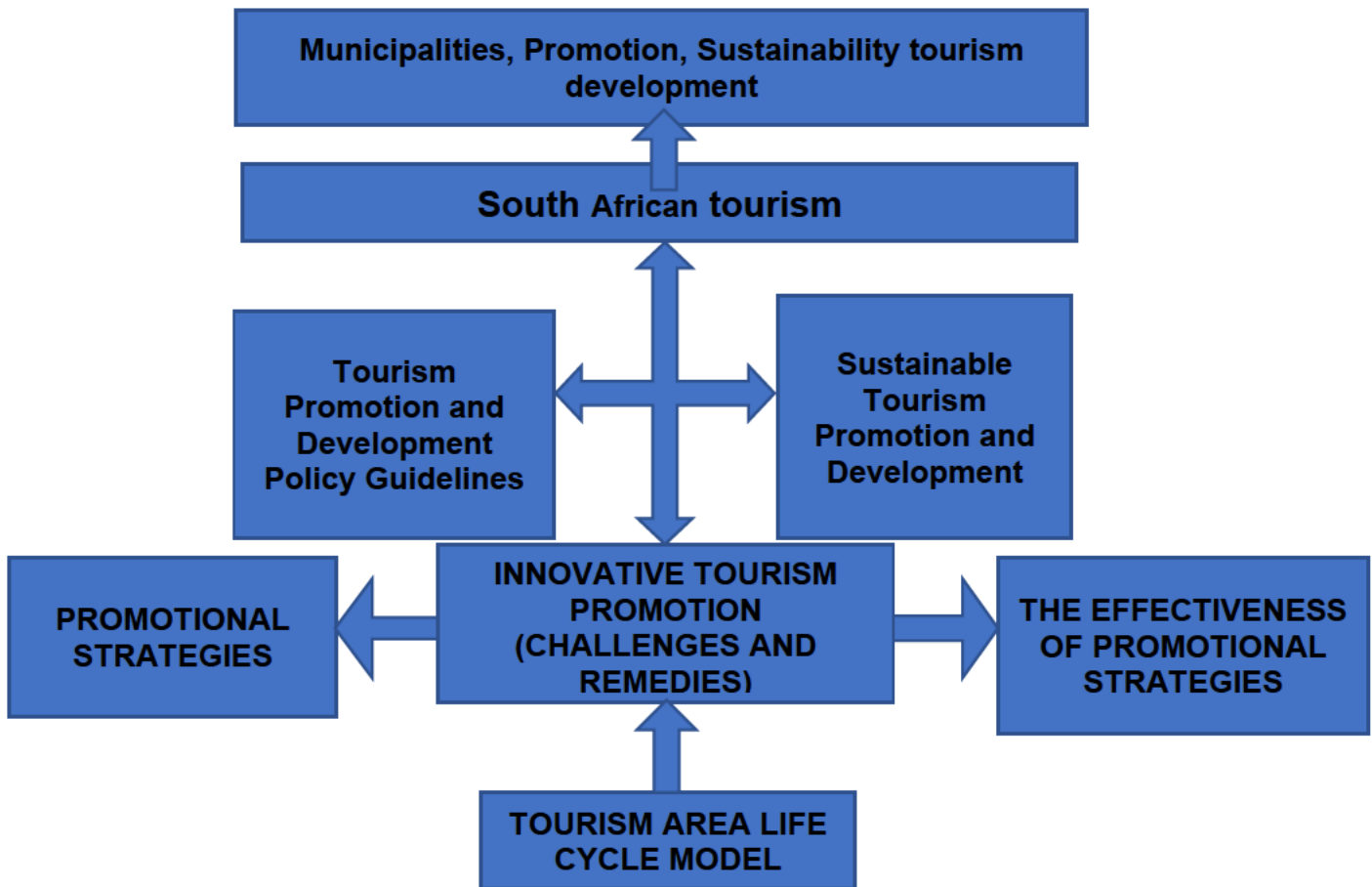


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework (review framework)

2.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM SECTOR

Tourism, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves people travelling to countries or places outside their usual environment for business or leisure (UNWTO 2015:26). The United Nations World Economic Forum International Tourism Competitive Index (World Economic Forum for Travel and Tourism 2015) states that South Africa was ranked 48th out of 141 and the top tourism destination in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the second most popular destination in Africa after Morocco. The tourist industry in South Africa is one of the best-performing economic sectors in the country. In the short, medium, and long term, it has the potential to increase employment and foreign exchange profits (National Department of Tourism 2017:8).

Tourism contributes to the National Development Plan's (NDP) aims of creating 11 million new jobs by 2030, providing economic opportunities for young people and rural

areas, and growing the economy's small, medium, and micro enterprise (SMME) base in the country. Given the fact that South Africa only receives about 2% of the world tourism's market size, there is enormous potential to attract significantly more tourists from South Africa's priority tourist markets (National Department of Tourism 2017). South Africa has a potential for growth as it is a popular tourist destination in Africa and one of the world's most visited places, having a diverse range of attractions and sophisticated cities. Furthermore, South Africa has improved its tourism standing in the globe since the end of apartheid in South Africa. The country has experienced significant political, economic, and tourism development; becoming part of the global arena has had an impact on our competitiveness. Currently, South Africa's competitive position in the global tourist business is 64, with room for improvement (Du Plessis, Saayman and Van der Merwe 2017).

According to the Tourism Quarterly Performance Report (Department of Tourism 2022:2), there was a decline in the number of tourists visiting South Africa in 2018 from 842 361 to 780 381 in 2019, with a 7.4% (61 980) decrease. There were no travelers documented in September 2020 since the country was under lockdown level 4 restrictions, preventing tourists from entering. However, a total of 539 202 visitor arrivals were registered in September 2022, up 161.8% (333 254) from the same month in 2021. The Tourism Quarterly Performance Report (Department of Tourism 2022/2023:2) states that the increase observed in September 2022 compared to September 2023 could be attributed to the relaxation of COVID-19 travel restrictions and the availability of COVID-19 vaccines in numerous places throughout the world. Despite the COVID19 challenges, the tourism industry continued to create jobs. Tourism employs one out of every 22 people in South Africa, accounting for 4.5% of the total workforce. Indeed, tourism outnumbers mining as an employer.

If the tourism industry is well promoted in the country the government, municipalities, and local communities can benefit. McKelly *et al.* (2017) emphasise that tourism growth and promotion can do the following: fuel the economic transformation of destinations; create many good jobs; accelerate economic reforms that can help SMME development; act as a catalyst for infrastructure improvements; increase domestic consumption and diversify exports; act as a catalyst for empowering women,

youth, and marginalised populations; act as a stimulus for cultural heritage and environmental conservation. This list could be expanded to include tourism's significant contributions to poverty alleviation and social and economic inclusion.

The main players in promoting tourism in the country are the South African national and provincial tourism authorities (National Department of Tourism 2017:2). South Africa has increased its tourism capacity in the last ten years by increasing the number of guest houses, hotels, lodges, game farms, and airlines and buses operating in the country (Myeni 2018:26). Despite the increased tourism capacity, the local government has decreased its spending in tourism which harms the promotion and development of the sector in South Africa. Rogerson (2013:8) observes that local municipalities have been urged to prioritise tourism in their budgeting, but some municipalities with the best tourism offerings in the country have cut their tourism budgets or have no tourism budget at all. Additionally, another major issue that affects the sector is the national government's recognition of the important potential role that local governments can play in the tourism sector, the role of local governments in tourism promotion, and, most importantly, the status of tourism and issues relating to tourism as a vehicle for local development in South Africa.

The tourism sector in South Africa, like the rest of the world, is still suffering from the crippling effects of COVID-19. However, the pandemic represented a crisis event that had the potential to transform South Africa's tourism sector as well as the context in which it operates (Rogerson and Rogerson 2021:1). Municipalities together with their stakeholders need to come up with new innovative ways to revive and resuscitate the tourism industry from the jaws of death due to COVID-19. Increases in local tourism have favourable benefits on employment growth, population, local GDP, and wages in municipalities (Dlomo and Rogerson 2021:15). Municipalities and tourism businesses must consider using alternative strategies to promote domestic tourism as it is one of the main recovery strategies.

Milwood, Marchiori, and Zach (2013) suggest that, given the increase in the use of innovative modern ways of promotion such as social media applications, DMOs are being forced to adopt and integrate this new technology so that they can better communicate with their online target audience. South Africa's marketing investment

strikes a balance between business, leisure, and events tourism, as well as between emerging source markets and traditional markets. The use of social media by tourism departments in South Africa can help and allow tourism businesses to better communicate with target audiences. Domestic marketing campaigns are being intensified, according to a government statement, to encourage more South Africans to visit their country (Asia News Monitor 2015:12).

2.3.1 *The tourism industry subdivisions*

Moutinho (2011: 5) described South Africa as a country with a robust travel and tourism industry, which may be categorised into the following categories:

- **The transportation sector** is the sector responsible for conveying local and foreign tourists in and around the country using various kinds of transportation.
- **The hospitality sector** refers to business organisations that provide food, beverages, and lodging to travellers.
- **MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and events)** is a field that deals with planning and/or hosting events such as exhibits, and it frequently collaborates with the hospitality industry and business tourism events.
- **Tourist attractions** are tourist-friendly sites or events, such as World Heritage Sites, museums, township tourism, art galleries, exhibitions, fairs, beaches, and so on.

2.4 KWAZULU-NATAL'S TOURISM SECTOR

According to the Tourism KwaZulu-Natal's annual report 2019-2020 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2020:25), KZN has a significant competitive advantage when it comes to tourism. The Drakensberg mountains, the iSimangaliso World Heritage Site, various private and public 'Big Five' game reserves, the battlefields, and Oribi Gorge, are all found in this province. Domestic tourist visits in KZN increased by 80% in the first half of 2019 when compared to the same period in 2018. In 2019, more than 2.3 million people visited the province, compared to 1.3 million in 2018. Moreover, on the international front, KZN had a rise of 8% in tourist numbers in 2019. The number of passengers arriving at King Shaka International Airport increased by 6.5% in 2019

compared to 6.26 million in 2018. In December 2019, the total number of passengers increased by 11.6% to over 616 000 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2020:45).

Although KZN is not the most popular province, it is amongst the most visited and it has more to offer and the ability to expand. In 2019 Gauteng (23%), KZN (22%) and the Western Cape (16%) were the most popular provinces with regard to domestic tourists, as large numbers of people travel to these provinces to visit friends and relatives (15 million) (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2020:35).

The KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, which now operates as Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN), is responsible for promoting tourism in the province, according to the TKZN strategy 2010-2014 (2014:7). With 11.3 million people, KZN is the third smallest province in terms of land area, but the second most populous after Gauteng. With 16.2% of GDP in 2018, it is the second largest contributor to South Africa's GDP according to Tourism KwaZulu-Natal's annual report 2019-2020 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2020:24). According to the Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Strategy 2010-2014 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2010:5), the province offers outstanding natural tourism attractions and is thus well positioned to benefit from continuing international and domestic tourism growth.

According to the TKZN Strategy 2010-2014 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2010:5-6), TKZN's vision is to position the province of KZN as Africa's leading tourism destination, both nationally and internationally. This organisation's mission is to initiate, facilitate, coordinate, and carry out strategic tourism marketing and demand-driven tourism development programmes. This will aid in the expansion of the tourism sector and will serve to achieve the following goals: transformation of the tourism sector within the province; and economic benefits to all stakeholders and the province. According to TKZN Strategy 2010-2014 (2013:7), all stakeholders are responsible for the economic success of tourism. The tourism authorities cannot achieve the tourism objectives on their own; all parties must work together to achieve them. Because the tourism industry is a complex system with many moving parts, tourism authorities cannot function effectively without the involvement of private and public stakeholders.

2.5 UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT TOURISM SECTOR

According to their IDP (UKDM 2018:43), UKDM is located in the northern KZN and is known for its scenic beauty and high levels of biodiversity. The District is home to the iSimangaliso Wetlands Park, a world heritage site that draws visitors from all over the world. The District is also known for its private and state-owned game reserves, marine protected areas, and natural forests. The iSimangaliso Wetlands Park stretches from Mapelane in the south to Kosi Bay in the north along the Zululand coast. Lake Sibhayi, Sodwana Bay, Mkhuze Game Reserve, False Bay, Fanies Island, Charters Creek, Lake St Lucia, and Cape Vidal are among the many areas that make up its 220 000 hectares (UKDM 2018:44).

The District is rich in tourism as it is a major driver of the local economy in the District. It has an appealing tourism climate, as well as exceptional biodiversity and natural resources, which give UKDM a high tourism potential. UKDM has a thriving tourism industry, with a large portion of the district dedicated to conservation in the form of protected areas, Community Conservation Areas, and private game reserves. Furthermore, the area has a rich historical and cultural background. Tourism-related activities provide an economic incentive to protect and restore heritage sites, and there is significant potential to develop community tourism activities (UKDM 2018:64). UKDM has great potential for sustainable tourism development, thus innovative tourism promotion should be prioritised for the advancement of tourism in the area in this digital era.

2.6 THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Municipalities are essential to the development of sustainable tourism and promotion because they protect the environment and cultural resources while also offering business support, policies, and the infrastructure they need. Municipalities can ensure that tourism benefits both their local people and the tourists who come to discover their geographic region by conducting tourism planning holistically and over a longer period. Moreover, municipalities should create an environment that supports and motivates businesses, communities, visitors, and other interested parties to address

sustainability concerns. The best method to achieve this is to create and put into effect a set of policies for the promotion and development of tourism products in collaboration with other stakeholders (Brokaj 2014:110).

2.6.1 Policy guidelines on promoting sustainable tourism and development

The South African Constitution assigns responsibilities for tourist destination management to all levels of government. The Tourism White Paper (1996) has policies that guide tourism promotion and development in South Africa as it states that effective and innovative marketing and promotion of the country is a critical success factor in the growth of new tourism in South Africa. International marketing should primarily fall under the scope of the national tourism organisation. The marketing and promotion plan for South Africa as a whole, on the other hand, should be developed in collaboration with the provinces and the private sector. Domestic marketing should be left to the provinces. Furthermore, it states that for domestic tourism to be promoted and developed properly, the policies and initiatives outlined below should be implemented at a municipal level:

- Aggressively market and promote tourism to all South Africans, encouraging citizens to spend their vacation time in their own country.
- Domestic public relations efforts should be directed towards promoting travel opportunities. The provinces should consider a national domestic public relations programme, with appropriate participation at the national level.
- Marketing and promotion should not just concentrate on well-known sites, but also on new or developing local tourism products and attractions.
- Opportunities for cooperation advertising and promotion should be pursued.
- More resources should be allocated to tourism marketing and promotion, particularly international tourism, which has the highest per capita expenditure.
- Consider changing the way South Africa is portrayed, marketed, and promoted visually.

In making sure that municipalities implement the policies and initiatives above, they should develop and promote unique local attractions, as well as disseminate relevant information. The municipalities are also expected to assist, advertise, coordinate, and administrate tourist efforts, encourage, and financially support the formation of local

publicity associations/community tourism and tourism marketing organisations. This is supported by the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism ACT (1996:26) as it postulates that within the framework of the Constitution, the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No.117 of 1998), and national and provincial tourist policies and regulations, states that municipalities are responsible for formulating and executing municipal tourism strategies in their domains.

Local tourism is the responsibility of a municipality within the province's jurisdiction. Its municipal tourism functions include, but are not limited to; the promotion, marketing, and development of local tourism within the metropolitan or district municipal area; the adoption of measures and programmes to transform the local tourism industry, including giving preference to women and small, medium, and micro enterprises; and the promotion, marketing, and development of local tourism within the metropolitan or district municipal area.

Although from the above-mentioned policy guidelines, the tourism department at a local level is vested with the power to execute tourism promotion and development. Keyser-Van der Watt (2013:36) points out that local government and tourism policies in South Africa give municipalities a lot of responsibility for tourism (local government). Even though major responsibility for the implementation of the tourist function is frequently assigned to a certain line/department, the function of a department within a municipality is influenced by the actions of other line departments. For example, there are numerous municipal functions required to hold a festival/special event exhibiting local culture at a municipally owned athletic facility; regional or local tourism will influence the promotion of the event and product development assistance for emerging crafters, while the department that deals with trading laws and regulations controls businesses that sell alcoholic beverages, licensing, and other requirements for selling food to the public.

The preceding example is not comprehensive but rather intended to demonstrate how a variety of functions other than tourism influence the successful hosting of an event. This indicates clearly that whether a local area's tourism thrives, or flounders is determined by the decisions and activities of the entire municipal organisation rather than that of the tourism unit only. The overall task of local government includes the

elaboration of local government's tourism role in sector-based policy and laws. As a result, municipalities must carry out tourism-related responsibilities in a manner that is consistent with this role which emphasises ongoing development and promotion of local tourism.

Policies and budget allocation are key to the successful development and promotion of local tourism. This is because, within a local area, tourism products, attractions, and experiences take place. As a result, municipalities can either help or impede the development of tourism depending on the services they offer (Tourism Summit 2013).

2.6.2 Sustainable tourism development in municipalities

Sustainable tourism development contributes to better tourism now and in the future, which should not be compromised; it should be something acceptable that contributes to the economy (Sharpley 2020, Ramgulam, Raghunandan and Raghunandan 2012). Local cultures, the environment, and heritage should be protected in order to develop sustainable uMkhanyakude District tourism, and the local tourism authority, in collaboration with all product owners, should adhere to sustainable tourism principles.

2.6.3 Sustainable tourism principles

- Sustainable tourism development must contribute to the satisfaction of previously unsatisfied basic needs of domestic tourists.
- In order to achieve sustainable development, local tourism destinations must address issues of inequality and poverty.
- Sustainable tourism should benefit the economy at all levels, including national, provincial, and local. Furthermore, economic growth must be distributed fairly.
- Sustainable tourism should address emergency conditions in tourism development, which will benefit the local community's social welfare and boost their self-esteem.

The principles of sustainable tourism should be achieved within a specific time frame, with no distractions that will jeopardise future generations' ability to achieve their goals (Hsu, Cai and Mimi Li 2009; Sharpley 2020; Ramgulam, Raghunandan and Raghunandan 2012). Although Kotuwegoda (2010:30) together with (Streimikiene et

al. 2021:267) recognise the importance of sustainability in tourism planning and development, it should be noted that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the participation of host communities and all stakeholders in adopting innovative ways of promotion. If the majority of stakeholders are not actively involved in tourism development, decision-making, and planning, UKDM will not achieve sustainable tourism development (Moodley 2003; Twining-Ward and Butler 2002).

Municipalities are expected to provide tourism promotion and sustainable development to local communities in order to attract visitors and uplift the local economy. South African tourism is increasing significantly and ahead of other profitable industries, drawing foreign direct investment, and creating jobs in the country (Madondo 2015:5). In the same way, Yu, Chancellor and Cole (2011:58-59) testify to the fact that tourism growth has the potential to provide significant economic advantages, which in turn can help the destination's economy expand. Tourism development and growth are vital, but they also have negative consequences, which is why "sustainable development" is defined as "development that fulfils current demands without jeopardising future generations' ability to meet their own needs". As a result of the foregoing, towns can continue to promote and develop tourism without sacrificing its quality or effects over time, necessitating the deployment of fresh tourist promotion and development approaches.

Sustainable development is important as Seghir *et al.* (2015) state that tourism was the fourth-largest source of export revenues in 2014 and 2015, after oil, automotive, and chemical industries, contributing 10% to world GDP (UNWTO2016b). In contrast, Berno and Bricker (2001), and Spangenberg (2019) point out that applying the concepts of sustainable tourism development at an operational level has proven extremely difficult. Local governments are increasingly agreeing that tourism development should be driven by local communities rather than globally established tourism groups. Goodwin (2016:8) argues that representatives of the local community or local government authorities are typically given specific areas of power and tasks to accomplish, including those connected to the tourism sector, at the local level. Local governments engage with other political and non-political bodies on a national and worldwide level to make their job more effective. Joint efforts between local people,

tourists, and the governmental sector are essential for successful sustainable tourism development. Torres-Delgado and Palomeque (2018) state that there is a need to establish a strategy that can be used at the local level to help communities reach a greater degree of tourist sustainability at the level of discussion and even planning, because the sustainability paradigm is apparent, but it does not convert well into action.

Sigalat-Signes *et al.* (2020:96) aver that tourism is inextricably linked to development, with its dynamism has transforming it into a capital sector for social and economic advancement. It is up to tourist area management to develop new and sustainable strategies to achieve the best possible results over time in an increasingly globalised and competitive environment. Through mutability in the forms of organisation, processes, and products of tourism service providers, as well as new consumer-tourist demands, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the tourism business has transformed the sector's mode of operation. Evidence from the private sector has gradually revealed the considerable capacity of ICT, has changed how businesses engage with customers and deliver value to them especially in terms of transforming how businesses interact with and provide value to customers (Huang and Benyoucef 2014).

In ensuring that development does not diminish its characteristics and effects, Ngxongo (2017:23) is of the opinion that a properly planned tourism development will not only ensure the quality of existence but also increase the positive mindset of the local community towards tourism development. For effective and efficient sustainable development, municipalities must invest in public goods which includes new technological methods. This is because public goods are non-rival, and may be consumed by several users (tourists) without getting depleted. Therefore, tourism municipalities can use investment in local public goods to foster sustainable development and growth (Rigall-I-Torrent 2008). Sustainable development also implies the establishment and promotion of new tourism products and activities, upgrading and marketing of already existing tourism products, and creating a safe and user-friendly atmosphere for tourists and local communities.

For tourism to be developed and promoted effectively in local areas, Polese *et al* (2018) believe that the identification of specific mechanisms and interaction platforms in smart tourist ecosystems may aid decision-makers in developing ad hoc strategies for resource exchange optimisation. Policymakers should be urged to develop long-term connections and information sharing through facilitating actors' engagement and interactions through the most effective use of technology.

2.6.4 Practices of innovative tourism promotion in municipalities

According to Dube (2006:22), it is vital to assess what is presently taking place within municipalities in terms of the usage of innovative ways of promoting tourism, so that one is to see the shortcomings and make the necessary recommendations. Strategies highlighted by McKenzie, Xaba and Associates (2005:12) which local governments can use to promote viable tourism enterprises are discussed below.

2.6.4.1 Innovation in tourism destinations and products promotion

According to Madondo (2016: 17), the process by which businesses attempt to remind, persuade, and inform clients about the brands and items they sell is known as promotion. In the tourism sector, promotion is the most prominent of the 'four' Ps in the marketing mix, with the other three Ps referring to Product, Place, and Price. Tourism destination promotion also encompasses a special type of communication that includes strategies for communicating information and messages to potential tourists about the destination's attributes and the components of tourism products offered/available. Municipalities have a critical role to play in promoting and developing local tourism. Dube (2006:22) notes that that several municipalities have formed organisations to promote tourism in their respective areas. The following are examples of marketing and information-gathering tools used by municipalities:

- Physical information centres in the area where tourists can get information on tourism products and services and get help.
- Websites that promote the destination while also providing tourist information.
- The destination can be promoted in various media and through the creation of area brochures.
- Creating a tourist brand or a tourism route for related tourism offerings.

- Participating in trade shows and other tourism-related events.

Neascu (2014:119) explains that customers today have lost trust in corporate communications and do not want to hear about commercial advertisements. In the tourism industry, social media has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to connect with customers. Moreover, tourism promotion aims to influence tourists' spending and consumption habits by instilling positive attitudes towards destinations and tourism offerings. It also aims to positively influence a traveller's habits and mentality regarding tourist attractions. Milwood, Marchiori and Zach (2013:166) imply that information gathered outside the destination domain can have a significant impact on a person's desire to visit that region. As a result, a growing number of destination marketing firms are implementing and employing social media strategies.

2.7 THE INTERNET AS A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN MUNICIPALITIES

Tourism has been steadily growing for some years, and progress is unavoidable; thus, innovation is required. McKenzie, Xaba and Associates (2005:34) explained that destination marketing and information provision are of benefit to all tourism service providers in a municipality, including community-owned entrants into the tourism industry. In an increasingly globalised and competitive environment, it is up to tourist destination management to establish new and long-term plans to secure the best possible results.

The use of ICT in the tourism industry has revolutionised the sector's modus operandi through enabling flexibility in the forms of organisation, processes, and products of tourism service providers, as well as responding to new consumer-tourist demands. The digital technology revolution and the implications of ICT in the tourism sector emphasises the significance of investing in the most relevant and current technological applications in tourist service organisations (Suyunchaliyeva et al. 2020:2). Internet technology has disrupted traditional business models in many industries, including media, finance, and retail, according to Howison, Finger, and Hauschka (2014), and this has had significant implications in the tourism industry. Traditional marketing has been changed by the internet and new social media platforms. In the tourism sector,

there are a variety of marketing and communication tactics that are used for promotion. The internet's impact on tourism is a fantastic way of doing business. It has helped to break through geographical borders and new forms of interactive media have been made available to people. This is reinforced by Loda (2014:306) who claims that the digital revolution has already altered practically every aspect of the tourism industry's operations. The tourism business has reaped the benefits of the internet's increased potential.

Luliana, Luigi, and Mihaj (2013:67) suggest that the internet has revolutionised how marketers and customers connect, particularly through social media platforms. The internet has a number of distinct features, including:

- Interactivity and the provision of information on demand
- Inexpensive storage of vast amounts of data in various virtual locations.
- Inexpensive and powerful means of searching and disseminating information
- Ability to serve as a transaction medium.
- Low establishment and entry costs for sellers.
- Serving as a physical distribution medium for certain products, such as software (Luliana, Luigi and Mihaj 2013:68).

In the travel industry, online tourism is increasingly important. Online content has surpassed all other types of traditional media and marketing as a key source of travel information. Online marketing, social networking, travel applications, search functionality, and booking systems are all ways for travel businesses to engage with their customers. These various sources of information and sales channels are progressively driving the industry of tourism (Jin and Hu 2022). Loda (2014:306) argues that the internet is most often researched as a stand-alone medium, rather than in conjunction with other media. Often, the internet is compared to television and print advertising. According to one comparison, the internet is superior to print media in terms of eliciting greater collaboration and increasing advertisement effectiveness. The internet is recognised as the most trusted information source due to the high-risk judgement in picking tourism destinations.

2.7.1 Online marketing

The evolution of ICT has had a significant impact on how local tourism groups sell themselves online. Garabinovi (2019) states that the development of information and communication innovation has had a significant impact on the online marketing promotion of local tourism organisations. The author goes on to say that to achieve success in modern business for all aspects of tourism, including local tourism organisations and municipalities, new technologies must be introduced - change must occur. Consequently, destinations should keep their traditions and characteristics, but they should always be refreshed with the spirit of the times. Local tourism organisations should provide detailed information on products available in their territories while also becoming more familiar with what is available. Thus, analysing local tourism organisations is the starting point for determining the quality of tourism organisation structure in countries, particularly in the area of relevant promotion activities.

Sheth (2020) postulates that social networks are where the first point of contact with the customer is made; it is at this point that a relationship between the brand and the user is established. Madondo (2016:40) emphasises that it is necessary for tourism businesses to provide interactivity that caters to a diverse range of potential customers in order to allow customers to make their choices, such as the inclusion of online booking facilities on websites. Traditional marketing approaches, on the other hand, revolve around the concept of "pushing" a promotional message to a large audience. Customers are exposed to messages delivered via radio, newspaper, and television. In contrast, online marketing strategies differ from traditional approaches in that they are customer-driven and thus focus on the customer. Internet users can access information whenever and wherever they want, and they can choose how, when, and where to access marketing messages or information (Howison, Finger and Hauschka 2014: 271).

Internet interactivity has compelled municipalities to promote themselves and it has been significantly impacted by the proliferation of ICT over the past thirty years, both in terms of accessibility and sophistication. Intricate networks of content producers and consumers have replaced traditional one-way communication methods, and two-way

conversations now predominate in these networks (Avraham and Ketter 2012:11). Social networks are seen as a place where people with similar interests can come together and socialise. This helps businesses connect with both their current and potential customers. The importance of online marketing especially social media has been strengthened by the COVID-19 epidemic as it has had a big impact on people's everyday activities and social life as well as their consumption habits. Companies had to innovate their marketing techniques to survive because of the significant changes in consumer demands and purchasing behaviour (Sheth 2020). Thus, for most tour operators, social media became the primary marketing tool for recovery from the pandemic. According to the Travel Consul study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media marketing was the primary focus of seven out of ten respondents. Direct sales and digital marketing came in second and third place, respectively (Toubes, Araujo Vila and Fraiz Brea 2021). Although social media is based on the web, Chan and Guillet (2011:347) argue that it is only a subset of online marketing and is not the same as it.

According to Howison, Finger and Hauschka (2014:273), Web 2.0 developments have made social media more and more evident. Web 2.0 is portrayed as a means of connecting people, and people as content creators and communicators. This has significant implications for the tourism industry, which is essentially a people business. Companies today must implement digital marketing strategies because the internet is crucial to their ability to compete across all sectors and industries. One of the key elements of contemporary promotion strategies is ICT, specifically the internet. Online marketing is one of the major trends in tourism, and it is included in the Tourism Development Strategy for the Republic of Serbia from 2016 to 2025. The researcher from the above discussions portrays online marketing as one of the important and major trends in the tourism industry and should be adopted by all tourism organisations including municipalities for economic growth and development.

2.8 SOCIAL MEDIA

Numerous technologies have been developed and implemented in society since the 1950s. The internet is one of the most important technologies that has undergone significant change during this time. Scholars and researchers agree that the internet

has had a significant impact on the tourism industry (Xiang and Gretzel 2010:179). The internet has influenced how tourists search for, review, and even book their desired destinations in this regard. Importantly, social media is one of the most significant aspects of technology that has a significant impact on tourism. Zivkovic Gajic, and Brdar (2014) support this by stating that as a trustworthy source of information, social media is crucial for the analysis of tourist attitudes and behaviour. Social media benefits tourism because one of the industry's unique characteristics is that customers frequently reside far from travel agencies and tourist destinations. Consequently, using the internet to access information about those customers is the most common and efficient method.

According to Svajdova (2019:21), social media is one of the internet's fastest-growing communication technologies. Social media marketing is the use of internet-based online media by people who share common interests, goals, and practices to engage in social interactions, build personal profiles, and share information and experiences. Social media takes many forms, including social networks (for example, Facebook), photo sharing sites (e.g., Flickr, Photobucket), video creation and sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Ustream), online communities, microblogging tools (for example, X), and social tagging (e.g., Digg).

According to the Digital 2020 Global Digital Overview (Kemp 2020), in 2020 over 4.5 billion people around the world were using the internet, and more than 3.8 billion people were using social media. Nearly 60% of people on the planet were online, and current trends indicated that soon more than half of them would be using social media. Previously, tourists relied on word of mouth (WOM), magazines, newspapers, trade shows, and even television advertisements to highlight different destinations that they could visit; however, this has since changed. Now social media is becoming increasingly important in providing such information. Zhao *et al.* (2018) argue that social media is the medium through which we communicate with one another. Individual interaction is referred to as socialisation, and media are information channels.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is internet media based on a set of technologies (such as Web 2.0) and ideas that allow users to create their own

content and communicate with others. The internet today offers the best opportunity for tourism businesses to become virtual organisations connected to information technology available for marketing innovation using social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and Pinterest and others. The tourism-related industry, as well as the virtual phenomenon, are being greatly influenced by the digital revolution and social media.

Gumuş (2016:54) argues that social media is regarded as an innovative platform that enables public institutions to interact with citizens and other organisations. Ketter (2016) supports this, stating that social media is heavily used mostly in the tourism sector, and thus in municipality promotional activities. Furthermore, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, blogs, forums, and media sharing sites are facilitating communication between tourism stakeholders and municipality managers on issues such as improving the images of tourism destinations, making past or future tourism plans, and establishing direct communication with tourism destinations. The main reason for this is that travellers are constantly using social media before planning their trips, during their trips, and at the end of their trips to share their travel experiences. As a result, social media tools are regarded as effective means of publicising tourist destinations.

According to Song *et al.* (2014), social media is now a powerful tool for destination marketing, especially when that municipality is a tourist destination. Social media is offering a good platform for enhancing and exchanging visitors' experiences with the city. The impact of activities will unquestionably increase if decision-makers use multiple social media platforms that are important and relevant to tourism. Although social media has a pervasive impact in promoting tourism destinations, using social media such as Google, Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn, X, Bing, and TripAdvisor can bring many benefits such as reaching out to more customers around the world, even in remote areas; promoting immediacy; improving accessibility, offering 24/7 operations regardless of the time difference, and enhancing interactive exchanges. However, Ketter (2016) criticises social media for having both positive and negative effects, pointing out that posting negative reviews on social media can create a very negative image of travel companies, and many reviews can cause serious harm and loss.

2.8.1 Categories of social media

According to Madondo (2018:19), the social media world needs to be categorised, although not all categories are equally applicable and effective in promoting tourism in South Africa. The author categorises social media as follows: social networking, publishing, photo sharing, audio, video, microblogging, live broadcasting, virtual worlds, gaming, search, mobile, and productivity applications form part of the categories. However, Irina *et al.* (2014: 1288) point out that certain social media categories cannot meet the personal needs of individuals as well as business needs. Leung *et al.* (2013: 10) propose that social platforms such as networks, video file sharing, blogs, and microblogs are appropriate for both commercial and personal purposes in tourism.

According to Dao (2015:86), there are different types of contemporary social media, and these can be categorised as follows: social networks, blogs, micro-blogs, and forums, and come in various formats such as text, video, and images and can be easily extracted and usefully exploited.

2.8.1.1 Social media categories

Table 2.1: Social media categories

Categories of Social Media	Examples of Social Media Technologies
Blogs	Blogger, WordPress
Wikis	Wikipedia, Wikimedia
Google Apps	Google Calendar, Google Docs
Image sharing	Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest
Social bookmarking	Delicious
Social networking	Facebook, Google+
Social news sites	Reddit
VOIP and Instant messaging	Skype, Google talk/chat
Do-it-yourself networks	Ning
File sharing	Dropbox, Google Drive, BitTorrent
Video sharing	YouTube, Vine
Location-based applications	Foursquare, Google Maps
Microblogs	X

Source: Smith (2017)

Table 2.1 shows the different categories of social media that can be used for innovative promotion of tourism for sustainable development. Nevertheless, there are significant

differences in how writers categorise social media, and no common criteria for categorising social media is provided.

2.8.2 Types of social media

According to Kaplan and Mazurek (2018:14), there are different types of social media such as social networking sites, blogs and microblogs, content community sites, collaborative projects, virtual worlds, and sites dedicated to feedback among others.

2.8.2.1 Social networking sites

These are websites or online communities where people from all over the world can network, meet virtually, create personal profiles, and form relationships with people they may or may not know in person. Despite the fact that social networking sites are a subset of social media, some authors classify all social media websites as social networking sites with different features, such as the ability to share videos or photos (Kuss and Griffiths 2017).

2.8.2.2 Blogs and micro-blogs

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), blogs or travel blogs are websites that enable bloggers to share both personal and travel experiences, engage with readers by leaving comments, and maintain logs. These are typically regarded as reliable sources of knowledge and may be image-based, text-based, video-based, or audio-based. Truelove, Vasardani and Winter (2017) state that micro-blogs are a type of blogging that serves the same purpose as regular blogs but differs in that the content of those blogs is text-based and limited to a certain number of characters.

2.8.2.3 Content community sites

These are websites created to allow users who upload content to share content that has been modified from original works. The content shared includes videos, text (e.g., Book-Crossing), images (e.g., Instagram), and PowerPoint presentations (e.g., Slide-Share). In most cases, users do not have personal profiles, and if they do, these typically contain minimal personal data (Kuss and Griffiths 2017).

2.8.2.4 Collaborative projects

These sites allow users to work on projects jointly and simultaneously using cloud-based computing. Two different types can be distinguished: Wikis allow for creating, removing, and modifying online content (e.g., Wikipedia); and social bookmarking applications allow for a number of people to accumulate and appraise websites (e.g., Delicious). Collaborative projects are often able to produce superior results in comparison to individual projects due to the concept of collective intelligence, whereby the intelligence in the group is greater than the sum of its parts (Kuss and Griffiths 2017).

2.8.2.5 Virtual worlds

Kuss and Griffiths (2017) describe virtual worlds as online applications where users are able to create an avatar as their online alter ego in virtual game worlds and play with other players in expansive gaming universes. Second Life, arguably the best example of these virtual social worlds, is populated by human-like avatars who engage in activities that users do on a daily basis, such as furnishing houses, going shopping, and meeting friends.

2.8.2.6 Sites dedicated to feedback

This type of social media refers to websites that allow users to read, post, discuss, respond, review, and share their opinions, thoughts, and experiences on a wide range of topics. The most common types of feedback sites are online sites and forums dedicated to product reviews (Madondo 2016:20).

2.8.3 Application of social media in promoting tourism in municipalities

Many organisations including municipalities have been slow on the uptake of ICT and engagement with social media marketing platforms Nel-Sanders and Malomane (2022) which points to the need for the current study to explain the potential and advantages of promotion innovations such as social media for tourism in municipalities. The tourism industry in the UKDM may benefit from this study because the use of social media marketing could increase the number of domestic and foreign visitors.

Social media are increasingly replacing public institutions' traditional, one-way communication channels (Alotaibi *et al.* 2016:4). These earlier forms of communication, which include mass media like the print press, radio, and television, as well as public relations firms and websites, offer little to no interaction. Effective communication is frequently constrained in these channels by time-consuming administrative procedures, high costs, and technical and administrative language that hinders a full public understanding (Nhedzi 2018:19). ICTs are now a crucial business and social tool that municipalities can use to boost innovation and manage urban services better, including tourism matters. Tourism organisations need to increase their commitment to the online space and adapt their promotion approaches to it (Molinillo *et al.* 2019:247).

Saylganolu (2018) asserts that social media has evolved into a popular source of information. This tool is used by a variety of organisations, including businesses, non-governmental organisations, and even administrative bodies such as national governments and municipalities. Aside from personal use, social media is becoming increasingly popular in both the private and public sectors. Many organisations use social media to improve their communication strategies. The use of social media and ICT facilitates feedback and encourages citizen participation while increasing collaboration among stakeholders. The creative application of technology supports transparency, government responsiveness, and citizen participation, all of which are essential to democracy (Verma, Kumar and Ilavarasan 2017:1). Several local government organisations use social media to make public announcements, increase transparency, inform people about future planned projects and activities, ensure public participation in decision-making processes, and, finally, market their tourist attractions through destination marketing (Tarhan 2012; Karabacak and Sezgin 2020; Saylganolu 2018).

In support of the above, Cobanoglu and Della Corte (2021: 2) state that municipalities that participate in social media destination promotions can interact with potential tourists and visitors by showcasing their tourist attractions, points of interest, and public businesses. Social media is distinctive in that it enables users to communicate

with their "followers" using visual aids, programmes using 3D worlds, augmented realities, and virtual reality.

Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013:214) posit that social media has fundamentally changed how information is produced and shared. People can now easily post their ideas, creations, and opinions on the internet thanks to this technology. Society's use of information and its contribution to its creation has changed. Social media platforms are well-liked venues for people to interact and share content (Buhalis and Foerste 2015:1). Social media platforms have also emerged as a valuable resource for potential tourists looking for information and conducting price, supplier availability, and feature searches. Because of the high visibility of consumption in the tourism industry, destination brands are more susceptible to social media conversations and stories. According to research, 93% of travellers use reviews to inform their travel decisions, and 80% of those who are considering a travel purchase will first turn to their social network for advice. Online accounts have the potential to have a significant impact on future visitors who look for unbiased first-person accounts online (Lund, Cohen and Scarles 2018:271).

While serving as a reference tool for potential visitors, capturing and creating value through social media data represents the development of new strategic resources that can improve marketing outcomes. These resources can serve as an important source of customer analysis, market research, and crowdsourcing of new ideas for tourism organisations including municipalities (Li, Larimo and Leonidou 2021:53).

According to Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013:213), social media has created a channel of communication in the tourism industry that is not just a producer-to-consumer but also consumer-to-producer, consumer-to-consumer, one-to-one, many-to-one, and many-to-many. Traditional communication channels were unable to provide this. Many travellers rely on these sites because they can visit them and read reliable reviews there. While social media is an innovative resource with brilliant opportunities, it also comes with challenges too. Akram and Albalawi (2017:350) state that social media comes with negative effects as follows:

- Negative customer feedback is harmful.
- It takes a long time, and the web is becoming increasingly crowded with content.

- A social media error is difficult to correct.
- Many of the major organisations have fallen victim to the programmers.
- The wrong online brand system can ruin an organisation and cause a massive viral social backlash.
- Getting involved in social media takes a significant amount of time. As an organisation, you should appoint someone to consistently support your pages and profile with noteworthy content.
- Most businesses have difficulty measuring the effects of web-based social networking marketing.

Howison, Finger and Hauschka (2014:272) also posit that businesses have no control over the information that internet users can upload, or that other users can review. It is not guaranteed to be successful to apply conventional marketing strategies to the world of electronic marketplaces.

2.8.3.1 The theory of social information processing

The use of social media to facilitate interpersonal influence processes can be examined using the social information processing theory. According to the underlying premise of this theory, meaning is socially constructed, and social environments serve as a significant source of data and cues about people's behaviours and perceptions. It differs from the traditional face-to-face contexts in that information is delivered on social media platforms in a variety of communicative language formats, including audio, text, video, and rich media, in addition to natural language (Tham, Mair and Croy 2020).

Kumar, Choi and Greene (2017:269) posit that social media has altered how businesses attract and keep customers, as well as how they interact with the company and other customers. Because media fragmentation brought on by the rise of social media, customers are now less likely to base their purchases on the traditional purchase channel and are instead more likely to be influenced by information from social media rather than firm-initiated marketing. Due to the information being spread quickly on social media and the volume of customers participating in discussions, the

impact of social media on brand sales can change more quickly than it does with traditional marketing.

Digital marketing, unlike traditional marketing, aims to serve customers as quickly as possible and anticipates their guidance rather than attempting to alter their perception. Social network communication that is computer-mediated provides an unmatched ability to connect people sequentially and simultaneously by allowing immediate feedback. Guo (2014:3) asserts that social media can influence a greater number of people and deliver rich information for a relatively minimal effort required. Furthermore, the influence of social media is more pervasive and compelling than that of traditional mass media. According to this theory, social media can be effectively used to promote the travel industry.

2.8.3.2 Social media's role in managing and operating the tourism industry

Since the introduction of social media into people's daily lives, the concept of communication has taken on a new meaning. Social media is increasingly being used as a tool for faster communication, information sharing, and entertainment (Tosyali and Oksuz 2020). The number of internet users worldwide climbed by 4% from 2021 to reach 4.95 billion in 2022, while the number of people using social media reached 4.62 billion, which is 10.1% more than a similar statistic from the previous year. This increase is the result of social media's expansion beyond the realm of young people's amusement to become a forum for interaction, education, and engagement in which members of every social group participate (Kemp 2022:42).

The incorporation of social media tools into the communication channels of administrative bodies and government agencies has resulted in changes in communication mediums. Many Web 2.0 tools, such as microblogs, wikis, crowdsourcing sites, blogs, multi-media sharing websites, and even virtual worlds, have now been adopted and used by municipalities (Cobanoglu and Della Corte 2021: 2). Social media is unusual in that it allows users to communicate with their "followers" using visual assistance. It is possible to use 3D worlds, augmented realities, and virtual reality programmes. Furthermore, the capacity to exchange photographs has heightened the importance of social media usage. Given the vast tourism market and

fierce rivalry among destinations, this opportunity given by social media is considerable and must be capitalised on by municipalities if they want to effectively sell their location (Cobanoglu and Della Corte 2021:2).

Local governments can also benefit in several ways from using social media including faster service, greater accountability, fewer IT server maintenance costs, and more chances for citizens and government interaction (Kaigo and Tkach-Kawasaki 2015:6). Effective social media use influences citizens' perceptions on different facets of the municipality. Using social media effectively and successfully promoting in the municipalities influences an individual's view of how liveable the destination is. Furthermore, social media is an important medium for connection and co-creation between municipalities and their citizens. Overall, developing a well-structured social media strategy is extremely useful not just for government agencies but also for the people who live in them (Gellerstedt *et al.* 2020). In the tourism industry, social media is essential and not an optional bonus and organisations or municipalities that do not employ social features to boost efficiency and remove communication barriers will not last long.

This assertion is supported by Howison, Finger and Hauschka (2014) who state that social media is not an optional addition. Organisations must learn how to use social media to achieve their diverse goals. In order to employ appropriate social media platforms that can effectively appeal to a diverse membership, organisations must also grasp the identification of different member types in a virtual community.

2.8.3.3 Destination marketing

The power of social media is immense, and its impact has completely changed the field of destination marketing. Kaur (2017:74) argues that since the introduction of the internet, novel strategies for reaching target consumers with diverse services have emerged. The rapid growth of the internet has particularly impacted the travel and tourism sector as a whole. Users can compare businesses from across the world and purchase travel-related services online with the touch of a button. Furthermore, author states that with the help of social media as a marketing tool, businesses can get to know their clients and potential clients in ways that were not possible before. This

knowledge and information must be based on decency, reliability, and honesty. The following social media sites are the most important for a tourism company: Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Being present on these platforms is much more than just showcasing the newest packages and amenities. A user will not use the services every day, thus it is critical for a business to participate in the user conversations taking place on these platforms. The engagement rate will increase if posting content that is valuable to the audience's lives is the main goal.

2.8.3.4 Correcting destination misconceptions

According to Bala and Verma (2018:324), social media technologies like Facebook, X, and Instagram enable businesses to engage with millions of individuals about their goods and services, creating new marketing opportunities. This is only achievable if the managers completely understand how to use communication tactics to engage the clients and improve their experience. Marketing professionals need to have a thorough understanding of social media marketing initiatives and programmes, as well as how to use indicators of performance to determine their success. Market dynamics are shifting all around the world as a result of young people's access to and use of social media. Strategic integration tactics must be included in an organisation's marketing communication plan.

2.8.3.5 Promoting sales

Social media has had a positive impact on raising sales income, particularly for products where users can read reviews and leave comments about personal experiences. Online reviews are a highly effective component of marketing strategies for companies. Online communication technologies have greater influence than conventional communication channels. According to research, when users adopt social media, they report higher levels of enjoyment and self-worth, which is a motivating factor for businesses and marketing specialists. Web experiences influence consumers' thought processes and improve their online purchasing decisions (Bala and Verma 2018:325).

2.8.3.6 Converting potential visitors into actual visitors

Social media is a useful tool for public relations, communications, and customer service in the travel sector. The use of social media for marketing and sales helps turn some potential visitors into tourists who visit South Africa now or plan to do so in the future. Furthermore, converting potential customers into actual customers is a key indicator of a marketing campaign's effectiveness (Irina *et al.* 2014:1291).

2.8.3.7 Managing customer complaints

Social media is useful in managing customer relations as it ensures that problems that arise on a daily basis can be resolved swiftly and simply. Sigala (2018) emphasises that utilising social media enables direct communication with customers, allowing for the establishment of relationships and one-on-one conversations. With this strategy, businesses can quickly respond to messages of a positive or negative nature, solve issues related to the appearance on social media of complaints about the quality of a good or service, and ultimately have an impact on how customers interact with brands. Furthermore, it allows organisations to strengthen the efficiency of marketing operations in order to improve brand presentation in social media, owing to improved relevance in connection to the requirements of the target audience. Thus, utilising social media helps companies to provide feedback to consumers; nevertheless, effort is required not only from the company but also from its customers. The challenge of creating and keeping client loyalty can also be addressed with the help of social media marketing. According to Irina *et al.* (2014:1291) social media is an excellent tool for customer service, communication, and public relations. However, little is known about how relationships are formed on social media.

2.8.3.8 A source of ideas for advancements

Gretzel (2021:43) states that social media has evolved into a vital resource for tourism organisations of all sizes. It can be used to communicate with potential and existing consumers, promote places and products, and generate leads and sales. At the same time, social media can also be a source of knowledge to assist tourism organisations in improving their operations, allowing organisations to monitor customer opinions and gain information on the sector as a whole. This information can be used by the

organisation to determine its strong points and places for development. Furthermore, social media is an ideal way to find out what experiences other travellers are sharing. This user-generated content can be a great source of ideas for completely novel products and services. For instance, a tourism board might discover that visitors are posting pictures and videos of themselves trekking in a specific area. The tourism board might then create a new marketing campaign to advertise the area as a hiking destination.

2.8.3.9 Brand reinforcement

Using social media is a great resource for identifying emerging tourism trends. Organisations can get a feel of what is popular and what is falling out of favour by paying attention to what people are talking about and posting on social media. Hysa, Karasek and Zdonek (2021) note that social media accounted for 28% of businesses' digital spending in 2019, and we can see that different tools are used at different frequencies. So, in order for marketers (hotels, restaurants, and local authorities) to efficiently reach potential recipients with their promotions, social media should be constantly monitored and used as a useful information channel. The ongoing challenge for organisations is not to merely launch social media campaigns, but rather to integrate social media into their marketing strategy to engage customers and create valuable and lasting relationships with them (Li, Larimo and Leonidou 2021:51). Additionally, organisations that thrive on long-term and trustworthy customer relationships can assist in the development of value-enhancing marketing strategies that will generate competitive advantages and lead to greater success through the use of social media. Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) argue that tourism companies are not efficiently utilising social media to engage visitors in a more meaningful way. There is a lot that companies need to change to include the usage of social media in their promotion strategies.

2.8.3.10 Destination image influencing

Kovacic *et al.* (2022) define destination image as the collection of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that tourists have about a specific destination. It is also a collection of impressions that tourists have about a location. Tourism and DMOs are well aware of

the growing trend of using social media as a marketing tool. As a result, a range of national and regional tourism organisations manage various types of social media platforms including X, Facebook, Instagram, Weibo, YouTube, and Flickr for brand positioning and to enhance the image of their tourism destinations (Kim *et al.* 2017:688). Furthermore, Kim *et al.* (2017:691) argue that social media plays a crucial role in influencing destination image because of its ability to serve as an electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) tool that increases the visibility of a destination's brand by disseminating a variety of perspectives about the destination. Tourists are now actively participating in the process of destination image construction through their spontaneous reactions on blogs and social media. This is known as the rising role of tourists as agents in destination image formation. From the perspectives of the above-mentioned researchers, undoubtedly, social media has a significant impact on the creation of a destination image.

2.8.3.11 Social media usage by travellers

According to Singh and Srivastava (2019:44), the way that travel-related information is disseminated and consumed by travellers has been dramatically impacted by information technology and the internet. The usage of social media is no longer just for finding information; it is quickly taking over the entire trip process through people sharing their opinions and experiences and producing user-generated content, which in turn influences other passengers' travel plans. The risk of travelling to a new place is typically increased significantly when it is an outbound trip. Because of the increasing degree of uncertainty in their decision-making, tourists look to social media for the information they need. They find WOM to be highly relevant. The most popular social networking platforms among search engine marketers are X and Facebook. DMOs now have an unprecedented chance to communicate with and attract tourists in real-time (Guo 2014:2). Social media has managed to revolutionise marketing practices such as promotion and advertising (Madondo 2016:30).

2.8.3.11.1 Reliable source of travel information

Social media, which include text messages, pictures or videos in real-time, and WOM, enable travellers to pay more attention, become interested in, desire, and interact

more effectively with a variety of travel-related experiences (Chung and Koo 2015: 215). In other words, social media can be used at all phases of the decision-making process for tourists, and tourists are aware of the importance of social media in the tourism sector. Travellers using social media to search for a travel destination can turn to destination websites to locate destination information and become potential visitors. Social media is a key factor in forming pre-trip perceptions of a destination and serving as a source of recommendations that affect travel choices. People want to be exposed to as much information as they can in order to make informed judgements because the tourist industry is an information-intensive industry. Travellers view social media as a more trustworthy source of information than information from private organisations, which may be influenced by their self-interest (Liu *et al.* 2020:32).

2.8.3.11.2 *Sharing photos*

Social media has had a significant impact on how travellers share and interact with images on the internet. It has democratised travel, connected individuals all over the world, and changed the way tourists follow and consume travel stories (Dedeoglu *et al.* 2020: 35). Innovative types of social media focused on images/photos have grown in importance recently as a result of their usefulness and convenience of use for content sharing, as well as the widespread use of smartphones and other mobile devices with built-in cameras. Millions of people worldwide may access these media since each image has identification information attached that allows users to search, navigate, and order the content according to their interests and priorities. Moreover, in the tourism industry, photographic representation is prioritised in the marketing and advertising of destinations and attractions, and the 'capture' of these images by travellers through the use of photography is essential for the creation and reproduction of the tourist image. Online visual images have a greater impact and are more compelling than words alone in this regard. Their online sharing may also reinforce a destination's or brand's "love mark" and inspire stronger loyalty, making these photos effective tools for tourism promotion (Marine-Roig, Martini-Fuentes and Daries-Ramon 2017).

2.8.3.11.3 *Influencing travel destination selection*

Alternative places are offered to destination choice makers. It is hypothesised that a variety of information sources influence destination selection. Word-of-mouth is an important part of decision-making that has recently been made available electronically through technical breakthroughs in the form of social media (Tham, Mair and Croy 2020). This shift to eWOM has brought decision-makers to a much more accessible and diverse group of friends with the ability to influence decision-making. Furthermore, it appears that eWOM is now given the same credence as WOM and is expected to have the same influence on destination decision-making (Kumar *et al.* 2020).

2.8.3.11.4 *Interacting with marketers*

According to Kayumovich (2020:22), consumers have transformed themselves into active makers of the internet realm, shaping the content of these sites. They not only discuss the characteristics of goods, companies, and marketers on social media, but they also share their consumption experiences, posting videos of their positive or negative experiences, which increases the influence of the so-called consumer information channel on the market through WOM (Hudson and Thal 2013: 158 cited in Madondo 2016:31). Travellers must interact with marketers in order to receive current information or price savings on specific product bundles. Travellers will be able to ask questions and obtain answers, while marketers will be able to respond to the queries while also expressing their marketing messages. Customer-to-customer connection via social media is now playing a critical part in decision-making at the "evaluation" stage.

2.8.3.11.5 *Packaging strategies*

The municipalities should use the packaging strategy as the package system includes the type of travel, places to see, where to stay, and the number of days. Packaged tourism services are pre-packaged deals that cannot be adjusted by tourists (Myeni 2018:56).

2.9 CHALLENGES FACED BY MUNICIPALITIES AND DESTINATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Domestic tourism is an important industry for several countries because it keeps the country's currency circulating inside it, which helps to prevent inflation and increases in the cost of products. Tourism has various effects on a country's development, but they are difficult to accurately measure because tourism is interconnected with other sectors. Due to the substantial connection between the tourism sector and domestic tourists, as well as other industries that complement the tourism sector, it is apparent that the domestic industry faces plenty of challenges.

2.9.1 *Financial constraints*

According to the Local Government Tourism Development and Growth Programme Tourism (2013:13) funding at the national level is currently arguably the weakest link in the development and sustainability of tourism in South Africa. This factor is exacerbated and felt at the local government level. Inadequate funding for tourism-related programmes and projects hinders tourism growth. Tourism is frequently overlooked in favour of more pressing service delivery concerns. The current lack of a defined budget allocation for tourism development in most towns is particularly troubling. Rogerson (2020:57) supports this by stating that budget restrictions are a big challenge in municipalities. Tourism promotion in municipalities such as the King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality (KSDM) is limited to the upkeep of the municipality's website, the manufacturing of a handful of pamphlets, and the operation of two tourism information centres. Due to economic constraints, further tourism promotion for KSDM is done through the operations of the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Authority (ECPTA).

2.9.2 *Poor infrastructure*

Municipalities have a shortage of infrastructure to support tourism, such as roads, energy, water, lodging, ICT, and so on. Lack of access to physical infrastructure is a key impediment to business expansion and greatly raises the cost of doing business (Kumar 2016:23). According to the Herrington *et al* (2014:12), infrastructure is one of the primary enablers of tourism business development. Access to communication

infrastructure, utilities, and transportation, as well as affordable land or space, are significant factors in fostering innovative businesses. The GEM report broadens the definition of infrastructure to include commercial and professional infrastructure, referring to the presence of commercial, accountancy, and other legal services and organisations. All of these services are critical to promoting the survival of existing tourism businesses in municipalities as well as the formation of new ones.

2.9.3 *Tourism promotion needs recognition*

Gretzel *et al.* (2020:321) believe that knowing travellers' information search strategies can assist the industry in developing and optimising search engines and better meet the needs of customers through website customisation. The internet is the most important source of information for travellers, particularly among the young and educated. Senior and adult travellers rely on printed pamphlets in addition to the internet. Social media is important in recognising consumer needs. Many people may become aware of their desire to travel as a result of social media sites. When other tourists post about their personal experiences, the reviewers feel compelled to visit specific locations. Without social media, some people may be unaware of their need to travel, or they may be aware of their need to travel but are unmotivated to go during that time. Individuals' travel desires can be sparked by social media (Arica *et al.* 2022).

2.9.4 *Locals' attitudes towards tourism promotion*

According to Kumar (2016:23) wherever tourist growth takes place, its effects are seen differently by diverse regions, peoples, and individuals. In general, tourist impacts can be beneficial or negative, with three broad categories of benefits and costs: economic, sociocultural, and environmental. Direct revenue, employment in tourism businesses, foreign exchange profits, increased governmental and private investment, and higher personal income are the primary economic consequences.

2.9.5 *Changing tourist needs*

Myeni (2018:48) postulates that the needs of tourists tend to change quite quickly in the current globalised environment. They expect the most recent information on travel-related elements, which can make things difficult for the municipality and the business.

2.9.6 Lack of effective marketing

There is a scarcity of promotional activities, such as media, satellite, TV, and domestic radio stations, as well as a restricted usage of websites in tourism businesses and municipalities (Myeni 2018:48). This new understanding of technological innovation, which may also include elements of social innovation in some cases, allows destination management organisations in innovative tourism municipalities to expand their scope and influence beyond the administration and promotion of tourist products and services. Smart innovation initiatives will help tourism municipalities build resilience to many of the short- and medium-term sustainable development challenges shown by the limits of acceptable change domain while future-proofing tourism municipalities and their surrounding regions by adopting an integrated network approach to longer-term issues, including climate change and others (Coca-Stefaniak 2019:516).

2.9.7 Stakeholders' lack of coordination

Stakeholder cooperation is a vital component of promoting a destination and fostering sustainable tourism; this is when various stakeholders actively work together to accomplish shared objectives. Because there have been so few successful attempts to adopt sustainable tourism, stakeholder engagement is essential, and stakeholder collaboration is highly useful for resolving issues with municipal tourism organisations. Due to the nature of tourism, a variety of independent stakeholders' points of view are necessary for the development of the travel and tourism sector (Mahat and Chhetri 2023:32). Tourism depends on several relationships with business, government, and non-government organisations. The working operations of tourism destinations are negatively impacted by the lack of cooperation among these parties (Myeni 2018:49).

2.9.8 More competition

According to Shirvani Dastgerdi and De Luca (2019), municipalities and large towns must make changes to their economic, cultural, and social structures in response to the effects of globalisation. One of the effects of globalisation is the sharp increase in municipal competitiveness, which is seen on a variety of levels and activity ranges. Maintaining resident satisfaction with the municipality is crucial for the sustainability of

the city given the free movement of capital and people in the "age of cities". Thus, there is more competition between cities in attracting tourists, with uMkhanyakude District Municipality competing with Durban Tourism and the King Cetshwayo District Municipality for visitors.

2.10 MEASURES PROPOSED TO ELIMINATE THE CHALLENGES

Municipalities promote their tourist attractions through tour operators and tourism product owners. To produce the most attractive packages that will draw tourists, municipalities must collaborate with tour operators and product owners.

Naveen (2016, cited in Myeni 2018:52) suggests a number of alternatives to the challenges which tourism companies encounter. These are discussed below.

2.10.1 Reduce bureaucracy

The tourism industry's administrative hierarchy contains numerous unnecessary regulations that operate as barriers in dealing with tourism business concerns that demand rapid resolution. Furthermore, the government could set up certain incentive programmes to help tourism businesses with their business operations Naveen (2016, cited in Myeni 2018:52)

2.10.2 Tax reform

The way income taxes are levied should be changed to encourage the formation and survival of new businesses. This can be accomplished through activities such as lowering tax rates for newly founded businesses for smooth operation and promotion Naveen (2016, cited in Myeni 2018:52).

2.10.3 Invest in educational institutions and training programmes for tourism stakeholders

The government should invest in the tourism business by establishing additional educational institutions that provide tourism training. Furthermore, the government should support the private educational sector to offer training courses to tour operators and community tourism organisations Naveen (2016, cited in Myeni 2018:52).

2.10.4 Infrastructure improvement

The government or municipalities should invest more in infrastructure development in the country such as ICT, media, and transportation, land, sea, and air, to make destinations for tourism more accessible Naveen (2016, cited in Myeni 2018:52)

2.10.5 Destination branding

Municipalities should engage with tour operators and tourism businesses to promote the country, and the services provided via market targeting and segmentation to examine economic opportunities in regions with low visitor numbers. This means building collaborative connections with other global tourism service providers (Naveen, 2016:23).

2.10.6 Regulation of the legal system

The legal framework in the tourism industry should be managed in order to make it easier for businesses in the tourism sector to adapt and implement their business operations. To increase efficiency in the tourism industry, rules governing it should be changed Naveen (2016, cited in Myeni 2018:52)

2.10.7 Unfair competition must be prevented

Unfair competition practices and corruption in the sector should be addressed by expanding the power invested in the necessary authorities to work for the formation of healthy business competition. Thus, unfair competition should be eliminated in order to clear the way for fair and managed competition based on the development of the tourism business Naveen (2016, cited in Myeni 2018:52).

2.10.8 The role of CTOs in tourism promotion

According to (Ntlangani 2021:34), community tourism organisations (CTOs) have faced a number of challenges in their efforts to increase their access to tourists as potential customers. Furthermore, it has been observed that established white tourism companies exclude historically marginalised tourism businesses due to the CTOs' lack of knowledge and skills. As a result, the government's transformation objective in the industry has been hampered. Local municipalities do not support CTOs who are

tasked with establishing tourism SMMEs and frequently lack the knowledge and abilities to do so. CTOs have also done a poor job of establishing collaborations between tourist SMMEs, local governments, and the large corporations that control the tourism industry.

2.11 THE MUNICIPALITIES PROMOTIONAL MIX

Promotional mix is the dissemination of tourism destination-related information provided to the market through advertisements and promotions that fill the gap between visitors' needs and the supply of services to them and draws consumer attention to visit the destination (Karim *et al.* 2021). Marketing plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of tourism destinations, so it is necessary to identify the relationship between tourism promotion and destination development. In this regard, the critical components of tourism promotion must be appropriately integrated into marketing plans in order for tourism to develop at the place of interest. The promotion mix is a particular arrangement of promotional methods including direct marketing, personal selling, public relations, advertising, and sales promotions (Belch and Belch 2018; Koekemoer 2014). When utilised effectively, promotional tools establish a connection with the consumer and communicate value by placing the business in the consumer's consciousness (Cunningham 2018:20).

Table 2.2: Promotional mix

Promotional Mix Elements and Promotional Mix Instruments			
Advertising	Public relations	Sales promotion	Direct sales
Commercials – printed Radio/tv broadcasts Catalogues Magazines Brochures, flyers, posters, tourist maps and guides Banners, Internet sites, Audio-video materials (CD, DVD, stick USB, Movies)	Conferences Press releases and articles Shows Speeches Seminars Year books Sponsorships Slogans Special events Tours Lobbying	Games Challenges Gifts Lotteries Various manifestations Trips Demonstrations Samples Coupons Loyalty cards Bundles Free offers discounts	Commercial presentations Business meetings Incentives Trade fairs and exhibitions Direct marketing

Source: Neascu (2014:120)

Table 2.2 displays a promotional mix which is a set of tools and strategies that destinations employ to engage with their target audience, promote their products or services, and achieve their marketing objectives. It entails a variety of promotional strategies, each adapted to certain objectives, target markets, and budgets. The primary components of a promotional mix include advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and direct sales.

2.11.1 Advertising

Advertising is any type of paid nonpersonal communication by an identified sponsor for a company, a good, a service, or a concept (Belch and Belch 2018:20; Prasetyo and Nuzula 2015). According to McKinsey & Company (2013) digital advertising is predicted to be the fastest-growing category of worldwide media spending over the next five years. McKinsey predicts a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.7% for digital advertising, compared to 10.0% for broadband. Due to the internet's adaptability, online advertising has developed into a powerful instrument in a variety of industries, allowing marketers and agencies to interact and market their services as customers increasingly spend more time online Ndeudjeu (2021:47).

2.11.2 Sales promotions

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), sales promotions are media and non-media marketing pressures applied to different target audiences, such as consumers, retailers, and wholesalers, for a predetermined time frame in order to stimulate use increase consumer demand and improve product viability (Ndeudjeu 2021:48). In the tourism sector, sales promotion is defined as a collection of associated strategies that provide clients with an additional incentive to purchase or remain loyal to a specific organisation or brand. When used individually or collectively, these approaches are used to generate consumer demand. Sales promotion strategies such as the use of discount vouchers, competitions, coupons, gifts, and free offerings, provide incentives for impulse purchases. A sales promotion is a short-term tactic that is used to generate instant increases in demand. Other businesses utilise sales to augment other aspects of the promotional mix, such as personal selling and advertising, in order to increase their efficacy (Madondo 2016:41).

2.11.3 Public relations

Public relations is defined as a strategic communication strategy that fosters mutually beneficial relationships between businesses and their target audiences (Ndeudjeu 2021:51). Public relations is an editorial space in broadcast or print media used to promote a location, person, or thing. In the tourism sector, public relations is concerned with how to maintain positive customer perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes in order to impact how they perceive a tourism organisation. A tourist group can utilise a variety of initiatives to promote and defend its image, such as exhibitions, product or destination literature, or the publication of articles about the organisation or its products (Loda 2014:305).

2.11.4 Personal selling

Personal selling is the practice of influencing a prospective or potential customer to buy a product or service. In an increasingly digitalised environment, the "people factor" should not be overlooked as firms debate the value of personal sales consultations to the organisation and its customers. Furthermore, traditional sales methods that focus on pressuring consumers into making purchases will no longer work in the digital age. Sales professionals can help consumers interact with brands by employing the correct digital tools (Ndeudjeu 2021:53). On the other hand, Madondo (2016:42) feels that personal selling encompasses all promotional efforts that involve face-to-face interaction between the salesperson and the individual to whom the promotional message is directed. The greatest benefit of this component of the promotional mix is that the seller may tailor the sales presentation to the unique needs of the customer. Tourism fairs are an example of a settings where personal selling can provide significant results. Municipalities must therefore develop their listening and communication skills in order to achieve the goal of increasing sales through this strategy.

2.11.5 Tourism fairs

Tourism fairs are organised as integrated brief promotional campaigns with the purpose of reaching a large number of potential clients. It allows for the distribution of various promotional materials to a targeted audience as well as the possibility to

address a variety of participants. The difficulty of this promotional approach is mostly due to three factors: the large number and diversity of objectives to be met, the ability to combine a variety of promotional techniques, and the large number and diversity of participants. The guests are at the core of the various kinds of participants. Visitors are crucial since they are potential visitors, and the exhibitions are geared towards them. Visitors attend tourism fairs to obtain price quotes, hear about current developments in the area, locate products that match their needs, and become informed about market offerings (Myeni 2018:60).

2.12 SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

The goal of integrated marketing communication is to combine several communication channels so that the organisation can speak with "one voice." Integrating components of the promotional mix goes beyond simple communication to the creation of synergistic communication (Madondo 2016:44). According to Reinartz, Wiegand and Imschloss (2019:352), a business can engage in conversation and build relationships with customers through marketing communication, which serves as the voice of the organisation and its brand. It enables consumers to connect the brand with specific locations, occasions, people, emotions, and experiences while also learning who made the product and what benefit it represents. Furthermore, Madondo (2016:44) states that integrated marketing communication is a method that raises brand awareness, educates the market, disseminates information, and promotes an upbeat portrayal of the organisation.

Social media cannot function effectively in isolation from other aspects of the tourism industry's promotional mix so it must be integrated into enterprises' promotional mix (Ndeudjeu 2021:59). Social media enables businesses to access and communicate with a huge number of consumers at the same time. Marketers should pay attention to consumers' attitudes towards online comments and reviews, as consumers today tend to evaluate the internet reviews of other consumers before purchasing items or services (Dwivedi *et al.* 2021:3).

2.13 MODELLING AND FORECASTING TOURISM DEMAND

According to Song and Li's (2008) evaluation of 121 published publications from 2000 to 2007, integrating several methodologies is a strategy to increase predicting accuracy. The authors found that there was no single model that consistently outperformed all other models in all situations. This means that, despite the increasing importance of social media in the tourism industry and the high accolades it has received, it does not always outperform conventional methods of tourism promotion. Demand cannot be adequately projected using social media only. This study concurs that the success of the tourism industry cannot be measured by social media alone as that would reduce the profitability of the businesses. Despite the widespread adoption of social media by both service providers and tourism customers in recent years, the successful practice of controlling and manipulating social media in promoting the tourism business remains mostly unknown to scholars and practitioners (Madondo 2016:45).

2.14 THE TOURISM AREA LIFECYCLE THEORY

The tourism area life cycle theory plays a role in constantly evaluating the critical phases of a destination life cycle. In 1980 Richard Butler developed the concept of a product life cycle theory for tourism destinations called the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). Piuchan (2018:100) states that TALC uses the number of tourist arrivals as the variable that drives the life cycle over time and characterises a stage of tourism development. The commencement, or exploration, stage of a destination, carries a small number of tourists because it is still new and lacks facilities. This stage is explained as a stage that targets tourists who desire pure nature and value cultural differences.

The next stage, involvement, is where tourist destinations begin to provide primary facilities and involve informal contact between locals and visitors. A municipality/destination has many primary facilities and has formal contact with the local people and tourists, and this will attract more tourists from particular groups. In the development stage, destinations become tourist areas and are advertised, and natural and cultural resources are well-developed and positioned for markets. Local

involvement seems to decline and more regional and national involvement to plan and develop the areas emerges to carry more tourists from various markets. The consolidation stage is seen from a decline in the rate of increase in the number of visitors declined, although the total number still increase. For survival, the destination needs to be covered by marketing, advertising, franchises, and chains in the tourism industry.

The next stage is the stagnation stage with a peak number of tourists which exceeds capacity levels. Destinations may rely on repeat visitors and conventional tourists. After this stage, Butler identified five possible scenarios that that range from complete rejuvenation and a total decline. In the decline stage, the area is unable to compete with other newer attractions which in this case could be other district municipalities. The trend to visit will start to decline and the destination will no longer appeal to visitors, but it will still have some visits for the weekend while the rejuvenation stage will be likely to start over the tourist area and re-image the destinations. The above stages will be applied in UKDM to check which level it falls in and what can the municipality do to re-image its brand and promote sustainable tourism development.

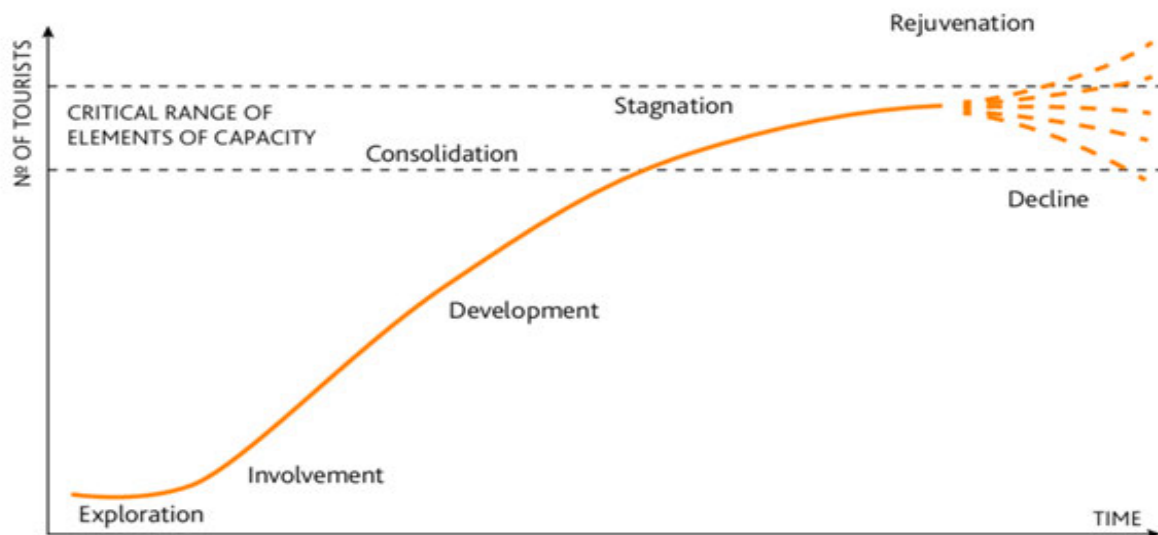


Figure 2.2: The tourist area life cycle by Butler (original model)

Source: Butler (2006:5)

Figure 2.2 shows the various stages of growth and change that a tourist attraction experiences over time. This model demonstrates how destinations adapt in response to increased tourism demand, as well as how both good and negative impacts arise,

emphasizing the importance of sustainable management. The TALC has six main stages: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline or rejuvenation.

External drivers such as media and advertising can be used to present a destination's life cycle; however, no indications of which stage the destinations are in is provided. Furthermore, Butler contends that dissatisfied residents will show signals of unhappiness, especially if they do not gain from tourists. All stakeholders must be included in the development and decision-making (Piuchan 2018:23). Tourism destinations that interact with tourists will go through several stages of development. An analysis of each stage of development, as well as the rate of development, could give municipalities and destination owners guidance on managerial measures. Tourism activities at each level of development can give tangible and intangible benefits to tourism stakeholders in all destinations.

With information and an understanding of the pattern of tourism destination development at all phases, tourist product owners or municipalities can offer measures to improve service delivery and secure the sustainability of each tourism destination. To ensure that tourism development is sustainable and sensitive to the local population, good and effective recommendations could be developed and implemented in the future through the use of the TALC (Rodrigo, Ajala and Irhanida (2023:9).

2.15 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter reviewed the literature on how social media is utilised by both tourists and tourism organisations, including municipalities and other stakeholders in the tourism industry, and how social media influences tourism promotion. The relevance of social media has grown considerably, but practitioners must still learn how to manipulate it in order to reach the municipality's full potential. Municipalities in the uMkhanyakude Municipal District must employ a variety of marketing strategies in order to improve the performance of the tourism industry, social media should be one of the most prioritised methods as it is cost-effective, and it has the potential to promote UKDM in the global space.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research methodology used in the study. This study focused mainly on the role of municipalities in ensuring that tourism products are promoted so that businesses and communities of UKDM are socio-economically emancipated. This chapter includes an explanation of the data collection method employed, the instruments used, and the difficulties encountered. The key components of the research are then highlighted. The researcher continues to elaborate on the study's limits, sources of data, research methodology, data collection and sample techniques, reliability of data acquired, and problems encountered. The researcher describes the reasons why the methods for data collection were chosen, how they were created, and how they were used. According to Parikh (2006), every study needs to be carefully organised in order to prevent wasting time and to guarantee the collection of reliable results.

In support of this view, Bhattacharya, Banerjee, and Saksena (2003:64) state that there is a distinction between research and information collection because the former needs the utilisation of a particular methodology. According to Urwin and Burgess (2007:29), research methodology is a tool for organising data collection. In line with the facts stated above, the researcher used a specific research methodology in order to collect, analyse, and interpret the data required to draw conclusions and make recommendations. The stages and procedures utilised by the researcher in planning and designing this study were incorporated into the investigation of the following research questions:

- What is the level of understanding and awareness that UKDM has regarding innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development and the importance of adopting it and the benefits accrue to its usage?
- What are the contemporary mechanisms used by UKDM to promote sustainable tourism development?

- How can the innovative mechanisms used by the municipality to promote local tourism be improved?
- What strategies can be used to improve the usage of innovative ways of promoting tourism and improve awareness of tourism in uMkhanyakude District Municipality?

The study sought to examine, explore, and understand the usage of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development by looking at promotional strategies that UKDM employ in promoting their tourism destination and looking at the effectiveness of those strategies.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

Burns and Bush (2010:14) describe a research design as being a thorough outline of the procedures taken in a research effort to attain the specified aim and objectives. It relates to a specific research method that is used for data collection and analysis. A research design is a plan that specifies how, when, and where data will be collected and analysed. According to Levy (2017:10), research design is the process of developing a structure and a plan for a research project that provides the overarching framework for collecting data to answer a research question or solve a particular problem. Research design is "the researcher 's overall process for answering the research question or testing the research assumptions". Research objectives are goals of the research (Kruger and Welman 2001:137).

Research is either primary or secondary data being collected directly through research tools or secondary data mostly collected by someone else. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:6) define research design as "processes for gathering, scrutinising, understanding, and reporting information in research studies". According to Mouton (2010:23), the main goals of research design are to enable the scholar or researcher to anticipate what the appropriate research decision should be in order to maximise the validity of the final result, to enhance and theorise an effective plan, and to confirm that the techniques adopted under the research plan are appropriate to provide objectives, accurate, and useful answers in relation to the research problem.

A qualitative approach was adopted using a single data collection method for a comprehensive evaluation of innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality. For a variety of reasons, using a qualitative research approach was appropriate for this research project. For example, qualitative research is conducted in natural settings where real events occur; this approach allows the researcher to find and obtain an adequate understanding of a specific situation or proceedings (Creswell 2009:173). The qualitative research method is appropriate for researchers who are interested in insight, discovery, and knowledge rather than assumptions (Noor 2008:1605). Furthermore, qualitative research is appropriate for addressing some research difficulties when the researcher frequently has little knowledge or comprehension of the matter in question (Morse and Richards 2002:11).

"Qualitative research usually involves participatory techniques of data collection emphasising participants' insights and familiarities with a particular event" (Creswell, 2009:176), which was the case with this particular research study. In particular, "qualitative research in the form of interviews permits the researcher to communicate directly with the respondents, offering the opportunity for detailed examination of issues and generation of detailed responses" (Nykiel 2007:60). This method was appropriate in a study of this nature since it provided a holistic perspective on the usage of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development by UKDM and its local municipalities.

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

According to Peterson (2014:18), study population refers to an aggregate of subjects, individuals, groups, organisations, human products, and events that conform to set research parameters and specifications. Similarly, Zikmund and Babin (2013:312) describe a population as a collection of units that will be examined by the research effort. A population incorporates the total collection of all components of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusions. Finn, Elliot-White, and Walton (2000:3) contend that three important questions have to be addressed in any sample survey. These are:

- What is the estimated population of the study area?

- How big should be the sample of the study?
- How should the study sample be obtained?

Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2007:33) define population as "the complete set of items or persons which is the focus of the research and about which the investigator wishes to regulate some characteristics". This study had a target population of respondents that were involved in the tourism development and promotion of this district municipality and the local municipalities under its jurisdiction. Based on the uMkhanyakude District Municipality's tourism database information provided by the Local Economic Development and Tourism department of UKDM there are four local municipalities and one tourism agency under their jurisdiction. All these entities have tourism practitioners involved in the promotion and development in uMkhanyakude District Municipality, namely, tourism managers, tourism information officers, and CTO chairpersons who represent the local tourism business.

3.3.1 Sampling

Alvi (2016:11) avers that a sample is a group of relatively smaller number of people chosen for research purposes from a population. Because of the vastness of the population, it is usually impractical and ineffective to involve all members of the population in a research project. Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to select members who have knowledge about the information being researched by the researcher in order to guarantee the validity of the study (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2005: 60).

This study was conducted in the UKDM where all the local municipalities, tourism information offices, and uMhlosinga Development Agency are located. The sample type and size were easy to choose since the number of respondents was determined by the fact the respondents had the necessary and applicable information that was desired to answer the research questions. Five tourism managers from uMkhanyakude District and four local municipalities (uMkhanyakude District, Mtubatuba, Jozini, Umhlabuyalingana, and the Big Five False Bay) and one tourism manager from uMhlosinga Development Agency were interviewed. Two tourism information officers (Mkhuze and Mtubatuba Local Municipality tourism information

offices) were interviewed. Information officers were not operating in the other municipalities at the time of data collection. Four CTO chairpersons (Mtubatuba, Jozini, Umhlabuyalingana, and the Big Five False Bay) were interviewed. The interaction in the form of an interview between the researcher and each respondent lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. Answers could be probed when the researcher needed clarity.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sampling method is the process of selecting a sample from a population in order to collect data on a phenomenon that characterises the population of interest (Neuman 2006:28). "Sampling is the study of the affiliation between the population and the sample drawn from it, aiming to determine some characteristics of a certain population" (Babbie and Mouton 2010:119). A sample is a small portion of a statistical population whose properties are examined in order to gain facts about the population as a whole (Babbie and Mouton 2010:119).

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:61), the participants or elements of a population are referred to as investigation components. This study identified respondents who were interested in the study and could answer all of the research questions. Because the information from each study subject chosen for this research was potentially significant, a purposive sample was chosen for this investigation. The researcher approached key local tourism practitioners and personnel involved in the promotion and development of sustainable tourism in UKDM who were able to provide an insight into the subject area and would help answer this study's research questions. "This is an appropriate sampling technique for in-depth research that does not aim to draw generalisable conclusions applicable to a wider population" (Bryman, 2008: 32).

A sample size of 12 participants from UKDM included Five Tourism/LED managers at uMkhanyakude District Municipality, including local municipalities (Mtubatuba, Jozini, Umhlabuyalingana, and the Big Five False Bay) and one Tourism/LED manager from uMhlosinga Development Agency. The sample further included four chairpersons of the CTOs in the district and two information officers from the tourism information centres excluding three which are closed and not operating, forming the tourism body

at uMkhanyakude District Municipality. These respondents were selected because of their extensive knowledge, experience, expertise, and participation in the tourism sector at uMkhanyakude District Municipality. In other words, they were chosen based on their ability to contribute to the overall study objectives. The local businesses were represented by the CTO chairpersons as they are recruited from local businesses and the research aim was mainly aimed at the municipalities.

According to Bryman (2008:8), purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher makes decisions about which individuals to include in the sample based on a variety of criteria such as specialist knowledge of the research issue or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. The purposive sample is best suited for this study due to its low cost; the researcher could select participants who are likely to provide extensive and relevant data to the research question and the respondents were known by the researcher.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is an essential part of the research process. The data collection technique chosen has a significant impact on how various activities for the rest of the research project are assumed (Polonsky and Waller 2011:94). The researcher opted to use an unstructured interview technique with open-ended questions for data collection. Thus, triangulation was used as a method for data collection since various groups were used. According to Churchill and Iacobucci (2005:167), data collection is an important component of the problem-solving process. The study was descriptive in nature and focused on the population from which the sample was obtained.

The interviews involved the tourism practitioners and stakeholders involved in promoting and developing sustainable tourism in uMkhanyakude District Municipality. The choice and design of interview questions was informed by the extent of the research problem, the demands of the research questions, and the scope of the research objectives. The interviews were all conducted during daylight hours. The rationale for conducting the interviews during daylight was to gain the trust of the respondents and also to give the respondents the chance to see the researcher face-to-face without any uncertainties.

The interviews were conducted in the form of one-on-one settings. A voice recorder was used to record all the interviews. Each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted in isiZulu because isiZulu is primary language of the study site, and the use of the study participants vernacular language was thought to be effective.

3.5.1 Interviews

The data collection method used in this study was unstructured interviews. This data collection method was used because unstructured interviews, unlike structured interviews, place few restrictions on how the questions are answered throughout the interview process and frequently takes the form of a conversation between the interviewer and the applicant (Chauhan 2022:475). Furthermore, unstructured interviews encourage follow-up questions and allow more freedom to participants to explain their strengths and weaknesses from their own point of view, which makes them feel at ease and motivates the interviewer. In the end, this is because it gives them control over the interview process (Chauhan 2022:476). Interviews are a major category of techniques for collecting data through questioning and are acknowledged as being some of the most effective ways of collecting data in social sciences research.

"The 'interview' is a managed verbal exchange, and as such its effectiveness heavily depends on the communication skills of the interviewer" (Clough and Nutbrown 2007: 2) which include the ability to clearly structure questions, listen attentively, pause, probe or prompt appropriately, and encourage the interviewee to talk freely, i.e., make it easy for interviewees to respond (Gomm 2004:26).

Unstructured interviews were used in order to gain an understanding of the municipalities and other stakeholders' views regarding the usage of innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development, policy guidelines used by the municipality to inform innovative ways of promoting tourism, mechanisms used by the municipality, and the effectiveness of those promotion mechanisms. Moreover, the interviews were used to gather data regarding strategies to improve the usage of modern ways of promoting tourism. Tourism/LED managers, tourism information centres, uMkhanyakude District Community Tourism Association, and uMhlosinga

Development Agency (a municipality entity) in UKDM were used/participated in the study as they form part of the districts' marketing and promotion body and fall under the jurisdiction of the district municipality.

According to Bihu (2020), unstructured interviews have the advantage of being flexible since questions and answers can be investigated in order for the researcher to gain clarity or follow-up on what the respondent has expressed. When performing a follow-up question or requesting clarification, the researcher should always make certain that he/she does not add to or deviate from the questions formulated for respondents, since this could have an undesirable effect on the reliability and validity of the findings. The format allowed for a flexible, interactive process where both interviewer and interviewee can have an active role in communicating, answering, listening, and conversing (Cloke *et al.* 2004:18). The respondent and researcher are thus free to explore new themes and follow up on interesting conversational angles rather than being constrained by a prepared list of questions (Bryman 2008:38).

3.5.2 Structure of the interviews

All the interviews were conducted by the researcher. Those who participated in the interviews were encouraged to give expression to their views, thoughts, and intentions. Interviews were conducted mostly in IsiZulu language with some in English – the researcher is fluent in both languages. Each interview was conducted at a mutually convenient time and place and covered questions on the subject of innovation in tourism promotion for sustainable development.

The average length of the interviews was 40 minutes; the shortest interview lasted for 30 minutes and 45 seconds with one of the information officers. The reason for the shortest interview was that most of the questions asked could not be answered because those aspects were not implemented or done at the information centre. The entire process of interviewing the respondents lasted for four months since it was during COVID-19. Some participants were working from home, and it was difficult to reach them as sometimes participants would have network issues, and the researcher had to wait for them to come to the office to conduct the interviews. The interviews were captured using a voice recorder and via Microsoft Teams for one tourism

manager who was working from home at the time. All the respondents were informed before the commencement of interviews regarding the use of a voice recorder or being recorded and they all accepted this.

The most notable limitation was the reluctance of the respondents to provide detailed information; it was only when the researcher reminded them that anything they said would be treated with confidentiality that they started to provide detailed information. Another limitation was the issue of finding respondents as it was during COVID-19 and they were working from home where sometimes there was no network which made it difficult to find them via both email and cell phone. The researcher had to wait for the respondents to respond or sometimes drive to the municipality offices and get advice on the schedule/roaster from other officials on duty on the day as the municipalities were using a roster at the time. All of the participants who were chosen to participate in the study were thoroughly interviewed.

3.6 RESPONDENTS RECRUITMENT PROCESS

In attending to the issue of participants' enrolment processes, an email communication, with the summary information of the study proposal, was sent to the following respondents:

Tourism manager uMkhanyakude District, tourism managers in the local municipalities (Mtubatuba, Jozini, uMhlabuyalingana, and the Big Five False Bay), Tourism manager uMhlosinga Development Agency, Chairpersons of the CTO in uMkhanyakude District and tourism information officers through the district coordinator to request permission to conduct the study at their respective areas of operation. The following procedures were followed:

The consent letter acquired from the uMkhanyakude District Tourism office was forwarded to the tourism managers in Mtubatuba, The Big Five False Bay, CTO chairpersons, and tourism information officers by using email correspondence before the commencement of the data collection process.

- The researcher conducted three of the six unstructured interviews on Microsoft Teams with the uMkhanyakude District, Mtubatuba tourism, and the uMhlosinga Development Agency managers because of the COVID19 virus

with the consent letters displayed on screen and explained, that the interviews were recorded on Microsoft Teams with permission from respondents. The other three interviews with tourism managers from (Jozini, Umhlabuyalingana, and The Big Five False Bay) municipalities were conducted face-to-face with the gatekeepers' letter and consent letter. The letters were handed to the respondents and explained on the day of data collection. The researcher collected the data single-handedly with the help of an audio recorder which all respondents consented to.

- The chairpersons of the CTOs were selected for this study. Based on the above, consent letters were issued to the respondents requesting permission to conduct the study and to participate in the study. The letters that were handed to respondents explained the nature of the study and outlined the purpose in order to generate the validity of the research study. After permission was granted, the researcher began the process of collecting information using unstructured interviews. The respondents were interviewed over a period of 3 days because they were residing in different locations.
- The consent letter acquired from the UKDM was forwarded to tourism information officers in Mtubatuba by means of email correspondence prior to the commencement of the data collection process. The researcher then travelled to the information officers of information centres with the hard copy of the consent letter acquired from the uMkhanyakude District Municipality for security reasons. The information officers were interviewed as important respondents regarding interacting with visitors and directly selling the UKDM attractions to them and getting concerns and feedback for improvement in tourism products. An information letter describing the aims and objectives of the study was given to or read to the respondents before they signed the consent forms.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The necessity for ethics in research studies has become a critical subject matter, particularly in investigations like this one which deal with personal lives and the dignity of individuals' culture (Nchabeleng 2013:64). Several academics have emphasised

the importance of treating research participants with respect, care, and sensitivity (Oliver 2003: 87). Participants must be treated in a way that preserves their human dignity. The principles of ethical research were implemented. Salkind (2014:149-153) mentions the basic principles of ethical research, as follows:

- Protection from harm.
- Maintenance of anonymity.
- Coercion: This ethical guideline emphasises the importance of voluntary participation.
- Informed consent form to be read and signed by each participant.
- Confidentiality: ethical principle that ensure that the privacy and personal information of participants is protected throughout and after the research process.
- Debriefing about the general intent and results of the study.

The authority to conduct the study was approved by the Durban University of Technology (Faculty of Management Sciences), Faculty Research Committee [FRC] and the Institutional Research Ethics Committee [IREC] with ethics number **078/21**, after a rigorous process that was aimed at ensuring that the study met the required standards with regard to ethical issues.

In addition, the district municipality, local municipality, CTOs, information centres, and uMhlozinga Development Agency's related personnel were supplied with copies of the research proposal in order to obtain their authorisation for this study to be conducted. The main ethical consideration of this study was the confidentiality of all information recovered during data collection. The researcher explained the drive and objectives of the study to all respondents and any questions were answered. All participants were expected to give written and verbal consent before participating in the study. Permission to make use of the audio tape was included in the consent forms. Participants' identities and contact information were not recorded or used for the study for reasons of anonymity. Study subjects were assured that all information provided would only be used for the purpose of the study and would be treated with utmost confidentiality. Study subjects were informed that the processed data (thesis) would be made available to anyone who is interested in the study. Participants of the study

were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any given time without any explanation.

3.7.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

According to Crow and Wiles (2008:1), "anonymity and confidentiality refer to the ability of the researcher to safeguard sensitive information and the names of the respondents". Despite emphasising the importance of maintaining confidentiality (Grinyer 2002:4), the literature on research design and ethical codes of professional conduct provides little specific, practical guidance on disguising respondents' identities to prevent deductive disclosure in qualitative research (Giordano *et al.* 2007). Before the interviews began, confidentiality and anonymity were highlighted in a consent letter, and participants had the option to participate or withdraw from the study. Throughout the interviews, each research participant signed an informed written consent letter.

In social science research, confidentiality can be defined as a researcher's explicit or implicit commitment to a respondent that any information submitted to the researcher cannot be traced back to that respondent. Furthermore, the provision of confidentiality implies that non-researchers will be unable to determine the respondent's identity. Thus, confidentiality is an active attempt by the researcher to delete any trace of respondents' identities from the records. Anonymity occurs when respondents remain anonymous throughout the academic research study (Oliver 2003:28).

The researcher assured all respondents that any personal information collected that could identify them would remain strictly confidential and access to that information would be restricted to the researcher and the supervisor directly involved in the research at all times, before, during, and after the research activities. The respondents were advised not to mention their names in the interviews and the researcher used codes to classify respondents. Respondents were informed of the plans to destroy the original interviews when the research project is concluded, five years after the completion of the thesis.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Maree *et al.* (2016:110-112), qualitative data analysis is an ongoing and iterative process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis, and reporting are intertwined rather than merely a series of successive steps. Qualitative analysis tools include content analysis, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and conversational analysis. On the other hand (Lancaster 2005:18), states that data analysis is the method of converting data into information. Information is data organised in a way that may be used for insight and decision-making. The critical objective of the analysis is to filter large quantities of data into forms that are more easily managed and absorbed, as well as to remove data that are inappropriate in the context of the research project. Data analysis, which is related to extraction, should also help in data classification. As a result, the researcher opted to identify and formulate themes derived from the research questions, with the goal of achieving adequate and valid findings through unstructured interviews.

According to Graue (2015:8), data analysis is the process by which phenomena are described, categorised, and connected to the researcher's concepts.

Creswell (2009:184) stresses the following:

Data analysis follows several steps which include: a) organising and preparing data for analysis; b) obtaining a general sense of information; c) coding and identifying the main themes; d) representing the main themes in a qualitative narrative; and e) interpreting data in relation to literature or theories.

The researcher used transcriptions from the interviews and a professional statistician to develop primary themes of the research findings through the use of NVIVO software for qualitative data analysis. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:69) state that field notes can be described as detailed notes made by hand, tape recordings, and observations that are compiled during qualitative interviewing. The collected information is captured and analysed, data is categorised, and individual themes are identified and analysed. The major data preparation techniques for qualitative data include data editing, data coding, and data capturing (McDaniel and Gates 2010:132). Information collected through interviews using a voice recorder was translated, edited, and converted to hard copy; the information was then coded per objective and

categorised accordingly. Data analysis allows for the identification of relationships, particularly causal relationships.

3.9 PILOT STUDY

Pilot testing is significant because it allows a researcher to test questionnaires with a group of respondents who have similar backgrounds to the actual sample (O'Leary 2014: 206). Pilot testing of this study was conducted with a sample of nine participants. The King Cetshwayo District Municipality Tourism officers / LED officers from the district and three local municipalities, three chairpersons of CTOs, and three information officers from this particular site were selected due to their background, tourism activities, local community, and location. This area offered the researcher the element of poverty with the existence of the coastline and tourism offerings with the potential of raising the economy through tourism with the main destination being Route 66. Route 66 as well as the uMlalazi and Richards Bay coastal areas are growing tourism destinations in the King Cetshwayo District Municipality, and addressing poverty is one of the most critical issues in the area.

The King Cetshwayo IDP document (2012/2013:27) document outlines that in the Kwa-Mbonambi, uMhlathuze, and Nkandla municipalities, where the vast majority of residents live in rural homesteads, unemployment is at about 50% and there is a high level of poverty. This raises the question of whether they would embrace the use of modern ways of sustainable tourism promotion.

The pilot study sought to anticipate any errors or ambiguity in questions that needed to be identified in order to uphold accuracy before the data collection process began. The interview questions were taken to an academic editor before the data collection process commenced.

3.10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

When a research project is developed, the evaluation of a measurement tool must take validity and reliability into consideration (Cooper and Schindler 2003:121). Validity addresses whether the instrument measures what is supposed to be measured, and reliability examines the degree to which a data collection technique yields the same

results across repeated trials. Miller (2007:21) concurs with Cooper and Schindler (2003:121) by emphasising the importance of validity and reliability as the two core aspects of any research procedure. Golafshani (2003:86) argues as he "summarises the significance of these two non-negotiables by referring to reliability and validity as tools of an essentially positivist epistemology".

3.10.1 Validity

The aim of the study was not to generate generalisable results but to examine and explore the usage of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development in uMkhanyakude District specifically. It is necessary for the information collected in the research area and the study's final findings to be reliable and applicable (Wagner, Botha and Mentz 2012). Validity is a process concerned with the methods used to measure quality, rigour, and trustworthiness of the study answering research questions. Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and operates as it is planned to do (Creswell 2014:84). Validity is essential for determining the accuracy of research findings (Creswell 2009:96). In warranting the validity of the study, the respondents were interviewed separately.

The study was further validated by the use of data triangulation, which assisted in cross-checking the findings. To validate the research findings, the researcher integrated multiple concepts, information sources, and approaches; the researcher evaluated the current approach used by municipalities and literature by other researchers related to the subject. Finally, the study was validated by the use of several sources of data collection such as interviews, observations, and recordings.

3.10.2 Reliability

According to Joppe (2000), reliability is the extent to which results are consistent over time and are an accurate representation of the total population under study. If the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. Punch (2005:95) describes "reliability as referring to the central concept in measurement".

In warranting the reliability of the research findings, the interview questions were piloted to ensure that the questions were clear and that respondents did not come across any redundant complications when answering the questions. A number of interview questions were reviewed subsequent to the pilot study based on the feedback. The reliability was also ensured by selecting a sample that was guaranteed to provide precise and suitable information to answer the study objectives. The reliability of this study was further assured by the extent to which the unstructured interviews were carried out.

To make the questions easier to understand, the researcher translated every question into the respondents' native tongue. The researcher followed internal consistency, which is the extent to which items in the research instruments measure the same thing. The researcher ensured that all the respondents who participated in the study were able to answer the same questions as consistently as they could without them being altered by the researcher to influence respondents' answers. Even where probing questions by the researcher occurred, this was in order to seek clarity or eliminate ambiguity from answers by respondents.

3.11 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter provided an explanation of the research methodology used in the study, including the research design, target population, sample methods and sample size, and measuring instrument. Respondent recruitment, data collection, and data analysis were discussed, as well as pilot testing, scope and limitations, confidentiality measurement, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations were presented. The chapter has also detailed the research process, with emphasis on the design, development, and administration of the research instrument as well as the collection, analysis, and interpretation of collected data.

The next chapter reports on the findings of the study by providing and analysing the data that was collected during the interviews and elaborating on the interpretation of the research results.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the methodology employed in this study. This chapter presents the findings gathered from the fieldwork conducted at uMkhanyakude District. The main objective of the study was to determine and expose the innovative ways of promoting tourism and sustainable development in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality.

More specifically, the study focused on determining whether the strategies used by the UKDM to promote and develop tourism sustainably are effective, the nature of the challenges faced by municipalities, CTOs, and information centres in promoting sustainable tourism, and how they address those challenges. To maintain consistency throughout the chapter, themes have been set out as derived from the data collected as a result of the interviews, which are then systematically analysed.

According to Cronjé (2019: 2) South Africa is a competitive country when it comes to tourism. It is home to some of the most beautiful places on earth. Therefore, the researcher draws the conclusion that South Africa may compete with other tourist-rich nations like Dubai, Thailand, Europe, and others if more support can be given to the country's tourism sector. The next section presents the thematic analysis of the study.

4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

According to Alhojailan (2012), thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that is used for data analysis, classification, and presentation of themes (patterns related to the data). It provides a thorough illustration of the facts and addresses numerous issues using interpretations. The thematic analysis provides an opportunity to understand the possibilities of any issue in greater detail (Marks and Yardley 2004). Namey (2008:138) said:

Thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas

or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence, or graphically displaying code relationships.

Thematic analysis was used by the researcher to correlate the data with concepts and opinions. In this study, multidimensional techniques (word clouds, cluster analysis/bubble diagrams, tree maps, and word trees) were used to ensure the validity of the findings. Themes and subthemes were developed in the analysis of the qualitative interviews that were designed to investigate the usage of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development with the help of a professional statistician through the use of NVivo.

NVivo is a set of tools for qualitative data analysis. However, regardless of the software used, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the data is useful and not influenced by the context of the study. Certainly, the software used does not replace the researcher's wisdom, because every researcher has a story in their head that influences how they see and understand the world. The following section defines techniques for the various analyses as per Ishak and Bakar (2012:102).

4.3 GENERIC DEFINITIONS OF TECHNIQUES FOR THE VARIOUS ANALYSES

The generic definition of techniques helped the researcher to gain an appropriate understanding of the themes identified during the in-depth interviews.

4.3.3 Tree map

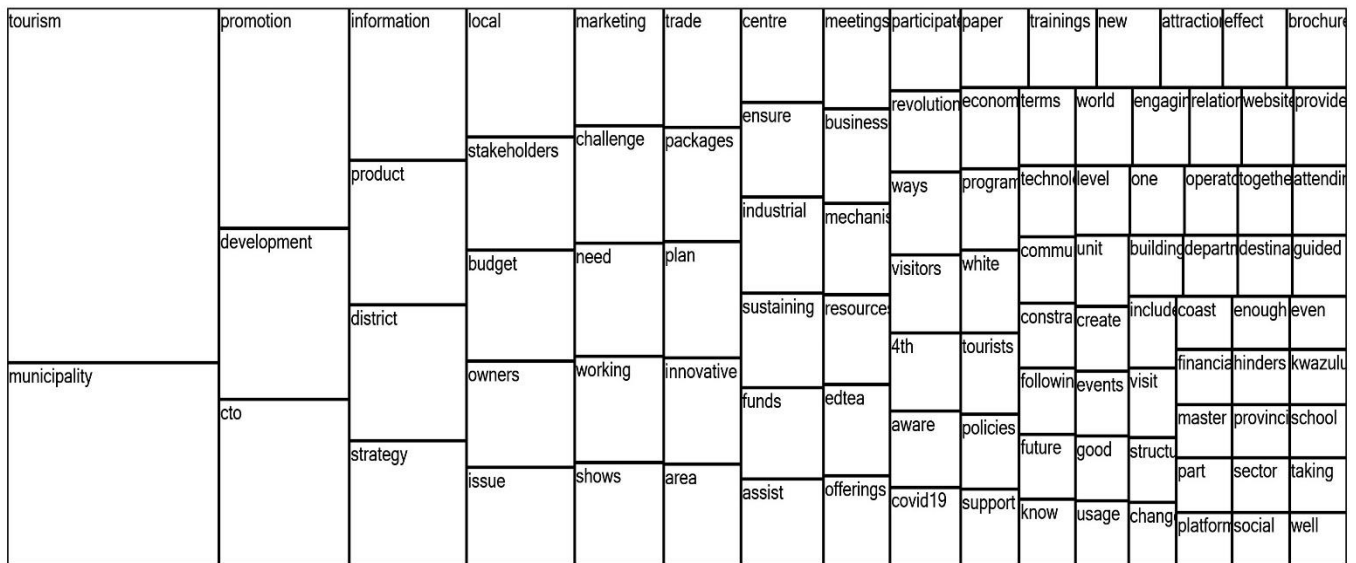


Figure 4.3: Tree maps

Tree maps show the data (frequently used words) in terms of the size of blocks. The larger blocks reflect the words mainly used. It also shows what those words are connected to. The words they are connected to imply relationships. The entire map gives a holistic view of how data is placed in terms of the size of the block (Figure 4.3).

Based on the above analyses there were four primary themes generated, and these were further informed by subthemes. The four primary themes were:

- The Municipality’s current tourism promotion strategies and their effectiveness.
- The Municipality’s support, skills, and relationships.
- Challenges faced by the Municipality in promoting tourism and sustainable development.
- The Municipality’s future tourism promotion strategies and innovation.

To protect the identity of respondents the researcher used a coding method to describe their responses. Table 4.1 is a total breakdown of the 12 interviewed respondents. The respondents were divided into three categories:

Category A – Represents respondents who are managing tourism in UKDM and its local municipalities;

Category B – Represents the respondents that are chairpersons of the CTOs;

Category C – Represents respondents from the tourism information office;

Table 4.1: Details of participants

DATE	DURATION	CODES	CATEGORIES	ORGANISATION	INTERVIEWS
25/10/2021	40:00m MS Teams	UKDMR	A	Government	1
29/10/2021	30:45m	UKDMR	A	Government	1
08/11/2021	33:22m	UKDM	A	Government	1
08/11/2021	39:15m	UKDMR	A	Government	1
08/11/2021	30:34m	UKDMR	A	Government	1
22/11/2021	30:34m	UKDMR	A	Government	1
06/12/2021	38:18m	CTOR	B	Community	1
07/12/2021	39:48m	CTOR	B	Community	1
10/12/2021	35:13m	CTOR	B	Community	1
10/12/2021	30:24m	CTOR	B	Community	1
10/01/2022	35:27m	TIOR	C	Government	1
10/01/2022	33:29m	TIOR	C	Government	1

development, innovation, and sustainability. For example, Respondent 01 indicated that:

Tourism promotion is about advertising and showcasing local tourism offerings to the target market (UKDMR).

Another respondent expressed that:

Tourism promotion is about profiling and showcasing tourism products within our destination and with sustainable development in mind (UKDMR).

The CTO chairpersons were also interviewed, and they mentioned that:

Tourism promotion and sustainable development include the use of brochures, pamphlets, word of mouth and social media like Facebook and Twitter (CTOR).

Participants from the information centres were also interviewed and highlighted that:

Tourism promotion and sustainable development is about developing local offerings in a manner that keeps them maintained and sustained for the future generation to experience it in its purest form (CTOR).

Another participant mentioned that:

It ensures that while developing the protection of wildlife, natural environments, and natural resources is achieved through good management of tourism activities. (UKDMR).

Furthermore, participants indicated that:

While developing and promoting tourism, the environment needs to remain safe, conducive and friendly for tourists as well as the local communities and the innovative products and services must take into account the fourth industrial revolution (CTOR).

4.4.2 Marketing

In any industry, the concept of marketing is vital. Given the nature of the industry, the tourism industry is no exception. The subthemes that follow address the current

marketing situation of municipalities, CTOs, and information centres in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality.

4.4.1.1 Creation and promotion of packages of tourism attractions

There is virtually no input/involvement of the municipalities, the CTOs, and the information centres when it comes to the creation of packages of tourism attractions in the District, as most respondents stated that the creation and promotion of the tourism packages is the responsibility of the tour operators and the product owners. These entities are only assisting the tour operators in the promotion and verification of the information.

We only come up with LED (Local Economic Development) and Tourism strategies that are in line with their needs. We cannot package for them; they must package their own offerings as they are the owners of the products and create them as per their own relations (UKDM)

Another respondent mentioned that there is a need for the involvement and joint collaboration of the municipalities, CTOs and information centres as they are also involved in and dealing directly with tourists. This would make them very knowledgeable of the packages and add to the success of promotion and attraction of tourists to the area. This can bring value from this unique angle.

4.4.1.2 Policy guidelines to promote and develop local tourism

This section gives a detailed account of the policy guidelines perceptions insofar as promoting and developing local tourism is concerned.

The results show that the municipalities and the other government entities involved in the promotion and development of sustainable tourism are aligned to a list of tourism policy guidelines including, the Tourism White Paper, tourism acts, National Tourism Sector Strategy, Provincial Tourism Master Plan, Provincial Tourism Sector Strategy and uMkhanyakude District Municipality's tourism strategy.

One respondent stated:

We are guided by the Tourism White Paper (UKDMR).

Another respondent stated:

We are also guided by the KwaZulu-Natal's Department of Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs' (EDTEA) tourism master plan (UKDMR).

However, a few did not know any or were not aware of any applicable policies. Moreover, the respondents never mentioned a policy that specifically looked at and guided them on innovation, ICT promotion strategies, etc. When respondents were asked on the subject of policy guidelines in promoting and developing local tourism, the respondents stated the following:

Not any that I know of because we haven't used any policy or been advised to use a certain policy (TIOR).

Another respondent expressed that:

We have never heard of a tourism policy guideline. It's a foreign word to me. There is no policy that we are following, or have been following, that guides us on tourism promotion and the usage of technology (UKDMR).

The data reveals that the in-use policies of the local municipalities under UKDM are not regularly revised and merely cover the traditional ways of promoting tourism products whereas the world is evolving, and it is evident by practice that these municipalities are not adapting (not racing forward with times), therefore have the potential of being pigeon-holed as inefficient vetting institutions. Another factor is that while some policies exist, other challenges that hinder implementation and effectiveness are financial constraints, monitoring systems, and policy review. One respondent felt that the existing policies were unclear in terms of the extent to which public funds should be distributed for development and promotion.

4.4.1.3 Marketing and promotion of tourism offerings to the outside world

Marketing and promoting tourism to the outside world is not very strong. This was primarily because:

- **Method of marketing or promoting to the outside world**

Most of the respondents indicated that their organisations rely on the usage of traditional marketing methods such as disseminating information through brochures, WOM, school tours and trade shows which is the most used technique to promote tourism to the outside world. The respondents also mentioned the usage of government events and IDP road shows, tourism conferences, and TKZN both locally and internationally when they attend international shows. Only a few respondents stated that they use websites and social media to disseminate information to the outside world. This needs to be looked at as the world is changing and every destination is adopting innovative ways of promotion to reach the masses.

4.4.1.4 Innovative mechanisms to promote sustainable tourism development.

This was a significant subtheme since it examined innovation, particularly in the present 4IR epoch. However, innovation seemed to be severely lacking, and more improvement is needed. Most respondents reported on the lack of innovative mechanisms for sustainable tourism development. This was primarily due to a lack of budget and resources. Hence more budgetary resources need to be allocated for innovation to take place.

When respondents were asked about the subject of innovative mechanisms used by their organisations to promote sustainable tourism development, the respondents stated the following:

For tourism specifically, I can say we are not using any innovative mechanism (UKDMR).

Not that I know of, the CTO and the municipality rely on the traditional ways of promotion (CTOR).

Another respondent provided the following viewpoint by stating:

Apart from the traditional promotion methods like brochures, pamphlets, and trade shows, the municipality hasn't taken advantage of the innovative ways, though the fourth industrial revolution is compelling us to do so, but we haven't started (UKDMR).

The results show that respondents do view the usage of innovative mechanisms to promote tourism as an important aspect to be considered, especially after the

COVID19 disease outbreak which forced a lot of changes in the tourism industry. One respondent stated:

It's only the municipalities' website and we don't put much content there. But COVID-19 has really shaken every organisation, and we are all going back to the drawing board and strategising on new ways of bringing visitors to our area (UKDMR).

Another respondent had the following to say:

No mechanism has been used yet and it is all because of the budget (TIOR)

From the results some of the respondents indicated that the organisations do use some innovative method of communication, but it is mostly used for IDP information dissemination and other government entities use websites to disseminate, but these websites are hardly visited. One respondent said:

The information centre only uses Facebook, and the plan is to tap into other platforms as the pressure is mounting from COVID-19 and the fourth industrial revolution (TIOR).

4.4.1.5 Provision of accurate and interesting information to tourists

The results show that the tourism entities were making an effort to make information interesting for tourists. This was done via:

- **Benchmarking and research**

Respondents mentioned researching other destinations with similar tourism products as a way of keeping the information interesting and conducting strong verification by double checking information for accuracy with product owners and related stakeholders, in order to remain competitive. The respondents also mentioned keeping information updated in relation to the latest happenings in the country and the world at large.

- **Putting the visitors first**

Respondents reported that the information disseminated was produced based on the tourists needs and gave them exactly the information they needed by checking information with product owners for changes and updating was done regularly.

- **Site visits and reviews**

One respondent mentioned that they are planning to do strategy reviews every 1-2 years and this was going to be implemented soon. This strategy will ensure accurate information with regards to the sector. Another respondent stated that the municipalities do site visits and reports are provided to the information centres for information accuracy. Capacity building is also done during some visits for product owner-related issues and prices.

4.4.1.6 Effectiveness of tourism promotion and sustainable development strategies

The results show that the effectiveness of promotion strategies seems to be lacking and strategies are more reactive in nature. For tourism growth and development more improvement is needed as well as a proactive approach. The effectiveness of the promotion strategies was found lacking for the following reasons:

- **Non-existent promotion strategy**

Some respondents indicated that they did not hear anything about a promotion strategy which indicates that a promotion strategy may not be in existence in some areas. Where there is a strategy or alignment with a strategy, it has been expressed that it doesn't cover the component of modern promotion mechanisms. As conveyed by one of the respondents:

I would say it is not, since I haven't heard anything about a promotion strategy and we as the CTO also don't have any strategy (CTOR).

Another respondent stated:

There are no strategies except following EDTEA's tourism masterplan, which is also outdated and doing any promotion that is necessary and affordable to the unit (UDMR).

Another respondent said their municipal strategy is still in development but not yet implemented:

A new municipality strategy is still being developed (UKDMR).

For now, there is no strategy, the municipality is just following the traditional strategies such as brochures, attending trade shows, and relying on word of mouth the conventional strategies (UKDMR).

The results show that there is a lack of assessment of promotional mechanisms, and some did not feel that there were any innovative mechanisms in place to measure the effect of existing strategies. This was conveyed by some of the respondents:

I would say it doesn't since there is no usage of the innovative mechanisms (CTOR).

Another respondent stated:

We do not have any assessment or measuring tool to assess our promotion mechanisms (TIOR).

Another respondent expressed:

Honestly there is no monitoring system that traces and kind of indicates to us whether the website is contributing to our visitor numbers or not. It's something that we still need to check (UKDMR).

From the above comments, many respondents indicated and concurred on the lack of strategy and felt that the current promotion methods were more traditional and reactive in nature. There was hence a need for more proactive tourism strategies. For assessing the effectiveness of the promotional strategy used, the organisations rely on visitors' statistics, suggestion boxes, meetings, and forums where they discuss issues and evaluate strategies. Some respondents indicated that there was more improvement needed in strategy in such a way as to integrate the traditional methods with the modern technological ways of promotion assessment to remain competitive in the sector.

4.4.1.7 Awareness and the use of tourism area life cycle model

The tourist area life cycle is a concept that assists municipalities and destinations in understanding and managing their tourism industry's development and growth. It provides insights into the various phases that a tourist attraction goes through as it develops. The outcomes of the study revealed that there is a lack of awareness or utilisation of the TALC in municipalities, CTOs, and tourism information centres. However, it could be possible that the model is being used indirectly, but there is no formal application of the model. All respondents interviewed indicated that did not know this model, as indicated by these excerpts:

We have never heard of such. It's a foreign word to me. There is no policy that we are following, or we have been following (CTOR).

No, because it has never been used or applied or even suggested (CTOR).

No, we have never used such a model, we only check the statistics or visitor numbers. (CTOR).

The none-usage of such a model is a loss because the importance of the model is that understanding the life cycle helps adjust marketing and promotion efforts in municipalities. As destinations evolve, it is possible that they may need to diversify their tourism offers in order to remain competitive. Municipalities can use the tourism area life cycle to find diversification and innovation opportunities. The tourism area life cycle can provide municipalities with a useful framework for navigating the complexity of tourism development and management. It can enable them to make informed decisions, plan strategically, and build resilient and sustainable tourist industries that benefit both the local community and visitors.

4.5 MUNICIPALITY'S SUPPORT, SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIPS

This primary theme examined the key components of support, skills, and relationships within the sustainable tourism and promotion domain. It was important to assess the extent of structural support for the promotion of sustainable tourism development in municipalities, CTOs, and information centres as they all form part of the tourism

promoting and development structures in the district. Support seemed lacking, as is evident in the subthemes discussed below:

4.5.1 Management and support

- **Projects**

One respondent mentioned that tourism promotion projects are supported by CTOs and municipalities through funding and resources. Such projects include infrastructure and tourist centres to promote tourism. Further support in platform development allows people to sell their products thereby promoting growth. The respondent stated the following:

The district is contributing a lot as there is a relationship with the district, they work with us, there is cohesion. Last year they were able to fund one of our projects along the coast whereby they built a bridge that assisted our tourists in being able to cross over to other attractions which was a challenge, and it would have led other offerings to fail and end up closing doors (UKDMR).

- **Management, cleanliness, and maintenance**

Respondents stressed that the district municipality plays a pivotal role in ensuring that destinations are properly managed, clean, and maintained for promotion, development, and excellent tourist experience.

- **Tourism business support**

Results show that the district municipality is also playing a crucial role in ensuring that support is given to emerging businesses and relevant stakeholders in order to promote cohesive working.

- **District tourism strategy**

Many respondents indicated the lack of a tourism strategy as a big issue, as it hinders municipalities from creating their own strategy to align with that strategy. Although the strategy is being developed, local municipalities are confused about how to structure

their marketing strategies as there is no clear vision of tourism promotion and sustainability.

One respondent said:

uMkhanyakude District is still developing a district strategy that we can follow. For now, each municipality is just doing what they think can be beneficial to the local tourism economy without a proper framework that guides them into the future. Every municipality is working in silos (UKDMR).

4.5.2 Lack of tourism priority and support

Results reveal that there is a lack of tourism priority and support in some municipalities, especially in terms of funding.

One respondent had this view about tourism as a priority and the lack of financial support:

Tourism is not prioritised in the municipality because even the CTO depends on the membership fees for it to function and remain in operation (CTOR).

Another respondent indicated that there is a lack of alignment between municipalities and the CTOs when it comes to tourism promotion. More efforts are needed at the municipal level to merge the communication unit, the tourism unit, and the CTOs for effective tourism promotion and development.

4.5.3 Relationship with the local tourism stakeholders in promoting tourism

This primary subtheme examined the relationship with the local tourism stakeholders in promoting tourism. However, while some agreed it was a good relationship, most respondents felt that the relationship was not strong enough, and improvement was needed.

4.5.3.1 Good relationship amongst stakeholders

Results revealed that the stakeholders have a good relationship with the different structures of the tourism sector as is evident from the following:

- **Stakeholders (The local community, Local businesses, Community Tourism Organisations, and the Provincial Government)**

Respondents mentioned that the stakeholder relationships were good, and they assisted with a lot of things including relevant information needed by municipalities, CTOs, and information centres.

- **Meetings**

Respondents mentioned that there were regular meetings and most of the stakeholders would attend. These meetings are sometimes inclusive of the community, which is good for tourism awareness, growth, and promotion. These also included business owners who provided reports indicating progress in their businesses. This promotes transparency.

- **Structures**

It was mentioned by respondents that existing structures such as the District Community Tourism Organisation (DCTO) and Community Tourism Organisation (CTO) assist in building the working relationship with local tourism stakeholders.

4.5.3.2 Difficulties of tourism stakeholders in promoting tourism

Despite the good relationship with some stakeholders, many respondents found difficulties when it comes to relationships. This indicated that relationship building requires improvement.

Respondents had this to say about stakeholder relationships:

- **Participation**

Respondents stressed that there was limited involvement in meetings and activities from stakeholders which hindered the progress thereof. Some did not want to deal with the respective municipalities that they are located in which made it hard for decision-making processes and strategising on tourism aspects.

Respondents stated:

Sometimes it's difficult to take tourism decisions that include all the stakeholders as some are not participating in the CTO (UKDMR).

Most of the stakeholders do not want to involve themselves with anything that has to do with government because they feel like it doesn't help them with anything (CTOR).

Another respondent expressed that stakeholders also worked in silos by not sharing information nor wanting to participate in any activities.

- **Politics**

Respondents stressed that there was also politics at play between different race groups. The respondent stated the following:

A race card is also playing a part in dividing stakeholders' participation, and it makes it difficult to support them in silos (UKDMR).

- **Lack of cohesion**

Results revealed that there was an overall lack of cohesion between stakeholders and some stakeholders feel neglected by the municipalities. More social cohesion is needed. This was expressed by one of the respondents:

Most of the stakeholders, mostly from meetings and CTO meetings, feel as if the municipality has neglected tourism, so most of the stakeholder's distance themselves from the municipalities' developmental and promotional programmes and projects (UKDMR).

4.5.3.3 Skills and training programmes for employees and stakeholders

This subtheme established the type of skills and training programmes the municipality provides to its employees, CTOs, and marketing agency in order to better understand the services they render to the tourists and how to promote those services. Results reveal that the municipality and government does assist in terms of skills and training for businesses and their employees.

- **Businesses**

Capacity building is provided to entrepreneurs and business owners through various programmes. Moreover, businesses are empowered at the local level in terms of policy and legislation. Participation is also given for necessary events.

One respondent stated that:

We give them the opportunity to participate in the relevant structures that are within the tourism fraternity so that they can grow, and we give them support for them to participate in the promotion and development platforms like tourism Indaba and other trade shows which are within the sector, though they are currently affected by COVID-19 (UKDMR).

- **Different government structures**

Departments such as the Small Enterprise Development Agency, the Sector Education and Training Authority, National Tourism, the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, and EDTEA provide training via the municipality. These include business management and financial-related training for local businesses and employees. Training programmes are also provided for information centres.

- **Conferences, international markets, and workshops**

Respondents stressed that there are tourism conferences that they attend, and they promote learning and knowledge on tourism product sales. There are also capacity-building workshops that serve to enhance knowledge capabilities, and these are done annually in some municipalities.

From the above, some respondents felt that some of these training programmes are not the necessary training and skills programmes required by the stakeholders. Stakeholders request necessary training and skills programmes, but funding is the primary reason why there is not enough training provided. The CTOs lacked the financial fortitude to provide adequate programmes. External funding had to be sought. Other respondents felt that training is not prioritised by municipalities, and they still need to do more to capacitate the local product owners when it comes to innovation in tourism. COVID-19 also played a role in hindering some training programmes.

4.6 CHALLENGES FACED BY MUNICIPALITIES IN PROMOTING TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

The key theme focuses on the challenges faced by municipalities in terms of sustainable tourism development and promotion. Respondents stated that the challenges in promoting local attractions entailed the following:

4.6.1 Financial

There was an overall tourism budget shortage which affected the promotion of local attractions. More budget needed to be allocated to municipalities in order to tap into the innovative ways of promoting tourism. One respondent said:

I can say it's budget because marketing needs more budget as we need to have the necessary digital tools and resources to undertake the promotion of our offerings (UKDMR).

Another respondent mentioned that the shortage of budget had an effect on necessary tools and resources that were needed for effective promotions. The budget also hindered programmes from being implemented as some CTO-planned programmes were unfunded and they rely only on membership fees for continuity.

One respondent felt that the budget issue starts at the national level and cascades down to provincial and local structures as the tourism budget was lacking at the national level, provincial, and local levels, and it seemed that more was allocated to other sectors rather than tourism. This type of mindset needs to change drastically.

Budget constraints are also an issue as tourism is receiving a limited budget even from the national level. Furthermore, support is needed from our provincial structures in terms of facilitating budget allocation as more budget is allocated to other sectors of the municipalities, for instance, technical services, and less budget is given to tourism promotion and development. Budget is the main constraint in our municipality's tourism promotion challenges (UKDMR).

Due to the lack of budget, creativity, and innovation in marketing and promotion such as online/interactive methods were hampered. Additionally, the cost of promotions can be exorbitant, and the lack of financial support means that such costs cannot be

absorbed thereby limiting the effectiveness of promotion and development in tourism destinations. Municipalities need to come up with strategies to overcome this issue.

4.6.2 COVID-19

COVID-19 remained a challenge. Tourist dropped during this period thereby causing a drop-in income and revenue. The disease outbreak forced tourism destination to re-strategise and look for new alternative methods of tourism promotion and development, one of which was to tap into the world of modern innovative ways of tourism promotion.

4.6.3 Support

Challenges relating to support were one of the highly ranked challenges and it includes the following:

- **Staff**

Respondents stated that the respective tourism entities they represent were short-staffed. This compromised quality and efficiency of services offered. Human capacity is invaluable for the quality development and promotion of tourism.

There is also a shortage of staff in the tourism unit which limits the units' productivity. So, all these challenges hinder the tourism units' success and a chance to capture every opportunity for tourism growth and development (UKDMR).

- **Disbanded CTO structures and information centres**

The CTO in one area was disbanded and there were no information centres, other information centres were revamped. Hence their support was absent.

- **Maintenance**

Respondents stressed the issue of poor maintenance of infrastructure which counts against tourism promotion and development. The poor maintenance of tourism signage was also highlighted as an issue that hinders tourism promotion and the good image of destinations.

- **Political challenges**

Respondents expressed the issue of political influence as one of the issues of concern as appointments into high-level tourism positions were not based on qualification or knowledge of tourism but other factors. Such appointments were seen as political appointments.

Lack of tourism knowledge as most of the leaders are from an economic and development background, they don't have tourism qualifications and experience (UKDMR).

Respondents also stressed that internal politics impacted on how departments and budgets were prioritised.

- **Race**

Results reveal that racial division between tourism stakeholders implied a lack of unity and cohesion thereby hindering progress in tourism promotion and development. The issue has resulted in stakeholders as well as product owners working in silos and not engaging with each other. This lack of stakeholder collaboration hinders progress and development especially when it comes to decision-making and reaching consensus.

4.6.4 Global, national, and local challenges impacting innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development

Relating to challenges, this subtheme determined challenges globally, nationally, or locally regarding innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development. The challenges include the following:

- **COVID-19**

Based on the results, COVID-19 was the highest-ranked disruptive change and challenge. It took the world by surprise and the tourism fraternity was one of the biggest casualties. Travel was banned due to lockdown, and everyone was not prepared for the restrictions that came with COVID-19. Hence tourism activities and programmes stopped, and re-adapting is difficult for many stakeholders.

- **Fourth Industrial Revolution**

From the results of the interviews, it is evident that the 4IR was another disruptive change brought about by technology. While such change can be positive and innovative, it becomes a challenge when the fraternity is not equipped to adapt to technology. Such adoption requires skills, money, resources, infrastructure, and many other factors. The digital transformation requires immediate consideration. It has become an 'adapt or die' situation and ample planning and resources need to be directed to address these factors.

- **Resource constraints**

Respondents stated that resources are always needed to promote and develop tourism. Currently, resource constraints such as lack of equipment and infrastructure negatively impact tourism promotion. The electricity crisis in South Africa was also a contributing factor.

- **Economic**

People all over the world experience financial issues that can hinder their travel plans. Tourism may become a luxury due to financial and economic constraints.

- **Climate**

Climate change is a global phenomenon, and climate changes can affect tourist destinations, travel schedules, and tourist experience.

4.7 MUNICIPALITIES' FUTURE TOURISM PROMOTION STRATEGIES AND INNOVATION

This important theme detailed what is needed to address challenges and was also based on lessons learned from challenges. It also outlines future strategies and innovations for sustainable tourism and promotion in municipalities.

4.7.1 Addressing challenges regarding tourism promotion and offerings

The subtheme establishes ways to address challenges. It also considers the lessons learnt from the challenges experienced.

- **Financial strategies**

Financial strategies were naturally at the fore due to the current financial constraints.

- Municipalities need to review their current financial strategy to find ways of financial leverage.
- The CTOs are trying to find alternative means of funding inclusive of trying to partner with the private sector and seeking donations.
- Municipalities must negotiate the increase of budget for promotion and development.
- Some tourism entities have approached departments such as EDTEA in order to obtain more funding for the promotion and development of tourism.

- **Stakeholder collaboration**

Collaboration strategies were being examined to address the challenges of silo working. Stakeholder participation, through stakeholder engagement meetings including EDTEA and other stakeholders, were encouraged in order to promote cohesive meetings and from a formidable unit working together to promote the destination.

- **Diversity**

The biggest challenge in the tourism industry, mostly in our municipality, is the division between races which should be fixed (CTOR).

Results reveal that there should be diversity amongst the tourism structures to ensure a racially diverse and well-balanced committee to promote racial cohesion and collective working efforts.

- **Empowerment and capacity building**

Results show that capacity building in the form of acquiring more staff and developing current staff was being examined. This was done by engaging entities such as SEDA, NYDA, and TKZN for capacity-building funding. Empowerment of leaders through South African Local Government Association was underway in order to promote the importance of tourism.

- **Conceptualising new strategies**

New strategies were being conceptualised especially in light of the 4IR and post-COVID19 era.

- **CTO resuscitation**

Some CTOs in some areas were either disbanded or inactive. Hence, the resuscitation of the CTOs in some areas was in progress. The provincial department was asked to intervene in some instances.

4.7.2 Strategies for innovation, promoting awareness, and sustainable tourism development

This was a critical subtheme as it examined the strategies needed for innovation, promoting awareness, and sustainable tourism development. It includes the following:

- **Capacity building and training**

Capacity building and training had to be focused on for now and in the future.

- **Technology training**

More workshops are needed for the development of tourism skills. This must be facilitated from the provincial level and needs to focus more on digital promotion skills to adapt to the new era of the 4IR. Modern tourism promotion gaps must be identified with product owners as to where training is required for a holistic revamp of the tourism sector in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality.

- **Leadership and cohesion**

Leadership and cohesion were important both in municipalities and CTOs must be the driving force behind such positive change and strategy in tourism destinations. Everyone needed to come together to work collectively. This must be facilitated from the leadership level. Challenges can be resolved when everyone works in cohesion with each other. Leadership must also understand tourism and how it can be used for economic growth in the area. Political leaders need to be trained on the importance of tourism and promotion so that the budget can be distributed evenly. This can alleviate

political interference. Lastly, respondents expressed that appointments for CTO and other committees must be fair and based on qualifications, knowledge, and merit for tourism growth and development.

- **New and alternative strategies**

Given the unpredictability of the current markets and economies, it's important to evaluate alternate strategies. This is especially true since COVID-19 taught us how sudden changes can occur. These entities must always plan for such changes and create alternative strategies.

- **Funding**

Funding for innovation must be sought. Innovative mechanisms and infrastructure can be costly but it's a necessity. Hence funding should be prioritised by the respective governmental departments.

- **Technology and media**

Currently, there seems to be a large deficiency in technology use. This must be capitalised on to harness technology's potential.

- Technology adoption must be integrated across the board, from leadership, operations, product owners, and other stakeholders. The government must also support the implementation of technology.
- The need for innovation has arrived and should be prioritised. Promotion methods incorporating 4IR must be tapped into otherwise the area/industry will be left behind.
- Technology such as social media will allow for global reach for the marketing of tourism products and services. Additionally, it will be a key expeditor of online selling to the global markets. This can allow for agile and convenient sales creating more income for tourism destinations.

- **Measurement and improvement**

Respondents also conveyed that there must be continuous measurement to inform improvement in tourism promotion and sustainability. Ongoing measurement is

needed to evaluate the effectiveness of tourism promotion. This could be done by conducting research and assessing current mechanisms against desired results. Benchmarking with other tourism entities can also serve to exchange best practices. The municipality should also develop a tourism strategy to identify and address gaps. The tourism life cycle can be utilised to assess the progress of tourism in the area.

- **Policy**

Policy must be looked at carefully and changes made for tourism promotion and development.

- There must be more policy alignment between tourism entities, leadership, and stakeholders towards a common goal.
- New policies should be developed that relate to current matters such as digital transformation (4IR), post-COVID-19, climate change, and inflation which affect sustainable tourism development and promotion.

4.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

From the results of the interviews, it is evident that all tourism entities operating in UKDM are generally positive about the adoption and usage of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development to attract visitors and are keen to grow the economy in the sector. However, there are many challenges that hinder them from tapping into the modern ways of tourism promotion and sustainable development. In the next chapter, these findings will be discussed relative to the literature review and primary study. Based on the conclusions, recommendations will be offered.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of the research was to draw conclusions on the findings and to submit viable recommendations to tourism entities, municipalities, CTOs, and information centres in uMkhanyakude District Municipality, KZN. The conclusions and recommendations of this study flow from the findings of both the primary and secondary studies. Limitations of this study have been identified and areas for future research are suggested.

5.2 Revisiting research aim and objectives

The aims and objectives of the study play a pivotal role as they reveal why the study is being conducted.

5.2.1 *Aim*

The aim of the study was to examine and explore the usage of innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development in UKDM to attract visitors, investors and develop uMkhanyakude District Municipality's tourism.

5.2.2 *Objectives*

The objectives of this study were:

- To investigate the level of understanding and awareness that uMkhanyakude District Municipality has regarding innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development and the importance of adopting it.
- To explore the contemporary mechanisms used by uMkhanyakude District Municipality to promote sustainable tourism development.
- To improve the existing mechanisms of innovation used by uMkhanyakude District Municipality to promote tourism and sustainable development.
- To ascertain strategies to improve the usage of innovative ways of promoting tourism in uMkhanyakude District Municipality and local municipalities.

5.3 Conclusions regarding each of the four objectives

The findings of the study are as follows:

5.3.1 First objective

- Investigate the level of understanding and awareness that uMkhanyakude District Municipality has regarding innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development and the importance of adopting it and the benefits that accrue to its usage.

5.3.1.1 Findings from the literature review and primary study

According to a comprehensive review of relevant literature, the usage of innovative mechanisms such as social media and its positive impact on tourism destinations such as those in uMkhanyakude District Municipality, revealed the strategic importance of modern ways of promotion to remain competitive. The findings further reveal that customers today have lost trust in corporate communications and do not want to hear commercial advertisements. In the tourism industry, social media has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to connect with customers (Neascu 2014:119).

Findings from the primary study revealed that the tourism practitioners in UKDM understand and are aware of the innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development. However, most of the municipal entities still depend on and prioritise the use of traditional marketing strategies to promote their tourism products in the area.

Theorists in the literature review (Garabinovi 2019), Madondo (2016:40), Avraham and Ketter (2012:11), Howison, Finger and Hauschka (2014:273) revealed that traditional marketing has been changed by the internet and new social media platforms. In the tourism sector, there are a variety of marketing and communication tactics that are used for promotion. The internet's impact on tourism is a fantastic way of doing business. It helps to break through geographical borders and generate new forms of interaction between people and businesses and people. This is reinforced by Loda (2014: 306), who claims that the digital revolution has already altered practically every

aspect of the tourism industry's operations. The tourism business has reaped the benefits of the internet's increased potential.

Research shows social media is now a very powerful tool for destination marketing, especially when that municipality is a tourist destination. Social media is a good platform for enhancing and exchanging visitors' experiences with the city or the municipality. The rate of tourism will unquestionably increase if decision-makers use multiple social media platforms that are important and relevant to tourism. Social media has a pervasive impact in promoting tourism destinations (Song *et al.* (2014) Primary research revealed that although traditional marketing methods are important for municipalities, they also need to be blended with innovative methods of marketing as the world is changing. The awareness campaigns taking place at schools need to be blended with online methods as most of the new generation is more on social media.

5.3.2 Second objective

- Examine the contemporary mechanisms used by uMkhanyakude District Municipality to promote sustainable tourism development.

5.3.2.1 Findings from the literature review and primary study

Findings from a comprehensive review of relevant literature about contemporary mechanisms, their usage, and benefits to municipalities revealed that social media is heavily used mostly in the tourism sector, and thus in municipality promotional activities.

The study reveals that social media may be used more efficiently than traditional communication channels, so, like any other business, tourism organisations need to participate in social media marketing platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, blogs, forums, and media sharing sites. These sites are facilitating communication between tourism stakeholders and municipality managers on issues such as improving the images of tourism destination, making past or future tourism plans, and establishing direct communication with tourism destinations. The main reason for this is that travellers are constantly using social media before planning their trips, during

their trips, and at the end of their trips to share their travel experiences. As a result, social media tools are regarded as an effective means of publicising tourist destinations (Ketter 2016).

The study revealed that using social media such as Google, Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn, X, Bing, and TripAdvisor can bring many benefits. The benefits include reaching out to more customers around the world, even in remote areas; promoting immediacy; improving accessibility; offering 24/7 operations regardless of time difference; and enhancing interactive exchanges (Sahin and Sengün 2015).

Findings from the primary study revealed that most of the municipal entities do not use social media as part of their promotion techniques. There is a need for full adoption of the contemporary mechanisms used by tourism municipal destinations around the world. The few tourism entities that use contemporary mechanisms of promotion are only using them solely for IDP roadshows and when tourism is blended with other municipal activities for example on a website, but these websites are hardly visited and rarely updated with new interesting information. In light of the current lack of adoption of contemporary mechanisms, there is a dire need for the adoption and usage of such promotion methods as they are cost-effective for promotion, development, and improvement of tourism in uMkhanyakude District Municipality.

Findings from the literature review emphasise that with the help of social media as a new marketing tool, tourism destinations can get to know their clients and potential clients in ways that weren't possible before. This knowledge and information must be exchanged for results of decency, reliability, and honesty. The following social media sites are the most important for a tourism company: Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and YouTube (Kaur 2017:74).

5.3.3 *Third objective*

- Exploring the effectiveness of the innovative mechanisms used by uMkhanyakude District Municipality to promote tourism and sustainable development.

5.3.3.1 Findings from the literature review and primary study

The findings from the primary study and literature review reveal that there are some challenges encountered by tourism municipalities that hinder them from exploring the contemporary mechanisms for promoting sustainable tourism and development.

The Local Government Tourism Development and Growth Support Programme (Department of Tourism 2013:13) states that funding at the national level is currently arguably the weakest link in South Africa's development and sustainability of tourism. This factor is exacerbated and felt at the local government level. Inadequate funding for tourism-related programmes and projects hinders tourism growth. Tourism is frequently overlooked in favour of more pressing service delivery concerns. The current lack of a defined budget allocation for tourism development in most towns is particularly troubling. Rogerson and Rogerson (2021:57) supports this perspective when he states that budget restrictions are a big challenge in municipalities. They face myriad challenges. There is a scarcity of promotional activities, such as media, satellite, TV, and domestic radio stations, as well as restricted usage of websites in tourism businesses and municipalities (Myeni 2018:48).

To ensure that tourism development is sustainable and sensitive to the local population, good and effective recommendations could be developed and implemented in the future through the use of TALC (Rodrigo, Ajala and Irhanida 2023:9).

The findings from the primary study revealed that the current promotional strategies were seen as ineffective. There was a lack of digital platforms such as websites and other contemporary digital media for marketing. Traditional methods of brochure distribution, tourism school awareness campaigns, trade shows, and more were still being used. This current situation needs to change drastically for promotion strategies to become more effective.

5.3.4 Fourth objective

- Ascertain strategies to improve the usage of innovative ways of promoting tourism and improve awareness of tourism in uMkhanyakude District Municipality and local municipalities.

5.3.4.1 Findings from the literature review and primary study

The findings from the primary study revealed that the challenges of devising and implementing strategies for adopting and using contemporary tourism promotion mechanisms for tourism and sustainable development are hampered by several issues of technological training as well as a lack of funding for such initiatives. The findings reveal that a strategy to address the issues facing tourism promotion requires government intervention from all spheres from the national, provincial, and local level in the form of facilitation, support, and funding. The findings reveal that many municipalities are currently working under no guidance of a promotion policy or marketing strategy, etc.

The interviews that were conducted with the tourism managers shows that even if the strategy is available, it is a challenge to implement it due to a lack of resources and funding. The development of tourism marketing strategies requires the participation of all the tourism stakeholders for it to be successful.

The findings also reveal that it is crucial to develop tourism strategies that will address the issues of diversity and the leadership challenges in the UKDM. The developed strategies should unpack the marketing promotion trends as this will assist in terms of aligning the strategy with new trends and developments in tourism promotion space and ensure that the municipalities and other affected tourism entities use it effectively.

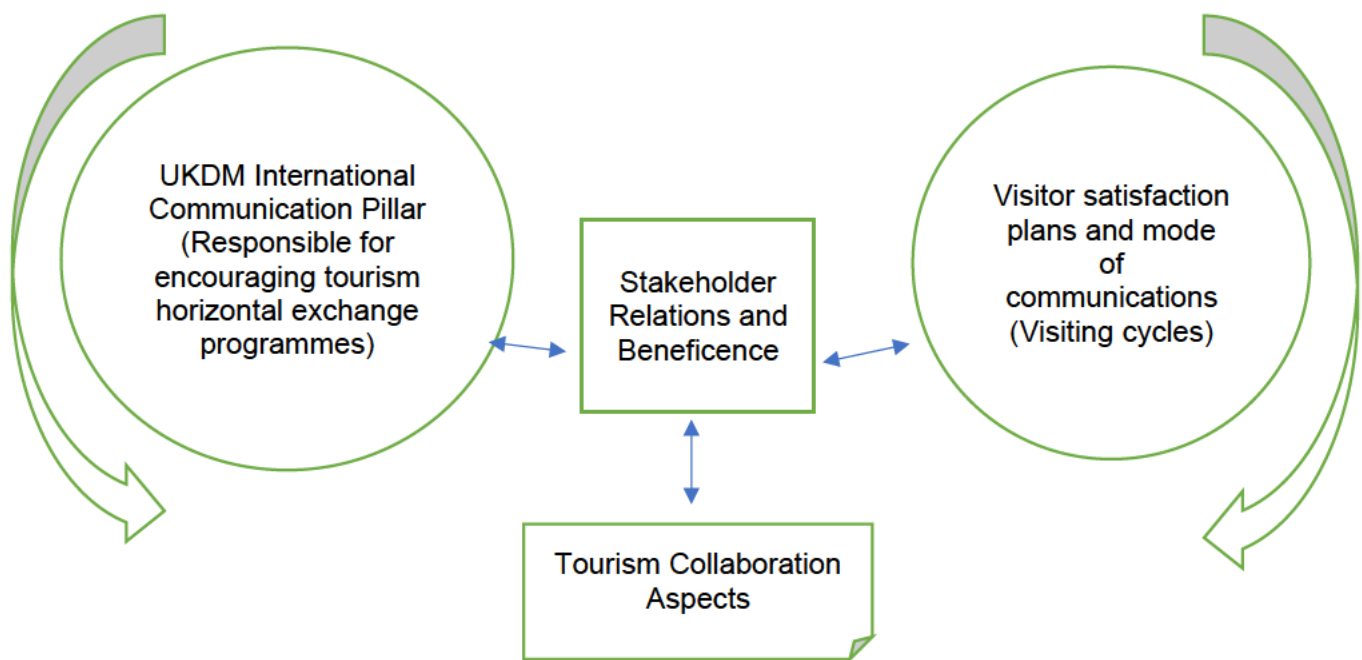
5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

This study sought to determine the usage of innovative mechanisms in promoting sustainable tourism development in uMkhanyakude District Municipality, South Africa. UKDM which has rich biodiversity and breath-taking beauty. The iSimangaliso Wetlands Park, a world heritage site, is located in the district and is well-known for

drawing visitors from all over the world. The region is renowned for its natural forests, marine protected areas, and private and public game reserves. Moreover, UKDM contributes immensely to employment and the economy in the district and is responsible for promoting tourism at the district level. The vision of UKDM is to market itself as a prime tourism destination (UKDM 2018:12). This can be enhanced and achieved through blending the traditional methods, social media, and other promotional strategies in the district. Promoting tourism via social media in UKDM is the premise behind this study and the aim is to determine the usage and the influence of social media in achieving this.

As part of the original contribution to the field, this study introduced a more critical approach to disruptive tourism innovation. The researcher developed a model entitled: 'UKDM Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Value Chain' that is shown in Figure 5.1 which uMkhanyakude District Municipality can adopt as part of their tourism innovation strategies.

The uMkhanyakude District Municipality's sustainable and responsible tourism value chain model is created to guide UKDM in ensuring that the municipality's communication unit works in harmony with the tourism unit in encouraging tourism horizontal exchange programmes that enable the district to penetrate the global market through communication or promotion, maintain stakeholder relations, and ensure that the stakeholders benefit from tourism as well as having strategic plans for visitors by monitoring visitor satisfaction.



Cost	The budget required to fund the intervention of tourism enhancement and innovation programmes.
Input	Inputs cover all the materially significant financial, human, and material resources used for the roll-out of Tourism media strategies.
Activities	Activities are used to deliver outputs (they include grant global exchange, collaboration, and tourism cycles of uMkhanyakude District Municipality).
Output	Outputs (service of tourism) relate to products, capital assets, and services that result from tourism sustainable development.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the likely or realised short-term/medium-term effects of the outputs of the tourism innovation. They contribute to poverty reduction and/or the Millennium Development Goals.
Impact	The longer-term effects of tourism innovation on members of the community are produced, directly or indirectly, by the development of an all-inclusive approach to bigger and better tourism.

Figure 5.1: Umkhanyakude District Municipality's sustainable and responsible tourism value chain

The researcher created the above tourism value chain model as part of the study's original contribution to knowledge in the field of tourism economy including the demonstration of the novelty, relevance, and rigorousness of sustainable tourism development in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions derived from the findings are:

- The adoption of contemporary mechanisms such as social media is of paramount importance in promoting tourism and it is not just an optional extra. Municipalities that do not use or do not successfully utilise social media techniques to enhance productivity, attract tourists, and break down communication barriers, may find that tourism will decline, and the local economy will suffer.
- The study concludes that innovative mechanisms such as social media are one of the most effective methods for promoting tourism due to its effectiveness when compared to traditional communication channels in municipalities.
- Local municipalities in the UKDM need to collaborate and utilise the contemporary promotion tools available in the District Municipality's communications unit and work with other stakeholders (e.g. product owners, CTOs, and information centres) to improve promotion and sustain tourism in the district.
- Tourism municipalities and other entities must acquire more knowledge in departments or unit that lack performance so that the necessary skills and knowledge acquired will contribute towards the growth of tourism products in the future.
- Local municipalities in UKDM and other stakeholders need to develop tourism strategies that address the issues of funding, promotion policy, diversity, and leadership crisis as well as monitor the implementation of the strategies. This will assist in terms of aligning the strategy with new trends and developments in the tourism promotion space and ensure that the municipalities and other affected tourism organisations attract visitors and grow tourism in the area.
- Social media is one of the most effective communication platforms in the tourism sector, outperforming traditional channels in recent years. To successfully promote the tourism sector, social media must be blended with other aspects of the promotional mix. Effective promotion requires the incorporation of multiple tactics. In all instances, no single marketing tactic

consistently outperforms others. In the tourism industry, social media alone is insufficient to promote tourism.

5.6 Limitations of the study

Simon (2011:1) explains the limitations of the study as being the potential weaknesses in the study. The sample population selected for this study was limited to respondents based in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality; thus, the ability to generalise to all the municipalities in KZN and beyond its borders is strictly limited. As the design is a case study, the findings also are not generalisable to other district municipalities in other regions of South Africa. Another limitation of this research study was that a number of respondents displayed reluctance to participate in the study and some were passionate in responding to questions due to their political views and the fact that they were not happy about the uMkhanyakude District Municipality as some of the local municipalities are managed by different political parties. As a result, some of the responses were motivated by anger and animosity. Such conduct could have influenced the study's outcomes.

The next paragraph discusses the general recommendations.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion and findings of the study the following recommendations are put forward:

- Resources such as funding, technology, and infrastructure should be provided to ensure that municipalities and other stakeholders can promote and grow their tourism products.
- Training and development that addresses tourism promotion and development must be provided as a means of continuous learning and adaptation by the industry. This includes hiring marketing professionals so that they can teach and sharpen tourism practitioners and other staff members regarding new tourism marketing skills to improve tourism products. These can be done via Sector Education and Training Authorities or Further Education and Trainings', online learning academies with

funding from EDTEA, the National Department of Tourism, and other sourced funding.

- Municipalities and other marketing bodies should implement and blend traditional and innovative methods in their tourism marketing promotional strategies. Furthermore, they must increase their efficiency in promoting tourism activities by increasing the utilisation of social media platforms in an ongoing effort to showcase the UKDM and the country at large as tourist destinations of choice.
- An ongoing review and measurement of tourism marketing strategies is recommended to maintain efficiency.
- In addition, product development and improvement of services is important to promote valuable tourism products depending on the needs of UKDMs' different target markets..
- Tourism CTOs should be given ample funding and incentives to allow them to grow their entities with proper resources and training.
- Strategic partnerships and involvement of other stakeholders such as product owners are encouraged to enforce diversity and stakeholder collaboration.
- Workshops need to be conducted in order to train political leaders in the importance of tourism and promotion. These workshops can assist in ensuring that CTO leadership appointments are fair and based on qualification, knowledge, and merit for tourism growth and development.
- New policies should be developed that relate to current matters such as digital transformation (4IR), post-COVID-19, climate change, and inflation, all of which affect sustainable tourism development and promotion.

The next paragraph discusses the further research directions.

5.8 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This research study investigated innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development by interviewing tourism practitioners (tourism managers, CTOs, and

information officers) in uMkhanyakude District Municipality, KZN. The findings of this study show that there very few innovative mechanisms such as social media platforms being used in UKDM. The influence of more or specific social media sites will provide marketing practitioners with a better idea of what platform to utilise and in what situation. Different types of social media do not have the same impact on providing the needs of organisations as well as individuals. Different social media platforms are not equally useful for promoting tourism so, further research ought to investigate the impact of specific social media platforms on promoting the tourism sector.

5.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Overall, this study has investigated innovative ways used by the UKDM to promote tourism and sustainable development. In uMkhanyakude District, KZN. It has examined the current literature and empirically explored the opinions of tourism practitioners (tourism managers, CTOs, and information officers). The objectives of the study were discussed relating to the findings, ascertaining that the aim of the study was achieved.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Gate Keepers Request Letter



uMkhanyakude District Municipality

Harlingen No. 13433, Kingfisher Road,

Mkuze, KwaZulu Natal,

South Africa

30 May 2020

Request for Permission to Conduct Research addressed to the uMkhanyakude District Municipality.

To: The Municipal Manager

My name is Brian Vika Simelane, I am a registered Master of Tourism student: Management Sciences specialising in Hospitality and Tourism at the Durban University of Technology-Riverside Campus. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's thesis is titled 'Innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development: A case of uMkhanyakude District Municipality, KwaZulu Natal.'

I am hereby seeking your consent to:

•Interview Tourism/LED managers or Tourism/LED unit officers from the district (UMkhanyakude District) and all the other four local municipalities, Tourism visitors' information officers from the tourism information offices from the local municipalities under uMkhanyakude District municipalities. Five Chairpersons from Five CTOs within the uMkhanyakude District Municipality, and one tourism manager from the District Municipal entity who have had experience and are involved in tourism development and promotion in uMkhanyakude District.

The cost pertaining to this study will be borne by the Durban University of Technology.

Furthermore, the final dissertation will also be made available to the district municipality.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor/promoter on the details below:

Office: 033 845 8839 / 0737755417

E-mail: brians@dut.ac.za

Promoter: Dr N.S Chili: nsizwazikhonac@dut.ac.za

Office: 033 845 8810 / 072 995 2586

Your co-operation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Brian Vika Simelane

Durban University of Technology

Appendix 2: Permission letter from uMkhanyakude District Municipality



UMASIPALA WESIFUNDA
Umkhanyakude

OFFICE OF THE ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER

**P. O. Box 449
Mkuze
3965**

**Harlingen 13433
Kingfisher Road
Mkuze**

**Tel : 035 573 8600
Fax : 035 5731094
Website: www.ukdm.gov.za**

Email: sabelom@ukdm.gov.za

Enquires: Mr S Madela (AMM)

**Mr Brian Vika Simelane
Durban University of Technology
Durban
4000**

Send by email: brians@dut.ac.za or nsizwazikhonac@dut.ac.za

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The letter serves as authorisation of Mr Brian Vika Simelane to conduct the research on innovation in Promoting Sustainable Tourism Development: A case of Umkhanyakude District Municipality, KwaZulu Natal

Upon the review of the letter sent to us by your institution, we are glad to offer you an opportunity to conduct the research in our organisation.

If you have any concerns or require additional information feel free to contact our Tourism Manager Mr T. Khumalo at 035 5738600 or email khumalot@ukdm.gov.za.

Hope you will find the above in order.

**MR S MADELA
ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER
DATE: 18th OCTOBER 2021**

CC. Mr T Khumalo (Tourism Manager)

Appendix 3: Consent Letter



Consent Letter

Full Title of the Study:

Innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development: A case of uMkhanyakude District Municipality, KwaZulu Natal.

Names of Researcher/s: Mr Brian V Simelane

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Mr Brian V. Simelane, about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: to be confirmed.
- 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.

Full Name of Participant Date Time Signature / Right Thumbprint

I, **Mr Brian V. Simelane** herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher Date Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable) Date Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date Signature

Appendix 4: Interview Consent Letter



Interview Consent Letter

Faculty of Management Sciences
Department of Ecotourism Management
Date: 28: 07: 2021

Dear Participant

I am a currently registered student with the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology [DUT]. As part of my studies and to qualify for the award of a master's in management sciences degree, I must complete a dissertation. I am therefore conducting a study titled: **Innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development: A case of uMkhanyakude District Municipality, KwaZulu Natal**. I have to conduct interviews with tourism experts in the municipality. I kindly request you to participate and contribute to this study by participating in an interview which will not take more than 45 minutes of your valued time. All the data collected in this study will merely be applied for research purposes and confidentiality is guaranteed. Should you not understand any one question in this interview, please do not hesitate to ask me for clarity. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Please note that no money or incentive will be received for participating in this study. My supervisor can also be contacted on 033 845 8810 should you need to make any further enquiry. All your efforts to this interview are highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Brian V Simelane

Student
Tel/Cell: 0737755417 / 0338458839
Email: simelanebrian4@gmail.com
Dr N.S Chili

Supervisor / Promoter
Tel/Cell: 0729952586 / 0338458810
Email: nsizwazikhonac@dut.ac.za

Appendix 5: Interview schedule (uMkhanyakude District Tourism Unit)



Innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development: A case of uMkhanyakude District Municipality, KwaZulu Natal.

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

Researcher: Mr Brian Vika Simelane

Supervisor: Dr. Simon Nsizwazikhona Chili

The foundation of this interview guide is to obtain information from the Municipality tourism employees on the topic: innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development. The information provided will be used for this research purposes only. Participation in the study is voluntary and does not require your personal details. The interview will last no longer than 45 minutes.

- For the purpose of study, can you introduce yourself?
- What is your understanding of tourism promotion and sustainable development?
- To what extent does the UKDM contribute to tourism promotion and sustainable development
- What skills and training programmes does the municipality provide to its employees, CTO's and marketing agency in order to better understand the services they render to the tourists and how to promote those services?
- Does UKDM have excellent packages of tourism attractions that have been created and promoted?
- How does the KCDM market and promote its offerings to the outside world?
- How is the municipality's relationship with the local tourism stakeholders in promoting uMkhanyakude District tourism to the outside world?
- What are the challenges that the municipality face in promoting local attractions?
- How does the UKDM address the challenges it faces regarding the promotion of uMkhanyakude District tourism attractions and offerings?
- Does Tourism KwaZulu Natal (TKZN) involve KCDM in their marketing strategic planning as a tourism stakeholder?

- How is the municipality's relationship with the local tourism stakeholders in promoting KCDM tourism to the outside world?
- Which innovative tourism promotion mechanisms does the municipality use to market and promote its local offerings?
- How effective are the municipality's' promotion strategies in promoting UMkhanyakude District tourism?
- How does the UKDM ensure that it provide accurate and interesting information to tourists about uMkhanyakude District as a tourist destination?
- What are the policy guidelines followed by UKDM that guides and ensure that the municipality keeps abreast to the new technological mechanisms used to promote and develop local tourism?
- In your view, are those policy guidelines if there are any, adequately developed to attract and meet all the needs of the tourist and why?
- Has UKDM established any innovative mechanisms to promote sustainable tourism development?
- How does UKDM assess the effectiveness of the promotion mechanisms used to promote tourism in the area?
- Is the municipality aware of the tourism area life cycle model and if yes has it been tested to detect which level is the municipality in, using the model?
- Is the municipality aware of any challenges obtained globally, nationally or locally regarding adopting innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development?
- In your view, what can the municipality do to learn from these challenges?
- In your view, what are the strategies the KCDM could use to improve the usage of innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development while improving awareness of tourism in KDCM?
- Before we close this interview, is there anything critical that you feel should be included regarding the use of innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development and if so, what is it?

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 6: Interview schedule (Tourism Managers, CTOs and Tourism Information Officers)



Innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development: A case of UMkhanyakude District Municipality, KwaZulu Natal.

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

Researcher: Mr Brian Vika Simelane

Supervisor: Dr. Simon Nsizwazikhona Chili

The foundation of this interview guide is to obtain information from the Municipality tourism employees on the topic: innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development. The information provided will be used for this research purposes only. Participation in the study is voluntary and does not require your personal details. The interview will last no longer than 45 minutes.

- For the purpose of study, can you introduce yourself?
- What is your understanding of tourism promotion and sustainable development?
- To what extent does the district and your municipality contribute to tourism promotion and sustainable development
- What skills and training programmes does UKDM(UKDM), and your municipality provide to its employees, CTOs, and marketing agency in order to better understand the services they render to the tourists and how to promote those services?
- Does UKDM or your municipality have excellent packages of tourism attractions that have been created and promoted?
- How does your local municipality market and promote its offerings to the outside world?
- What are the challenges that your municipality face in promoting local attractions?
- How is the municipality's relationship with the local tourism stakeholders in promoting UKDM tourism to the outside world?

- How does your municipality address the challenges it faces regarding the promotion of KCDM tourism attractions and offerings?
- Has your municipality established any innovative mechanisms to promote sustainable tourism development? If yes, which innovative mechanisms does it use to market and promote its local offerings?
- How does your municipality assess the effectiveness of the promotion mechanisms used to promote tourism in the area?
- How effective are the municipality's' promotion strategies in promoting UKDM tourism?
- How does your municipality ensure that it provides accurate and interesting information to tourists about UKDM as a tourist destination?
- What are the policy guidelines followed by your municipality that guides and ensure that the municipalities keep abreast to the new technological mechanisms used to promote and develop local tourism?
- In your view, are those policy guidelines if there are any, adequately developed to attract and meet all the needs of the tourist and why?
- Is the municipality aware of the tourism area life cycle model and if yes has it been tested to detect which level is the municipality in, using the model?
- Is the municipality aware of any challenges obtained globally, nationally, or locally regarding adopting innovative ways of promoting sustainable tourism development?
- In your view, what can the municipality do to learn from these challenges?
- In your view, what are the strategies that your municipality could use to improve the usage of innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development while improving awareness of tourism in uMkhanyakude District districts?
- Before we close this interview, is there anything critical that you feel should be included regarding the use of innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development and if so, what is it?
- Are there any other related matters you would like to comment on which were not raised?

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 7: Turnitin report

Innovation in promoting sustainable tourism development: A case of Umkhanyakude District Municipality, KwaZulu Natal

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Appendix 8: Editing certificate

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BA HDE MTech(Hom)

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EDITING CERTIFICATE

Re: **Brian V Simelane** (21203002)

DUT master's dissertation: **EXPLORING INNOVATION IN PROMOTING
TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF
UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, KWAZULU-NATAL**

I confirm that I edited this dissertation and the references for clarity, language and layout. I returned the document to the author with track changes so correct implementation of the changes and clarifications requested in the text and references is the responsibility of the author. The intellectual content of the document is the responsibility of the author. I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing academic documents. My original tertiary degree which I obtained at the University of Cape Town was a B.A. with English as a major and I went on to complete an H.D.E. (P.G.) Sec. with English as my teaching subject. I was a part-time lecturer in the Department of Homoeopathy at the Durban University of Technology for 13 years and supervised many master's degree dissertations during that period.

Dr Richard Steele

01 December 2024

per email