

THE EFFICACY OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOL IN THE DURBAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Marketers still have the view that social media is a set of strange and foreign technologies that they may or may not use to market their offerings. They are still thinking that this is a pre-mature time to get a full understanding of the influence of social media in promoting business activities. The purpose of the study is to determine the efficacy of social media as a marketing communication tool in the Durban tourism industry. The study followed a quantitative research method. Descriptive research design was employed and data was collected using a questionnaire from a sample of 300 local and international tourists to Durban. The results revealed that social media is of strategic effectiveness in promoting tourism as it is adopted by the majority of travelers, creates awareness of tourist destinations, and creates opportunities for engaging with customers and building relationships. Tourists use social media to search for information, interact with other travelers and marketers, and share their experiences. Social media is not an optional extra in the tourism industry and destination marketing organisations, like any other firm, must participate on social media sites in order to succeed in today's highly competitive business environment. The study recommended that tourism marketers must adopt and integrate new social media applications in their formalized promotion strategies. Marketers must break communication barriers and improve efficiency in promoting tourism by increasing the utilisation of social media platforms. Social media marketing should be incorporated in the online marketing plan for tourism businesses. Tourism operators need to raise their level of online commitment and transform their marketing strategies to the online environment.

Keywords: Internet marketing, interactive advertising, online media, social media, tourism

Introduction

South African tourism is growing ahead of other economic sectors, attracting foreign direct spent and investment in the country and creating jobs. Tourism in driving the country forward and is advancing economic development. Durban is regarded as the leading tourism destination in South Africa and is globally marketed by an official marketing unit known as Durban Tourism, a part of the eThekweni Municipality (Durban Tourism, 2012). It is one of the major centres of tourism in South Africa and Africa because of its extensive beaches and the warm subtropical climate (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2014). The city is located off the east coast of the Indian Ocean, bordering the African continent (Ethekeweni Municipality, 2011). It is situated on the eastern seaboard of Africa and is built around one of the busiest ports in the continent (Durban Tourism, 2012). Durban is most known for its swimming

beaches which are lifeguard protected, the iconic Moses Mabida stadium, the uShaka Marine World aquarium, green parks and gardens like Mitchel Park and the Botanic Gardens, and the world-class pedestrian promenade (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2014).

The South African Tourism Strategy (2013) indicates that the opportunities in the tourism industry are so numerous but are not yet fully exploited and more marketing is needed to create more awareness. To achieve that, the choice of the right media is equally important as the efficacy of the medium can vary from industry to industry or it depends on the profile of the target audience and their preferences. Shimp (2012) argues that marketers are now tapping into social media and others have created their own social network sites as a means of conveying different messages about their organisations or brands to customers. The tourism industry is one such industry which must undoubtedly start finding ways to utilise social media and engage with prospective and present tourists. Lu *et al.* (2017) state that social media is being used by both tourists and tourism companies but the niche area has not gained much attention in academia. Although some organisations are using social media, they don't follow a strategy and their understanding of its efficacy is questionable (Agapitou *et al.*, 2021).

Durban is seen as a product which is marketed throughout the world. The imperative for tourism marketers is to package Durban the best way possible, positioning it in the minds of the potential tourists as a destination which will offer good value for money and to create awareness through the use of social media as well as other forms of media. Social media is already being used to push sales by attracting more tourists to South African destinations (Strauss and Frost, 2014). However, marketers still have the view that social media is a set of strange and foreign technologies that they may or may not use to market their offerings. They are still thinking that this is a pre-mature time to gain full understanding of the influence of social media in promoting business activities (Shimp, 2012). The use of social media is therefore still not optimized in most industries. There are a number of companies which are still lagging behind in the utilisation of social media (Chan and Guillet, 2011). Some organisations have not yet achieved their financial breakthrough targets due to their inability to grasp this new form of communication (Isodije, 2013). Agapitou *et al.* (2021) argue that where social media is used by tourist accommodation owners, even for the purposes of advertising, it is done without it being part of the general promotion strategy and without specific goals or plans. As such, there is no measurement of results and the benefits of social media are therefore not fully realized. Therefore, the main objective of the study was to determine the efficacy of social media in promoting tourism in Durban. The experiences of tourists to Durban was also examined because tourists like the act of sharing their experiences on social media platforms. Pan *et al.* (2007) stipulate that tourists often like to exchange and share their travel experiences on social media sites. The shared experiences affect the other viewer's perception of the image of the destination.

Literature review

In this study, tourism is defined operationally as a temporary movement of people outside their normal place of residence and work, together with the facilities provided to cater for those visits and the activities undertaken during the stay in those visited places (Holloway, 2002). On the other hand, Hays *et al.* (2013) define social media as the practices, behaviours, and activities among communities of people who gather online to share knowledge, opinions, and information using conversational media. Conversational media refers to Web-based applications that make it easy to create and transmit content in various forms such as videos, words, audios, and pictures. Social media is one of

the most effective internet based applications which allows interactive and direct relationships between customers and tourism organisations. Despite the plethora of marketing communication tools available to promoting tourism, social media has become by far the most effective way of generating awareness and creating interest in a product (Ulffy *et al.*, 2021; Waxer, 2012).

Categories of social media

According to Safko (2010), there is a need to categorise the entire world of social media. In responding to the need, the following categories of social media were found but the categories are not equally applicable and effective in promoting tourism. The categories are: social networking, publish, photo sharing, audio, video, microblogging, livecasting, virtual worlds, gaming, search, mobile, and productivity applications. Irina *et al.* (2014) argue that certain social media categories cannot equally meet personal needs of the individuals as well as the needs of the business. It was suggested that social networks, video file sharing, blogs, and micro-blogs platforms can be used for both tourism business and personal purposes (Leung, 2013). According to Kang and Scheutt (2013) there is a variety of forms of social media such as photo sharing sites (Photobucket, Flickr), social networks (Facebook, Twitter), video sharing and creating site (Ustream, YouTube), microblogging tools (Twitter), online communities, social tagging (Digg), rating/review websites (TripAdvisor), public internet forums, moblogs/blogs, podcasting, tagging sites, wikis, news readers (Google Reader), and individual websites. However, there are great differences in how writers categorise social media and there is no common criteria given.

Efficacy of social media

Leung *et al.* (2013: 3) highlight the strategic importance of social media in tourism competitiveness. Customers rely on sources of information that are reliable such as people they already know, share a bond with, and have a relationship with. Lin *et al.* (2020) indicate that research in the tourism industry identified many applications and benefits of social media. Travellers have turned to social media in order to share their experiences with others, mapping their travelling route, critique accommodation and search for information (Loreche *et al.*, 2012). Agapitou *et al.* (2021) assert that social media indeed transformed communication ways among the people and between people and companies. Hays *et al.* (2013) further elaborate that social media has radically altered the way of creating and disseminating information. In tourism, travelers now interact with other travelers more than before due to the advantages offered by social media. Interactions happen especially when travelers are searching for information and are planning for their trips. Social media is also used to share experiences and views, and to create and spread user-generated content which affects the travel choices of others. The current era of social media has evolved the Internet from a broadcasting medium to a participatory platform which allows the tourists to become the “media” themselves for collaborating and sharing information. Social media is an effective tool for customer service, communications, and public relations (Datta, 2019; Irina *et al.*, 2014). Tafesse and Korneliussen (2021) posit that social media can enhance customer satisfaction, drive customer spending and enable organization to build brand equity.

Firms therefore need to formalize their social media promotional efforts in order to capitalize on these benefits (Mishra, 2019). This technology does now allow individuals to easily contribute their opinions, creations and thoughts to the Internet. There are changes in the way in which the society

consumes and contributes to the creation of information. Ashra *et al.* (2020) state that service providers can tailor their social media advertisements to suit the information needs of travelers because they exhibit a certain information-seeking behavior. Luliana (2013) asserts that social media allows prospects and customers to communicate directly with their friends or with a brand representative, giving a chance for incorporating tailor made advertisements in the conversations. It is a highly interactive platform which allows customers to connect and engage with firms (Tafesse and Korneliussen, 2021). The opportunity of direct engagement with customers has never been found so easy before the advent of social media. Cusick (2013) supplements that social media is an effective and low cost global marketing tool, hence it cost-efficient promotional tool. This makes social media the most relevant tool in promoting tourism because tourism is a service which needs to be marketed globally and most firms in this sector are small to medium enterprises (Isodje, 2013; Roult *et al.*, 2016)). Social media sites enable potential visitors to learn from previous visitors through its ability to spread electronic word-of-mouth at a dramatic speed. The shared experiences from previous visitors to the destination can influence the intention of potential visitors to visit the place. Organisations should however not rely on what people share among themselves but must take a leading role in promoting their destinations using this platform. Teams dedicated to social media marketing should be set up and entrusted with the task to plan, implement and evaluate the impact of their social media promotional efforts of their destinations or brands as suggested by Tafesse and Korneliussen (2021).

Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive research design and followed a quantitative research approach in order to achieve its objective. Saunder (2007) indicate that the quantitative research approach predominantly deals with data-collection and data analysis procedures such as the use of questionnaires and statistics or graphs that use statistical models and numerical data. According to Churchill and Iacobucci (2010) descriptive research identifies the relationship between variables or the frequency within which something occurs, which supports the objectives of the study. A survey strategy was employed and the target population consisted of local and foreign nationals who visited Durban. A non-probability sampling technique was utilised in recruiting the participants. Convenience sampling technique is the type of non-probability sampling technique that was used. The projected sample size was 300 tourists but the achieved response was 272 questionnaires, giving a 90% response rate. A structured questionnaire was used in the survey that was conducted to obtain primary data from the tourists. The survey was mainly conducted on the Durban beach-front and other tourist hotspots. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics to present and analyse the data. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 23.0 was used for data analysis.

Reliability of the statistics

The two most important aspects of precision are reliability and validity. The success of a research study is mainly dependent on the reliability and validity of the research. A research can employ an internal consistency method to determine the reliability of a measuring instrument (Welman, 2005). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the degree of the instrument's internal consistency. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as "acceptable" (Andrew *et al.* 2011). The various sections that made up the research instrument were considered in obtaining Cronbach's alpha scores. Table 1 below reflects the Cronbach's alpha scores for all the items that constituted the questionnaire.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Sections	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1. Experience / Impression	15 of 15	.752
2. Efficacy of social media	6 of 6	.458
Overall	21 of 21	.857

The overall reliability score of 0,857 exceeds the recommended Cronbach's alpha value of 0.700. This indicates a high degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for the various sections of the research. Section 2 has values below 0.700, the scoring was 0.458. The reason for this is that the construct was newly developed.

Factor Analysis

Moonsamy and Singh (2012) state that factor analysis is a statistical technique whose main goal is data reduction. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent a number of questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. Factor analysis can be used to establish whether the two measures do, in fact, measure the same thing. If so, they can then be combined to create a new variable, a factor score variable that contains a score for each respondent on the factor. One need not believe that factors actually exist in order to perform a factor analysis, but in practice the factors are usually interpreted, given names, and spoken of as real things. The summarised table (Table 2) reflects the results of KMO and Bartlett's Test. The requirement is that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy should be greater than 0.50 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity less than 0.05. In all instances, the conditions are satisfied which allows for the factor analysis procedure.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Sections	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
		Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Experience / Impression	.782	680.442	105	.000
Efficacy of social media	.574	83.763	15	.000

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

Results and Discussion

This section investigates the impression or experience of the tourists who visited Durban and the efficacy of social media in travel and tourism. Where applicable, levels of disagreement (negative statements) were collapsed to show a single category of "Disagree". A similar procedure was followed for the levels of agreement (positive statements). This is allowed due to the acceptable reliability levels.

Tourists' experience of Durban

Figure 1 summarises the scoring patterns of the respondents' impression or experience in Durban. The three highest levels of agreement were for "Durban caters for my holiday needs" 80.51%, "Durban has the best beaches" 76.10%, and "I enjoyed a variety of food cuisines" 72.22%. The other three second highest values of agreement were for "Durban has many world class attractions" 77.21%, "The price of the food is cheap" 71.69% and "The cost effectiveness of the holiday" 63.24%. These values indicate a highly favourable impression of Durban from the tourists who visited the city. The following patterns are observed:

13 of the 15 statements have higher levels of agreement than disagreement.

The significance of these differences will be tested later (in Table 4).

- The statements referring to taxi fares and safety had higher levels of disagreement. Nearly half of the respondents, 47.43% of the sample, were in disagreement with the statement that the costs of the taxis are cheap and affordable. 44.49% also disagreed with the statement "I feel safe in Durban." These two were the highest statements of disagreement amongst the tourists.
- In some instances, the levels of agreement were much higher, and in others not so high. The two highest levels of agreement were 80.51% for, "Durban Caters for my holiday and 77.21% for "Durban has many world class attractions." The two lowest levels of agreement were 39.34% for "I feel safe here" and 40.44 for "The costs of taxis are cheap and affordable."
- Out of 15 questions, 13 have very low percentages of indecision but were lower than the levels of agreement and disagreement on all variables. Only questions 14 and 15 had scores slightly higher than the level of disagreement.
- Singh and Strivastava (2019) argue that travellers use social media to share own experiences and views about a destination or the whole trip. Given the favourable impression of Durban, travelers are most likely to spread a positive electronic word-of-mouth through interactions on social media

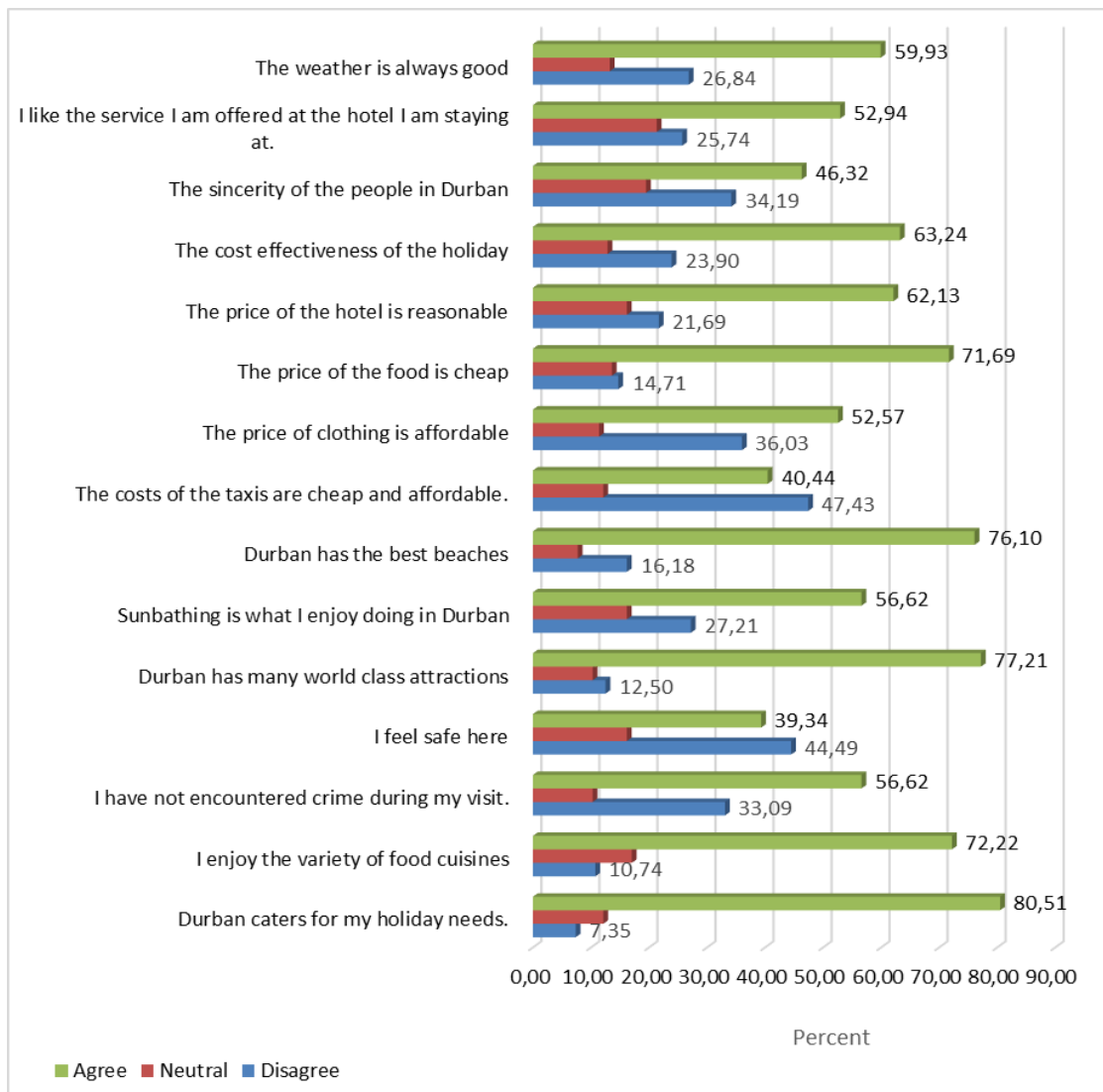


Figure 1. Tourists' Impression of Durban

To determine whether the scoring patterns per statement were significantly different per option, a Chi square test was done. The null hypothesis claims that similar numbers of respondents scored across each option for each statement (one statement at a time). The alternate states that there is a significant difference between the levels of agreement and disagreement. The results are shown Table 4 below.

The highlighted sig. values (p-values) are less than 0.05 (the level of significance). It implies that the distributions were not similar. That is, the differences between the way the respondents scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant.

Table 4: Chi square test

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

From the scoring pattern, the differences can be noticed and this was also shown statistically in Table 4 above.

Tourists’ online communities involvement

The section depicts the adoption of social media by tourists. More than 80% of the respondents indicated that they were active in online communities. Only 17.6% of the respondents indicated that they were not active on any social media platforms. A more than 80% rate of the tourist’s participation on social media platforms indicates the relevance of social media in the tourism industry. This is consistent with the assertion by Loreche *et al.* (2012) who state that travellers are turning to social media in order to share their experiences with others. Agapitou *et al.* (2021) indicate that social media has fundamentally changed how travellers plan for and book trips, access information, and the ways of sharing experiences. The most commonly used platforms are indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Social media platforms popular with the tourists

Platform	Frequency	Percent
WhatsApp	92	33.8
Facebook	68	25.0
Twitter	17	6.3
Google plus	15	5.5
YouTube	14	5.1
Flickr	11	4.0
Foursquare	7	2.6
Total	272	100.0

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

Efficacy of social media

This section deals with the use of social media in disseminating promotional messages. The main objective of the study was to determine the efficacy of social media as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry. Figure 2 illustrates the scoring pattern of the results obtained. There are some very different scoring patterns from the tourists surveyed in the study. Figure 2 reveals that there are high scores for both agreement and disagreement to the statements in this section. Neutral measures are very low and the difference between the respondents who agreed and those who disagreed is significant. The highest agreement value is 70.59% to the statement “social media is the best communication platform for interacting with marketers.” It is followed by 66.18% to the statement “I always carry a mobile device to access social media.”

This is consistent with Hudson and Thal (2013) who indicate that travellers are getting engaged with marketers so that they can get updates on current information or price discounts on certain product bundles. The authors also state that travellers need to ask questions and get clarity whilst at the same time the marketers can respond to the questions as well as convey their marketing messages concurrently. The results also corroborate with Ulfy *et al.* (2021)’s assertion that social media offers a good platform for interactions and engagements between marketers and customers. Ashra *et al.* (2020) adds that service providers can tailor their social media advertisements to suit the information needs of travelers.

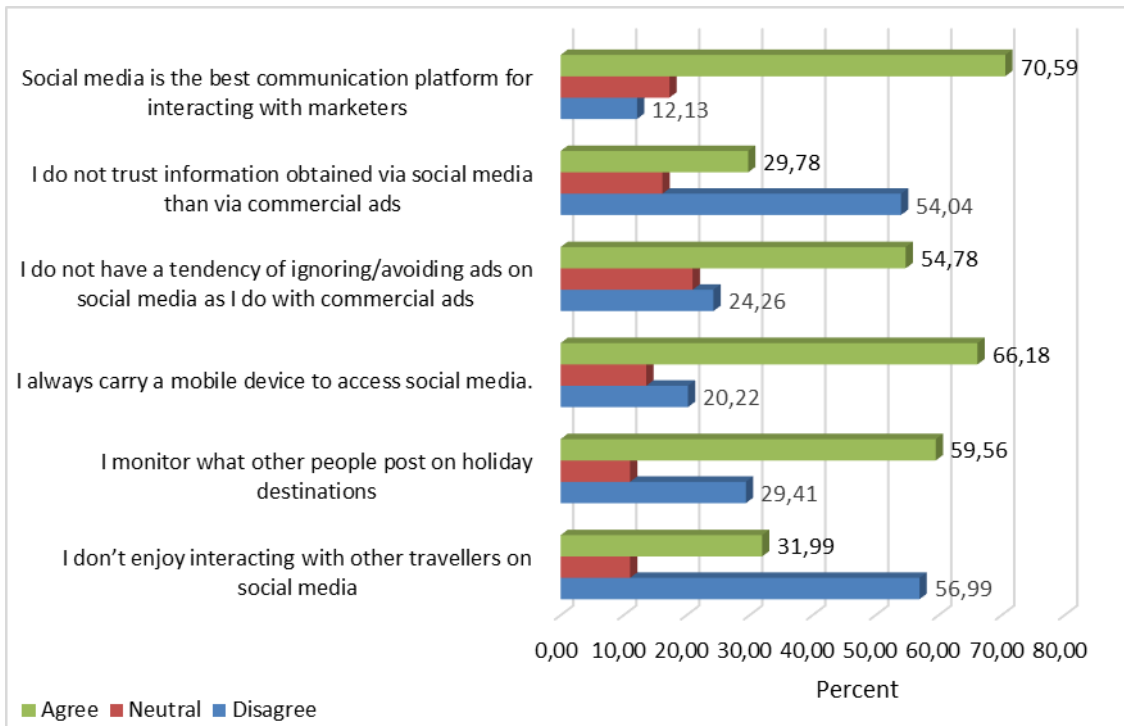


Figure 2. Efficacy of social media

As can be seen from Figure 2, 59.56% of the respondents indicate that they monitor what other people post on holiday destinations and 54.78% agreed that they do not ignore ads on social media as they do with ads on commercial channels. The findings revealed that social media is a more effective tool in promoting the tourism industry. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) the higher level of efficiency available in using social media, compared to traditional communication channels, calls for tourism companies to participate on social media sites in order to succeed in today’s technological and business environment. The high levels of disagreement were 56.99% for the statement “I do not enjoy interacting with other travellers on social media,” and 54.04% for the statement “I do not trust information obtained via social media than via commercial ads.” This reveals that tourists enjoy interacting with other travellers and they trust the information from the social media platform. This suggest that social media is an effective tool for promoting the tourism industry. The results support the claim that social media is a highly interactive platform which allows customers to connect with other customers and to engage with firms (Tafesse and Korneliusson, 2021). The chi square tests are shown below

Table 6: Chi-square test

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

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

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

Correlations

Correlation analysis is a statistical tool used to describe the degree to which two variables are linearly related to one another (Zar, 1984). Wegner (2010) state that Pearson's correlation frequently computes the correlation between two numerics (ratio-scaled) random variables. Bivariate correlation was also performed on the (ordinal) data. The most commonly used bivariate correlation technique is Spearman's correlation. Spearman's correlation measures the relationship between variables without giving a distinction between the dependant and the independent variables (Mertler and Vannatta, 2002). The results indicate the following patterns: positive values indicate a directly proportional relationship between the variables and a negative value indicates an inverse relationship. Only those measures indicating significant relationships were discussed, as shown by the Spearman's correlation calculation. A directly proportional relationship exists between "Social media is very important to me as a tourist" and the statements: "I became aware of certain tourist attractions in Durban through social media" ($r = 0.290$, $p = 0.000$), "Social media aroused my need to travel to Durban" ($r = 0.227$, $p = 0.000$), "I have already shared a part of my experience with my virtual friends whilst I am in Durban" ($r = 0.128$, $p = 0.035$), "I will post information on social media so that others can be informed" ($r = 0.164$, $p = 0.007$), and "I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media" ($r = 0.152$, $p = 0.012$). All of these preceding correlation values between the statement, "Social media is very important to me as a tourist" and five of the given statements all support the existence of directly proportional relationships. Tourists indicate that social media is very important to them as it creates awareness to tourist destinations, used to select which destinations to visit, and arouses the need to visit those destinations. During and after their visits, they use it to share their experience with friends and to post information that can keep others informed. The results are consistent with Pan *et al.* (2007) who stipulate that tourists often like to exchange and share their travel experiences on social media sites. These results reveal that social media is very important to tourists and to the promotion of the tourism products, and that it is of great value to both tourists and

tourism promoters. The results also concur with Loreche *et al.* (2012)'s assertion that travelers have turned to social media in order to share their experiences with others, map their travelling route, critique accommodation and search for information.

Another trend that exists is that there is a directly proportional relationship between "Durban caters for my holiday needs" and the following statements: "The cost effectiveness of the holiday" ($r = 0.193$, $p = 0.001$), "The price of the hotel is reasonable" ($r = 0.249$, $p = 0.000$), "The price of the food is cheap" ($r = 0.226$, $p = 0.000$), "Durban has the best beaches" ($r = 0.182$, $p = 0.003$), "Sunbathing is what I enjoyed doing in Durban" ($r = 0.132$, $p = 0.030$), "Durban has many world class attractions" ($r = 0.203$, $p = 0.001$) "I feel safe here" ($r = 0.123$, $p = 0.042$), and "I enjoy a variety of food cuisines" ($r = 0.190$, $p = 0.002$). These results indicate a directly related proportionality. The respondents have shown that the cost effectiveness of the holiday which is mainly indicated in the price of the hotels and the price of food, coupled with the existence of world class attraction such as beaches, and sunbathing activity, as well as the availability of a variety of food cuisines and security provisions in Durban affects the extent to which their tourism needs are catered for in Durban. Another directly related proportionality exists between the statement "I monitor what other people post on holiday destinations" and the statements: "My original decision was modified or changed after reviewing travel content on social media" ($r = 0.217$, $p = 0.000$), "I received recommendations and advice from other travellers prior to visiting Durban" ($r = 0.182$, $p = 0.003$), "I drew my list of alternative places to visit through social media" ($r = 0.183$, $p = 0.003$), "Travel reviews influenced my decision" ($r = 0.257$, $p = 0.000$), and "I referred to social media prior to visiting Durban" ($r = 0.194$, $p = 0.001$). These interesting results means tourists who monitor what other travellers post on holiday destinations will have their decision changed or modified as a result of that and this will play a part when drawing a list of alternative places to visit. It also means that prior to visiting Durban, tourists review travel content and also receives recommendations and advice from other travellers, which influences their decisions.

Conclusion

The empirical findings of the study have shown that social media is of paramount importance in promoting tourism because of its ability to connect people in an information rich virtual environment. The results revealed that social media is of strategic effectiveness in promoting tourism as it is adopted by the majority of travelers, creates awareness of tourist destinations, and creates opportunities for engaging with customers and building relationships. Tourists use social media to search for information, interact with other travelers and marketers, create and share user-generated content and share views and experiences with others. Social media is not an optional extra in the tourism industry and destination marketing organisations must participate on social media sites in order to remain competitive. Its efficacy is not questionable in the tourism sector where most travelers have adopted the platform and actively participate in generating and sharing content that can influence the travel choices of others. The study yields many implications for both practice and literature on the promotion of tourism. The study recommended that tourism marketers must adopt and integrate new social media applications in their marketing strategies. Marketers must break communication barriers and increase their efficiency in promoting tourism by increasing the utilisation of their social media platforms. Tourism operators need to raise their level of online commitment and transform their marketing strategies to the online environment by actively taking part in generating and disseminating promotional messages. The major limitation of the study was that the instrument used was newly

developed and has not been extensively tested and this may pose a limitation on the applicability of the results obtained. Given that the respondents were drawn from the tourists visiting the Durban tourist destinations and that only 300 participants took part in the study, the sample size becomes a limiting factor. Further research could investigate how to successfully manage and manipulate the business opportunity presented by various social media platforms. Further research can also be undertaken on the influence of specific social media sites to allow more understanding and use of appropriate social media platforms by marketing practitioners.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The author declares that I have no conflict of interests.

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