Abstract

This study sought to assess key success factors of social media as a marketing tool in the Zimbabwe tourism and hospitality sector. A plethora of studies have been conducted on social media, but few have focused on optimisation of social media in the Zimbabwe tourism and hospitality industry. Social media has become the world’s latest marketing sensation and cannot be ignored in the tourism and hospitality industry. The extent to which this tool is being used is subject to debate. A mixed method approach was used to ensure that the emic and etic phenomenon were balanced. Stratified sampling was employed for a representative sample size. Two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed, one hundred and eighty five (185) questionnaires (93%) were successfully returned for statistical use. Twenty interviews were conducted with management in the tourism and hospitality sector. Factor analysis was done. The deterring factors in the usage of social media were determined. An independent sample t-test was applied to determine usage of social media around Bulawayo. The results showed that the use of social media was partly affected by perceptions and insufficient knowledge of its benefits. The study established that some tourist operators were skeptical on the use of social media despite its accessibility. This study however, highlighted that effective and successful implementation of social media marketing strategies contributes positively to the Zimbabwe tourism and hospitality industry.

Key words: social media, marketing, success factors, e-marketing.
1.0 Introduction

Scholars all over the world have different views about social media and they clearly indicate that its importance to an organisation cannot be underestimated. This is supported by Tuten (2008) who states that, organisations appreciate that the world has gone digital and that competitive advantage will accrue for those who understand this transformation. According to Safako and Brake (2009) social media refers to actions, practices and behaviors among groups of individuals who meet to share opinions, information and knowledge using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it easy to create and transfer content in the form of words, pictures, videos and audios etc. Social media is also online content created by people using highly accessible and accessible publishing technologies. At its most basic sense, social media is a shift on how people discover, read and share news, information and content. Social media marketing is any form of direct or indirect marketing that is used to create awareness, recognition, recall, and action for a brand, business, product or service and is carried out using the tools of the social Web (Gunelius, 2011:10). The social media of an organisation assists marketing executives create a long lasting relationship and powerful relations with their customers. These relations act as a marketing tool which determines customers’ needs and wants. Therefore the use of social media is said to result in increased sales, profits and strengthening of the corporate brand name (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). Businesses in various sectors have acknowledged the importance of incorporating a social media platform in their communication activities.

1.1 Main Research Objective

To examine the key success factors of social media used to market Tourism and hospitality in Zimbabwe?

1.1.1 Sub Research Objectives

1. To identify the key social media platforms in use in the Zimbabwe tourism and hospitality sector.

2. To establish the key success factors of social media as a marketing tool in the tourism and hospitality sector in Zimbabwe
3. To examine the challenges experienced in the use of social media as a marketing tool in the Zimbabwe tourism and hospitality sector.
4. To recommend ways to mitigate the challenges identified.

1.2 Problem statement

The advent of social media has reduced the whole world into a palm. It presents both the positive and negative effects of social media to the tourism and hospitality industry. Gunelius (2011) alludes that tools of social media are the most prominent gadgets that convey information. The tourism and hospitality industry cannot be immune as its products are both tangible and intangible. These products range from travel products, accommodation, recreational, meetings, incentives, exhibitions, conferences, food and beverage services etc. These are directly affected by social media and are at risk due to social media marketing. According to Schmalleger & Carson, (2007); Leung, Law, Van Hoof & Buhalis, (2013), social media is susceptible to both negative and positive comments. Amerland (2012) states that social media and the use of the internet as a marketing strategy can be a platform where criminals take advantage and use it as an opportunity to corrupt individuals and intrude on their privacy through multiple cybercrimes. Thus, social media demands responsiveness to reduce incidences of time wastage that impacts negatively on tourism and hospitality organisations’ efficiency. The key success factors of social media as a marketing tool in the tourism and hospitality industry need to be identified to assess how these organisations can utilise social media as a marketing tool.

2.0 Literature review

Kaplan (2010), conducted a study on the impact of social media marketing on purchasing decisions. The results from the research proved that there is an impact of using social media websites on all purchase decisions which: are need recognition, information search, evaluating alternatives, and purchase as well as post purchase behaviour. It was also observed that many consumers spend a lot of time using social media platforms communicating with their friends and family, which indicates that social media platforms are a fertile place to practice e-marketing. Invariably, social media enhances communication in organisations.

Notwithstanding, the preceding studies explained above, another study was conducted on social media marketing and brand awareness by Johnson (2010). The major idea of this study was the
role of social media marketing in creating awareness and the results revealed that social media has a significant role in branding. Gunelius (2011), also conducted a similar research on the impact of social media marketing on brand equity. The research emphasized the use of Facebook as a social media platform for online communication, interaction and sharing of information. Additionally it emphasized on the correlation between social media marketing and brand equity and the results showed that this relationships attracts new customers and retains existing customers. Hence there is a business case for the use of social media in the tourism and hospitality sector.

2.1 Theoretical framework
In order to fully contextualise the value social media in the tourism and hospitality industry it is important to review the theoretical framework underpinning the concept of social media.

2.2.1 Social Exchange Theory
The social exchange theory originated from sociology studies exploring exchange between individuals or small groups (Emerson, 1976). The theory mainly uses a cost-benefit framework and comparison of alternatives to explain how human beings communicate with each other, how they form relationships and bonds, and how communities are formed through communication exchanges (Homans, 1958). The theory states that individuals engage in behaviours they find rewarding and avoid unrewarding behaviour. Hence, consumers interact on social media so as to gain a reputation and gain an influence on others, to build relationships and to search for information as it is cheaper. For example, travel blogs and social media sites in the tourism and hospitality industry have accepted that there are a lot of people consuming information than generating. On social media platforms there are four groups of users. These are the watchers who consume information so as to help others in decision making. There are also the sharers who upload and forward information to demonstrate knowledge, the commenters who review and rate products. Lastly we have the producers who create their own content in an effort to express their identity. Therefore these four groups of users make use of the social exchange theory. The theory is helpful to the organisations which use social media as a marketing tool to increase their visibility. The tourism and hospitality industry is one such industry whose business thrives largely on visibility.
2.2.2 The Honeycomb framework of social media

Kietzmann, Hermkens & McCarthy (2011) created the Honeycomb Model to review social media effectiveness, looking at reasons why users engage with social media. The idea behind the honeycomb model is that of the seven (7) key building blocks delineated by the model, companies can select the ones most relevant to their business, and focus their attention on those areas. The framework has seven (7) building blocks: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, and groups. The importance of the framework, according to Miller (2014:3) is that it leads to an understanding of how organisations should monitor, engage, and exploit different functionalities of the various media platforms such as: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn etc. (Kietzmann et al. 2011). The framework is shown below:

![Honeycomb Framework](image)

**Fig 2.1** shows the Honeycomb framework as adapted from Kietzmann et al, (2011).

1. **The identity block** (the extent to which users know if others are available)
This is the block which shows the extent to which the social media users identify themselves. Information on age, gender, professions, and other personal dimensions are mentioned here. Identity in tourism and hospitality is significant, hence the need for customer oriented marketing. In the tourism and hospitality industry customers value recognition by organisations that identify them and constantly update them on new products available. This brings repeat business to some tourist organisations while others record a low occupancy level (Awaritefe, 2003). Thus identity enables marketing of products in various forms as clients look for such information on social media such as twitter, blog, YouTube, Face book and WhatsApp. Whatever media used it must be informative, that is, give enough detail about the organisation, be persuasive to encourage repetition (patronage) and remind clients so that they retain the organisation of their choice in mind.

2. **The conversations block** (the extent to which users communicate with each other).
   
   This block explains the communication process amongst users. Organisations can manipulate the platform to analyse behaviours and complaints. In the tourism and hospitality industry communication is vital as it is the means through which feedback is passed on for service provided.

3. **The sharing block** (the extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive).
   
   The sharing block shows how content is exchanged, shared, distributed. Content is the prerogative of organisations to define the extent to which objects can be distributed taking into account copy right laws. Information on how tourism and hospitality organisations operate is mostly shared through social media as it is the means with which information travels fastest.

4. **The presence block** (the extent to which users know if others are available).
   
   The presence block allows social media users to identify their accessibility and location of individuals in both the virtual and real world. This is the core of tourism and hospitality business when clients scrounge for the best products they want.

5. **The relationships block** (the extent to which users relate to each other).
   
   This block shows the relationship amongst the users and the flow of information. Organisations can understand how to maintain relationships. In the tourism and hospitality
industry such information may be found on platforms such as the Trip Advisor and several others.

6. **The reputation block** (the extent to which users know the social standing of others).
   The reputation block represents the understanding of the standing of others and has an implication on how organisations should engage others. Social standing speaks to the position in society of the communicator and the influence that position gives them. This standing becomes important when one is looking for a tourist destination, they may be swayed by negative comments from a person preserved to be important who had a nasty experience at the targeted destination.

7. **The group block** (community building capacity). The block explains the extent to which users can build communities. The number of group followers determines the degree of sociality of the group. Social groups are easy to form as long what they look for is found in social media platforms.

Therefore, indeed the seven blocks of the honey comb framework are a true reflection of how information travels in any business and the tourism and hospitality industry would grossly benefit if such platforms are utilised.

### 2.3 Key Success factors affecting social media

Social media has become a brand new instrument for marketing because it permits marketers to explore and observe the behaviour of consumers. However, while some businesses can employ social media marketing successfully, some are still struggling to make it work because of failure to understand the key success factors of social media as a marketing tool. These key success factors include information content, security, characters, interaction and communication (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012) as explained below:

#### 2.3.1 Security

In social media, security means the measurement of risk a user feels whilst participating on social media platforms. In other words security is interactive efficiency (Liu and Arnett, 2000). Social media platforms need privacy policies in order to help consumers to preserve their private information. Despite all positive aspects, the internet has an extensive set of risks and threats.
There is need therefore to always closely examine social media usage as it may be detrimental especially when incorrect information is communicated.

2.3.2 Information content

The majority of social media experts believe that information content makes social media marketing an easy and quicker way of increasing awareness of a brand or service especially in the tourism and hospitality industry. For this reason, if an organisation does not pay attention on creating relevant and attractive online information content, consumers can easily move to the social media platforms of the competitors. Attractive content and online discussions will be valuable for people. Organisations when engaging in social media marketing need to use the same language and tone with their target audience, update information constantly as many platforms have outdated information (Gunelius, 2011).

2.3.3 Characters

Characters are one of the social media success factors which absorb people in social media. Visual design, navigation and loading of pages are some of the examples of characters of social media (Lynch & Horton, 2008). Visual designs in social media marketing makes the organisation gain attention, build loyalty, communicate vital information and increase engagement. This can be achieved by posting relevant images, combining colours, images and words. In selecting visual design of a website the most important item is the quality of fitness between color and text (Lynch & Horton, 2008). Secondly loading of pages should be considered when using social media as a marketing tool. Loading pages speed play an important role in search engine optimisation. Many organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry may need to consider site speed as more of an information technology concern. Emphasis on improving page load time should be part of a good marketing strategy too. Pages that are not attractive and do not quickly show information that clients are looking for may not be popular in the tourism and hospitality industry.

2.3.4 Interaction and communication.

Organisations need to interact and engage with their consumers on social media as these are the key features of social media descriptions. Through interacting and communicating on social media marketers can easily get information about consumer habits and behaviour and it is cheaper to obtain such information unlike the traditional way of conducting market research. With this
interaction, this social media is very successful (Gunelius, 2011). There are many factors that influence an interaction between user and social media. Failure to communicate and interact with consumers can make social media an ineffective tool of marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry. Through interacting and communicating organisations get to understand different cultures of customers and this will help in personalization of services and marketing activities for customers (Azaroff, 2007).

2.4 Role of social media in the Tourism and hospitality and Hospitality Industry

Laroche, Habbibi and Richard (2013) postulate that, social media comprises of numerous internet applications that build on the foundation of a Web, allowing online communities to share their interests, thus, enabling two way communication through representation of personal identities. Social media platforms have facilitated “demand-pull and supply-push” for knowledge which is the easier and faster circulation of information (Liburd, 2012). In the tourism and hospitality industry social media is extremely significant particularly for the search of travel knowledge on reviews and blogs Callarisa,L ,Garcia, J.S , Cardiff, J , Roschina,A. (2012). Organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry embarking on social media make use of selected web-based application such as Facebook and Instagram for acquisition of target audience through marketing, produce brand equity, to build community relationships and to drive sales through the use of audios, videos and text. This view is supported by Nassar, (2012) who points out that, organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry particularly hotels can easily monitor online happenings, effectively respond to queries, give feedback on hotel sales promotion and offer a personalised service to guests, if they make use of social media.

2.4.1 Social media marketing in Tourism and hospitality and Hospitality

The evolution of the internet has allowed the tourism and hospitality industry to embark on different social networking sites giving it a competitive advantage. The use of social media platforms through internet marketing has been effective in driving the branding strategy of companies in the tourism and hospitality industry. Mohammadian & Mohammadreza (2012) state that social media marketing facilitates the introduction of brand awareness, drives sales and profits and enhances viral- spread of marketing activities within the organisation such as sales promotions. A new trend which is referred to as “convergence culture” means that consumers nowadays are heavily participating in social media communication channels than ever before (Mansson, 2011).
This entails that social media marketing confines control of hoteliers over shared information because online consumers are now demanding and influential (Russel, 2010). Social media marketing has a wide audience reach globally and there are no time zone and geographic barriers because of its huge network connections. This has allowed the tourism and hospitality industry to reach out its targeted markets easily and faster (Ryan and Joens, 2012). It is of great significance for companies not to disregard online feedback as it can tarnish the image of the brand or services (Dwivedi, Shibu, Venkatesh, 2007). To stay abreast of competition organisations can use social media marketing to manage its online reputation through the word of mouth.

2.4.2 Current trends and opportunities of social media in the Tourism and hospitality industry.

Social media platforms are gaining power in usage rate each and every day through the proliferation of mobile devices such as phones and laptops. This is an indication that they can be valuable channels of marketing for organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry especially when targeting young consumers as they spend most of the time on these devices (Quach, 2017). Some hotels in the world have started to capitalize on this opportunity with their social media and mobile-adept user base (Riegner, 2007). By being up to date with social media marketing trends and building a vibrant online presence, the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe can swiftly adjust to the disruption and achieve an early adopter advantage when attracting business from tech-savvy millennials. The current social media trends and opportunities that are currently in the tourism and hospitality industry include the following:

2.4.3 Online Payment: A new opportunity

With the proliferation of mobile devices and internet access around the world, the use of digital payment has seen accelerated growth. According to the Allied Market Research,” the global mobile payments market is estimated to reach $3,388 billion by 2022, representing a
compound annual growth of 33.4% from 2016 to 2022.” In Zimbabwe consumers are becoming increasingly aware of online payment options as there are cash shortages in the country. The projected adoption of online payment in the tourism and hospitality industry along with the growth of social media users, is an opportunity for direct booking through mobile devices. The incorporation of mobile digital wallet into social media and messaging application is important for the tourism and hospitality industry to keep up with consumer expectations. Therefore an opportunity may exist for the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe to integrate their rewards with digital payment.

2.4.4 Social media marketing in Tourism and hospitality and Hospitality

The evolution of the internet has allowed the tourism and hospitality industry to embark on different social networking sites giving it a competitive advantage. The use of social media platforms through internet marketing has been effective in driving the branding strategy of companies in the tourism and hospitality industry. Mohammadian & Mohammadreza (2012) state that social media marketing facilitates the introduction of brand awareness, drives sales and profits and enhances viral spread of marketing activities within the organisation such as sales promotions. A new trend which is referred to as “convergence culture” means that consumers nowadays are heavily participating in social media communication channels than ever before (Mansson, 2011). This entails that social media marketing confines control of hoteliers over shared information because online consumers are now demanding and influential (Russel, 2010). Social media marketing has a wide audience reach globally and there are no time zone and geographic barriers because of its huge network connections. This has allowed the tourism and hospitality and hospitality industry to reach out its targeted markets easily and faster (Ryan and Joens, 2012). It is of great significance for companies not to disregard online feedback as it can tarnish the image of the brand or services (Dwivedi, Shibu, Venkatesh, 2007). To stay abreast of competition organisations can use social media marketing to manage its online reputation through the word of mouth.
2.4.5 Current trends and opportunities of social media in the Tourism and hospitality industry.

Social media platforms are gaining power in usage rate each and every day through the proliferation of mobile devices such as phones and laptops. This is an indication that they can be valuable channels of marketing for organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry especially when targeting young consumers as they spend most of the time on these devices (Quach, 2017). Some hotels in the world have started to capitalize on this opportunity with their social media and mobile-adept user base (Riegner, 2007). By being up to date with social media marketing trends and building a vibrant online presence, the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe can swiftly adjust to the disruption and achieve an early adopter advantage when attracting business from tech-savvy millennials.

The current social media trends and opportunities that are currently in the tourism and hospitality industry include the following:

2.4.6 Online Payment: A new opportunity

With the proliferation of mobile devices and internet access around the world, the use of digital payment has seen accelerated growth. According to the Allied Market Research,” the global mobile payments market is estimated to reach $3,388 billion by 2022, representing a compounded annual growth of 33.4% from 2016 to 2022.” In Zimbabwe consumers are becoming increasingly aware of online payment options as there are cash shortages in the country. The projected adoption of online payment in the tourism and hospitality industry along with the growth of social media users, is an opportunity for direct booking through mobile devices. The incorporation of mobile digital wallet into social media and messaging application is important for the tourism and hospitality industry to keep up with consumer expectations. Therefore an opportunity may exist for the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe to integrate their rewards with digital payment.

2.4.7 Social media and mobile device

The growth in mobile device usage has transformed the travel and tourism and hospitality industry; travel bookings are increasingly occurring through mobile devices. Consumer engagement has begun to shift towards mobile platforms, and rightfully so; the vast reach
and worldwide interconnectivity of mobile devices make them a suitable platform for commerce. As mobile device penetration rates strengthen globally, consumer engagement through this platform is only expected to strengthen. Social media usage is likewise on the rise. Today, digital consumers are spending more time on social networks and messaging platforms than ever before. It is thus important for hotels to have a brand presence and a marketing effort on social media channels, especially since social media marketing has been proven to be more effective than traditional marketing (when utilized correctly). Social media marketing allows for two-way communication between consumers and customers; this interactive element helps companies cement a long-term consumer following. Additionally, social media marketing supports the real-time promotion of new products and services, all while yielding measurable consumer data that can be further leveraged to target, engage, and grow a base of consumers.

**2.4.8 Opportunities for Personalization**

Improved personalization is coterminous with a higher level of service in the tourism and hospitality industry. Social media as made it easier to practice personalized marketing which a marketing strategy by which organisations leverage data analysis and technology to deliver individualized messages, product offerings and services. Organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry are now attempting to personalize marketing communications through interacting with consumers on their social media platforms. In a bigger picture, social media channels used for marketing purposes are benefiting organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry because they give an opportunity to create personalized interactions with consumer, which can be leveraged to yield more direct online activities such as bookings (Quach, 2017).

**2.5 Challenges faced by organisations implementing social media as marketing tool**

The digital atmosphere creates not only opportunities, but also hitches for the social media marketing process. The transparency of the web makes online information available to all audiences, and strengthens the need for consistency in the planning, design, implementation
and control of online marketing communication. Some of the major disadvantages that need to be considered on social media marketing are discussed below:

2.5.1 Negative Feedbacks

In a way social media, changes consumers into marketers and advertisers of your products and services, and consumers can also spread positive or negative word of mouth depending both on how the organisation is presented online and the quality of service and products (Roberts & Kraynak, 2008). Usually opinion leaders who buy the products when they are still new in the markets have the power of building or destroying one’s brand on social media. According to Ghose, Ipeirotis and Li (2009) product reviews from consumers serve as a valuable source of information by potential consumers on social media platforms. Marketing campaigns are mainly damaged by negative post responses by consumers or unhappy industry competitors and there is not much a marketer can do to prevent these occurrences. Thus, Social networks must be managed efficiently enough to immediately respond and neutralize harmful posts, which takes more time.

2.5.2 Security, trust and privacy issues

The processing of trying to increase awareness of a product, service or brand through the use of social media can implicate security, trust and privacy settings. It is of great importance for organisations to be aware of these matters and take suitable measures to reduce their exposure to liability related personal data collection, use and maintenance. Trust, particularly the unique dimensions of transactional security and privacy (Hoffmann et al, 1999), play a critical role in generating customer loyalty to social media marketers. Advertising Age (2000) states that privacy concerns have led to a public relations disaster for some major media marketing resulting in substantial brand image erosion. Organisations that manage their own social media platforms should maintain comprehensive policies that disclose the company’s data and any responsibilities that third parties have regarding privacy and data security (Steinman and Hawkins, 2010). Invariably, trust is closely connected to security, it is a significant factor in the online consumer buyer behaviour.
Therefore organisations should create methods of increasing brand trust online. Brand trust usually contributes to a reductions of uncertainty.

2.5.3 Time intensive

As the name suggests, social media is interactive and successful, two way exchanges take commitment. The nature of marketing changes in social networks, with the focus placed on establishing long-term relationships that can turn into more sales. Someone within the organisation has to be responsible to monitor each network, respond to comments, answer questions and post product or service material the customer deem valuable (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010). Businesses without a service to manage these social networks will find it difficult to compete in industry. The first consideration and probably the most important one is that social media marketing requires significant time investment (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010).

2.5.4 Trademark and Copyright Issues

According to Steinman and Hawkins (2010), it is of the greatest significance for businesses to safeguard their own trademarks and copyrights when using social media to promote their brands and products. A business’s brand and intellectual property like logos are often nearly as valuable as the products or services that they offer. Social media’s ability to enable informal communication often on a real time basis, can support businesses in endorsing their brands and disseminating copyright material, but it can also facilitate third party abuse of a business trademarks and copyrights (Steinman & Hawkins, 2010). When using social media, whether via a third-party outlet or a company’s own social media platforms, marketers should regularly monitor the use of their trademarks and copyrights. Companies should monitor their own social media outlets as well as third-party social media platforms to ensure that those providing content through the media outlets are not misusing their intellectual property. Internet tracking and screening services are available to monitor the use of your business’s marks and copyrights on third-party sites, including checking social media sites for profile or user names that are identical or substantially similar to your company’s name or brands (Steinman & Hawkins, 2010).

2.5.5 Conceptual framework.

The key success story of how tourism and hospitality products are consumed can be summed up using the figure below:
Basing on this figure it can be ascertained that the successful marketing of tourism and hospitality products is hinged on the multiple factors highlighted. It therefore transcends that managers in the tourism and hospitality industry should to embrace the key success factors to remain viable in the 21st century. To retain clients in the tourism and hospitality industry there is always need to guarantee a network of factors such as communication, characters, content, security and information content. These factors determine the business level and how users feel whilst participating on social media platforms (Steinman & Hawkins, 2010).

3.0 Methodology
The pragmatic philosophical underpinning guiding the study follows the assertion by Tashakkori and Toddie (2003) that the use of some aspects of both positivist and interpretivism in a singular study is possible in order to triangulate. The research design was a mixed method combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in getting data from the respondents. According to (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures each have their own strengths and weaknesses. There is invariably a relationship between the data collection technique one chooses and the results one obtains. In short, ones’ results are affected by the techniques and procedures used. Since all different techniques and
procedures have different effects, it makes sense to use different methods to cancel out the ‘method effect’ (Saunders et al, 2009), that way a detailed meaning is ensured that leads to greater confidence being placed in the conclusions. The population consisted of stakeholders in and around Bulawayo especially those in the tourism and hospitality industry. Basing on the nature of data sought, a survey was most appropriate for this study. The use of a multiple research design augments authenticity as the weakness of one method is compensated by the strength of the other. Stratified sampling was employed basing on key positions respondents held in industry and making use of final year tourism and hospitality students who had experience on the elements of social media when on industrial attachment. This enabled the selection of a representative sample size. Two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed to key people in industry basing, on their expertise in the use of social media and how it impacts on their daily business. One hundred and eighty five (185) questionnaires (93%) were successfully returned for statistical use. Twenty interviews were conducted with selected management personnel in the tourism and hospitality industry. Factor analysis was done. The deterring factors in usage of social media were determined. An independent sample t-test was applied to determine usage of social media around Bulawayo.

4.1 Results and discussion
Stratified sampling was employed for a representative sampling size. Two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed through email and personal delivery to the identified respondents. One hundred and eighty five (185) questionnaires (93%) were successfully returned for statistical use. Twenty interviews were conducted with selected management personnel in the tourism and hospitality sector.

4.1.1 The importance social media in tourism and hospitality in marketing
In soliciting information on the importance of social media in the tourism and hospitality industry, figure 4.1 provides the results obtained.
The response showed that 80% of the respondents were conscious that social media is a critical tool in tourism and hospitality marketing. While 20% were not in agreement arguing that social media brought the downside than good to the tourism and hospitality sector. This was in line with an observation by Amerland (2012).

4.1.2 To identify the key social media platforms in use in the tourism and hospitality sector in Zimbabwe.

Table 4.1 Players in industry identified their social media platforms preferences as shown in table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media platform</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook, MySpace;</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WikiTravel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcoming Blogs &amp; Micro-blogs</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results obtained were in line with findings by with Kietzmann et al (2011: 249) framework. It states that the intention of the honeycomb framework is to “understand and develop social media platforms, and the social media landscape more generally.’ Each social media platform has its
advantages and disadvantages. The managers whose opinion was sought preferred Facebook and MySpace more, at 30%, followed by upcoming Blogs and Micro-blogs at 25%, then You Tube at 23%, E-mail at 15% with Twitter and LInkedIN at 5% and 2% respectively. The results were not too different from what other scholars like Zivkovic et al (2014) had discovered in their research in Austria.

4.1.2 To establish the key success factors of social media as a marketing tool in the tourism and hospitality sector in Zimbabwe

Results obtained from this objective indicated that players in the tourism and hospitality industry have embraced social media platforms as the most prevalent way to do business. Eighty five percent (85%) of respondents highlighted that failure to upgrade systems within the tourism and hospitality industry has negative connotations on the way daily business is conducted. Twelve percent (12%) highlighted that players may be interested in using social media platforms, however, maintaining these platforms is expensive and at times there are cyber security issues which they may fail to comply. Three percent (3%) were indifferent as the issues of cybercrimes, security and digitalisation of all forms of social media may be new, and require some significant exposure.

4.1.3 To examine the challenges experienced in the use of social media as a marketing tool in the Zimbabwe tourism and hospitality sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid Challenges encountered using SM</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet and Time</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to use</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Feedbacks</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trademark</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time intensive</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright Issues</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing values</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                                | 185       | 100        | 100             | 100                   |
Findings on challenges on the use of social media in tourism and hospitality

1. On internet time, as alluded to by Barefoot & Szabo, 2010, someone has to monitor each network, respond to comments, answer questions and post product or service material the customer deems valuable. The respondents stated that due to the financial implications, it was difficult to dedicate an employee/s to the monitoring task. A related challenge was that of frequent internet outages and speed challenges related to electricity black outs.

2. Difficult to use, respondents stated that ICTs skills were required to navigate the internet in order to maximise the benefits of social media, hence, constant training was required for employees for them to adapt to the new marketing system.

3. Negative feedback, respondents were sceptical of the challenge posed by opinion leaders whose comments could sway the views of clients and potential clients. This view was in line with that held by Cheung, Lee and Thadani, (2015) who saw marketing campaigns as mainly damaged by negative post responses by consumers or unhappy industry competitors and there was not much a marketer could do to prevent these occurrences.

4. Trademark and Copyright Issues, respondents were conscious of the legal implications associated with litigations arising from misuse of social media platform to hurt others.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

The qualitative data was coded and arranged into themes. The focus of this section was to establish the key success factors of social media as marketing tool and the findings are summarised below:

1. Tourism and hospitality marketing has migrated from the traditional methods to real time ICTs powered marketing platforms. This has implications for those entities that are lagging behind as the tourism and hospitality industry sells intangible products, hence word of mouth and referrals have become more powerful in that industry.

2. Bad news go viral easily as good news and can do unethical business irreparable damage, hence it is prudent to use social media with caution.

3. The use of social media in tourism and hospitality is for the enhancement of the marketing communication, in a new way, thus most tourism and hospitality organisation are still at an infant stages in the exploration of the potential ICTs could enhance social networking.
The industry has discovered the potential of social media as a strategic instrument for the positive enhancement of the tourism and hospitality experience.

When answering the questions on social media usage in tourism and hospitality different views were captured: **Question:** How is social media contributing to the tourism and hospitality industry? Some of the managers responded that social media can result in brand equity through the enhancement of the brand image, brand awareness and brand loyalty. All this was possible only through frequent usage of social media, expertise in navigating and surfing the platforms and the availability of financial resources.

**Question:** What are the steps one should take to be on social media?

Some of the respondents were of the opinion that the first step was to open a website. They said that it was an expenditure item, the dividends were worthwhile. They also stated that clients are always searching for reviews online for everything from restaurants, hotels, etc.

**Question:** why is social media important?

The importance of social media was said to derive from the chance to communicate with the customers and future customers, about building a community, being part of other communities as well as the opportunity to educate people. It was emphasised that social media was about listening to clients,

**Conclusions**

Firstly, the majority of the examined tourism and hospitality organisations are not currently maximizing usage of social media to their fullest when dealing with clients’ interaction. Moreover, social media is still not widely recognised or considered as a strategic tool in relational marketing strategies, and hence is rarely assigned the necessary financial resources. The tourism and hospitality industry needs to embrace a paradigm shift in its marketing strategies in view of globalisation and competition, hence there is need to invest in training for enhancement of innovation and creativity. It is imperative that tourism and hospitality organisations migrate to the use of social media usage as a deliberate resolution.
Recommendations

Following the study’s findings the recommendation are preferred:

1. Social media marketing is a vital tool which should be adopted and used by all tourism and hospitality venture to reach a wide audience real time, thus it is a worthwhile investment.

2. It is vital to take precautions when using the social media platforms due to the danger of bad publicity going viral, at the same time, whether, an organisation embraces social media or not the chances of its reputation being tarnished through social media equally exists, yet the opportunity cost of not using social media is higher.

3. Organisations ought to ensure that there is close monitoring of the social media platforms at all times in order to respond and react to clients and customer suggestions and queries timeously.

4. Social media should be used taking due care to listen to the audience, as well as letting the audience know about the organisation, products, service, business philosophy, integrity and culture for brand success.
References


