

**EVALUATING SOCIAL MEDIA PARTICIPATION FOR SUCCESSFUL
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION BY SELECTED PRIVATE GAME
RESERVES, EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA**

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

in the

RHODES BUSINESS SCHOOL

by

Tara Booth

December 2012

Declaration

I, Tara Booth, hereby declare that this research thesis is my own original work, that all reference sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not previously, in its entirety or in part, been submitted to any University in order to obtain an academic qualification.

Tara Booth

Date: 06 December 2012

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the culmination my MBA degree and it would not have been possible without the help and support of a number of people.

My husband John. Thank you for understanding three years of early mornings, and late nights. For cups of tea and proof-reading. Words on a page are not nearly enough to express all that you mean to me. I love you Skattie.

My parents, Lynne and Vernon. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement. I promise this was the ABF! For now... I hope I made you proud.

My supervisor, Prof. Owen Skae. Thank you for your calm encouragement and guidance.

I'd also like to thank the MBA Class of 2010. You are an amazing bunch of people and I've been so privileged to get to know you in our syndicates and class discussions. To the 'Cool Group', thank you for always being game for a drink at the Rat, for answering frantic emails and phone calls before exams, and for all your support throughout this whole process. I count you guys as special friends and I am going to miss the laughter and inside jokes! Can you believe we did it?!

My friends, particularly ChickSoc, for everything. You know why!

Finally to all my colleagues, and in particular Mike Schramm. I truly could not have done it without your support and understanding. Thank you for encouraging me and allowing me the time to pursue this dream.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
List of Tables	6
Integrative Summery	7
1 Section One: Academic Paper.....	9
1.1 Introduction.....	9
1.2 Literature Review.....	9
1.2.1 Introduction to Social Media	9
1.2.2 Relationship Marketing	10
1.2.3 Why is Social Media Important to Business?.....	11
1.3 Research Method	13
1.4 Methodology	13
1.4.1 Social Media Participation.....	14
1.4.2 Interviews with Management	16
1.5 Results.....	17
1.5.1 Overview of Social Media Presence and Participation	17
1.5.2 Overview of Evaluation Criteria.....	18
1.5.3 Themes from Interviews with Management.....	20
1.6 Discussion	26
1.6.1 Participation on Social Media.....	26
1.6.2 Evaluation of Participation on Social Media.....	28
1.6.3 Social Media and Conservation.....	31
1.7 Conclusion	31
1.8 References.....	34
2 Section Two: Literature Review	37

2.1	Marketing and Communication	37
2.2	Marketing Theory - McCarthy's Four P's	37
2.2.1	Variations and Criticisms of the Four P's	37
2.2.2	Promotion	38
2.2.3	Promotional Mix.....	39
2.3	New Promotion Theories	40
2.3.1	Integrated Marketing Communication.....	40
2.3.2	Relationship Marketing	41
2.4	Media Channels	41
2.5	Social Media	42
2.5.1	Definitions of Social Media.....	43
2.5.2	Types of Social Media.....	44
2.6	Social Media and Tourism.....	46
2.7	Social Media Strategies.....	46
2.8	Social Media and Return on Investment (ROI)	48
2.9	Other Challenges of Social Media	49
2.10	References.....	50
3	Section Three: Description of Research Methodology	54
3.1	Goal of the Research.....	54
3.2	Aims and Objectives	55
3.3	Methodology	55
3.3.1	Social Media Participation.....	55
3.3.2	Interviews with Management	58
3.4	References.....	59
4	Appendices	60
4.1	Appendix One: Client Questionnaire.....	60
4.2	Appendix Two: Interviews with Management	62

List of Tables

Table 1-1: List of Private Game Reserves and Lodges Surveyed	15
Table 1-2: List and Type of Social Media Platforms Investigated.....	15
Table 1-3: List of Criteria for Evaluation of Social Media Participation (Chan and Guillet (2011)).....	16
Table 1-4: Overview of Social Media Participation	18
Table 1-5: Evaluation Criteria for Social Media Participation	18
Table 1-6: Summary of Social Media Profiles	21
Table 2-1: List of Criteria for Evaluation of Social Media Participation (Chan and Guillet (2011)).....	47
Table 3-1: List of Private Game Reserves and Lodges Surveyed	56
Table 3-2: List and Type of Social Media Platforms Investigated.....	56
Table 3-3: List of Criteria for Evaluation of Social Media Participation	57

Integrative Summery

Social media has become one of the defining features of the technological advances known as Web 2.0. As social media has increased in popularity, so businesses are expected to participate. Social media platforms enable businesses to widely broadcast a message as well as interact directly with individual customers. Customers are also able to interact directly with one another and share information and reviews about products and services offered. This suits the tourism industry particularly well. Internationally, research has shown that individuals use social media and other online tools to research potential holiday destinations. In addition social media is used during travel to share snapshots and commentary as well as after travel, through reviews and recommendations on platforms such as TripAdvisor. However, few studies have investigated how tourism destinations use social media to attract new clients and retain existing clients. Very little research has been done on tourism and social media in South Africa despite the importance of this industry to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

This study focused on four-star establishments within the photographic wildlife tourism industry in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. An initial survey of social media participation was carried out within the framework set out by Chan and Guillet (2011); this was then followed up with interviews with selected managers. Results showed that, in general, Private Game Reserves (PGRs) had embraced social media as a communication and marketing platform; despite concerns raised about the lack of control over content as well as poor understanding of the influence social media might have on the bottom line. TripAdvisor, Facebook and Twitter were the most commonly used platforms due to management familiarity with the platform and their ease of use. Few lodges utilised blogs or content sites such as YouTube and management cited time commitments associated with this type of platform as a reason for non-participation.

However, although most PGRs or lodges had a profile on social media, this did not always mean active participation. Frequently, lodges began updating but gradually stopped after a few months. It was noted however that only one of the lodges interviewed retained an individual whose sole responsibility was social media; generally lodges did not feel that a dedicated person was necessary. This may result in a lack of time available on the part of the individual responsible or simply be a case of not understanding the platform or how to use it effectively. However, none of the PGRs with poor social media participation responded to

interview requests and therefore it was not possible to determine the reasons for their poor participation.

Among those lodges that actively participated, most succeed in retaining fans and followers through consistent posting of relevant and interesting content as well as customised responses that encouraged fans or followers' interaction. However, there did not appear to be any evidence of using social media to learn about fans and followers in order to better customise the lodge offerings. This may not be necessary in this type of industry as PGRs sell a specific product and have a limited ability to customise offerings. In addition, there may be other sources of market information which lodges prefer to use. Special offers, competitions and promotions had limited success on social media. Generally, lodges used social media to promote links to a dedicated competition or promotions page.

In conclusion, the managers interviewed felt strongly that social media had made a measureable impact on the tourism industry and was a channel that was here to stay. Further research around the best practice and most effective use will enable PGRs to develop and maintain effective strategies for social media participation.

1 Section One: Academic Paper

1.1 Introduction

As of July 2011, the social networking site Facebook had 750 million registered users, about 50% of whom are active on any given day (Facebook, July 2011). The micro-blogging service Twitter celebrated its fifth anniversary on 21st March of 2011 (Twitter, 2011). During that month an average of 460,000 new Twitter accounts were created daily (Twitter, 2011). These figures are from just two of the many social media platforms and services which have developed over the last few years. Social media has become, and continues to be, a rapidly growing and evolving domain which businesses cannot afford to ignore (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:65). Business managers, regardless of industry, are demanding a share of the conversation within this new communications field (Fisher, 2009:189; Lingley-Larson, 2009:13; Owyang *et. al.*, 2009:2). The accessibility of information online means that the absence of a business from the social media arena will be noticed and competitors who do participate will have an advantage (Fisher, 2009:191).

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Introduction to Social Media

The advent of broadband connections and mobile internet-enabled devices has made it possible for individuals to be connected to the World Wide Web almost constantly. As the internet has become mainstream, it has facilitated the growth of online communities (Garnyte and de Avila Perez, 2009:43). However, not all online communities fall into the category of 'social media'. 'Social media' is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of sites, applications and services (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60). While sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube give an intuitive idea of what social media is; a formal definition is still required (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60).

The core feature of social media is User Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61) where users or members of a social media platform add and interact with content uploaded by other members and users. The concept of UGC is not new; originally the internet resembled a bulletin board where users could post and exchange various types of information including software, messages and news (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60;

Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242). In the beginning, content generation and sharing was simple, but more or less static. It took advances in technology such as those associated with 'Web 2.0' which allowed social media to evolve into the form that we recognise today (Garnyte and de Avila Perez, 2009:43; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60). The term 'Web 2.0' does not refer to a specific software update. Rather it has been adopted as a way to describe various advances which have facilitated interaction and collaboration of current web users (Maymann, 2008:12; Garnyte and de Avila Perez, 2009:43; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61).

Therefore 'social media' can be defined as a set of internet-based services or applications, built on the technological and conceptual foundations of Web 2.0, which allow the individual to create, exchange and interact with user generated content (Boyd and Ellison, 2008:214; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61). This definition differentiates social media from other online content in that it involves interactive user participation (Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:241). Under this definition, a static website which simply provides information cannot be considered to be a part of social media. However, a website which allows users to comment, share and interact with the content is part of the broader definition of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61).

1.2.2 Relationship Marketing

Social media facilitates communication and interactions between businesses and customers. These interactions therefore allow social media to be contextualised through the lens of relationship marketing (Dominici, 2009: 20). Relationship marketing can be defined as those activities which establish, develop and maintain successful relational exchanges (Morgan and Hunt, 1994:21; Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). The concept of relationship marketing grew out of a desire to understand horizontal and vertical trade relationships, particularly within the commercial buyer-seller sector (de Wulf and Odekerken-Schröder, 2001:74). More recently, through technology such the internet, consumers and sellers are able to communicate directly with one another; vertically, as well as with each other; horizontally. There is a need for sellers and service providers to understand and address consumer needs, to interact with them to gain an understanding of their preferences in order to effectively market a product or service (de Wulf and Odekerken-Schröder, 2001:74).

At the heart of relationship marketing are the concepts of quality interactions and the two-way enhancement and maintenance of relationships (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). The

value of participation for businesses therefore lies in the relationships built with customers through this type of communication. Key features of relationship marketing include transparency and authenticity (Fisher, 2009:193; Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011:277).

By its very nature, social media is perfectly suited to the concept of relationship marketing. Relationship marketing focuses on quality, long term interactions which build on previous interactions in an on-going process. The ability of social media to provide a platform for individuals to communicate directly with businesses in an informal manner, over a long period of time is what makes social media a good relationship marketing tool.

1.2.3 Why is Social Media Important to Business?

As participation in social media by businesses becomes the norm, so research in the field has increased accordingly (Fisher, 2009:189; Zeng *et. al.*, 2010:14). Some of the most exciting new developments within marketing and promotion are occurring in the field of internet communications (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011:107). In recent years, social media has become an accepted alternative mainstream communication channel. For many people, 'checking in' with their various social networks has become as commonplace as checking their email or answering the telephone (Nair, 2011: 45). Social media has become an indispensable part of daily communication, both personal and professional, and consumers have come to expect business to have a social media presence (Nair, 2011:45). Social media has therefore become an important way for businesses to communicate with and listen to its customers (Nair, 2011:46). In fact, some have gone so far as to say that if a business does not participate in some form of social media, they can no longer be considered to be part of the online community, and therefore in danger of becoming obsolete (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:67).

However, simply having a presence on social media is not enough, active participation is also required. Social media is a dynamic field, with content changing and updating frequently. Without active participation, there is little point to a business maintaining a social media presence. Through evaluating social media participation, businesses can learn how best to utilise the various sites or platforms to develop relationships and gather information and feedback from customers (Chan and Guillet, 2011:340). Chan and Guillet (2011) evaluated social media participation according to a set of 21 criteria relating to attracting, engaging, retaining, learning and relating to current and potential customers of hotel chain on various

social media platforms. The study allowed them to gain an understanding of shortcomings in social media participation. By understanding effective participation and engagement, tourism destinations are better able to manage their social media involvement. Used correctly, social media can develop brand ambassadors; passionate individuals who view the product or service positively, to generate word-of-mouth brand-awareness and thereby influencing a company's ability to attract and retain customers (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011:276).

Social media has the unique ability to allow a message to be widely broadcast, while simultaneously, interactions on an individual level are also possible (Dominici, 2009:20). Where previously, audiences were passive receptors of marketing and communication messages (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008:305), the advent of social media allows consumers to initiate communication directly with businesses. Businesses can no longer simply push a message onto the audience, they also need to listen, participate, remind and reassure both potential customers and existing stakeholders (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008:305).

With the multitude of social media platforms, and the frequent launch of new platforms, it is clear that it is impossible for a business to participate in all of the options in a meaningful way (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:65; Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:249). Typically, marketing literature does not tease apart the relative advantages and disadvantages of the various platforms; most articles bundle them together under the broad umbrella of 'social media'. However, social media is a communication channel akin to TV or radio. In the same way that marketers must decide which of the many available TV or radio stations to use, in order to best reach their target audience (Edelman, 2010:3) so too must social media managers decide which social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter or blogs) should be utilized (Thackeray *et. al.*, 2008:341; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011:112). Each social media channel is best suited to different forms of content and levels of participation and the users of that channel have different information needs and different profiles (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010).

With a myriad of options available, and only limited time and resources, social media managers have to choose carefully to maximise return on investment (ROI) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:65). If businesses are able to identify which platforms provide the greatest ROI for their marketing objectives, investments can be strategically managed to ensure a successful social media strategy (Thackeray *et. al.*, 2008:340). In this study, specific measures of ROI were not investigated; rather the overall participation on social media was

evaluated and compared to perceptions of social media held by management of selected lodges.

1.3 Research Method

While studies have been conducted on social media within the tourism industry elsewhere, no research has been done in South Africa. In addition, most previous studies (see for example Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Carson, 2008; Schmallegger and Carson, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Parra-López *et. al.*, 2011) have focused on social media as a tool used by potential clients when researching holiday destinations; rather than ways in which venues or destinations use social media as part of their integrated marketing efforts. More recently Chan and Guillet (2011) evaluated participation on various social media platforms among hotels in Hong Kong to gauge the extent to which they actively participated on social media.

The overall aim of this study was to gather information about the participation on social media of private game reserves within the Eastern Cape in South Africa. This was done through reviewing secondary data as well as through interviews with reserve management.

The first objective was to determine and evaluate the participation of private game reserves and luxury lodges on social media. Due to the lack of existing information, this study will provide basic information and allow reserves and lodges to better formulate effective social media strategies.

The second objective was to gain an understanding of social media participation from the point of view of the management of selected lodges or reserves. This will provide a more in-depth understanding of the reasons behind social media participation which cannot be determined from secondary data.

1.4 Methodology

This research was conducted under a post-positivist paradigm, using an objective epistemology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A post-positivist paradigm allows the research to be conducted within a framework of pre-existing ideas and theories while an objective epistemology enables the researcher to determine how well the findings fit with pre-existing

knowledge. An objective epistemology also allows for falsification of previous findings due to new knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

1.4.1 Social Media Participation

In order to address the objectives, the research was carried out in two parts. The first part was a descriptive study, evaluating the participation of private game reserves and/or lodges in the wildlife tourism industry on social media. This part of the study was based on the method used by Chan and Guillet (2011) for hotels in Hong Kong.

Private Game Reserves (PGRs) specialising in photographic safaris, as opposed to hunting, in the Eastern Cape were identified using the search engine Google.com, as well as industry specific search sites including SafariNow.com, SA-Places.com and SATourism.co.za. The full list was then narrowed to only include those lodges or reserves which had received four or more stars according to the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA). This selection criterion was applied to ensure that the facilities and services offered by each establishment, the competitive dynamics, resources and marketing strategies for all lodges were comparable. The list of PGRs and lodges reviewed in this survey can be found in Table 1-1.

Following the selection of lodges and reserves, a list of relevant social media platforms was then drawn up. The platforms were limited to the most popular due to time constraints and were based on the lists developed by Chan and Guillet (2011) and Boyd and Ellison (2008). A social media platform was any website where there was UGC. Examples of social media platforms included Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, YouTube and Flickr. Relevant platforms were those which could be used by both clients and management of the lodges. Platforms also had to meet the definition of social media as defined in this literature review. Table 1-2 contains examples of the types of social media platforms investigated.

Table 1-1: List of Private Game Reserves and Lodges Surveyed

Bukela*	Addo Afrique Giraffe Lodge†	Kuzuko Lodge†
The Bush Lodge*	Addo Elephant Safari Lodge†	Kwandwe
Hlosi*	Blaauwbosch	Kwantu
The Safari Lodge*	Bucklands	Lalibela
Hillsnek Safari*	Bushman Sands (River Hotels)	Nduna
Reed Valley Inn*	Fort D'acre	Pumba
Leeuwenbosch*	Gorah Elephant Lodge†	Riverbend†
Woodbury Lodge*	Hopewell Lodge	Samara
Woodbury Lodge Tented*	Kariega	Shamwari
Canarvon Dale*	Kichaka	Sibuya
Quatermain's Camp*	Koffyblaagte Game Farm	Inkenkwezi

**Even though they belong to the same private game reserve, these lodges are independently operated. As such they were treated independently.*

†These lodges all border on Addo Elephant National Park and do not belong to their own private reserve.

Table 1-2: List and Type of Social Media Platforms Investigated

Social Media Type	Examples
Blogging	Wordpress, Blogger, Self-hosted
Micro-blog	Twitter
Social Networking Site	Facebook
Content	YouTube, Flickr, Self-hosted
Feedback	TripAdvisor

A survey of social media participation of each reserve or lodge was then conducted on each of the selected social media platforms during October and November 2012. On each platform, the name of the lodge or reserve was input as a search term and the presence or absence of the property was noted. If a property did not appear in the first set of search results, various combinations of the name were searched until the researcher was satisfied that the presence of the property on that platform was unlikely. The performance of each PGR on the various platforms was then evaluated against 21 different criteria outlined by Chan and Guillet (2011). These criteria were chosen to demonstrate the PGR's ability to attract, engage, retain, relate and learn through their social media efforts. Additional information such as the date of the last update, the presence on other social media platforms,

cross-linkages between social media platforms and the property’s website were also noted. A list of the criteria can be found in Table 1-3.

Table 1-3: List of Criteria for Evaluation of Social Media Participation (Chan and Guillet (2011)).

Criteria	Features
Attracting	Company website shows presence on social media Shows affiliation with other aspects of the same corporation Shows affiliation with a different corporation Show affiliation with both Shows promotions or special offers
Engaging	Campaigns/Lucky draws/contests/games on social media Creation of virtual communities Number of Languages Used Type of Language Used Hosts a Forum or Discussion Group
Retaining	Dynamic content Security features and privacy Statements Links to social media platforms on website Link to website on social media Forums/Campaigns/Contests/Lucky Draws etc.
Learning	Information captured about customers and prospects Market research Supporting chat groups
Relating	Customisation/Personalisation Updating users of content change Real time interactions

1.4.2 Interviews with Management

The second objective of the research was to gather more in-depth information about social media participation. This information was gathered from primary sources through qualitative interviews (Babbie, 2011: 312) with lodge or reserve managers.

Each PGR that had been evaluated in the procedure outlined above was contacted and invited to participate in a face-to-face or telephonic interview. Of the 32 lodges, only four agreed to participate in the interview process. In addition to the interviews with management, participating lodges were invited to provide clients with a structured qualitative questionnaire designed to gauge the effectiveness of a lodge or reserves’ social media participation. Lodge managers were extremely hesitant to participate citing a fear of inconveniencing their guests while on holiday. Only one lodge agreed to participate and an instrument was developed for

this study (see Appendix One). However, the response rate to this questionnaire was extremely low (<5%) and therefore they cannot be considered to be representative. However, where relevant, client comments have been used for illustrative purposes.

Lodge managers were interviewed in person during October and November 2012. The author conducted the interviews personally and covered a set of nineteen open-ended questions (See Appendix Two). The interviews were recorded with consent and the transcripts were then analysed for themes.

The results for each objective are presented below. Statements made by lodge management were used to help interpret the findings of the participation evaluation survey and these are presented in the discussion along with suggestions and recommendations to address social media strategies going forward.

1.5 Results

1.5.1 Overview of Social Media Presence and Participation

A total of 32 lodges belonging to 21 private game reserves, were surveyed. Certain reserves, such as Amakhala, have several independently-operated lodges, all of which utilise the same private property. In these cases, for the purposes of this study, each lodge was considered independently, as the lodge and the reserve are not synonymous. Shamwari and several others however, were treated as a single entity although it maintains multiple lodges. This was because each lodge was not marketed independently of the umbrella brand. There were also five lodges which are located within or on the boundary of the Addo Elephant National Park and utilize the National Park for their activities such as game drives. Although these are not “private” reserves, the standard of accommodation, facilities and activities offered were comparable and therefore they were included in the study. It is thus important to note that unlike Chan and Guillet (2011), brand level social media efforts were not attributed to the property level.

The social media participation of the lodges is summarized in Table 1-4. Only four lodges did not have their own website. These lodges belonged to the Amakhala group of properties, and all had a profile page under the umbrella of the Amakhala brand. In addition these four properties did not have a presence on social media, independent of the group and therefore were considered to be absent from social media.

Table 1-4: Overview of Social Media Participation

Social Media Type	Platform	Number of lodges	%
Blogging	Any Platform	11	34.4%
Micro-blogging	Twitter	17	53.1%
Social Networking Site	Facebook	21	65.6%
Content	YouTube	11	34.4%
	Flickr	2	6.3%
	Self-Hosted	24	75.0%
Feedback	TripAdvisor	32	100.0%
	Website	29	87.5%

All lodges had a profile on TripAdvisor, 21 had a Facebook page and 17 had a Twitter account. Eleven lodges had a blog, either self-hosted or on a third-party blogging platform such as Blogger or Wordpress. Eleven lodges had their own YouTube channel, although almost all had content which had been uploaded by clients independently. Self-hosted content, i.e. not embedded within a social media platform, was also common and was comprised mainly of photographs. Only two lodges had a Flickr profile for photographs as well as their own self-hosted content. For all lodges, the language of communication was English.

1.5.2 Overview of Evaluation Criteria

The results of the evaluation of social media participation are presented in Table 1-5.

Table 1-5: Evaluation Criteria for Social Media Participation

Evaluation	Criteria	%	Number of Lodges
Attracting	Company website shows presence on SM	62.5%	20
	Affiliation with same corporation	15.6%	5
	Affiliation with different corporation	50.0%	16
	Affiliation with both	12.5%	4
	Promotions/Special Offers	34.4%	11
Engaging	Campaigns/Lucky draws/contests/games	31.3%	10
	Forum/Discussion Group	0.0%	0
Retaining	Dynamic content	68.8%	22
	Links to SM sites on website	62.5%	20
	Link to website on SM	62.5%	20
	Forums/Campaigns/Contests/Lucky Draws etc.	18.8%	6

Learning	Info captured about customers and prospects	0.0%	0
	Market research	0.0%	0
	Supporting chat groups	0.0%	0
Relating	Customisation/Personalisation	37.5%	12
	Updating users of content change	0.0%	0
	Real time interactions	3.1%	1

1.5.2.1 Attracting

For those lodges with their own website, most advertised their presence on at least one social media platform, usually TripAdvisor or Facebook. On those social media platforms, five advertised affiliations with other member of the same organisation, and sixteen promoted another organisation, with only four lodges promoting both. Eleven lodges used social media to advertise promotions and special offers.

1.5.2.2 Engaging

Ten lodges used social media to engage with clients through various campaigns, contests or lucky draws. These games were seldom for a prize; rather they were intended to generate comments and discussions. The most popular form of game involves guessing the identity of an animal from a clue, photograph or other piece of information. Two of the ten lodges engaging in this way consistently host a contest. None of the reserves set up a virtual community or hosted discussion groups or forums.

1.5.2.3 Retaining

‘Dynamic content’ was defined as at least one update within the last calendar month on the date of the survey. Twenty two of the lodges had dynamic content with more having older updates. Twenty lodges either linked to social media from their website, or from social media back to the lodges’ website. There were nineteen which cross-linked their various social media platforms, for example, their Twitter profile provided links to and was linked with their Facebook account while the website showed live feeds or ‘tickers’ with content from social media pages. Six lodges encouraged clients to remain fans or followers through lucky draws and competitions although this was not a common use of social media.

1.5.2.4 Learning

There was no evidence of any lodges using the social media platforms to harvest information about their client pool. There were no platform-specific applications, such as a game, forum or competition, which required potential customers to enter details which would then be captured in a database. However, there may be other methods by which the lodge gathers information about their fans and followers although this was not detectable in the survey. For example, lodges may be able to purchase information about their fans or followers directly from the social media platform. Alternatively they may make use of an application which automatically harvests information.

1.5.2.5 Relating

Some lodges made an effort to customise responses on social media; particularly on Facebook and TripAdvisor by replying directly to individual posts, comments or reviews. However only one lodge had “real-time chat” functionality and this was located on their website rather than on a social media platform. A few lodges had a standard response which was not customised, however many lodges simply did not respond to comments or reviews rather than give a standard response.

1.5.3 Themes from Interviews with Management

Four lodges consented to interviews with management or individuals responsible for social media. These interviews were conducted in person during October and November 2012. The identity of each lodge and the individuals interviewed has been kept confidential.

1.5.3.1 General Lodge Profiles

Three of the reserves are so-called ‘Big Five’ properties. Reserve One was established in 2007 and has one lodge on the property with a total of 20 beds. Reserve Two was also founded in 2007, with lodges established in 2009 and 2010. Reserve Two currently has a total of 24 beds. Reserve Three was established in 2004 and has two accommodation options with a total of 52 beds. Reserve Four was founded in 1989 and has expanded since then to encompass four accommodation options and approximately 70 beds.

1.5.3.2 Social Media Profiles

Lodge One has profiles on both Facebook and Twitter. Lodge One joined Facebook on the 27th of September 2010 and at the time of writing had a total of 559 ‘likes’ to date (22nd October 2012). Similarly, Lodge One joined Twitter on the 6th of October 2010 and currently has 129 followers. The Lodge also has a listing on TripAdvisor with 95 reviews to date. The Lodge’s website provides links to all these profiles as well as several client video clips loaded on YouTube. However Lodge One does not have their own YouTube channel, nor do they add content themselves.

Lodge Two has profiles on Facebook and Twitter, as well as a short marketing clip on YouTube, but they do not have their own YouTube channel. Lodge Two joined Facebook on the 3rd of June 2011 and Twitter on the 12th June 2011 and at the time of writing had a total of 182 ‘likes’ and 524 followers to date (22nd October 2012). The Lodge also has a listing on TripAdvisor with 11 reviews.

Lodge Three has profiles on Facebook and Twitter, as well as a YouTube channel administered by the Lodge. Lodge Three joined Facebook on the 5th of August 2010 and at the time of writing had a total of 799 ‘likes’ to date (22nd October 2012). Similarly, Lodge Three joined Twitter on the 18th June 2009 and currently has 164 followers. The Lodge also has a listing on TripAdvisor with 151 reviews.

Lodge Four joined Facebook on the 11th of October 2010, and Twitter on 23 May 2011 and the profiles had 6,402 ‘likes’ and 1,197 followers respectively to date (22 October 2012). The Lodge also runs a YouTube channel and has 159 reviews on TripAdvisor. The social media profile for all lodges has been summarised in Table 1-6.

Table 1-6: Summary of Social Media Profiles

	Facebook		Twitter		TripAdvisor		YouTube
	Joined	Fans	Joined	Followers	Profile?	Reviews	
Lodge One	27.09.10	559	06.10.10	129	Yes	95	No
Lodge Two	03.06.11	182	12.06.11	524	Yes	11	No
Lodge Three	05.08.10	799	18.06.09	164	Yes	151	Yes
Lodge Four	11.10.10	6,402	23.05.11	1,197	Yes	159	Yes

Three of the Lodges made a conscious decision to participate on social media; specifically Facebook and Twitter. At the fourth Lodge, the Lodge managers were already familiar with Facebook and Twitter through personal use and believed that social media was a necessity and therefore there was no conscious decision made about which platform to participate on. However the fourth Lodge was also the only Lodge to consider alternative social media platforms such as MySpace before deciding not to participate there, citing lack of local interest in the platforms especially when compared to Facebook and Twitter.

Other platforms such as TripAdvisor were recognised as critically important, although one Manager admitted that they had not paid attention to the platform until relatively recently. Although in general Lodge management recognises the importance of TripAdvisor, their responses to reviews are inconsistent. Only one of the lodges consistently thanked reviewers for their comments, while two others only responded to poor reviews. It was not clear whether the lodges participated on TripAdvisor in other ways, for example, contributing to the forums on the platform. One General Manager (GM) in particular felt that too much interaction on TripAdvisor was not desirable as it was important for prospective clients to have access to an unbiased platform.

“We feel that TripAdvisor is for guests to get a real honest review of a property and if you get too involved it might be seen as being contrived.”

In terms of content, YouTube was noted as a popular option among other Lodges, although only two of the Lodges interviewed managed their own YouTube channels. In the cases where there was no YouTube channel, GMs cited a lack of time to shoot, edit and upload video clips. Similarly there was a desire to give a more honest reflection of the Reserve and Lodges which and felt that YouTube was better suited with client video clips rather than ranger videos. He noted that rangers have many more opportunities to have great sightings which could result in false marketing. The lodge preferred to promote or link to client videos.

“...and the best way for it [The Lodge] to market itself is past guests.”

1.5.3.3 Importance of Social Media to Tourism

None of the GMs could give a formal definition of social media although all had a basic intuitive understanding, identifying both Facebook and Twitter as good examples of social

media. The GMs for Lodges Two and Three did however have a good grasp on a functional definition of social media saying;

“Social media to us is a medium to involve the guests on a day-to-day basis on what is actually happening.”

“Essentially it’s the grouping together of people with similar or same interests on an online platform.”

All managers felt that social media was of crucial importance to the tourism industry in general as well as for their specific lodges in spite of the difficulties in quantifying the impact it has on the business. One GM felt that social media fit in well with the nature of the tourism industry in general. He suggested that people in the industry take enjoyment in sharing news, sightings and stories and social media provides a platform to do this. All managers felt that social media and other technological advances had revolutionised the tourism industry and would remain a critical part of the industry for the foreseeable future. All managers also felt that while it was very difficult to quantify the direct benefits or effects of social media on the business; it was something that they could not do without.

“I think it’s vital. If you’re not doing it anymore, I’m sorry you’ve gone down with the ark!”

“[It’s] an integral part of the oil that’s needed in a business. If you’re not doing it, I think you will feel it.”

Among social media platforms, TripAdvisor was consistently mentioned as an important platform. TripAdvisor allows past clients to post reviews and rate the establishment. TripAdvisor then uses member’s reviews and ratings to rank destinations. Awards are given to establishments for consistently good performance as well as listing the best overall destinations. The platform and its associated forums are used extensively by prospective clients when deciding on a holiday destination. Therefore this platform offers a powerful tool for identifying areas which could be improved upon or issues which need addressing. The importance of this platform is reflected by the 100% participation rate among lodges (See Table 1-4).

Facebook was identified as particularly important due to the ease of use and familiarity to both the Lodge management and to the majority of clients. Most lodges use Facebook for

general communication and for keeping their establishment 'top-of-mind' rather than for specific marketing drives. Facebook was particularly used by past clients who may in time become returning clients. Likewise Twitter was used more to drive followers to either the website or to the Facebook page through links rather than as a communication platform itself. Other platforms identified as important were YouTube and in once case Flickr, but these seem to simply provide another mechanism for communication of general information and impressions of the lodge. However both YouTube and Flickr are more specialist platforms and as such are more time-consuming to curate.

It is interesting to note that despite the difficulties associated with quantifying the benefits of social media; it remains a popular marketing channel. While all Lodges still participate in traditional forms of marketing, the emphasis in this area differs from lodge to lodge. Overall, print marketing seems to have declined and is used by Lodge Three only locally and then only to advertise winter-time specials. All lodges focus particularly on relationships with tour operators and bookings agents both locally and overseas. Lodge Four regularly travels to the large tourism conventions internationally such as ITB-Berlin and locally the *Indaba*, hosted in Durban annually. All managers felt that traditional mechanisms had a role to play in tourism marketing, but the social media and online marketing were becoming increasingly important and an area that could no longer be ignored. Three of the GMs interviewed noted that an increasing proportion of their booking were direct, online bookings, up to 45% in one case. Another GM noted that they made a conscious decision to improve their website and online booking system since they noticed a large proportion of bookings were made direct and online and that this has become a priority for their Lodge. Lodge One in particular felt strongly that an up-to-date website and an obvious online presence were critical to their success. A large emphasis was placed on their web presence of which social media was a crucial part. This lodge has a budget for both Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Google's Pay per Click (PPC) advertising.

1.5.3.4 Mechanisms of Participation

Only Lodge Four contracts individuals specifically to manage their website and social media platforms. Lodge Three had an individual responsible for all online information including social media, but that individual has recently left the organisation and the responsibility for social media had fallen to the GM for the time being. The lodge

management is planning to fill this post in future. The individuals who have been contracted to run the social media platforms run a business providing social media management as their full-time job; as such they were considered to by professionals in the field.

The other two Lodges had assigned the social media responsibilities to individuals already in the organisation. At Lodge One, the Facebook page and Twitter accounts are updated and monitored by the Lodge's bookings manager. Lodge One's GM felt that as a relatively small lodge, there was no need for a dedicated individual to run the social media accounts. Similarly at Lodge Two, the social media interactions are run by a person in addition to other managerial duties. Neither individual has had any formal training or background in managing social media apart from their own personal experience.

At all lodges, content on the platforms were provided mainly by the rangers in the form of animal sightings, stories or other news and events from the reserve. General Managers and other marketing management also occasionally provide news relating to lodge services, new facilities, staff, as well as trivia and occasionally special offers. However few of the Lodges used Facebook or Twitter specifically to run competitions. The GM at Lodge One specifically mentioned that they had limited success in the past with special offers or competitions on their Facebook page. Rather they use the page to direct traffic to the main website. Interaction with followers and fans is done by the individual monitoring the page.

None of the lodges interviewed have a formally documented social media policy relating to content. However, all GM's mentioned that there had been informal discussions around appropriate use of social media and encouraged common sense in the use of these platforms. Lodge One's GM specifically mentioned that all communication, whether on social media or otherwise had to "*be honest and had to market the Lodge*". Therefore if there was any doubt about whether or not content should be posted, it was informally discussed with management and a decision made. Only one Lodge made use of administrators who had to review all posts before they were shared publically. One aspect that all Lodges emphasised related to security, particularly information relating to rhinos such as the location of their sightings, anti-poaching operations and total numbers of animals. In addition two lodges mentioned that they had informal policy in place relating to the privacy of high profile guests.

The time spent monitoring of the various social media platforms varied across platforms. Facebook, the most commonly used social media platform tended to be updated at least once a day or every other day. Other platforms, such as YouTube and various blogs

were updated less frequently, every week to every few months or infrequently. TripAdvisor was monitored consistently by the Lodges who had dedicated social media personnel, while the other Lodges checked the platform infrequently. In general the costs associated with running social media platforms are relatively minimal, even in those cases where specific individuals are employed or retained. In addition time investments tend to be low with most lodges mentioning that they spend between one and “*a few hours a day*” checking the various sites.

1.6 Discussion

1.6.1 Participation on Social Media

A large proportion of the private reserves and lodges reviewed had at least a basic presence on some form of social media. All managers interviewed mentioned that social media was integral to the tourism industry and they expected it to remain important for the foreseeable future. Managers viewed social media as a channel to communicate events and occurrences on the reserve as well as promotion of conservation efforts. Management recognised that social media was important for building community and relationships, a key feature of social media (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010:181; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:65). Advertising and promotions were not a large part of the communication on the various platforms. This is different to the findings of Chan and Guillet (2011) and may be a reflection of the differences between the urban hotel and wildlife tourism industries.

Participation on social media however, was more unpredictable, with some lodges demonstrating a very active presence across all platforms, and others active on only some of the platforms where they had a profile and a few not active at all, despite having a profile. This inability to sustain social media efforts is similar to the pattern observed by Chan and Guillet (2011). The reasons for this are unclear as management of these lodges did not respond to requests for interviews. However, some insight can be gained from comments by management who were interviewed. Common concerns raised included time constraints and motivation to engage with social media, as well as the inability to gauge the return on investment. This is particularly true where the individual responsible for social media maintains the platforms in addition to multiple other duties. While this arrangement can work effectively, for long term commitment and management of multiple platforms, it may be preferable to assign social media duties to a dedicated individual or team.

Other than TripAdvisor, Facebook and Twitter were the two most commonly used platforms. Only one of the managers interviewed consciously considered which social media platforms they would participate on. However, given the worldwide popularity of Facebook and Twitter, these two platforms are indispensable within a social media portfolio. Twitter appears not to be used as a communication channel in its own right but rather it is used to drive online traffic to either the Lodge's website or Facebook page.

TripAdvisor is recognised as a reliable resource for individuals wishing to research upcoming holidays and is often used to assist with decision-making in regard to accommodation options (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010:65; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010:186). All lodges reviewed had a profile on TripAdvisor, although some profiles appear to have been established by past clients rather than the management of the lodge; however this could not be confirmed. Not all lodges appeared to engage publically with reviews left on TripAdvisor; although it is impossible to tell from this type of survey whether or not a Lodge monitors their TripAdvisor listing anonymously; as mentioned by one of the lodge managers. The lack of engagement with TripAdvisor may be due to a desire to have an unbiased information resource for potential clients as mentioned by one manager; or it may be that Lodges are simply unaware of the importance of this platform.

YouTube was relatively popular as a social media platform and the video format lends itself to wildlife tourism particularly well. However, in general, the channels belonging to lodges were infrequently updated. Searching combinations and permutations of a lodge or reserve's name typically returned private, client-uploaded video clips ahead of the Lodge's official channel. These privately uploaded videos were not always linked to the official channel although it is possible to do this. The lodge channels tended to contain video clips that were professionally filmed advertisements for the lodge rather than amateur footage captured by rangers or other members of staff. Again, those managers who did not participate on YouTube felt that the platform was better suited to client videos which provide unbiased clips of the lodge experience..

Blogs are an ideal platform for sharing news and event and yet relatively few reserves made use of this platform. Even in cases where there was a blog written by rangers, the content was infrequently updated and many entries were several months out of date. This is probably due to time constraints faced by the rangers themselves as well as unfamiliarity with

blog-writing (aka blogging). It is also possible that there are technological constraints, such as poor bandwidth, as well.

Very few other social media platforms were utilised with only two reserves using the photo sharing site Flickr, and one reserve making use of LinkedIn, and the location-based platform, Foursquare. These platforms are not as well-known as others, and in addition they may not be as well suited to the tourism industry.

1.6.2 Evaluation of Participation on Social Media

1.6.2.1 Attracting

The easiest way of advertising and attracting clients to social media platforms is to place a clickable logo or hyperlink for the social media platforms somewhere on the homepage of the lodge's website. However, despite having multiple profiles, the majority of lodges only advertised their TripAdvisor profile. In one case, the lodge did display links to social media, but these links pointed to the lodge's parent company instead of the lodge itself, despite the lodge having its own profile. The poor linking of social media sites to the lodge's homepage and vice versa is representative as a problem for accessibility by Chan and Guillet (2011). The intention of social media is to attract and retain potential clients; if social media platforms are difficult to access, potential clients may be put off. In addition, managers mentioned that web and direct online bookings are consistently increasing, and therefore it is important that potential clients are able to easily find all sources of information that could influence their decision. Managers interviewed for this study mentioned that even clients who book through traditional tour operators or agents make decisions about where to stay that are strongly influenced by social media and the online presence. Therefore any mechanism, such as cross linking your website and social media platforms, which will make it easier to gather information can influence a potential client.

1.6.2.2 Engaging

Unlike Chan and Guillet's (2011) study, the majority of communication on social media was not related to promotional activities. Typically social media was used to communicate day-to-day events, such as animal sightings and rangers observations, as well as special news from around the reserve. Popular posts tended to be news of events on the reserve, such as the

birth of new mega-fauna (elephants, rhinos, lions, giraffe etc.), unique or interesting sightings, and on occasion, news relating to rhino poaching. Social media pages followed the basic format, but were customised with photographs and were easy to use and navigate, encouraging visitors to stay and browse (Kierzkowski *et. al.*, 1996:182).

The lack of promotional posts may be due to the difference between the city hotel industry and the wildlife tourism industry. Hotels attract customers through promotion of special offers, while reserves attract clients through the wildlife they can offer and the quality of the game drives. Other features and services may be secondary within the wildlife tourism industry, especially when compared to a city hotel.

While some lodges did attempt to hold competitions through their social media platforms, they have had limited success. The limited success of competitions may be due to the nature of the destination. Game reserves, unlike hotels are not well suited to short stays, and their clients are not always local or even national. The social media platforms were also used to publicise and promote special offers and seasonal specials. Rates were generally not published as this is sensitive information and best handled by the booking agents. However, in general, social media platforms served to re-direct web traffic to a website or homepage where there was additional information.

1.6.2.3 Retaining

Social media appears to be used mainly for general communication and information rather than hard-sell marketing. Fresh content and casual interactions help to keep the Lodge or reserve 'top-of-mind' among its followers and fans (Kierzkowski *et. al.*, 1996:182; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Chan and Guillet, 2011). Lodges who did encourage engagement typically posted identification challenges, or trivia and other interesting facts intended to generate comments and discussion. Overall however, engagement was poor. Many reserves failed to keep up with social media efforts and have not added any new content in several months or only add content infrequently. Of particular concern is the lack of response by reserves to poor reviews on TripAdvisor. Research has shown that bad reviews are given more weight by potential customers than good reviews (Kanouse, 1984:705), especially if the establishment is perceived as 'average'; this was understood and specifically mentioned by the manager of Lodge Three.

1.6.2.4 Learning

There was no evidence of any lodges using the social media platforms to harvest information about their client pool or to use it to gather information about client expectations. This may be because the marketing team for lodges utilises other methods of market research, or simply because they are unaware of the possibilities presented by social media. Two of the managers interviewed mentioned that their fans on Facebook tended to be past clients. It is possible that because of this, there is limited information that can be gained about potential clients through the social media platforms. There are several mechanisms through which lodges could collect information using social media. A common method is through the creation of a game or application which uses a social media platform to run. Clients wishing to play the game would be required to register, and their information could then be harvested. In addition, there are third-party, automated data-harvesting applications which a lodge could use to collect information about their fans and followers.

1.6.2.5 Relating

The most pressing problem with social media in this review was the lack of true participation. While many lodges had a presence, this did not translate to participation. Fresh, relevant and up-to-date content encourages users to become a fan or follower of a social media platform and gives them a reason to return. However, many of the lodges did not appear to be actively maintaining their social media platforms. Of the 22 lodges with a social media presence, only 12 had updates within the last calendar month, with a further six having updated within the last calendar year. The remaining lodges last updated their content more than 12 months previously or in one exceptional case, not at all. The managers interviewed mentioned that they strove to balance fresh daily content against overloading their followers with too many posts. Unfortunately none of the lodges who did not actively participate on social media agreed to an interview so it is difficult to determine reasons behind non-participation. Some managers interviewed mentioned challenges in obtaining content from managers, or their personal unfamiliarity with the various platforms; either of these could be reasons for non-participation.

One of the key features of social media is the ability of an organisation to communicate directly with fans or followers. Social media platforms make it easy for organisations to tailor

messages and responses and respond directly to a client's query, comment or review. Where lodges did engage on social media, they tended to be good at tailoring responses and replying directly to the individual who left a review or comment.

1.6.3 Social Media and Conservation

While social media platforms have been used to share general information, there is one specific topic which deserves mention. Most lodges and reserves are passionate about conservation and frequently provide links or 'like' third party pages which relate to conservation movements. For example, a reserve might 'like' the WWF South Africa page on Facebook. Unlike the previous study by Chan and Guillet (2011), reserves and lodges reviewed in this study seldom provided other external links, with the exception of a bed and breakfast and a car rental company. The Eastern Cape has a relatively robust population of rhino (Stop Rhino Poaching, 2012) but during 2012 there has been a dramatic increase in rhino poaching. During 2012, a total of seven animals (Stop Rhino Poaching, 2012) have been killed on reserves evaluated in this study. The most dramatic and well known example was that of 'Thandi and Temba'; two rhinos which were de-horned by poachers but left alive. The reserve to which the animals belonged mounted a massive effort to treat the animals and save their lives. Sadly, Temba died due to his injuries but Thandi has survived and in doing so she has become a mascot for rhino conservation and anti-poaching efforts. Social media has played an enormous role in the process through updates and information shared on Twitter and Facebook as well as a YouTube video which has raised awareness as well as funds for their treatment. This campaign has been so successful that the money raised has exceeded what was required and has therefore been put forward to other conservation efforts. This campaign has helped to raise awareness around the plight of the rhino in South Africa and through social media, reached a much broader audience than even the management of the reserve though possible. Social media therefore can be a powerful tool for conservation and conservationists.

1.7 Conclusion

In general, private wildlife tourism operators in the Eastern Cape have embraced social media as an alternative marketing strategy. This is in spite of the fact that there is very limited information available to managers about the efficacy of these platforms and the impacts they

have on business operations. Despite the general acceptance of social media, many establishments still seem to be determining the most effective and efficient way to use the various platforms. Managers raised concerns about the lack of control over content posted by followers and in particular negative feedback and content. Consistent active engagement and participation are the only way to ensure that a lodge is able to build up a community on social media.

Similarly lodges need to advertise their presence on the various platforms to encourage those individuals still deciding on a holiday destination to join and become a fan. It is acknowledged that social media plays a role in the holiday destination decision-making process. The wildlife industry is particularly suited to social media because it is easy to share stories and photographs from game drives and animal sightings, which is what people come to these reserves for. Social media also provides a platform for past clients to offer their observations and comments about the destination. Negative comments should not be shied away from because unlike simply analogue word-of-mouth, social media gives management an opportunity to address the concerns raised and mitigate the effects of a poor review. It also provides a valuable learning opportunity and a chance to address areas where there has been under-performance.

While most lodges participate on social media purely as a marketing strategy, the platforms also offer a powerful tool for managers passionate about conservation and their role in conservation. Many lodges and reserves already participate in conservation efforts and possibly do not see social media as beneficial to their efforts. Through social media information can be shared directly, which can then be re-shared by fans and followers and so spread. Through this process it is possible to reach many more individuals, which have positive benefits for fundraising efforts and conservation awareness. While the plight of the rhino in South Africa is currently the most pressing, other conservation issues can also benefit.

Finally, social media is a powerful tool but effective use of social media requires a new mind-set and a new way of operating. The poor client response in this study is disappointing, but this area would benefit from further study. Social media is seen as an indispensable part of the wildlife tourism industry now and will continue to play a role into the future. If management wants to take advantage of social media, they need to adapt to new methods or appoint individuals who are comfortable and familiar with the platforms. These efforts can be

better focused with input for clients as to which platforms influenced their decision to stay at a particular lodge.

1.8 References

- BABBIE, E. 2011. Chapter 9: Field Research. In: BABBIE, E. (ed). BABBIE, E. *Introduction to Social Research*. Belmont, Canada: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- BOYD, D. M. and ELLISON, N. B. 2008. Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 13, 1: 210-230.
- CARSON, D. 2008. The 'blogosphere' as a market research tool for tourism destinations: A case study of Australia's Northern Territory. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 14, 2: 111-119.
- CHAN, N. and GUILLET, B. 2011. Investigation of Social Media Marketing: How Does the Hotel Industry in Hong Kong Perform in Marketing on Social Media Websites? *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*. 28, 4: 345-368.
- DE WULF, K. and ODEKERKEN-SCHRÖDER, G. 2001. A critical review of theories underlying relationship marketing in the context of explaining consumer relationships. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*. 31, 1: 73-101.
- DOMINICI, G. 2009. From Marketing Mix to e-Marketing Mix: a literature overview and classification. *International Journal of Business and Management*. 4, 9: p17.
- EDELMAN, D. C. 2010. Branding in the digital age. *Harvard Business Review*. 88, 12: 62-69.
- FACEBOOK. July 2011. *Statistics*. Facebook. Available: <http://goo.gl/FHbXH>. Accessed: [20 July 2011].
- FISHER, T. 2009. ROI in social media: A look at the arguments. *Journal of Database Marketing and Customer Strategy Management*. 16, 3: 189-195.
- GARNYTE, M. and DE AVILA PEREZ, A. 2009. *Exploring Social Media Marketing Towards a Richer Understanding of Social Media in Postmodernity*. MA in Corporate Communication. University of Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus.
- GUBA, E. and LINCOLN, Y. 1994. Chapter 6: Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In: DENZIN, N. and LINCOLN, Y. (eds). GUBA, E. and LINCOLN, Y. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- HOFFMAN, D. L. and FODOR, M. 2010. Can You Measure the ROI of Your Social Media Marketing? *MIT Sloan Management Review*. 52, 1.
- KANOUSE, D. 1984. Explaining Negativity Biases in Evaluation and Choice Behaviour: Theory and Research. *Advances in Consumer Research*. 11, 703-708.

- KAPLAN, A. M. and HAENLEIN, M. 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*. 53, 1: 59-68.
- KAPLAN, A. M. and HAENLEIN, M. 2011. The early bird catches the news: Nine things you should know about micro-blogging. *Business Horizons*. 54, 2: 105-113.
- KIERZKOWSKI, A., MCQUADE, S., WAITMAN, R. and ZEISSER, M. 1996. Marketing to the digital consumer. *The McKinsey Quarterly*. 2: 180-183.
- KIETZMANN, J., HERMKENS, K., MCCARTHY, I. and SILVESTRE, B. 2011. Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*. 54, 3: Special Issue - Social Media: 241-251.
- LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. 2008. Marketing communication strategy. In: LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. (eds). *Marketing*. (3e). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- LINGLEY-LARSON, R. J. 2009. The Rise of Viral Marketing through the New Media of Social Media. *Liberty University Faculty Presentations and Publications*. Paper 6. Available: <http://goo.gl/cfTau>. [Accessed: 25.04.2012].
- MAYMANN, J. 2008. *The Social Metropolis* EU: GoViral ApS.
- MORGAN, R. and HUNT, S. 1994. The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*. 58, July: 20-38.
- NAIR, M. 2011. Understanding and measuring the value of social media. *Journal of Corporate Accounting and Finance*. 22, 3: 45-51.
- OWYANG, J. K., BERNOFF, J., CUMMINGS, T. and BOWEN, E. 2009. Social Media Playtime Is Over. *Forester Research*. 1-7.
- PARRA-LÓPEZ, E., BULCHAND-GIDUMAL, J., GUTIÉRREZ-TAÑO, D. and DÍAZ-ARMAS, R. 2011. Intentions to use social media in organizing and taking vacation trips. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 27, 2: 640-654.
- SCHMALLEGGGER, D. and CARSON, D. 2008. Blogs in tourism: Changing approaches to information exchange. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 14, 2: 99.
- Stop Rhino Poaching. 2012. *Rhino Poaching Statistics*. Stop Rhino Poaching. Available: <http://www.stoprhinopoaching.com/statistics.aspx>. Accessed: [11/05 2012].
- THACKERAY, R., NEIGER, B. L., HANSON, C. L. and MCKENZIE, J. F. 2008. Enhancing promotional strategies within social marketing programs: use of Web 2.0 social media. *Health promotion practice*. 9, 4: 338.
- TWITTER. 2011. *#Numbers*. Twitter.com. Available: <http://goo.gl/Z9wqk>. Accessed: [20 July 2011].

- WANG, Y. and FESENMAIER, D. 2004. Modelling Participation in an Online Travel Community. *Journal of Travel Research*. 42, February: 261-270.
- WEINBERG, B. and PEHLIVAN, E. 2011. Social spending: Managing the social media mix. *Business Horizons*. 54, 275-282.
- XIANG, Z. and GRETZEL, U. 2010. Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*. 31, 2: 179-188.
- ZENG, D., CHEN, H., LUSCH, R. and LI, S. H. 2010. Social Media Analytics and Intelligence. *Intelligent Systems, IEEE*. 25, 6: 13-16.

2 Section Two: Literature Review

2.1 Marketing and Communication

Every business has a set of goals and objectives aimed at ensuring and improving the success of the company. In order to achieve these objectives the company develops a strategic plan, one component of which will be the marketing and communications (marcom) strategy (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008c: 322). Since the 1960's, these strategies have been rooted in traditional marketing theories. The role of the marketing manager is to devise and implement an appropriate marketing strategy utilising the so-called 'marketing mix'.

2.2 Marketing Theory - McCarthy's Four P's

Marketing is one of the most important activities for businesses. Today, the majority of marketing theory is based on the mnemonic put forward by McCarthy (1960), the "Four P's" of Product, Price, Place and Promotion. McCarthy's original theory is not covered here as it has been reviewed and discussed in depth (see van Waterschoot and van den Bulte, 1992; Anderson and Taylor, 1995; Yudelsohn, 1999; Constantinides, 2006; Dominici, 2009).

2.2.1 Variations and Criticisms of the Four P's

Throughout the years, marketing has evolved and the Four P's theory has been challenged, refined and adapted. Criticism of the Four P's typically focuses on the relative simplicity of the model. Authors suggest additional factors ('P's' or otherwise) that they feel should be added to the original model or that should replace one or the other of the original P's.

Some modifications to the original framework have gained some popularity, for example, the addition of three extra P's (Personnel, Processes and Physical Evidence) to form the Seven P's according to Booms and Bitner (1981). This modification to the framework grew from dissatisfaction with the Four P's within the services industry. Kotler (1986) suggested two additional factors; Politics and Public Opinion. Despite these expansions, not all authors believe that they are necessary.

Other authors have attempted to address the seller-orientated approach of the framework with one that is customer-orientated. Two alternative frameworks were proposed in an attempt to address this issue; the Four C's model proposed by Lauterborn (1990) and the Four

A's by Sheth and Sisodia (2011). Under these models, each of the Four P's are replaced by a similar, but customer-centric concept. Thus Products became 'Customer needs' or 'Acceptability', Price became 'Cost' or 'Affordability'; Place became 'Convenience' or 'Accessibility', and Promotion became 'Communication' or 'Awareness' (Lautenborn, 1990; Sheth and Sisodia, 2011).

For the purposes of this dissertation, the refined definitions proposed by Yudelson (1999) will be used. Yudelson (1999) argued that while the Four P's framework has not kept up with the evolution of marketing theory and practice, no suitable framework has been proposed to replace it. Therefore instead of replacing the original, the applicability and life of the theory can be extended through careful redefinition of each of the existing factors (Yudelson, 1999: 62). The new definitions encompass the transactional nature of marketing interactions as well as the customer's perspective and shows that McCarthy's original framework is still applicable.

Despite all the variations of McCarthy's original framework; the central principles essentially remain the same. The ultimate goal of marketing is to get an individual to buy a product or service (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 308). This is often expressed as the 'AIDA' concept. Marketing involves capturing the 'Attention' and 'Interest' of a customer, evoking 'Desire' for the product or service and finally enabling them to take 'Action' through purchasing the product or service (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 308). Marketing therefore consists of those activities concerned with finding the most effective and efficient way to make products or services easily available and accessible to customers; at an affordable price. Marketing is also involved with getting customers interested in purchasing a product or a service through promotion.

2.2.2 Promotion

One of the most obvious aspects of marketing is promotion. To laypersons, marketing appears to consist solely of various promotional activities (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008a: 4). Promotion describes the activities undertaken by businesses to endorse and raise awareness of their company, their company's activities, products and/or services (Shannon, 1996: 56; Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b:294).

2.2.3 Promotional Mix

While The Four P's covers marketing in general, some authors subscribe to a similar mix when discussing promotion (Shannon, 1996:57). The marketing and communications mix, also sometimes called the promotional mix, evolved as a method for managing interactions between consumers and businesses (Hughes and Fill, 2007:46). Promotion encourages consumers to act, behave and think in certain ways. Traditionally, the promotional mix consists of several elements, which can be combined in a variety of ways to achieve the desired results (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 295). These elements are described briefly below.

2.2.3.1 Advertising

Advertising is perhaps the most familiar aspect of marketing promotion due to its omnipresence. Open any newspaper, listen to a radio station or turn on the TV and one will be exposed to advertising. Advertising takes many forms, but all are based on the premise of paid communication in which the sponsor or business is identified (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b:296). Advertising allows businesses to communicate with a large number of people simultaneously; making the cost- per-contact very low; although overall costs tend to be high (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 296).

2.2.3.2 Public Relations (PR)

Public relations (PR) is the branch of promotion concerned with the perception of the company that is held by the public. PR is therefore concerned with the development and maintenance of a good public image (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b:301). This involves both education about the aims and objectives of a firm, including any environmental and social programs as well as the management of negative publicity such as customer complaints.

2.2.3.3 Personal Selling

Personal selling focuses on a direct communication between a sales person and one or more prospective buyers. Typically, personal selling will include a detailed presentation or demonstration of a product (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 302). Personal selling is the most effective of the promotional elements because sellers are able to vary the approach and information provided according to each prospective customer, but the cost-per-contact is high. This promotional approach relies heavily on the relationship that is developed between the seller and the prospective buyer.

2.2.3.4 Sales Promotions

Sales promotions are generally short-run tactics that are designed to encourage sales as well as raise awareness. Sales promotions are often used in conjunction with other promotional aspects. Coupons, contests, free samples and limited time discounts are all methods that are employed in sales promotions (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 303).

2.3 New Promotion Theories

In recent years, some authors have questioned whether the traditional promotional mix is still applicable (Shannon, 1996:56). Originally, marketing and communication from businesses to their audience was largely one-way and consumer participation was largely passive (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 305). Businesses pushed information and marketing onto the consumer (Hughes and Fill, 2007: 47). The traditional media channels were, and still are, good at delivering a message to a large audience (Mulhern, 2009:86). However, businesses can no longer simply push a message on the audience, they also need to listen, participate, remind and reassure both potential customers and existing stakeholders (Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011: 241).

As far back as 1994, Grönroos notes that technological advances and new forms of media such as mobile technology, internet and social media have resulted in fundamental shifts in the approach to marcom and promotion (Grönroos, 1994: 6). This in turn has led to a shift in the nature of the interaction between businesses and customers. The audience has become more participative and interactive; not only with companies, products, services and service providers; but also with each other (Grönroos, 1994: 8). This in turn has led to a fundamental change in the expectations of consumers and the structure of the marcom mix.

2.3.1 Integrated Marketing Communication

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is one of the most important new promotional concepts to emerge as a result of technological advances (Kitchen and Bergmann, 2004). IMC seeks to provide a single consistent message across all channels of communication (Fill, 2000: 410). While this has always been an important goal, with the rise of technology and the ease with which individuals can access information, consistency in communication has become particularly important (Kitchen and Bergmann, 2004). IMC

allows a variety of media channels and disciplines to be incorporated, standardised and applied to the marketing approach (Mulhern, 2009: 94). This consistency is believed to be important in generating and maintaining consumer awareness and brand loyalty. However, it is often difficult to implement IMC policies. IMC requires a company-wide approach and yet different promotional departments are often separated, with different operational policies and objectives (Fill, 2000: 414; Lamb *et. al.*, 2008b: 322).

2.3.2 Relationship Marketing

As marketing theory has developed, it has resulted in the realisation that consumers are no longer a passive audience who can be manipulated and persuaded to behave or think in specific ways (Grönroos, 1994: 9). With the rise of internet marketing and social media in particular, consumers are now able to initiate interactions both with the company and with each other. The idea of relationship marketing grew from the network or interaction approach that recognised that all interactions between parties have an impact on those parties, and that the traditional concepts of marketing communication were difficult to apply (Grönroos, 1994:9). The development of long-term relationships between consumers and companies was recognised to be an important factor influencing the future purchasing decisions of those consumers (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995:399; Hennig-Thurau *et. al.*, 2002:231).

The relationship marketing approach recognises that effective marketing is interactive and consists of several distinct activities (Hennig-Thurau *et. al.*, 2002:232). Technology has allowed businesses to manage large amounts of customer information; which in turn has allowed the development of customized and personalised communications (Grönroos, 1994:8). Traditional marketing is good at attracting and building the initial relationship with a consumer; however it falls to relationship marketing to enhance and maintain the relationship in the long term (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995:398).

2.4 Media Channels

Media channels are the method or platform through which marketing communication occurs (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008c:329). There are multiple media channels available; each of which embodies a particular medium, each with advantages and disadvantages. The traditional channels include print media such as newspapers and magazines; radio, television and

outdoor media such as billboards, signs, posters, brochures and flyers (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008c:329). Sponsorships of sports teams, sporting and/or cultural events are also popular methods (Lamb *et. al.*, 2008c:329). More technological approaches include email and SMS (short message services). It is noted that each of these channels has various advantages and disadvantages and reasons for choosing specific channels will depend on a variety of factors such as the nature of the product and the nature of the purchasing decision. However a discussion of these factors falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

2.5 Social Media

In recent years, 'social media' has become a mainstream communication channel. In fact, some have gone so far as to say that if a business does not participate in some form of social media, they can no longer be considered to be part of the online community, and therefore, obsolete (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:67).

As of July 2011, the social networking site Facebook had 750 million registered users, 50% of whom are active on any given day (Facebook, July 2011). The micro-blogging platform Twitter celebrated its fifth anniversary in on 21st March of 2011 (Twitter, 2011). It is difficult to pin down the total number of active users; but on average during the month of March 2011, 460,000 new accounts were created daily (Twitter, 2011).

These figures are from just a few of the many social media platforms and services which have developed over the last ten years. Social media has become, and continues to be, a rapidly growing and evolving domain which businesses cannot afford to ignore (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:65). For many people, social media has become an indispensable part of their daily communication and consumers have come to expect business to have a social media presence (Nair, 2011:45). The accessibility of information online means that the absence of a business from this area will be noticed and its competitors will have the advantage (Fisher, 2009:191). Social media has become a tool enabling businesses to listen to and collaborate with customers (Nair, 2011:46). Businesses and marketers use it to directly communicate with consumers and generate brand awareness and word-of-mouth (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011:276). Social media is unique in that it allows for a message to be widely broadcast, but at the same time, interactions on an individual level are also possible (Dominici, 2009:20). Through this individual interaction and communication, social media is ideally suited to the relationship marketing approach (Dominici, 2009:20).

2.5.1 Definitions of Social Media

The advent of broadband connections and mobile internet-enabled devices has made it possible for individuals to be connected to the World Wide Web almost continuously. As the internet has become mainstream, it has facilitated the growth of online communities (Garnyte and de Avila Perez, 2009:43). However, not all online communities fall into the category of ‘social media’. ‘Social media’ is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of sites, applications and services (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60). While sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube give an intuitive idea of what social media is; a formal definition is still required (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60).

The core of social media is User Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61). The concept of UGC is not new. The internet originally amounted to a bulletin board where users could post and exchange various types of information including software, messages and news (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60; Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242). In the beginning, content generation and sharing was simple, but more or less static. It took advances in technology such as those associated with ‘Web 2.0’ which allowed social media to evolve into the form that we recognise today (Garnyte and de Avila Perez, 2009:43; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:60). The term ‘Web 2.0’ does not refer to a specific software update, rather it has been adopted as a way to describe various advances which have facilitated interaction and collaboration of current web users (Maymann, 2008:12; Garnyte and de Avila Perez, 2009:43; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61)

Therefore we can define ‘social media’ as a set of internet-based services or applications, built on the technological and conceptual foundations of Web 2.0, which allow the individual to create, exchange and interact with user generated content (Boyd and Ellison, 2008:214; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61). This definition differentiates social media from other online content in that it involves interactive user participation (Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:241). Under this definition, a static website which simply provides information cannot be considered to be a part of social media. However, a website which allows users to comment on the content is part of the broader definition of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61).

2.5.2 Types of Social Media

Social media can be broken down into several broad categories based on the purpose of each platform. Within each category, there are multiple applications and platforms each of which may have a slightly different focus. The major categories include communication, collaboration and multimedia.

2.5.2.1 Communication: Blogs, Micro-Blogs, and Social Networks

Blogs, originally called ‘weblogs’, are probably the oldest form of social media on the internet (Jensen, 2003:22; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:63). A blog is a website or a portion of a website, that is regularly maintained and updated in a diary-style format (Bradley, 2004:83). Though blogs may take several forms, they all have certain features in common. Their posts are arranged in reverse chronological order, each post has a set of author-determined tags which are used to categorize them, the content is fully controlled by the author(s), and readers of a blog have the opportunity to interact with both the author(s) and other readers through comments (Bradley, 2004:85; Garnyte and de Avila Perez, 2009:53). Micro-blogging is a very specific sub-section of social media. Platforms such as Twitter allows users exchange small or short pieces of content such as a single sentence, image or URL link (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011:106). While micro-blogging services may seem counter-intuitive due to the size limit on each posting; Twitter for example limits updates to 140 characters, they are growing in popularity as they provide a simple and quick method of sharing information that may not warrant a full blog-style post (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011:106; Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242).

These small pieces of content, if interesting or catchy enough, can be pushed through the micro-blogging community and may be very rapidly and widely distributed (Suh *et. al.*, 2010:178; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011:107). This rapid dissemination is often referred to as ‘going viral’ and can be defined as content transmitted in an exponentially growing way, often through the use of social media applications (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011: 255). The aim of many marketers is to generate a viral campaign due to the extremely rapid and wide distribution of the content. An example of a recent viral campaign would be the advertisement for the take-away chicken restaurant Nandos. Their TV advertisement entitled ‘*Last Dictator Standing*’ was placed on the multimedia platform YouTube in November 2011 (Nandos SA, 2011). The video was quickly picked up by several large blogs and news

services including the BBC, The Daily Mail among others; and the video was spread even further after Nandos removed the ad from traditional TV sources due to protests in Zimbabwe (Mail and Guardian, 2011).

Micro-blogging services are often used in conjunction with other forms of social media in order to generate awareness and traffic to another website which usually contains more detailed information (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:67; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011:108).

Facebook, MySpace and the recently launched Google+ are examples of social network sites (SNSs). Members of a social media network site are typically required to sign up and create public or semi-public profile before they are able to connect and interact with other members (Boyd and Ellison, 2008:211; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:63). Members are then able to add content to their networks and invite friends and colleagues to connect with them (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:63).

2.5.2.2 Collaboration: Wikis, and Social Bookmarking

Perhaps the best known example of a collaborative social media site, or wiki, is the general knowledge website Wikipedia. Essentially a 'wiki' is any site where information is generated through community contribution, review and collaboration (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61). Social bookmarking services are also collaborative but instead of contributing and editing content, users rank content, resulting in a ranking of the best or most popular content available (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61; Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242). Individuals can then choose to share their rankings with other members (Al Falahi *et. al.*, 2010:806).

2.5.2.3 Multimedia (Content Communities)

Content communities are focused on the sharing of content between members (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:63). The content can take almost any media format including photographs (e.g. Flickr, PhotoBucket) or video (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo) (Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242). Text-based content communities are also common and tend to be centred around a specific theme, for example books (GoodReads), technology and gadgets (TechCrunch), cooking and recipes (AllRecipes, Epicurious) among many others. Content communities typically do not include in-depth user profiles.

2.6 Social Media and Tourism

Although virtual tourist communities have been around since the 1990's (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008:100); their importance has increased with the advent of Web 2.0 as a source of travel information (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010:186). Research has shown that individuals use social media before, during and after their trips to research and gather information about destinations, share their experiences and provide reviews and commentary about destinations and attractions (Parra-López *et. al.*, 2011: 640). Social media is important for travel research because often consumer feedback and word-of-mouth is perceived as being more reliable and unbiased than more traditional sources of travel information (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008:100). Sites such as TripAdvisor.com and VirtualTourist.com therefore have been found to play an increasingly important role for tourism (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010:186).

Much has been done relating to the content shared by an organisation and the impact this wealth of information has on other individuals searching for places to stay however there is limited information available describing the effect participation on social media platforms has on the decision by travellers to stay at a particular destination. While it is generally agreed that participating in social media is necessary, it is not known how this participation affects or impact the business' bottom line. This means that managers are faced with a dilemma, social media can represent a significant investment in terms of both time and money, but it does not provide a clear or direct return on this investment.

2.7 Social Media Strategies

With the multitude of existing social media platforms, and the frequent launch of new platforms, it is clear that it is impossible for a business to participate in all of the options in a meaningful way (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:65; Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:249). Typically, marketing literature does not tease apart the relative advantages and disadvantages of the various platforms; most articles bundle them together under the broad umbrella of 'social media'. However, social media is a communication channel akin to TV or radio. In the same way that marketers must decide which of the many available TV and radio stations to use, in order to best reach their target audience (Edelman, 2010:3), so too must social media managers decide which social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, blogs) should be

utilized (Thackeray *et. al.*, 2008:341; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011:112). Each social media channel is best suited to different forms of content, and the users of that channel have different information needs (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010).

With a myriad of options available, and only limited time and resources, social media managers have to choose carefully to maximise return on investment (ROI) and gain the greatest advantage (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:65). However it is not enough simply to have a presence on a social media platform. Social media relies on interaction and active participation. Chan and Guillet (2011) evaluated social media participation among hotels in Hong Kong. They devised 21 criteria (Table 2-1) relating to attracting, engaging with, retaining, learning from and relating to fans and followers on social media.

Table 2-1: List of Criteria for Evaluation of Social Media Participation (Chan and Guillet (2011).

Criteria	Features
Attracting	Company website shows presence on social media Shows affiliation with other aspects of the same corporation Shows affiliation with a different corporation Show affiliation with both Shows promotions or special offers
Engaging	Campaigns/Lucky draws/contests/games on social media Creation of virtual communities Number of Languages Used Type of Language Used Hosts a Forum or Discussion Group
Retaining	Dynamic content Security features and privacy Statements Links to social media platforms on website Link to website on social media Forums/Campaigns/Contests/Lucky Draws etc.
Learning	Info captured about customers and prospects Market research Supporting chat groups
Relating	Customisation/Personalisation Updating users of content change Real time interactions

The authors found that although many had a basic profile on social media most were not active on these platforms. There was poor interaction between hotels and customers, including a lack of response to customer queries or reviews, a lack of commitment to social media, inaccurate content, as well as problems for potential clients accessing the social media platforms due to incorrect hyperlinks. Chan and Guillet (2011) suggest that these problems stem from a basic misunderstanding of what social media is and the best use for this communication channel. Social media needs to be managed and maintained like any other part of the marcom mix and communication must be consistent with other marketing and promotional information. The right platform must be selected, and the content posted must be interesting, relevant and up-to-date.

2.8 Social Media and Return on Investment (ROI)

As participation in social media by businesses becomes the norm, so research in the field has increased exponentially (Fisher, 2009:189; Zeng *et. al.*, 2010:14). Business managers, regardless of industry, are demanding participation in this new communications field (Fisher, 2009:189; Lingley-Larson, 2009:13; Owyang *et. al.*, 2009:2). Monitoring for the purposes of calculating return on investment (ROI) has been of particular interest and controversy (Fisher, 2009:189; Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). ROI is difficult to calculate because the investments and returns related to social media are not always expressed in monetary terms (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011:278); whereas traditional metrics focus on a simpler expense/income comparison. However, if businesses are able to identify which platforms provide the greatest ROI for their marketing objectives, investments can be strategically managed to ensure a successful social media strategy (Thackeray *et. al.*, 2008:340).

Social media requires a new method of measuring ROI where the focus is on more qualitative parameters. So called 'social ROI' (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011:276) takes into account qualitative factors such as the content of communication and the tone of the conversation rather than hard quantitative factors. This is often because quantitative information is simply unavailable or difficult to determine, but also because the aim of social media is often to build social capital and loyal relationships rather than elicit sales (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011:278). Appointing a coordinator with the right personality and drive is as important as the time and money invested in participation

(Murdough, 2010:95). As noted with relationship marketing, quality interactions and the enhancement and maintenance of relationships are at the heart of a successful social media campaign (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). The value of business' participation lies in the relationships built with customers through communication, transparency and authenticity (Fisher, 2009:193; Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011:277). The value of social media involvement is therefore difficult to quantify using traditional measures. It is these non-monetary costs and returns which make social media difficult to accurately measure, and therefore difficult to calculate ROI (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010).

2.9 Other Challenges of Social Media

The difficulty of measuring ROI for social media has already been mentioned, but there are other pitfalls of this new channel of communication which management frequently cite as a concern. Damage to company reputation through social media frequently tops the list of concerns, and for good reason. In the same way that a positive or clever advert can 'go viral', so too can negative or damaging publicity. It has become very easy for content to be shared with hundreds or thousands of people at the click of a mouse; the effect can then gain momentum and spread exponentially (Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242). If a company is unable to respond quickly enough; irreparable damage may be done to the product, service, brand or even the company in a matter of hours and it can persist long past the life of the initial problem. An excellent example of mismanaged negative publicity can be found in the case of United Airlines in the USA when, in 2008, baggage handlers damaged a guitar belonging to musician Dave Carroll (Carroll, 2009; Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242). Carroll appealed to the airline to reimburse him for the damage to his instrument, when the airline refused, Carroll made a series of YouTube music videos criticising United Airlines (Carroll, 2009). The catchy songs 'went viral' and have been viewed over 12 million times. United never responded and the popularity of the videos means that to date, a search for 'United Airlines' returns links to those videos (Kietzmann *et. al.*, 2011:242).

2.10 References

- AL FALAHI, K., ATIF, Y. and ELNAFFAR, S. 2010. *Social Networks: Challenges and New Opportunities*. Proceedings of the 2010 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Green Computing and Communications and International Conference on Cyber, Physical and Social Computing, Hangzhou, China.
- ANDERSON, L. M. and TAYLOR, R. L. 1995. McCarthy's 4P's: Timeworn or Time-Tested? *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. 3, 3: 1-9.
- BOOMS, B. H. and BITNER, M. J. 1981. Marketing strategies and organization structures for service firms. In: DONNELLY, J. H. and GEORGE, W. R. (eds). *Marketing of Services*. Chicago, Illinois: American Marketing Association.
- BOYD, D. M. and ELLISON, N. B. 2008. Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 13, 1: 210-230.
- BRADLEY, P. 2004. What are weblogs? *Serials: The Journal for the Serials Community*. 17, 1: 83-86.
- CAROLL, D. 2009. United Breaks Guitars. YouTube, Available: <http://goo.gl/SIqx>. Accessed [20 July 2011].
- CHAN, N. and GUILLET, B. 2011. Investigation of Social Media Marketing: How Does the Hotel Industry in Hong Kong Perform in Marketing on Social Media Websites? *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*. 28, 4: 345-368.
- CONSTANTINIDES, E. 2006. The Marketing Mix Revisited: Towards the 21st Century Marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 22, 3: 407-438.
- DOMINICI, G. 2009. From Marketing Mix to e-Marketing Mix: a Literature Overview and Classification. *International Journal of Business and Management*. 4, 9: 17-24.
- EDELMAN, D. C. 2010. Branding in the digital age. *Harvard Business Review*. 88, 12: 62-69.
- FACEBOOK. July 2011. *Statistics*. Facebook. Available: <http://goo.gl/nWusN> . Accessed: [20 July 2011].
- FILL, C. 2000. Essentially a matter of consistency: integrated marketing communications. *The Marketing Review*. 1, 4: 409-425.
- FISHER, T. 2009. ROI in social media: A look at the arguments. *Journal of Database Marketing and Customer Strategy Management*. 16, 3: 189-195.
- GARNYTE, M. and DE AVILA PEREZ, A. 2009. *Exploring Social Media Marketing Towards a Richer Understanding of Social Media in Postmodernity*. MA in Corporate Communication. University of Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus.

- GRÖNROOS, C. 1994. From marketing mix to relationship marketing: towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management Decision*. 32, 2: 4-20.
- HENNIG-THURAU, T., GWINNER, K. P. and GREMLER, D. D. 2002. Understanding relationship marketing outcomes. *Journal of Service Research*. 4, 3: 230.
- HOFFMAN, D. L. and FODOR, M. 2010. Can You Measure the ROI of Your Social Media Marketing? *MIT Sloan Management Review*. 52, 1.
- HUGHES, G. and FILL, C. 2007. Redefining the nature and format of the marketing communications mix. *The Marketing Review*. 7, 1: 45-57.
- JENSEN, M. 2003. A brief history of weblogs. *Columbia Journalism Review*. 42, 3: 22.
- KAPLAN, A. M. and HAENLEIN, M. 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*. 53, 1: 59-68.
- KAPLAN, A. M. and HAENLEIN, M. 2011. The early bird catches the news: Nine things you should know about micro-blogging. *Business Horizons*. 54, 2: 105-113.
- KIETZMANN, J., HERMKENS, K., MCCARTHY, I. and SILVESTRE, B. 2011. Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*. 54, 3: Special Issue - Social Media: 241-251.
- KITCHEN, P. J. and BURGMANN, I. 2004. Integrated marketing communication. *Wiley International Encyclopaedia of Marketing*. Available: <http://goo.gl/bUpf2>. [Accessed 25 August 2011].
- KOTLER, P. 1986. Megamarketing. *Harvard Business Review*. 64, 2: 117-124.
- LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. 2008a. Introduction to Marketing. In: LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. (eds). *Marketing* (3e). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. 2008b. Marketing communication strategy. In: LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. (eds). *Marketing* (3e). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. 2008c. Implementing marketing communication mix strategies. In: LAMB, C. W., HAIR, J. F., MCDANIEL, C., BOSHOFF, C. and TERBLANCHE, N. S. (eds). *Marketing* (3e). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- LAUTENBORN, R. 1990. New Marketing Litany: 4 P's Passé. C-Words Take Over. *Advertising Age*. 61, 41: p26.

- LINGLEY-LARSON, R. J. 2009. The Rise of Viral Marketing through the New Media of Social Media. *Liberty University Faculty Presentations and Publications. Paper 6*. Available: <http://goo.gl/cfTau>. [Accessed: 25.04.2012].
- MAIL AND GUARDIAN. 2011. Why did the Nando's Chicken Cross the Border? Available online: <http://goo.gl/OBHLt>. [Accessed 05.07.2012].
- MAYMANN, J. 2008. *The Social Metropolis* EU: GoViral ApS.
- MULHERN, F. 2009. Integrated marketing communications: From media channels to digital connectivity. *Journal of Marketing Communications*. 15, 2: 85-101.
- MURDOUGH, C. 2009. Social Media Measurement: It's Not Impossible. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*. 10, 1: 94-99.
- NAIR, M. 2011. Understanding and measuring the value of social media. *Journal of Corporate Accounting and Finance*. 22, 3: 45-51.
- NANDOS SA. 2011. Last Dictator Standing. Available: <http://goo.gl/SbDPF>. [Accessed 12.05.2012].
- OWYANG, J. K., BERNOFF, J., CUMMINGS, T. and BOWEN, E. 2009. Social Media Playtime Is Over. *Forester Research*. 1-7.
- PARRA-LÓPEZ, E., BULCHAND-GIDUMAL, J., GUTIÉRREZ-TAÑO, D. and DÍAZ-ARMAS, R. 2011. Intentions to use social media in organizing and taking vacation trips. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 27, 2: 640-654.
- SCHMALLEGGGER, D. and CARSON, D. 2008. Blogs in tourism: Changing approaches to information exchange. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 14, 2: 99.
- SHANNON, J. R. 1996. The new promotions mix: A proposed paradigm, process, and application. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. 4, 1: 56-68.
- SHETH, J. N. and PARVATIYAR, A. 1995. The evolution of relationship marketing. *International Business Review*. 4, 4: 397-418.
- SHETH, J. N. and SISODIA, R. 2011. *The 4 A's of Marketing: A Customer Perspective* . London, Routledge.
- SUH, B., HONG, L., PIROLI, P. and CHI, E. H. 2010. *Want to be retweeted? Large scale analytics on factors impacting retweet in Twitter network*. Social Computing (SocialCom), 2010 IEEE Second International Conference on Social Computing. Washington DC.
- THACKERAY, R., NEIGER, B. L., HANSON, C. L. and MCKENZIE, J. F. 2008. Enhancing promotional strategies within social marketing programs: use of Web 2.0 social media. *Health Promotion Practice*. 9, 4: 338.

- TWITTER. 2011. *#Numbers*. Twitter.com. Available: <http://goo.gl/Z9wqk> . Accessed: [20 July 2011].
- VAN WATERSCHOOT, W. and VAN DEN BULTE, C. 1992. The 4P classification of the marketing mix revisited. *The Journal of Marketing*. 56, 4: 83-93.
- WEINBERG, B. and PEHLIVAN, E. 2011. Social spending: Managing the social media mix. *Business Horizons*. 54, 275-282.
- XIANG, Z. and GRETZEL, U. 2010. Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*. 31, 2: 179-188.
- YUDELSON, J. 1999. Adapting McCarthy's four P's for the twenty-first century. *Journal of Marketing Education*. 21, 1: 60.
- ZENG, D., CHEN, H., LUSCH, R. and LI, S. H. 2010. Social Media Analytics and Intelligence. *Intelligent Systems, IEEE*. 25, 6: 13-16.

3 Section Three: Description of Research Methodology

3.1 Goal of the Research

This research was conducted under a post-positivist paradigm, using an objective epistemology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A post-positivist paradigm allows the research to be conducted within a framework of pre-existing ideas and theories while an objective paradigm enables the researcher to determine how well the findings fit with pre-existing knowledge. An objective epistemology also allows for falsification of previous findings due to new knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

In recent years, online marketing and in particular, social media marketing, has become increasingly important to the tourism industry (Hvass and Munar, 2012). Statistics from the travel industry show that 85% of travellers use the internet as a travel planning tool, with 24% specifically using social media sites (ThinkInsights, 2011). Past research has investigated the importance of social media to the process of choosing a holiday destination, (Carson, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Parra-López *et. al.*, 2011), the changing way in which tourism operator exchange information with prospective clients (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008) and the credibility of tourism blogs compared to more traditional word-of-mouth recommendations (Mack *et. al.*, 2008). Recommendations have been made to assist with managing electronic word-of-mouth and online reputations (Litvin *et. al.*, 2008) and other research has shown that referrals from Facebook and Twitter accounts (Milano *et. al.*, 2011) have an impact on tourism websites. More recently, Chan and Guillet (2011) investigated performance and participation on various social media platforms among hotels in Hong Kong. The research community clearly considers social media to be an important factor in the success of the tourism industry despite the difficulties associated with measuring the impacts or ROI.

Tourism is an important and growing industry in South Africa, contributing 10.5% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2008 (Abedian *et. al.*, 2010). A thriving tourism industry contributes to employment as well as capital growth and investment. South Africa successfully hosted the FIFA World Cup[®] 2010 event which had positive impacts on the perception of South Africa as a tourism destination among international travellers (Abedian *et. al.*, 2010). This coupled with advances in technology, particularly high speed internet and mobile device penetration, means that South Africa is poised to take advantage of the global revolution of social media particularly when it comes to promoting tourism destinations.

However, to date very little research has been conducted in South Africa on the role of social media within the tourism industry.

3.2 Aims and Objectives

While there is a growing body of knowledge relating to social media and tourism, no research has been published relating to Africa as a whole or South Africa in particular. Therefore the overall aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the role of social media within the photographic sector of the wildlife tourism industry in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

The first objective was to evaluate the participation and performance of private games reserves and luxury lodges on social media. Due to the lack of existing information this study will provide basic information and allow reserves and lodges to better formulate social media strategies.

The second objective was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of social media held by the management of selected lodges or reserves. This will provide a more in-depth understanding of the reasons behind social media strategies which cannot be determined from secondary data.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Social Media Participation

In order to address the objectives, the research has been carried out in two parts. The first was a descriptive study, investigating and evaluating the extent to which social media is being used by the wildlife tourism industry in the Eastern Cape. This study was based on the method used by Chan and Guillet (2011) for hotels in Hong Kong.

Private Game Reserves (PGRs) specialising in photographic as opposed to hunting safaris, in the Eastern Cape were identified using the search engine Google, as well as industry specific search sites including SafariNow.com, SA-Places.com and SATourism.co.za. The full list was then narrowed to only include those lodges or reserves which had received four or more stars according to the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA). The selection was done to ensure that the facilities and services offered by

each establishment, the competitive environment, resources and marketing strategies and target markets were comparable and therefore the results would be comparable. The list of PGRs and lodges reviewed in this survey can be found in Table 3-1.

Following the selection of lodges and reserves, a list of relevant social media platforms was then drawn up, based on the list developed by Chan and Guillet (2011) and Boyd and Ellison (2008). Relevant platforms were those which could be used by both clients and management of the lodges. Platforms also had to meet the definition of social media as defined in this literature review. The full list of social media platforms was then narrowed down to platforms which have been described in the literature as popular within the tourism industry (see: Chan and Guillet 2011). This also allowed the study to be simplified due to time constraints. Table 3-2 contains a list of social media platforms investigated.

Table 3-1: List of Private Game Reserves and Lodges Surveyed

Bukela*	Addo Afrique Giraffe Lodge†	Kuzuko Lodge†
The Bush Lodge*	Addo Elephant Safari Lodge†	Kwandwe
Hlosi*	Blaauwbosch	Kwantu
The Safari Lodge*	Bucklands	Lalibela
Hillsnek Safari*	Bushman Sands (River Hotels)	Nduna
Reed Valley Inn*	Fort D'acre	Pumba
Leeuwenbosch*	Gorah Elephant Lodge†	Riverbend†
Woodbury Lodge*	Hopewell Lodge	Samara
Woodbury Lodge Tented*	Kariega	Shamwari
Canarvon Dale*	Kichaka	Sibuya
Quatermain's Camp*	Koffyblaagte Game Farm	Inkenkwezi

**These lodges are independently operated, but belong to same private game reserve. As such they were treated independently.*

†These lodges all border on Addo Elephant National Park and do not belong to their own private reserve.

Table 3-2: List and Type of Social Media Platforms Investigated

Social Media Type	Examples
Blogging	Wordpress, Blogger, Self-hosted
Micro-blog	Twitter
Social Networking Site	Facebook
Content	YouTube, Flickr, Self-hosted
Feedback	TripAdvisor

A survey of social media participation of each reserve or lodge was then conducted on each of the selected social media platforms during October and November 2012. On each of the platforms, the name of the lodge or reserve was input as a search term and the presence or absence of the property was noted. If a property did not appear in the first batch of search results, various combinations of the name were searched until the researcher was satisfied that the absence of the property on that platform was likely. It took approximately one hour to verify the likely absence of a lodge. The performance of each PGR on the various platforms was then evaluated against 21 different criteria based on the previous study by Chan and Guillet (2011). Additional information such as the date of the last update, the presence other social media platforms, cross-linkages between social media platforms and the property's website were also noted. A list of the criteria can be found in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3: List of Criteria for Evaluation of Social Media Participation

Criteria	Features
Attracting	Company website shows presence on social media Shows affiliation with other aspects of the same corporation Shows affiliation with a different corporation Show affiliation with both Shows promotions or special offers
Engaging	Campaigns/Lucky draws/contests/games on social media Creation of virtual communities Number of Languages Used Type of Language Used Hosts a Forum or Discussion Group
Retaining	Dynamic content Security features and privacy Statements Links to social media platforms on website Link to website on social media Forums/Campaigns/Contests/Lucky Draws etc.
Learning	Info captured about customers and prospects Market research Supporting chat groups
Relating	Customisation/Personalisation Updating users of content change Real time interactions

3.3.2 Interviews with Management

The second objective of the research was to gather more in-depth information about social media participation. This information was gathered from primary sources through qualitative interviews (Babbie, 2011: 312) with lodge or reserve managers.

Each PGR that had been reviewed in the participation and performance survey was then contacted and invited to participate in a face-to-face or telephonic interview. Of the 32 lodges, only four agreed to participate in the interview process. Initially, in addition to the interviews with management, there was a plan to provide clients of the lodges with a structured qualitative questionnaire designed to gauge the effectiveness of a lodge or reserves' social media participation. An instrument was developed for this study (see Appendix One) and provided to the one lodge which agreed to participate. However, the response rate to this questionnaire was extremely low (<5%) and therefore the findings were not able to be analysed statistically.

Lodge managers were interviewed during October and November 2012. The author conducted the interviews in-person and covered a set of nineteen open-ended questions (See Appendix Two). The interviews were recorded with consent and the transcripts were then analysed for themes.

3.4 References

- ABEDIAN, I., AKANBI, O., HASSAN, R., ZANAZO, N. and MBONGO, N. 2010. *A Framework/Model to Benchmark Tourism GDP in South Africa*. Pan-African Investment and Research Services (Pty) Ltd. Johannesburg, South Africa.
- BABBIE, E. 2011. Chapter 9: Field Research. In: BABBIE, E. (ed). *Introduction to Social Research*. Belmont, Canada: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- BOYD, D. M. and ELLISON, N. B. 2008. Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 13, 1: 210-230.
- CARSON, D. 2008. The 'blogosphere' as a market research tool for tourism destinations: A case study of Australia's Northern Territory. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 14, 2: 111-119.
- CHAN, N. and GUILLET, B. 2011. Investigation of Social Media Marketing: How Does the Hotel Industry in Hong Kong Perform in Marketing on Social Media Websites? *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*. 28, 4: 345-368.
- GUBA, E. and LINCOLN, Y. 1994. Chapter 6: Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In: DENZIN, N. and LINCOLN, Y. (eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- HVASS, K. A. and MUNAR, A. M. 2012. The takeoff of social media in tourism. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 18, 2: 93-103.
- LITVIN, S., GOLDSMITH, R. and PAN, B. 2008. Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*. 29, 458-468.
- MACK, R., BLOSE, J. and PAN, B. 2008. Believe it or not: Credibility of blogs in tourism. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 14, 2: 133-144.
- MILANO, R., BAGGIO, R. and PIATRELLI, R. 2011. *The effects of online social media on tourism websites*. Proceedings of the International Conference in Innsbruck, Austria, January.
- PARRA-LÓPEZ, E., BULCHAND-GIDUMAL, J., GUTIÉRREZ-TAÑO, D. and DÍAZ-ARMAS, R. 2011. Intentions to use social media in organizing and taking vacation trips. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 27, 2: 640-654.
- SCHMALLEGGER, D. and CARSON, D. 2008. Blogs in tourism: Changing approaches to information exchange. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 14, 2: 99.
- THINKINSIGHTS. 2011. *The Traveller's Road to Decision 2011*. ThinkTravel with Google. Available: <http://goo.gl/yPrPh>. [Accessed 12.05.12].
- XIANG, Z. and GRETZEL, U. 2010. Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*. 31, 2: 179-188.

4 Appendices

4.1 Appendix One: Client Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a final year MBA student and this research forms part of my dissertation. I have chosen to evaluate participation on social media platforms for marketing and communication by selected establishments within the Eastern Cape. Your responses will be analysed as part of this research. Please note that even if you do not participate in social media, your response is still valid. Simply tick 'none' on the relevant questions. There are six questions in total, please complete them all; this should not take longer than 10 minutes.

I appreciate you taking time out of your holiday to participate in this research.

Sincerely

Tara Booth

Questionnaire – Please print your answers

Name of Establishment:			
Dates of stay: (dd/mm/yyyy)	From:		To:

1. Demographic information (please tick one):

Age:	<20	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	60+
Gender:	Male			Female		
Ethnic Group: Please specify						
Country of Origin: Please specify						

Social Media Information

2. For those platforms where you have a profile, please indicate your level of participation. This includes 'checking in' without interacting with other members (*arranged alphabetically*):

	Daily	2-3 per week	Once a week	2-3 per month	Once a month	Every few months	Rarely	No Profile
Blog (any platform)								
del.icio.us								
Digg								
Expedia								
Facebook								
Flickr								
Google+								
LinkedIn								
MySpace								
Pinterest								
Reddit								
StumbleUpon								
TripAdvisor								
Twitter								
YouTube								
Other specify:								

3. How did you hear about this establishment?

Travel Agent		Search Engine e.g. Google	
Travel Show		Brochure	
Magazine/ Newspaper Ad		Link on another website <i>(please specify)</i>	
TV/Radio Ad		Social Media <i>(please specify)</i>	
Referral/Word of Mouth		Other <i>(please elaborate)</i>	

4. If you were aware of the presence of the establishment on any of the following social media platforms; did that play a role in your decision to stay here? Please indicate the extent to which it influenced your decision. Please indicate N/A if you were not aware of their presence.

	No - not at all	Yes - a little	Yes - moderately	Yes - significantly	N/A
Blog					
del.icio.us					
Digg					
Expedia					
Facebook					
Flickr					
Google+					
LinkedIn					
MySpace					
Pinterest					
Reddit					
StumbleUpon					
TripAdvisor					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Other <i>(specify)</i>					

5. If you answered yes for any of the platforms above, what type of content influenced you the most? Please number your answers in order of importance, with 1 being the most influential.

Lodge/reserve/ ranger blogs		Online community specials	
Animal Life Stories/ Animal specific blogs		Seasonal specials	
Photography		Competitions	
Interaction with management/ rangers		Information about the reserve	
Interaction with previous clients		Information about community engagement	
Sightings reports			

6. If you have other remarks, please leave them in the space provided.

Thank you so much for your time, I appreciate your participation. I hope you have a wonderful holiday!

4.2 Appendix Two: Interviews with Management

Social Media Profile

1. Which platforms does your business participate on?
2. How long have you participated on each platform?
3. How did you decide where to participate?
4. If you do not participate on a platform, why not?

Importance of Social Media

5. What do you understand by the term “social media”?
6. Can you give me examples of platforms you identify as social media?
7. Do you feel that participation in social media is relevant/important to the tourism industry in general?
8. Which platforms do you feel are most relevant to the tourism industry?
 - a. Your business? E.g. Facebook, Twitter, Linkdin, TripAdvisor.
9. What are some other methods of marketing and communication
 - a. Do you feel these are more or less effective than SM
 - b. Do you feel they are complementary?
10. Do you feel that social media has had a measurable impact on the business?
11. If:
 - a. **YES:** What kind of impact? (Increased awareness, greater booking rates, easier communication?)
 - b. **NO:** Why do you continue to participate?
12. Do you think social media will continue to play a role in the tourism industry?

Mechanism of Participation

13. Who manages your social media participation? (Dedicated individual or *ad hoc*?)
14. Who determines the content?
15. Who contributes most to content e.g. rangers, management, marketing and PR, other?
16. Do you have a policy regarding participation on social media?
17. Do you use SM for any of the following:
 - a. Promotional activities (e.g. advertising, special offers, competitions etc.)
 - b. News and event
 - c. Other happenings
 - d. Photo sharing
 - e. Client queries
 - f. Booking enquiries
18. How often do you update/participate on your various platforms?
19. How much do you estimate you invest in your social media in terms of both time and monetarily (specific figures are not necessary).