**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

**TREATISE**

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ONLINE TRAVEL INFORMATION SEARCH**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF COMMERCE HONOURS: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

**DARREN DANISA 214111598**

**TUMELO RAFUTHO 219979766**

**SUPERVISOR: DOCTOR ALBERT. NELMAPIUS**
**DATE SUBMITTED: FRIDAY 26TH OCTOBER. 2018**

**DECLARATION**

We (Darren Danisa and Tumelo Rafutho) hereby confirm that we are the authors of this research study, using our own words (except where attributed to others).

We attest to the fact that no form of plagiarism has been conducted in this study, and we have provided references in all cases where we have quoted from the work of others or used other individual's ideas or reasoning in this research study.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

# The Role of Social Media in Online Travel Information Search

## ABSTRACT

Social media has proven to be an online tool that keeps growing and expanding as it develops in technology, efficiency and user number. The global aspect of social media becoming such a powerful force in the creation of a worldwide network with an unbelievably vast amount of information. This massive online expansion allows users of social media to consume, send and receive information on a global and local scale. It has also allowed small and large marketers of information a wide online market to appeal to. Conservative and traditional ways of researching travel information have quickly become less appealing due to the accessibility of the World Wide Web.

This study seeks to investigate the influence that social media, more precisely Facebook, has on perceptions of the users of the platform. These perceptions revolve around trust, enjoyment, ease of use and usefulness. Social media is a widely use generated content space, with account holders posting whatsoever they wish. This facet of social media poses a threat to the integrity of travel information that is available online as it can be provided by just about anyone and also consumed by just about anyone. The objective of this study is to use exploratory methods to determine to gain insight on the difference between users and non-users of Facebook to search for travel information. This study will be based on literature, a research model and the empirical results collected from 200 respondents who consist of both individuals who use and do not use Facebook for online travel information search.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Page**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)**

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF GRAPHS

# LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

With regards to this research study, a brief introduction and background to the study will be provided. The major concepts that will be highlighted and addressed briefly include social media, the evolution of the World Wide Web (web 1.0 to web 2.0), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), traditional versus digital marketing, E-marketing, E-commerce and E-business, and lastly the concept of trust. These topics are covered in extensively more detail in chapter two of this research study, specifically section 2.2. to section 2.10.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the past few decades, social media has become a powerful driving force with regards to how individuals search for travel related information. The global reach and nature of the internet provides has enabled individuals across the globe from different nations, backgrounds, belief systems and values to interact with each other by utilising social media platforms. This has created a global network, which allows for the rapid dissemination of information to be viewed and shared by anyone with internet access and has also contributed to changing the way in which tourist destinations are marketing their businesses to attract a broader customer base.

According to a study by Pinheiro, Tiago and Verissimo (2014:703) a significant change with regards to human interaction is the proliferation of social networks on the internet. The rapid growth of internet-based platforms which facilitate online social communication and interactivity has modified how humans interact with each other. The movement of social relationships to web-based platforms has resulted in online communities being formed through which individuals all over the globe can interact and communicate with each other.

In the past, travel agents and agencies, as well as other traditional methods of conducting travel information search such as the use of travel destination magazines, radio and television advertisements were the most common and effective methods used by individuals. However, in recent times the formation and development of the World

Wide Web, increased internet capabilities and Web 2.0 have proven to become integral elements with regards to the role social media has in relation to individuals conducting online travel information search. According to a study by Munar and Jacobsen (2013:2) because of technological advancements, social media has provided travellers with a platform to share and post their travel experiences online in the form of images, real time videos and written travel reviews. With reference to a study by Xiang and Gretzel (2010:180) social media lacks a single formal definition, but it can be described as various, internet-based platforms that consist of consumer-generated content in the form of shared consumer experiences and has a host of other platforms which serve various purposes such as recording memories and interacting with users on a global scale.

According to a study by Chung and Han (2017:370) because of developments in internet technology and capabilities, the number of social media users is increasing i.e. the estimated number of social network users in 2013 was 1.73 billion worldwide. This number is expected to rise to an estimated 2.55 billion in 2018. Social media consists of various components including blogs, social networking sites, picture and video-sharing applications. In addition, social media continues to play an increasingly important role in terms of online information searching (Chung and Han 2017:371).

Social media provides users with the ability to search, share, and organise travel information, as well as engage in potential travel. Individuals who are looking to travel utilise multiple information sources because they recognise the importance of obtaining travel information. In the past, most individuals obtained travel information from mediums such family and friends, travel agencies or travel magazines. However, travellers in today's technological society find it more useful, effective and simple to search for travel information on the internet. Furthermore, individuals who make travel decisions based on other social media users' reviews and pictures/videos obtain more information as well as gain more insight into a particular travel destination choice. This ultimately indicates that social media is not only a popular choice for conducting travel information search, but it has become an important source of information in addition to being a platform where users can engage and communicate (Chung & Han 2017: 374). It is also important to note that unlike other travel information media, social media is characterised by providing reputational information too, not simply specific review

information. This indicates that individuals who conduct travel information search on social media platforms such as Facebook are not only influenced by the quality of the information they find, but also the reputation of the reviews. Since online travel information search applications are increasingly becoming more socially connected, social media can have a positive or negative influence on the decision-making behaviour of a potential traveller. (Chung & Han 2017:374).

According to a study by Bogdanovych, Berger, Simoff and Sierra (2010:418) a major reason why there is an increasing number of individuals who search for travel information online is because the online experience has a much greater potential in visualising travel destinations. Online capabilities surpass those offered by traditional travel agencies and booking systems, for example 3D interactive tours may be used to provide a clear impression of the travel destination using real time images and videos.

Gamboa and Goncalves (2014:710) found that until recently, the only form of communication consumers had with each other was through phone call, face-to-face meetings and text message but web 2.0 capabilities have drastically changed the communication model. Web 2.0 represents a more social, collaborative, interactive and responsive form of web-based communication that enables individuals to upload user-generated content on social media platforms such as blogs (WordPress, Tumblr), social networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and social news sites (Reddit). The common theme throughout these websites is social and human interaction, which was not possible during the first generation of the internet (Web 1.0). Web 2.0, according to Gamboa and Goncalves (2014:710) can be defined as a collective of open source applications which allow for the expansion of experiences, knowledge as well as the power of social media users in an interactive way. Alternatively, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:59) describe web 2.0 as a term that was first used in the year 2004 to describe the new, innovative way in which software developers and end-users began to utilise the World Wide Web.

This new method was characterised by the fact that content on the internet could be continuously modified by all users in a participative and collaborative fashion. Gamboa and Goncalves (2014:712) further state that web 2.0 supplies the technological

components which enable social media platforms to operate effectively, whereas social media such as Facebook facilitates the social aspects of Web 2.0 in the form of user participation and connectivity to a global community which allows individual users to create and share user-generated content. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) user-generated content refers to the ability of users of the internet to create, generate and post their own content on web-based platforms which was not possible to do with the first generation of the internet (web 1.0). In addition, user-generated content is comprised of three main requirements for it to be considered as such. Firstly, content must be on either a publicly accessible website or a social networking site. Secondly, content needs to exhibit a certain level of creative effort and lastly the content generated needs to have been formed outside of the parameters of a professional environment, routine and/or practice (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61).

User-generated content is an important aspect of the World Wide Web, and according to Pinheiro et *al.* (2014:704) in the past it was used to present marketing content through page views and advertising to reach a broader audience in a short amount of time. Furthermore, in an industry defined by an individual's travel experiences, the user-generated content revolution has broadened the scope of opportunities available to the travel industry. In the past, travellers relied heavily on travel journalism and traditional media to help guide them review the best destinations to travel to, and the most exciting activities to do during their stay at a certain destination. The internet is now more easily accessible and the creation of content has also shifted to the traveller and users of the internet using blogs, podcasts and photos that they can share, in the process allowing other travellers to conduct their own travel research so instead of relying on what they have simply been told by travel agencies and agents.

Tourism has always been one of the industries in which new technological developments have had major, long-lasting effects, more especially with the rise of the internet and World Wide Web in the mid-to-late 1990s. According to Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier (2015:244) Information Technology continues to have a major impact on the way travellers gain access to, as well as utilise travel-related information. Search engines impact travellers' access to travel information, and the growth of the social media landscape has drastically changed the dynamics of online communication.

Xiang *et al.* (2015) further discuss that pre-trip travel planning is considered by authors such as Bieger and Laesser (2004), Fodness and Murray (1997) and Gursoy and McCleary (2004) to be fundamental in terms of the trip experience. This is because a traveller needs to obtain a substantial amount of information before choosing and deciding on a destination to travel to.

In addition, using the internet and social media for travel planning is becoming increasingly mainstream, prominent and the preferred method to use, indicating that the internet is still currently the most relevant source of travel information with regards to travel planning. This also suggests that a large number of travellers are not only technology-dependent, but also reliant on social networking platforms such as Facebook in terms of searching for information and preparing for their trips (Xiang *et al* 2015).Development of web-based platforms has also led to advancements in the world of commerce, and concepts such as e-business, e-commerce and e-marketing have grown to become important driving forces that contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the internet and web 2.0 capabilities.

According to a study by Moriset (2018:2) the word 'business' encompasses many elements, and when broken down into its composite components it covers areas such as e-business, business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C) and consumer-to-consumer (C2C). The term known as e-business consists of and involves transactions and processes conducted through electronic means, regardless of the industry in which the transactions and processes are taking place. E-business is not simply limited to purchases and sales, but also captures other IT-related elements of the value chain such as marketing and advertising, enterprise resource planning (ERP) and human resource management. The spectrum of e-commerce on the other hand is much narrower and can be defined as the sale of goods and services through which a buyer places an order, and the terms of the sale are negotiated over the internet through electronic data interchange (EDI) or any other web-based interface system (Moriset (2018:2).

Moriset (2018:8) further describes the different classifications of commerce, which can be briefly described as the following:

- Business-to-business (B2B): involves transactions that occur between companies and/or traditional vendors.

- Business-to-consumer (B2C): this form of commerce involves sales operations in which the buyer is an individual end-user.

- Consumer-to-consumer: is comprised of electronic transactions between individual consumers, often conducted through third-party platforms such as Facebook.

- Consumer-to-business (C2B): a business model in which consumers create value, and businesses consume that value.

- Business-to-administration (B2A): a derivative of B2B marketing; involves marketing products and services to various government levels through integrated marketing communications techniques such as branding, advertising and web-based communications.

- Consumer-to-administration (C2A): encompasses all electronic transactions conducted between individuals and public administration.

The relationship between e-commerce and social media is evident in that in the past, a business' presence was signified and represented by advertisements in newspapers and physical storefronts. In contrast to this, in today's digital society the presence and reputation of a business is largely affected by its social media standing. Social media is used by various businesses to conduct advertising and marketing strategies, increase their online presence as well as deliver high-quality customer service. Social media's reach extends to various businesses in different industries, but not much is known about the role social media plays in relation to the impact it has on consumers conducting travel search.

Among existing studies that encompass and delve into the role social media plays within the context of travel planning, not much is known about the impact and influence online travel information search has on the decision-making behaviour of prospective travellers. In addition, there is also a lack of knowledge and understanding in terms of the extent to which prospective travellers do in fact utilise social media, more especially Facebook, to conduct online travel search. Furthermore, existing studies have mainly

focused on areas such as defining the role of social media in holiday planning (Fotis, Buhalis & Rossides 2012), destination marketing (Lange-Faria & Elliot 2012) and the effect social media has on online product purchase decision behaviour (Dhar & Jha 2014). It can therefore be said that it is important to conduct a study such as this one to analyse and determine what role social media plays in relation to individuals conducting travel information search, as well as the extent to which social media such as Facebook is effective and efficient with regards to providing prospective travellers with the type of information they are searching for.

The process of conducting travel search on social media is dependent on elements pertaining to how simple navigation through a site is, as well as the level of satisfaction and enjoyment that users derive from using a certain system while conducting their research. Travellers will be less likely to search for information if they feel that the platform they are using is difficult to navigate, the information provided on the site is does not satisfy them in terms of what they are looking for and they do not derive any enjoyment from the use of that platform. These elements are represented in more detail through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which is a major focus area of this study. The Technology Acceptance Model was developed by Davis (1989) which has also been widely criticized for its parsimonious nature.

The TAM is adapted from the psychology-based theory of reasonable action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and the TAM has taken a major role in highlighting users' behaviour towards technology and thus an in-depth understanding of TAM would make contextualisation simpler (Granic & Marangunic, 2015: 81). Furthermore, Granic & Marangunic (2015:84) suggested that the user's motivation for using a particular system can be explained by three factors: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitude toward using. The attitude of the user was influenced by two beliefs, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, with the perceived ease of use having a direct influence on the perceived usefulness. The concept of the Technology Acceptance Model will be discussed in more detail in chapter two.

It is also important to take into consideration the extent to which individuals searching for travel information on social media deem the information to be reliable source of user-

generated content that meets their needs. In addition, the extent to which individuals feel that the information presented online is trustworthy and relatively simpler to obtain by using platforms such as Facebook as opposed to traditional travel search methods such as reading magazine reviews and consulting with travel agents/agencies.

Trust from an online perspective, according to Jager (2014:12) can be defined as the level and extent of an individual's willingness to partake in online transactional relationships, despite being placed in a vulnerable position with the seller due to a lack of adequate knowledge about the seller, as well as a lack of information regarding the product or service being provided by the seller and the reliability of the information being presented about a certain product/service. Furthermore, Jager states that for trust to be established and exist, the consumer needs to have a certain level of assurance in their minds that the seller will be able to successfully deliver on the service needed by the individual.

## 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In light of the above, it is clear that traditional methods of conducting travel information search are becoming increasingly less effective, therefore the problem statement of this study is to investigate the extent and impact of how social media (more especially Facebook) affects travellers' decision making when deciding on a destination to travel to, considering the site's user-generated content. In addition to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this study will also investigate differences in social media consumption between users of Facebook, and non-users of Facebook.

The role that trust plays in individuals conducting travel search on social media is also an important determinant that affects whether travellers perceive Facebook to be a reliable source of conducting travel information or not. The level of trust an individual has in Facebook in terms of the reliability of information and content they are presented with will determine whether an individual will continue to use Facebook to conduct travel search. Users of Facebook will most likely to continue to use the site if they exhibit a high level of trust towards the site, including the information presented to them and whether the information they search for and find satisfies their needs. Non-users of Facebook may prefer to use other mediums to conduct travel search because they may

not trust the information posted by other users on Facebook (user-generated content), resulting in non-users to exhibit a low level of trust in Facebook for the purpose of conducting online travel search.

Furthermore, travellers may struggle to obtain information relevant to what they are looking for because too much information is available to them on Facebook. An individual's path to travel, both from a purchase and experience perspective has become nonlinear in that they now turn to friends and family, co-workers and the content uploaded by other users on various social networking sites within the expanding social media world to find travel and vacation information.

With reference to a study by Xiang and Gretzel (2010:180) the term social media lacks a formal definition, but is generally understood as being internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content. As a result of an increasing number of travellers seemingly penetrating the collective aspect that social media provides, many tourism businesses are beginning to adapt their marketing strategies to encompass web-based social networking sites and platforms. Traditionally, individuals who desired to travel to specific destinations would consult travel agents, and they would provide them with information about a certain destination as well as help them plan and organize the trip by, for example, booking their accommodation and organizing transport. The establishment of the World Wide Web and 2.0 capabilities makes it much easier for an individual to explore the internet and social media platforms to find information they are looking for.

The problem arises when individuals struggle to find information that is relevant to what they are looking for due to the vast nature of information being presented to them, and secondly because of the public nature of social media (user-generated content) any individual can post their own content. This could result in the information presented online being posted with malicious intent.

According to Obiniyi and Oyelade (2014:1) Facebook is the social medium with the highest level of registered users. With reference to an internet article by the title .: ("Distribution of Facebook users worldwide as of October 2018 by gender," 2018) 57% of males use Facebook compared to 43% of females. Furthermore, from this gender

distribution it was also identified that the highest age distribution of Facebook users are individuals aged between 25 and 34, followed by individuals in the age range of 18 to 24. The least prevalent Facebook users were identified to be in the age range of 65 years or older (.: "Distribution of Facebook users worldwide as of October 2018, by age and gender").Furthermore, Obiniyi and Oyelade (2014) state that many security threats mitigating the efficiency of social networking sites can be categorised as the confidentiality of data, the availability of the service and the integrity of the data presented online. Therefore, Facebook's public nature from a user-generated content perspective as well as the problem of finding relevant travel information on social networking sites are exacerbated by these threats.

## 1.4 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of undertaking this study lies in the fact that in recent decades, the role of travel agents as well as traditional brick & mortar travel agencies has become increasingly less effective and increasingly outdated as advancements in web-based technologies continue to drive forward new, more efficient ways of searching for travel information by utilising the internet. According to van Rensburg (2014:1) the internet and social media-based platforms have proven to be perfect tools for serving clients in that not only do they serve as alternative channels for travellers to search for information, but platforms such as Facebook also allow for the visualisation of travel products and services through video clips and real time images.

In addition, travellers in today's digital society have easy access to vast amounts of travel information, and as a result potential travellers are not only gifted with the ability to make more travel choices, they are also better informed before deciding on a travel destination (van Rensburg 2014). The capabilities that arise from web-based technologies serve as benefits for potential travellers in that they place travellers in better positions to make sound travel decisions and choices.

## 1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

### 1.5.1 Primary objective

For this study, the primary objective is to conduct an exploratory study to determine differences between users and non-users who search for travel information on

Facebook. Furthermore, to determine whether social media platforms do in fact have a role in online travel information search and if they do the extent of influence social media has on online travel information search.

**1.5.2 Secondary objectives**

Firstly, to investigate the extent to which online travel information is perceived to be trustworthy in the minds of users of the information. Secondly, to investigate how social media influences demographic variables such as age, gender and race with regards to online users of travel information search. Thirdly, to investigate the role that trust plays in using Facebook for online travel search.

**1.5.3 Methodological objectives**

- To conduct a literature review on the major elements relating this study in relation to how Facebook is used by individuals to conduct travel information search
- To develop a model that represents the information presented on Facebook and the factors that influence social media consumption in relation to the decision-making behaviour of individuals who search for travel information on Facebook.
- To develop an appropriate measuring instrument to empirically test the data collected from the sample of respondents
- To provide recommendations and conclusions based on the findings of this study.

**1.5.4 Research questions**

**The research questions for this study are as follows:**

- To what extent do users and non-users of Facebook perceive the information presented on the site to be trustworthy in relation to conducting online travel information search?
- How does the perceived usefulness of Facebook affect individuals' decision to conduct travel search using Facebook?
- From a perceived ease of use perspective, how easily accessible is the information relevant to the user?

- To what extent does perceived enjoyment of Facebook affect individuals' decision-making to conduct travel search using the site?

## 1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to a study by Thomas (2010:292) a research paradigm is defined as an all-inclusive system that consists of interconnected practices and thinking which explain the nature of enquiry with regards to the three major recess processes, namely ontology, epistemology and methodology. In addition, research paradigms can be distinguished between two major themes, namely positivism which is quantitative in nature and deals with facts, and also argues reality is based on what is available to the five senses and that inquiry must focus on scientific observation. Interpretivism and inquiry must be based on scientific observation as well as deal with facts. Interpretivism is qualitative in nature and deals with actions of an individual (Thomas, 2010:295). For the purposes of this study, a positivistic research paradigm in conjunction with a quantitative research methodology will be conducted because the nature of our study will require the collection and analysis of primary data from a sample size selected from the population of individuals who conduct online travel search using Facebook in the city of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and a descriptive research approach will be utilised.

Moreover, a non-probability sampling method will through the convenience sampling technique will be used and a survey questionnaire will serve as the primary method used to collect data from respondents. More details on the research design will be provided in chapter three of this study.

To achieve the objectives of this research study, primary and secondary research will be undertaken.

### 1.6.1 Literature review (secondary research)

A comprehensive literature search will be conducted to identify the most relevant factors that could influence the success of the role social media has in relation to users of social media conducting online travel information search. International and national data search will be done through the use of Google Scholar, Google Books, previous dissertation abstracts and the library of the Nelson Mandela University. Furthermore,

additional data will be accessed from other international and national libraries by means of the inter-library loan facilities available at Nelson Mandela University. As far as can be ascertained, no similar research study has been previously undertaken in South Africa.

### 1.6.2 Empirical investigation (primary research)

As previously mentioned, a positivistic research paradigm will be adopted, and the theoretical model highlighted in chapter two of this research study will be tested by means of conducting a large-scale empirical study.

### 1.7 SCOPE AND DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

As discussed in the introduction, traditional methods of conducting travel search h were once sought after and well-favoured in the past. In recent times however, the use of travel agents and manual booking systems have to a certain extent become redundant as well as relatively overshadowed by technologically-advanced methods in the form of online travel search. This is an indication that change is inevitable and even though traditional travel agencies are still used widely throughout the tourism industry, modern technology has created a rift and increased competition between online travel search methods and traditional travel search methods, aggravated by the emergence of social media platforms.

Therefore, given the importance of the influence social media has with regards to users conducting online travel search, this study intends to focus primarily on users and non-users of social media who conduct online travel information search on Facebook in the Nelson Mandela Bay area, Port Elizabeth South Africa. The empirical research will be limited to social media users in the Nelson Mandela Bay area due to the ease of access of this sample. Furthermore, only social media users who are in the age range of 20-65 and older will be approached for this study as they are most likely to possess the necessary resources and financial stability to travel. In addition, demographic information pertaining to participants is limited to gender, age, and ethnicity.

 The role of social media on online travel information search, which is the main focus of this study, is much more advantageous as opposed to traditional methods of conducting travel search. Even though this is the case, conducting online travel search poses many problems. Some individuals may doubt the credibility of the information presented to

them on Facebook, and therefore this causes them to not trust Facebook information for the purpose of conducting online travel search. Furthermore, an individual's level of trust in Facebook will determine whether they will continue to use Facebook to search for travel information, or whether these individuals will pursue alternative methods to find the type of information they are searching for.

For this study, the main focus area will be aimed at individuals who have used both traditional and online methods to search for travel information. This will limit the scope of the study in that some individuals may have not used both methods, but have rather used traditional methods only, or have strictly used online methods.

## 1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

As a result of previous research in this field of study having been primarily focused on social media, the credibility of the information presented on websites, and how web technologies have evolved from web 1.0 to web 2.0 (Montalvo 2016:45; Ismail and Latif 2013:356; Longstreet and Sarker 2011:2), this study aims to add value, as well as expand on the limited body of knowledge that currently exists regarding the credibility and authenticity of the information presented online in relation to travel information. Given that credibility and authenticity of the information presented online can be key determinants as to how effective online travel search can potentially be, this study can assist individuals and organisations who are looking to conduct digital marketing activities online. Tourism industry members such as owners of guesthouses, well-established hotels and travel agencies can seek to benefit greatly from this study. Furthermore, this study aims to provide enhanced insight into the effectiveness of the role social media plays with regards to online travel information search.

## 1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Due to the nature of this research project having a main focus on social media and the role it plays in relation to online travel information search, clear definitions of terms that contribute to the importance of this study are presented below.

### 1.9.1 Social media

For this study, social media can be defined as web-based communication technologies that turn communication applications (smart phones, personal computers, portable media players) into interactional dialogue platforms.

### 1.9.2 E-Business

In relation to this study, e-business can be defined as business processes which involve the buying and selling of products, supplies and services over the internet.

### 1.9.3 E- Marketing

For the purposes of this study, e-marketing involves translating elements of marketing strategies to a computerized network environment in the form of the internet. E-marketing is a process that involves the creation and maintenance of customer relationships through online activities to promote the exchange of ideas, products and services that will ultimately satisfy the achievement of goals for both parties involved.

### 1.9.4 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

For the purposes of this study, TAM consists of a mediating role of two variables called perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness in a complicated relationship between external variables and potential system usage. Without the knowledge of the model's origin, progression, and how it has been adapted as well as what the limitations of the model are, there can be no true comprehensive and methodical research in the arena of technology acceptance.

### 1.9.5 Trust

For this study, trust can be defined as the level and extent of an individual's willingness to partake in online transactional relationships, despite being placed in a vulnerable position.

### 1.9.6 Users and non-users of Facebook

For this study, users of Facebook can be described as those individuals who utilise the website for the purpose of conducting online travel information search. Non-users are the individuals who do not use Facebook to search for travel information, but rather utilise it for other means such as communicating with friends and family online.

### 1.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter, a brief introduction and background to the study have been discussed, the concepts of e-business, e-commerce and e-marketing, trust, the evolution of the World Wide Web (web 1.0 to web 2.0), social media consumption, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and perceived enjoyment have been briefly introduced and discussed, and these concepts will be discussed in more detail in chapter two of this study. Furthermore, brief descriptions of the problem statement, research objectives and the research design & methodology have also been explained which will be covered extensively in chapter three of this study. Lastly, scope and demarcation of the study, contribution of the study and the definitions of key concepts have been provided and discussed in this chapter.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ONLINE TRAVEL INFORMATION SEARCH**

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, a brief background and introduction of the research study was given and an outline was provided which highlighted all the various sections that the treatise is comprised of. The main objective of this study is to determine whether social media platforms do in fact have a role in online travel information search, and if they do the extent of influence and role that social media has on online travel information search. This section of the study will provide a detailed contextualisation of the research in relation to E-business, E- commerce, types of business models in E-commerce, E-marketing, trust, Evolution of the World Wide Web (Web 1.0 to Web 2.0), social media consumption, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with regards to perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Various definitions and operationalisations of the investigation will be presented in this chapter.

## 2.2 E-BUSINESS

With the rise of the global economy, strong drivers of economic development are becoming increasingly necessary. E-business and e-commerce are two major catalysts that have enabled the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) in the business industry to revolutionise the way in which internal organisational relationships are conducted, as well the relationships between individuals of an organisation and business-to-business relationships. According to Combe (2012:1) electronic business or e-business as it is commonly known can be defined as utilising the internet, intranets, extranets and other networks to network, empower business processes, electronic commerce and organisational communication. In addition, e-business seeks to improve collaboration efforts among members of the organisation and between the organisation and its customers, as well as improve collaboration with suppliers and other stakeholders. Even though the terms e-business and e-commerce are used inter-changeably, the distinction between the two lies in the fact that e-business is not solely confined to the buying and selling of products online through

utilising internet technologies such as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), but it is also comprised of other activities that form part of business, for example providing services to customers and communicating with employees and/or clients. With regards to e-commerce, it is a major component or sub-section of e-business that specifically deals with monetary transactions in the form of buying and selling goods online using the internet.

E-business as a concept is described in more transparent terms by Ĉiarneienė and Stankevičiūtė (2015:734) as a set of complex tools and practices which enable companies to use internet-based information technologies for the purposes of conducting business internally and externally. In addition, Ĉiarneienė and Stankevičiūtė (2015) state that many companies are beginning to rethink their businesses with regards to the internet and its endless capabilities, including integrating internet technologies to redesign business processes in ways that will enable companies to achieve enhanced competitive advantage. Furthermore, the main business processes comprised of e-business are grouped into three main categories. Firstly, production processes which involve activities such as procurement and the ordering & replenishment of stock, secondly customer-focused processes which consist of promotion and marketing efforts, as well as customer-support systems and lastly internal management processes which involve activities ranging from video-conferencing to internal information sharing. This indicates that e-business serves as the major business processes and activities that companies utilise to conduct business online. It reaffirms that e-business does not only focus on the buying and selling aspect of conducting business online, but also involves other major  business activities.

In the 21st century, there is a high demand for businesses which possess the ability to respond to any fluctuations or negative impacts in real time i.e. as the events occur. A business that possesses this ability needs to be flexible and must differentiate itself from competitors  by thoroughly integrating all of its business processes as well as ensuring the company's I.T. infrastructure exists in an on-demand operating environment. According to Malhotra (2014:12) e-business is creating an entirely new economy that is changing the way in which businesses conduct transactions. The wide array of goods and services that can be purchased online over the internet has made buying goods

online not only an increasingly attractive option, but also more convenient for consumers all over the world who have access to the internet. Malhotra (2014:12-13) further states that e-business is a key success factor in the digital age of today's society. The global reach of the internet has not only enabled e-business to become a major channel for inter-organisational business processes, but it has also proven to be advantageous for all companies who utilise the internet in the following ways:

- Increased global trade: e-business is a major contributor of the globalization of business and has contributed to achieving major economic breakthroughs such as decreasing trade barriers and globalising capital markets.

- Lower search costs: e-business is highly cost effective by reducing marketing costs, processing costs and costs involved with inventory management.

- Transparent access: Consumers are given the opportunity to conduct transactions or enquire about a product or service provided by a company at any time of the day, and from any location in the world provided they have access to the internet.

According to Dixit and Sinha (2016:1) e-business involves transforming important business processes by utilising web-based technology. In addition, businesses need to be able to consistently develop and upgrade their capabilities with the aim of facilitating e-business innovation. Since e-business technologies such as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and extranets link multiple companies which perform functions such as online purchasing and selling, as well as online information sharing, e-business companies need to frequently make changes to their systems to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage over their rivals. Dixit and Sinha (2016) further states that e-business has enabled companies to change from traditional organisations to organisations in which different parties such as customers and suppliers in different locations interact using web 2.0 internet capabilities. Whereas e-business consists of all the main processes that encompass conducting business through internet capabilities, e-commerce on the other hand places emphasis on the buying and selling aspect of conducting business online.

## 2.3 E- COMMERCE

According to Manzoor (2010:2) e-commerce can be defined as the process of conducting business transactions over the internet. In addition, e-commerce utilises electronic means and web-based technologies to conduct commerce within a business, from one business to another as well as from the business to the consumer. Manzoor (2010:2) further states that e-commerce consists of three main types of integration, namely vertical integration of front-end web site applications, secondly cross business integration that involves integrating the websites of customers and suppliers with company processes, and lastly the integration of technology processes to conduct processes such as order handling. In addition, Bhalekar, Ingle and Pathak (2014:25) define e-commerce as the paperless exchange of business information by utilising electronic data interchange as well as other internet-based technologies such as electronic mail. Therefore, from these two definitions, it can be surmised that e-commerce is a web-based function involving internet technologies to conduct online business transactions.

With the emergence and development of information technologies, e-commerce has become an integral part of how businesses in the 21st century conduct business online. With reference to Nanehkaran (2013:192), websites have become extremely effective for businesses to conduct online transactions. Websites can be used to market a company's product or service effectively and can also be utilised as branding platforms to reach a broader range of customers through various marketing campaigns and advertisements portrayed on certain sites. Andam (2013:10) describes the various types of e-commerce and provides various examples of the different types of e-commerce. Business-to-business (B2B) in simple terms refers to business transactions conducted between companies whereas business-to-consumer (B2C) makes reference to the process of customers gathering information about a company's product and decision-making processes regarding whether or not to buy a product. Moreover, business-to-consumer e-commerce is described as the earliest form of e-commerce. Lastly, Consumer-to-consumer (C2C) is characterised by commerce and transactions that strictly take place between private individuals and consumers. These different forms e-commerce can potentially be utilised by web-based social networking sites to enable

interactions to occur with regards to online travel search. For example, accommodation businesses such as guesthouses and hotels can place advertisements on Facebook and create a Facebook page which consists of  all the necessary information an individual would require about the business such as types of rooms available, price, security features and the page could include a comments section as well as a  rating scale system where previous travellers can rate the service provided by business on a scale of one to five (one being very poor and five being excellent). As a result of e-commerce being a broad field that consists of many sub-components, another area of importance are the major business models that are comprised of e-commerce.

### 2.3.1 Types of Business Models in E-Commerce

According to Abdollahi and Leimstoll (2011:1) any form of business requires at least one business model a company can utilise to structure its operations with the aim of generating enough revenue to sustain the business. There are nine major business model types that are relevant to the field of e-commerce; therefore a few examples of these major models can be described as follows:

### 2.3.1.1 Brokerage business model

The broker offers services to different parties and charges them for their service. The product offered does not solely belong to the broker, indicating it can be categorised in the service and intermediation group.

### 2.3.1.2 Advertising business model

An e-commerce based company provides advertising services and products to its customers. Revenue method will vary depending on the offered product or service, for example if the company is producing an advertisement package the revenue will be direct, but if the company provides a service in the form of developing an advertisement on the website of a customer then in this case the revenue will be in the form of commission.

### 2.3.1.3 Infomediary business model

For a traded item within an infomediary business model, both services and supplementary products are possible. Most companies provide a service to other

businesses in order for these businesses to conduct analyses of the marketing campaign themselves.

### 2.3.1.4 Merchant business model

The company provides a service or immaterial goods, and the merchant assumes responsibility for the products. If a merchant offers a supplementary product that supports usage of another traded item, ownership is considered in the production section which indicates that revenue would be direct.

### 2.3.1.5 Affiliate business model

With this model, the company offers incentives to other affiliates who have the ability to redirect customers to them. Ownership of products and goods is of the production type since the company owns them; therefore, this indicates that revenue generated will be direct.

### 2.3.1.6 Manufacturer business model

The producer of the goods offers products that provide a direct revenue stream and sole ownership. Traded items within this model are considered to be goods.

### 2.3.1.7 Community business model

With this model, only certain parts of the service are offered to users with the aim of contributing to a professional problem solution. Nature of the contributors does not change, and this indicates that ownership of the service for the service falls within content ownership.

### 2.3.1.8 Subscription business model

This is mainly a model through which a company offers some services to customers to facilitate interaction and communication. The main difference between the community and subscription models is that the community model consists of more professional aspects, whereas the subscription model consists of more social interactions.

### 2.3.1.9 Utility business model

Lastly with this model, a service is provided to customers of the same type and the company has content ownership of the information. Revenue is based on rent of the

service that is used. This model is not considered as a direct sales category since main revenue is generated from the usage fee from where the customer owns the service.

### 2.3.2 The importance of e-commerce

E-commerce has proven to be extremely important for businesses in the 21st century since it has provided businesses with a wide range of opportunities that were previously not available to them before the World Wide Web was developed. Some of these opportunities include increased product ranges and the generation of more sales, and convenience since all transactions are done online and can be completed within the comfort of your own home for example buying clothing online.

Other major advantages of e-commerce are its global presence meaning transactions can be conducted all over the world provided an individual has access to the internet, cost effectiveness i.e. logistical problems can be reduced and small businesses can have the ability to perform on the same level as larger companies, direct communication with the consumer is another major advantage i.e. online advertising networks can be used as mediums to create enhanced awareness about a certain product or service. These advantages all inter-link, and e-commerce applications can be utilised to enhance e-marketing efforts of a company that uses online methods to conduct marketing strategies and campaigns to make a wide range customers aware of existing or upcoming products and services.

### 2.4 E-MARKETING

As a result of the rapid development of internet technologies and the increased opportunities made possible by improvements in modern technological advancements, for example the buying and selling products online, small businesses being able to compete with large businesses through product innovation, and increased communication capabilities such as live video calling, traditional marketing methods are increasingly becoming less effective when compared to digital marketing methods. According to .: ("10 Social Media Stats You Might Not Know But Should," 2016) traditional methods of marketing are increasingly becoming less favourable because 44% of direct mail is never opened and 86% of individuals do not watch television advertisements. On the other hand, statistical data that indicates digital marketing is on

the rise can be attributed to facts such as 84% of B2B marketers use some form of social media, 79% of online shoppers spend 50% of their time conducting research for products online and 53% of B2B marketers have acquired a customer through Facebook whereas 44% have acquired a customer through Twitter.

According to a study by Dehkordi, Rezvani, Rahman, Fouladivanda, Nahid and Jouya (2012:114) the manner in which companies conduct business has drastically changed and these changes can be attributed to the emergence and rise of the World Wide Web and internet-based technologies. Dehkordi *et al.* (2012) further state that for many individuals the use of the internet, smart phones or other technology-based tools and platforms including social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter has become a daily need. Companies now possess the ability to market their products and services online through advertising campaigns generated on websites, or through creating Facebook pages to promote a product or a major event such as the FIFA World Cup.

According to Dehkordi *et al.* (2012:117) electronic marketing can be defined as the use of marketing methods to market goods, services, and information via the internet and other forms of electronic means. Furthermore, e-marketing strategies involve existing utilities and merge them with communication data networks with the aim of forming a relationship with a company and its customers within the internet environment. Batiniċ (2015:34) provides another definition of e-marketing as being the application of information technology within the process of creating, communicating as well as delivering value to consumers. In addition, Batiniċ (2015) further states e-marketing is a process that involves applying information technologies to create more efficient segmentation, differentiation and positioning strategies to gain a competitive advantage over rival companies in the same industry.

## 2.4.1 Traditional marketing versus Digital Marketing

According to Das and Lall (2016:6) traditional marketing methods involve the use of strategies such as direct sales, radio, television advertisements, newspaper advertisements and print material in the form of billboards. On the other hand, digital marketing methods involve promoting products of a company through the utilisation of various types of electronic media. Promotion and advertising products through electronic

media can be done through social networking sites and placing advertisements on various websites across the internet. Das and Lall (2012:6) further state that as the world has transitioned and continues to transition into a digital environment, activities individuals conduct on a daily basis such as banking transactions are also becoming increasingly digitised. Even though traditional marketing methods may still prove to be useful in today's digital society, more especially by members of the older generation who grew up in an age before rapid technological advancement, these methods are diminishing in the world today. It is imperative for businesses in the 21st century to utilise online digital methods of marketing and promotion with the aim of attracting as well as interacting with a broader consumer base (Das & Lall 2016).

A study by Sekar and Geetha (2013:156) found that towards the end of the 1990s and early 2000s the most important trends that had a negative impact on traditional marketing were increasing competition, less differentiation of products, increasing consumer expectations and heightened consumer privacy & security concerns to name a few. During this period, marketers across various industries such as mass media and retail clothing were among the first individuals to notice the potential for opportunities relevant to the rising landscape of the World Wide Web and internet technologies. The main attractive element is interactivity and maintaining close relationships between the consumer and the company. In addition, the changing landscape of the marketing industry was characterised by three major factors, namely marketing management with regards to information contained in marketing databases instead of information acquired through marketing research, secondly the utilisation of digital media rather than generic advertising to stimulate the marketing environment and lastly the management of client-company relationships (Sekar & Geetha 2013).

As e-marketing methods began to outcompete traditional marketing, e-marketing provided numerous advantages over its predecessor such as minimal risk & investment attributed to low start-up operating costs and the ability to enable consumers to purchase products online at any time of the day as well as from anywhere in the world due to the global presence and reach of the internet. In addition, mass customization which according to Nayak, Padhye, Wang, Chatterjee and Gupta (2015:162) is the process of equipping customers with unique products at an affordable price when,

where and how they want these products. Moreover, mass customisation is technology-based process through which customers have the ability to modify a company's product line. From the perspective of a customer, Nayak *et al.* (2015:162-163) outline the different approaches to mass customisation as follows:

• Cosmetic customisation: the representation of a product, such as its packaging is changed, but the product itself is not changed.

• Transparent customisation: the nature of the product is changed, but the overall standard representation of the product is not altered.

• Adaptive customisation: neither the product nor how the product is represented is changed. Rather, flexibility is provided to individual customers so that they can manipulate the product to suit their own needs without additional interaction with the company itself

• Collaborative customisation: design and representation of the product can be altered.

Mass production involves producing products on a large scale, and the process is made possible as a result of technological advancements in production, measurement systems and communication (Nayak *et al.*2015). Furthermore, a study by Mohamed (2014:144) outlines the benefits of internet-based marketing, in the process stating that time and cost-saving serve as the main two reasons as to why there is an increase in the utilisation of the internet for marketing purposes.

Firstly, Mohamed (2014:144) states that since the internet became the most widely used form of communication channel used to promote marketing initiatives of a company, there is no limit to the reach of customers a company can potentially have in a particular target market and this could be greatly advantageous to the company. Therefore, a company can optimise this advantage in order attract customers in untapped markets and in the process increase their sales and profits. Secondly, another benefit arising fromt the nature of the internet is that consumers are provided the opportunity to first conduct research on a product, then decide whether they would like to purchase the product or not at the click of a button. This is convenient and time-efficient in that consumers do not physically have to travel to a store to view and purchase a product,

but this can rather be done within the comfort and safety of their own homes.  Other advantages that e-marketing  provides include the increased exposure of products and services, increased interactivity capabilities, universal accessibility and the low risk involved with marketing online.

Even though E-marketing has proven to be advantageous with regards to improving the way in which businesses market and promote their products online, there are also multiple challenges faced by e-marketing methods.

## 2.4.2 Challenges faced by e-marketing methods

Sekar and Geetha (2013:159) outline some of these challenges as being for example, companies developing a bad reputation for false advertising and promotion campaigns on their websites that promote products which do not exist in reality or differ in reality from what a consumer viewed on the website. Another challenge some companies may face is trying to integrate traditional marketing methods with their online marketing campaigns, and lastly the issue of privacy in that most consumers still do not completely trust web-based companies. For example, with an online retail clothing store such as superbalist.com, consumers shay away from providing such a company with personal information such as their address and account details due to the fear of being scammed and having their privacy invaded.

User privacy in relation to trust is an important element that needs to be established for consumers to feel a certain level of safety that will enable them to conduct online transactions on a regular basis. Companies that do not exhibited the desired level of trust that consumers are seeking will inevitably lose that customer. It is therefore important for companies operating through the internet to communicate to their customers that the information they present on their websites is authentic and credible.

## 2.5 TRUST

According to Ayeh, Au and Law (2013:437) even though user- generated content websites have become important sources of travel information, the subjective nature of online travel opinions including the difficult task of evaluating the content generated by individuals on these sites has given rise to doubts and questions relating to the credibility and authenticity of user-generated content.

A study by Gupta and Dubey (2016:225) defines trust as the willingness an individual express to be vulnerable, and reliance on other parties other than oneself. Hakansson and Witmer (2015:518) argue three hypotheses relevant to trust. Firstly, that trust is a derivative of reciprocity which indicates that trust can only be established when there is cooperation between two or more parties. Their second hypotheses states that trust can be created by networking on social media or do face-to-face meetings have to be conducted for trust to be established. Thirdly, Hakansson and Witmer (2015:518) hypothesize that social media has no effect on trust, arguing that trust is a moral virtue which has little to no meaning for individuals who are active on the internet.

 Furthermore, Hakansson and Witmer (2015:519) argue that the effect the internet has in terms of establishing trust between the consumer and the company is not convincing since trust is a process that an individual takes time to develop. Conducting transactions online prevents face-to-face meetings and also limits interaction between the parties involved. Hakansson and Witmer (2015) conclude that the internet plays a negative role when it comes to establishing meaningful relationships with regards to building mutual trust among active members of the internet as well as between a business and its customers.

According to a study by Pee and Lee (2016:2), even though social media does provide informational uses and benefits, there are often concerns that stem from the quality and truthfulness of the information generated by users. Pee and Lee (2016) state that social media content is in most cases prone to containing unverified information, misinterpretations as well as fabricated content. Furthermore, a large majority of users experience difficulties in terms of distinguishing between information that is true or false on social networking sites. As a result, some users may trust the false information presented online that could potentially lead them to make wrong travel choice decisions. Pee and Lee (2016:3) state that based on previous studies conducted by Barlte, Avineri and Chatterjee (2013) and Chu and Kim (2011) trust is affected by factors such as the source of the information, history of the interaction with a certain source, as well as content characteristics. Furthermore, another important determinant of a user's trust in social media information is how a user processes and evaluates user-generated content. User-generated content would not be possible if the internet had not evolved to

Web 2.0. capabilities, and the evolution of the World Wide Web has enabled further advancements in internet technology to occur.

There has been an increasing interest in the application of social media platforms to the tourism industry. This interest can be attributed to the development and capabilities of web 2.0 technology which has resulted in the creation of various user-generated content (UGC) websites in the form of social networking sites and online travel community & review sites In addition, Ayeh, Au and Law (2013) state that user-generated content has grown to become an important information source for travel consumers and individuals are increasingly making use of information contained on user-generated content websites in order to form travel-related decisions, as well as shape their perceptions regarding certain travel destinations and travel offerings.

To conclude based on the above-mentioned theories of trust, prospective travellers need to be cautious as well as discern for themselves whether the travel-related content being presented and generated online is trustworthy.

## 2.6 EVOLUTION OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB: WEB 1.0 TO WEB 2.0

Kunjur and Chhetri (2015) state that Web 1.0 was the very first version of the web to be implemented from 1989 to 2005. Web 1.0 This first "generation" of the web was extremely passive in nature since it allowed for limited to no user interaction with other individuals on a site. In addition, web 1.0 did not allow for content contribution, but was rather mainly developed for users of the internet to search for information on the web and read the information they found. The major characteristics of Web 1.0 were that the information presented on the web at that time contained read-only content, and that web 1.0 contained static web pages that used basic Hypertext Mark-up language.

According to Kunjur and Chhetri (2015), major limitations of web 1.0 were that the web pages could only be understood by humans i.e. these pages did not possess machine-compatible content. Secondly, the web master was the only individual responsible for maintenance and management of the website, and it was also their duty to update users. As the years went by, web 1.0 gradually became obsolete and a more advanced version of the web needed to be developed. Therefore, web 2.0 was developed and

implemented to serve as upgraded version of the previous version of the web and this upgrade came to be described as the second version of the web.

The new capabilities of social media have paved the way for redefining of users' roles in the conventional trifecta of information communication (Casero-Ripolles, 2017: 14). In the years gone by, users were only faced with the interaction with brands or information providers who controlled and dictated the information supplied to the consumer (Casero-Ripolles, 2017: 14).

Casero-Ripolles (2017:15) indicates that according to the study undertaken, social media is mostly used for entertainment and social interaction. Gender, age, race and socio-economic factors lead to inequalities in information reception and the user's ability to access information on Web 2.0 platforms (Casero-Ripolles, 2017: 15). This indicates that not all users have the same opportunity and access to information. The web environment creates cognitive differences which establish vulnerable areas and create a wide gap between the information rich and information poor (Casero-Ripolles, 2017: 15).

According to Wilson, Lin, Longstreet and Sarker (2011:2), web 2.0 can be defined as the second generation of the web in which inter-operational, user-focused web applications and platforms promote social interconnectivity, content-sharing, user-generated content and collaboration as well as communication among individuals and organisations. Wilson *et al.* (2011:2) further state that a major theme associated with web 2.0 technologies includes the ability to facilitate collaborative action and social interaction online. For example, online social network platforms such as Facebook and Instagram enable individuals from all over the globe to stay in contact with relatives and friends, as well as utilize these platforms to conduct professional business networking.
In addition, media-sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr, as well as user-generated applications in the form of SnapChat have enabled users to generate and share their own media, and enable them to share this media with other users.

The development and evolution of web 2.0 technologies has allowed for users of social networking sites to view past experiences of travellers, share their own travel moments in the form of pictures and real-time videos, as well provide them with the ability to

interact with other travellers/potential travellers about various destinations they have been to or would like to travel to.

Furthermore, web 2.0 advancements have also enabled tourists to view important information regarding prices of accommodation, viewing hotel rooms, view flight information and details, as well as interact with individuals who are located at the destination they would like to visit. This type of interactivity would not have been possible while web 1.0 was still the dominant web technology.

## 2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Social media and its various social networking sites are not the sum of the terms parts but are a phenomenon (Boyd, 2015:1). Social media began as a buzzword but was far from being accurate, however it still set the tone and shaped the borders of social media that were rooted in technical, social and business dynamics (Boyd, 2015:1). Social media refers to a group of practices, tools and ideas that were introduced after the dot-com meltdown by a group of technologists (Boyd, 2015:1). As these sites and social media as a whole have matured it has allowed for the development of technology, social commentary and business systems and models (Boyd, 2015:2). In the recent decade, social media has developed from just an idea to Silicon Valley developers into an integral part of modern digital life worldwide. The most famous sites, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have forced their way into daily human life (Boyd, 2015:2).

Social networking sites were first developed in 1997 as the popularity of the internet started to increase tremendously and websites began to enable users to upload and generate their own content. Dewing (2012) states that from 2002, multiple social networking sites such as Friendster and MySpace began to appear, only to fade quickly out of existence as a result of multiple issues. These issues, being poor engagement with users, poor relationship management from the website perspective have conversely positively affected Facebook and caused the major user transition to this social networking site. The transition of users from MySpace to Facebook has been colossal as the size of Facebook users increased significantly after the decline of MySpace and can be attributed partially to MySpace's backward strategies and inability to innovate (McNeil, 2012: 1). This saw them lose millions of users. However, Facebooks growth

and market share capturing strategies have made it one of the world's leading social networks (McNeil, 2012: 1).

The reasoning for the user transitions begins with the multi-generational and multi-functional nature of Facebook, this mean that the site had the majority of account holders between the ages of 18-44, while MySpace had 18-34, with most of their users being 18-24 (McNeil, 2012: 1). Facebook has led through appealing to numerous age groups and generations of people as well as various types of businesses. Facebook dominated the sphere of Corporate Influence, most businesses have Facebook pages while MySpace catered mostly for entertainment (McNeil, 2012:1).

Customisation is major reason for Facebooks success. All social sites have this customisation feature, however with varying degrees. Facebook mastered this feature by allowing users to customise as much as they could on their profiles while keeping the Facebook layout (McNeil, 2012: 1). Social Impact has been a determining factor for Facebooks success, people are constantly talking about, sharing and discussing the site. Word of mouth has positively affected Facebook and has contributed greatly to the sites success (McNeil, 2012:1).

Since their conception, multiple social network services have gained millions of users, many of those users have incorporated these social network sites into their daily lives (Sillaber, Chimiak-Opoka & Breu, 2013: 377).The growth and adoption by the users follows various distinct patterns, while the fast rise and deep fall of social network influencers like Myspace, has shown that not only a precise  prediction method for their growth and attraction but the users' disengagement from the network sites is of exceptional commercial and academic interest (Sillaber *et al.* 2013: 377).

By the late 2000s, there was unanimous widespread acceptance of social media all over the world, and some platforms had garnered an amazing number of users. For example, Facebook announced that in November 2012 the company had reached the 1 billion user mark for its social networking site, whereas Twitter had 517 million users worldwide (www.Smartinsights.com) . A number of various factors can be attributed to the growth and prominence of social media, namely advancements in technology in the form of broadband internet connectivity, improvements in software engineering tools, social

factors including the rapid acceptance of social media platforms by the youth and economic factors such as the easy accessibility and affordability of computers (www.Smartinsights.com).

Social media platforms have not only proven to be beneficial to individuals from a general everyday use point of view, but these platforms have also proven to be utilized extensively by business professionals and the corporate world. Major corporations from various types of industries have increasingly begun to use social media to increase their marketing efforts, improve brand image and place advertisements on these platforms. Moreover, companies can now also incorporate their marketing strategies into content generated on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook to advertise their products and get their message across to customers in increasingly creative and innovative ways. To effectively gauge social media's role, the effectiveness of social media in a different context needs to be analysed. Several theories emerged to better understand social media usage by users.

## 2.8 TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

### 2.8.1 Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use

The Technology acceptance model TAM is adapted from the psychology-based theory of reasonable action (TRA) and theory of planned behaviour (TPB), and the TAM has taken a major role in highlighting users' behaviour towards technology and thus an in-depth understanding of TAM would make contextualisation simpler (Granic & Marangunic, 2015: 81).

The major growth and development of technology, specifically information and communication technology, and its incorporation into users' private and professional life, a stance regarding its acceptance or rejection is still a question that remains open (Granic & Marangunic, 2015: 81). In the past couple of decades, there has been an increased interest in the research community in addressing the above-mentioned question and that has resulted in the existence of numerous theories and models of technology acceptance and its most effective usage (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:81).

 For a full understanding of the existence and the development of TAM, a description of theories and models, which it originated from and those which influenced its

development, is necessary (Granic & Marangunic, 2015: 84). In the beginning of technology becoming a part of users' daily life, there was an increasing need for understanding reasons as to why the technology is accepted or rejected (Granic & Marangunic, 2015: 84). Firstly, theories attempting to explain those decisions were located in the arena of psychology.

The theory of reasoned action, with the TPB, is the origins of TAM. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), assumed that individuals are usually quite rational and make systematic use of available information (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84). They theorised that one could predict, understand behaviour and attitudes (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84). The TRA deals with behavioural intentions as opposed to the attitudes as the main predictors of behaviours (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84). In their theoretical model, Ajzen and Fishbein, suggested that one's actual behaviour could be determined by taking into consideration his/her prior intent as well as the beliefs that the person would have for the given behaviour. According to their theory, a most influential predictor of the behaviour is the behavioural intention, while the influence of the attitude on the behaviour is mediated through the intention (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84). Given the origin of TAM, its development requires explanation as well to further solidify the foundation of understanding of the model.

In 1985, Fred Davis proposed the model for technology acceptance. He proposed that the actual usage of a particular system is a response that can be described or explained by user motivation, which would be influenced by an external stimulant consisting of the system's features (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84). Davis further refined his conceptual model of the TAM, which suggested that the user's motivation can be explained by three factors: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitude toward using (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84). Davis theorised that the attitude of the user to the system was a large determinant of whether the user will use or reject the system (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84).

The attitude of the user was considered to be influenced by two beliefs, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, with the perceived ease of use having a direct influence on the perceived usefulness.

Davis (1989) defined perceived usefulness as the degree to which the person believes that using the particular system would enhance her/his job performance, whereas the perceived ease of use was defined as the degree to which the person believes that using the particular system would be free of effort (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:84). All the above factors come full circle in the model of this study with the comparison between online search methods and traditional search methods to gauge the impact of online methods now and the differences from the past.

The impact of technology in changing humanity requires no mention, it has been profuse and transformational in more ways that can be mentioned in human life (Chakravarthi & Gopal, 2012:13). The comparison is starker when the observation of how information and communications technology in general and internet technology in particular has helped provide consumers with the ability to communicate with the outside world without any hindrances, limits or boundaries (Chakravarthi & Gopal, 2012:13). This added ability enabling consumers to communicate with the outside world as well as each other has contributed to the way in which users search for travel information, more especially since the internet is constantly active and operational. This has enabled internet technology to keep improving over time and has opened overwhelming opportunities and possibilities for a prosperous e-commerce business, allowing internet users to buy and sell on the internet, reaching unimaginable proportions (Chakravarthi & Gopal, 2012:13). This has caused the entertainment and enjoyment of the developed sites to come into consideration and how that perceived enjoyment plays a role in the usage.

## 2.9 PERCEIVED ENJOYMENT

Perceived enjoyment is defined as the intrinsic reward derived through the use of particular technology and unlike an extrinsic motivation such as perceived usefulness which is based on completion of specific goals or tasks, intrinsic motivation refers to the pleasure of doing an activity itself (Nguyen, 2015:22).

Enjoyment is the satisfaction felt by an individual through the engagement of an activity or action (Akram & Albalawi, 2016: 24). Enjoyment can be categorised as a kind of intrinsic stimulus as opposed to usefulness which happens to be a kind of extrinsic stimulus (Akram & Albalawi, 2016:24). Akram and Albalawi define enjoyment received

from making use of digital systems to be enjoyable to users by itself despite the contributing value of using that technology. The intrinsic satisfaction received by the user from using information technology enhances the behaviour as well as the intentions behind the adoption of the particular system or technology (Akram & Albalawi, 2016: 24).

The intentions to make use of a satisfaction centred system or technology is determined by the factor of, enjoyment, that the user derives from it (Akram & Albalawi, 2016: 24). For its hedonic purpose, enjoyment affects the reason of online use for entertainment and people use social media to fulfil their entertainment needs (Akram & Albalawi, 2016: 24).

**FIGURE 2.1 FOUR-FACTOR MODEL AND DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

**INDEPENDENT**

**VARIABLES**

**DEPENDENT**

**VARIABLE**

Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived Usefulness

Trust

Perceived Enjoyment

Social Media Consumption
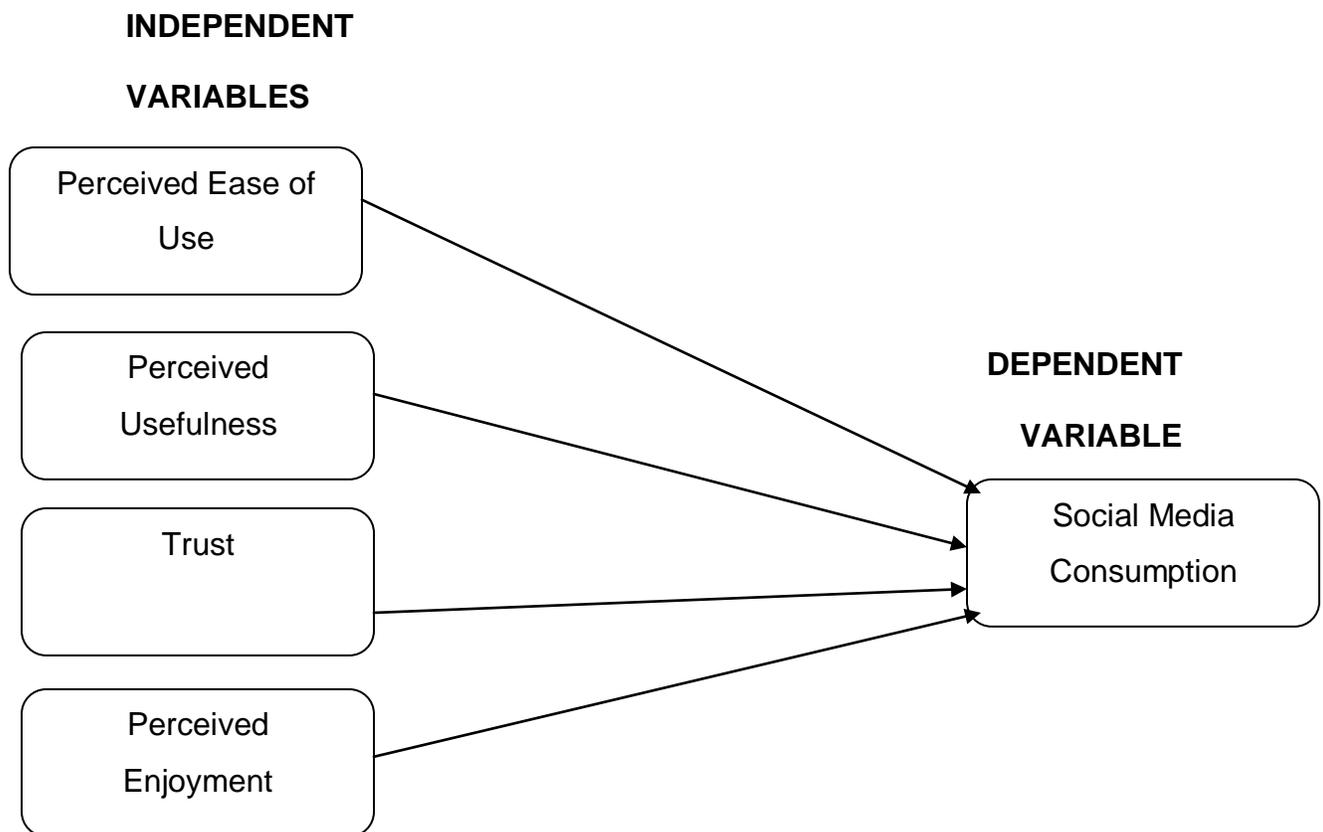
## 2.10 OPERATIONALISATIONS OF FOUR-FACTOR MODEL CONCEPTS

### 2.10.1Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

According to a study by Granic & Marangunic (2015:81) this study consists of the Technology Acceptance Model because it is a study that is well trusted and has been used quite often in academic writing, and it is a model that is widely regarded as one of the best in technology and online media studies. In the past couple of decades, there has been an increased interest in the research community in addressing the existence of numerous theories and models of technology acceptance and its most effective usage (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:81). The technology acceptance model (TAM), introduced by Fred Davis close to thirty years ago, became a main model when investigating the factors affecting acceptance of the technology that is engaged by users (Granic & Marangunic, 2015:81).

Furthermore, according to a study by Fathema, Shannon and Ross (2015:212) Davis (1989) Technology Acceptance Model is a variation model based on Azjen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). With reference to the TRA, an individual's intention to perform a particular act is a function of an individual's attitude towards their behaviour and social norms. Therefore, according to the Technology Acceptance Model, an individual's attitude predicts their intention, and an individual's intention will shape the actual behaviour of the individual. The TAM consists of a mediating role of two variables called perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness in a complicated relationship between external variables and potential system usage.

For the purpose of this study, the Technology Acceptance Model is relevant, because an individual's behavioural intention for using Facebook to conduct online travel search will affect the extent to which an individual will perceive social media to contain relevant travel information they are looking for.

### 2.10.2 Perceived Ease of Use

According to a study by Ayeh, Au and Law (2012:133) perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) form an integral part of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The Technology Acceptance Model assumes the way in which an individual perceives a system to be relatively simple to use will determine the individual's

attitude as well as their behavioural intention regarding that system. In addition, a study by Ozturk, Nusair, Bilgihan and Okumus (2016:2) states that when an individual is presented with a new form of technology, the individual's perceived ease of use of this technology will have an influence on their decision making as to whether they will utilise this technology or not. Moreover, Ozturk *et al.* (2016) also state that perceived ease of use affects the belief an individual has in relation to whether the use of a particular system will enhance or diminish their work performance. Therefore, from this explanation it can be said that perceived ease of use affects the way in which an individual believes that their use of a particular system or technology will be determined by the level of ease with which they will be able to use the system or technology. For the purpose of this study, perceived ease of use of a social media platform such as Facebook is the level of ease with which an individual is able to use Facebook as a reliable source for travel information. The perceived ease of use of Facebook to find reliable travel information, will determine an individual's decision as to whether or not to utilise Facebook to conduct online travel information search.

## 2.10.3 Perceived Usefulness

With reference to a study by Hamid, Razak, Abu Bakar, Salihin and Abdullah (2015:646) perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which a person is of the belief that a by using a particular technology, this will enhance their job performance. Additionally, perceived usefulness affects an individual's utilisation of this technology or system, as well as whether the technology will have a positive or negative effect on the way in which they conduct their work.

For this study, perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which users find social media useful in their travel research. Furthermore, the value that Facebook creates for the user in relation to their research is a determining factor of usefulness. Additionally, the more consumers perceive that using Facebook will satisfy their intention of using the platform, the more they will appreciate its usefulness and engage with it.

## 2.10.4 Trust

According to a study by Kong, Dirks, and Ferrin (2014:1235) the concept of trust can be defined as the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the

intentions or behaviour of another. In addition, trust is also based on an individual's willingness or unwillingness to take risks. Users who conduct online travel search need to be able to perceive in their minds that the information they are searching for is reliable, credible and authentic.

This study realises that social media platforms have an uncertainty aspect to them as a result of their public nature. Thus, one of the major factors this study investigates is the role that trust possesses in using social media to conduct online travel search. Therefore, trust in this study will be based on the perception that Facebook users have about the information they consume. Trust is therefore explained as the extent to which users of Facebook perceive to have confidence that the information providers and information of travel content will be reliable, credible and authentic.

## 2.10.5 Perceived Enjoyment

Perceived enjoyment is defined as the intrinsic reward derived through the use of particular technology and unlike an extrinsic motivation such as perceived usefulness which is based on completion of specific goals or tasks, intrinsic motivation refers to the pleasure of doing an activity itself (Nguyen: 2015,22).

Enjoyment is the satisfaction felt by an individual through the engagement of an activity or action (Akram & Albalawi: 2016, 24). Enjoyment can be categorised as a kind of intrinsic stimulus as opposed to usefulness which happens to be a kind of extrinsic stimulus (Akram & Albalawi: 2016, 24). Akram and Albalawi define enjoyment received from making use of digital systems to be enjoyable to users by itself despite the contributing value of using that technology.

For this study, perceived enjoyment can therefore be explained as the pleasure that social media renders to users and thus provides an intrinsic reward. This study seeks to gauge whether users will use Facebook more if it is enjoyable to them when they are searching for travel related information.

## 2.10.6 Social Media Consumption (Dependant Variable)

Social media is defined by van Dijck (2013:4) as a collective of internet-based applications which build on the ideology and technological foundations of Web 2.0

developments, therefore this has allowed for the creation as well as the exchange of user-generated content on social media platforms. With reference to Firat, Kutucuoglu, Saltik and Tuncel (2013:183) the concept of consumption in general terms can be defined as a desire to satisfy a specific need. Within the context of social media consumption, this would indicate that users of social media platforms fall under the category of consumer culture, and certain cultural influences can directly or indirectly have an influence on consumer behaviour. For this study, based on these two descriptions, the term social media consumption refers to the rate at which users of Social Networking Sites (SNS) are increasingly utilising Facebook as a platform to consume vast amounts of information and media, more so especially with the popularity of Facebook. Social media consumption will be used as a determining factor as to how individuals utilize Facebook to search for travel information. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study Social media consumption will investigate the duration of time and the frequency of visits that users spend on Facebook, consuming, researching travel information.

According to Ljepava, Orr, Locke and Ross (2013:1602) the majority of research relating to Facebook usage explores characteristics of Facebook users and motives for utilising the site. On the other hand, however, studies investigating Facebook non-users found links between non-usage and preference for other types of communication such as email and telephone, including preference for other activities to engage in such as sports-related activities. These previous studies were conducted by Baker and White (2011) as well as Ryan and Xenos (2011). Furthermore, non-users of Faebook were characterised by cyber-safety concerns such the privacy and access to their personal information, and these studies concluded that non-users of Facebook were less narcissistic, more introverted, more conscientious as well as exhibited more socially-lonely traits when compared to users of Facebook (Ljepava, Orr, Locke and Ross, 2013:1602).

A sufficient body of literature has emerged in relation to the characteristics of Facebook users, more especially in terms of communication preferences and personality traits. Previous studies conducted by Lenhart and Madden (2007) and McKenna, Green and Gleeson (2002) identified keeping in touch with friends and family, including meeting

and connecting with new friends as viable reasons for individuals joining and using social networking sites (Ljepava, Orr, Locke and Ross, 2013:1603). In addition, it was also found that social networking sites such as Facebook serve as an extension of face-to-face communication (Ljepava, Orr, Locke and Ross, 2013:1603).

## 2.11 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To summarise and conclude what has been discussed in this section of the study, detailed explanations of the concepts of e-business, e-commerce, e-marketing and trust were covered and discussed. In addition, detailed descriptions in terms of the concepts of social media as well as how the World Wide Web evolved from Web 1.0 to web 2.0 have been discussed. Furthermore, operationalisations regarding the factors of the study namely trust, perceived enjoyment, social media and the Technology Acceptance Model were provided. Furthermore, it can be concluded that without the advancements in internet technologies and web capabilities such as the development and implementation of the internet, social media would not exist because the ability of an individual to post user-generated content would not be possible.

In addition, trust is an element that still needs to be fully established between organisations who operate over the internet and their customers. Without trust, buying and selling as well as other transactions would not take place. In addition, the growth and innovation of the World Wide Web allowed individuals and businesses to exploit vast amounts of information at the click of a button. Web technology and the use of social media has increased exponentially, allowing consumers to gain access to copious amounts of information.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a detailed description of the research design i.e. the manner in which data was collected as well as how it was analysed will be discussed. Furthermore, detailed explanations of primary data collection and secondary data collection will be provided, including how the concepts of primary and secondary data collection relate to this study. In addition, elements relating to the population, sample frame, sample size, sampling techniques and the research instrument used to collect the data for this study will be covered. Lastly, an in-depth description of the data analysis will be discussed in relation to how primary data will be captured into the statistical programme known as Statistica.

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this study involves a series of linked decisions that outline the collection, measurement and analysis of the data. The first major decision involves the research paradigm which consists of two main concepts known as positivism and interpretivism. According to a study by Hamza and Antwi (2015:217) all research is based on an underlying philosophical assumption regarding what constitutes as valid research, as well as what type of research methods are appropriate for the growth of knowledge within a given study. Furthermore, Hamza and Antwi (2015:218) also state that selection of a research methodology to use is dependent on the paradigm that guides the research study. A research paradigm is therefore defined as the pattern, structure, framework or system of scientific and academic ideas with regards to the approach used to thinking about, as well as doing research.

According to a study by Wahyuni (2012:69) two main philosophical dimensions are used to distinguish existing research paradigms, namely ontology and epistemology. Ontology refers to the view of how an individual perceives a reality whereas epistemology the belief regarding the way in which to generate, understand as well as utilise the knowledge that is deemed to be valid and acceptable. These two philosophical dimensions therefore link to the concepts of positivism and interpretivism.

Positivism (or a positivistic approach) according to Wahyuni (2012:71) applies the lens of natural science to social science in that they share the common view that social reality is external and objective. Furthermore, positivist researchers also seek to obtain law-like generalisations through conducting value-free research with the aim of measuring social phenomena. Additionally, positivists are under the belief that various researchers who observe the same factual problem will generate a similar result through careful utilisation of statistical tests, as well as through the application of a similar research process when investigating a sample (Wahyuni 2012:72). Interpretivism on the other hand accedes to constructivism, and interpretivists represent the belief that reality is constructed by social actors, as well as people's varied perceptions of it.

According to Collis and Hussey (2014:10) a methodology refers to the approach used towards conducting the research. In addition, a methodological approach towards a study can be conducted through positivism, which constitutes a quantitative methodological approach or interpretivism which serves as a qualitative methodological approach. Furthermore, Collis and Hussey (2014:47) state that through a positivist process of research, the researcher can assume a deductive approach, results are accurate as well as reliable through validity and reliability, and generalisations can lead to prediction, explanation and understanding.

For the purpose of this study, a positivism methodological approach will be used to by conducting survey research through the administering of questionnaires to a sample population of two-hundred individuals in the Nelson Mandela Bay area within the city of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The Positivism approach has been undertaken because it is more suited and preferred for quantitative methods, like structured questionnaires, surveys and official statistics, because they have good representativeness as well as good reliability. Having good representativeness means the sample adequately reflects the larger population and reliability means the measurement of consistency and stability of scores, in this case the respondents' responses to the questionnaire. Furthermore, this approach is used when investigating relationships or correlations between variables.

**3.2.1 DATA COLLECTION**

**3.2.1.1 Secondary data collection**

According to Salkind (2010:1330) secondary data is information collected by other research for its specific purpose, the data stems from previous research that has been already undertaken. Salkind (2010:1332) further states that the specific types of information needed to conduct secondary research will depend on the focus of the study. Therefore, secondary data can be obtained from a number of different external sources such as official statistics accessible to the public as a whole, and technical reports which refer to accounts of bodies of work conducted on various research projects. These reports are written to provide accurate research results to research institutions, governments as well as other interested research parties. Other forms of secondary data can be obtained from scholarly journals and articles, including trade journals which contain articles discussing practical information concerning various fields. Moreover, reference books also provide sources of secondary data. Handbooks, manuals and encyclopaedias constitute as secondary data obtained from reference books.

Another definition of secondary data according to Johnston (2014:620) is knowledge additional to, or different from, that which was presented in primary data and investigates what is already known as well as what remains to be learned about a particular topic by reviewing secondary sources and other studies that have previously been conducted within a specified area of interest.

For the purpose of this study, secondary data will be obtained from viable sources such as scholarly journals and articles relevant to this study, including Google books as well as the Nelson Mandela University Library and Information Services & Resources portal. In addition, textbooks containing relevant information regarding the focus of this study will also be used to source secondary data.

**3.2.1.2 Primary data collection**

According to a study by Wilson (2014:256) primary data refers to the collection of data conducted by the researcher him/herself using a range of collection tools such as interviews, observation and interviews, instead of simply relying on existing data

sources. Moreover, primary data collected is information which is unique to the researcher's particular area of study. Furthermore, Wilson (2014:256) states that three main primary data collection tools are interviews, questionnaires and lastly observation. In addition, Adams, Khan and Raeside (2014:92) state that gathering your own original data is an essential aspect of the research design process, and the ability to successfully achieve the research objectives largely depends on the effectiveness of the data collection, even though collecting primary data can potentially be an expensive and time-consuming process. The collection of primary data calls for decisions regarding the population, sample frame and sample.

### 3.2.1.2. a Population and Sample

- Population: according to Daniel (2011:9) a population refers to the set of elements an individual desires to apply the findings of the study to. Therefore, in this study the population can be defined as all individuals from the city of Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape South Africa. From a statistical perspective, Port Elizabeth has a population of 967,677 individuals with reference to worldpopulationreview.com.

- Sample: With reference to Thompson (2012:1) sampling involves selecting only a small portion of the population to observe in order for a researcher to collect data based on the sample size with the purpose of drawing conclusions about the entire population. Therefore, for this research study, a sample size of two hundred (200) respondents will be selected from individuals in the Nelson Mandela Bay area who use Facebook as a means to conduct online travel information searches.  The sample size of 200 is used because it is a large enough sample for reliable data results and is a roughly more authentic sample size, additionally there was no sample frame available as a result of the nature of the study.

### 3.2.1.2. b Sampling Technique

There are various sampling techniques that are available for use for research. For this study, the convenience sampling method will be used. In most type of research, it would

be futile to try and use the whole population, but in many cases, it is not possible to include every subject, because the population is almost infinite (Etikan, 2016:2).

Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where individuals of the target population, that meet practical criteria, practical criteria such as easy accessibility, geographical location, availability at a certain time or the willingness to participate are included for the study (Etikan, 2016: 2). Convenience samples can also be considered as accidental samples, because elements may be selected in the sample simply as they just happen to be situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection (Etikan, 2016:2).

The main objective of this convenience sampling is to collect information from participants who are easily accessible to the researcher. The main assumption associated with convenience sampling is that the members of the target population are homogeneous (Etikan, 2016:2). That is, that there would be no difference in the research results obtained from a random sample, a nearby sample or a sample gathered in some part of the population that is inaccessible (Etikan, 2016:2). The obvious and unfortunate disadvantage of convenience sampling is that it is likely to be biased.

The participants of this sample will at large be heterogeneous individuals. Maximum variation sampling under the guise of convenience sampling will seek to provide a wide range of respondents to complete the questionnaires (Etikan, 2016:2). Maximum variation sampling is a method that is made up of a sample that contains extremes, this is to achieve the most varied responses and the main reason for this is to understand how different individuals view certain topics (Etikan, 2016). The main objective behind maximum variation sampling is to assess a certain subject from all its angles, thereby achieving a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Etikan, 2016:2).

It involves choosing candidates across a broad spectrum that relates to the subject matter of the study and for this particular investigation, this is the presence on the platform of and use of Facebook (Etikan, 2016:2).

The researchers of this study will distribute questionnaires to individuals who are willing to fill it out, are available at a certain time and are in the nearest geographic proximity.

The entire sample will consist of Facebook users who use Facebook for travel information search as a basic requirement of the study and questionnaire then followed by the above-mentioned characteristics of respondents of a convenience sampling technique.

For this study, non-probability sampling will be used and the basis of selection will be based on convenience. The sample will be made up of individuals in Port Elizabeth that use the social network, Facebook, for online travel information search and are over the age of 18.Once the sample has been drawn, a research instrument is required and will be developed. More information and detail about the instrument will be given in the following section.

### 3.2.1.2. c Research Instrument

A seven-point-Likert-scale, self-administered questionnaire will be used as the research instrument. The questionnaire will have questions focused on and based the factors in the Technology Acceptance Model, discussed in the second chapter. To acquire the best quality information possible in the most convenient way, for this quantitative research, one open ended question and a set of closed ended questions will be part of the entire questionnaire set. The open-ended question asks respondents how often they use Facebook, on average, for travel information search every month. To understand the types of questions that will be asked, the distinction between open and closed ended questions must be made clear. Open-ended questions are used by researchers in paper and web surveys and can be put into three categories, which are; numerical entry, list of items and descriptive open-ended questions (Chaudhary & Israel, 2016:140). Among all three if these categories, descriptive questions can be used to receive the most detailed and copious amounts of information about the topic (Chaudhary & Israel, 2016:140). These types of questions have the potential to produce rich and descriptive responses however, getting a high quality and a high item response rate may be a challenge (Chaudhary & Israel, 2016:140).

Conversely, closed-ended questions are a tool that provide respondents with a set number of responses to select their answer from and is made up of a question and a set of choices for their answers (Lavrakas, 2008). The set of answers available to the

respondent must fulfil two requirements, they must be exhaustive and mutually exclusive and in being mutually exclusive, no two responses choices may overlap in conceptual meaning (Lavrakas, 2008). In being exhaustive, the choices of answers must cover all logically possible answers to the question (Lavrakas, 2008).The most appropriate type of question for this study are closed-ended questions as the responses will be based on the 7-point Likert-scale, however one open ended question will be used to get information about the extent to which respondents use Facebook for travel search monthly, it will be a numerical entry open ended question.

The first section of the questionnaire will require respondents to answer questions of demographics such as race, gender and age, including the open ended numerical list question. This open ended question will seek to investigate the respondents average visits on the Facebook website for the purpose of travel information search. The following section will be based on the literature review section. The research instrument has to meet a certain criterion for it to be successful in the study of the topic. The questionnaire must meet the criteria of reliability and validity. Reliability is the ability of a measuring tool to measure attributes of a variable and produce the same results, consistently (Liobondo-Wood & Haber, 2014:290). Validity is the ability of a measuring tool to produce results accurately (Liobondo-Wood & Haber, 2014:290). An in-depth look at reliability shows that it is a measurement of consistency and predictability, this means that should the instrument qualify as reliable, and the answers therein will be consistent and predictable on repeated measures (Liobondo-Wood & Haber, 2014:298). These two concepts will have significant impact on the subsequent actions of the study and will thus lead to the analysis that will be captured by a valid and reliable research instrument.

### 3.2.2 Data Analysis

Once primary data have been collected, the data will be analysed using the appropriate methods, such as an exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach's Alpha to determine validity and reliability of the results. The data will be captured in Microsoft Excel and imported into the statistical program, Statistica, where further analysis will take place. Descriptive and exploratory statistics will be calculated based on the results and information.

Additionally, exploratory statistics will be used to test the research hypothesis of the study.

## 3.3 Summary

A non-probability, convenience sampling technique will be used for this study. As such, quantitative data will be sourced by means of a research instrument that is a questionnaire. Furthermore, detailed explanations of research design, data collection (primary data with regards to the population and sample) and secondary data collection have been discussed. In addition, the details of the demographics of the sample were provided above as well as the qualifying element for individuals to be part of the sample. Primary data will be collected by the questionnaire and analysed through the Statistica application as mentioned. In the following Chapter Four, the empirical findings will be analysed and presented by way of following the research design.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter three of this research study described the research design and methodology as well as sampling techniques and the way the study was undertaken, thus the following chapter 4 will delve into a detailed sample description that will deal with the respondents much more specifically. The empirical findings will expand on the correspondence between literature discussed in chapter 2 and the research instruments results.

The results were imported into the Statistica application tool and analysed through an Exploratory Factor Analysis.. It was found that the measurement of the results in the Factor Analysis proved the results as not valid as the factor loadings mostly loaded under the first factor which means that the items of the study are quite correlated. The items or the interpretation of the items by the respondents are very similar.

**4.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION**

The sample size of the study that was engaged is sample of 200 respondents. The respondents were chosen based on convenience; however they were required to fulfil the condition of having a Facebook account in order to be able to complete the questionnaire appropriately and in the relevant manner.

**4.2.1 Demographic information of respondents**

When compared with the demographic information of Facebook users worldwide, it was found that from a global perspective more males use Facebook as opposed to females as previously mentioned in chapter one. Specifically, 43% of women use Facebook compared to 57% of men, and young individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 use Facebook the most, whereas individuals aged 65 were identified as the least frequent users of Facebook. Table 4.1 below summarises the gender-related demographic information of the sample population for this study. The specific demographics of the sample are as follows; there are 103 female respondents and 97 male respondents, indicating a difference with regards to the global perspective of male and female Facebook usage.

**Table 4.1 Gender**

| GENDER | NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS |
|---|---|
| Female | 103 |
| Male | 97 |
| Total | 200 |

The age demographic of the sample shows a majority of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 30 with 116 of them represented in the sample followed by the age group that is 31 to 40 with the second largest representation in the sample with 52 respondents. In the other extreme end, the older generation 51 to 60 and 60+ each have 2 and 4 respondents respectively. This may result from younger people and fewer older people were asked to complete the survey.

The majority of respondents are well represented by the more youthful individuals, with 116 respondents being between the ages of 18 to 30. This shows a much higher rate of young users of Facebook and thus confirmed one of the presumptions of the researchers before the study began, which was that majority of respondents would be of a much younger generation. However, these results are only from a sample of 200 respondents and may need to be received cautiously as a representation of the worldwide Facebook population. From a global perspective, there is a link in terms of younger individuals using Facebook more than the older generation when the age distribution of the sample size of this study is compared to global statistics.

**Table 4.2 Age**

| AGE | NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS |
|---|---|
| 18 to 30 | 116 |
| 31 to 40 | 52 |
| 41 to 50 | 26 |
| 51 to 60 | 2 |
| 60+ | 4 |
| Total | 200 |

It was a major concern when investigating the demographics of the sample to ensure that there was no bias when selecting the different individuals to complete the survey, more especially since a convenience sampling technique was used. Undercoverage occurs when the whole target population is not represented in the sample frame. In order to avoid selection bias in the representative sample, the study attempted to include every type of respondent into the demographic in order to do away with this bias, especially with age sensitive studies that include technology usage and this is sensitive between younger and older users of technology. From a global perspective, according to .: ("Distribution of Facebook users worldwide as of October 2018 by age and gender,") people in the age range of 25 to 34 are the most prevalent users of Facebook, whereas people who are 65 years of age or older are the least prevalent users.

**Table 4.3 Ethnicity**

| ETHNICITY | NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS |
|---|---|
| Asian | 16 |
| Black | 91 |
| Coloured | 36 |
| White | 46 |
| Other | 11 |
| Total | 200 |

The above table 4.3 shows the spread of racial demographics of the respondents in the study. The Asian race is represented as being 8% of the sample, the Black population is represented as being 45.5% of the sample, the coloured population is represented as being 18% of the sample, the White population is represented as being 23% of the sample, and the other races are the least in number with being 5.5% of the sample. The majority of the population sample is represented by black individuals followed by white individuals and then the coloured individuals and finally the Asian and other races representing the least amount.

These statistics are only closely linked with general population through their representing values but not in the specific percentages, meaning that the majority of the greater population is indeed black but not majority by 45%. Also, the Asian category and Other ethnicity category produced the lowest number of respondents from the sample population. To an extent, this general population of 200 respondents of which 133 are users of Facebook, and 67 are non-users, is well represented in value and contemporary relevance. This aspect of the research was also a concern for the study when it was undertaken as it would be crucial to get as close to the real demographics of the greater population in order to remain as accurate as possible in the sample study so as to not investigate and report skewed and irrelevant results that do not engage the greater population as a whole.

**Table 4.4 Average Monthly usage of Facebook**

| Average Usage of Facebook for Travel Info Search[monthly] | 3.47 |
|---|---|
| Zero Usage | 67 |
| 3-6 times usage | 122 |
| 7-10 times usage | 11 |
| 11+ Usage | 0 |
| Total | 200 |

The above data that was collected is from 200 respondents, however for the investigation and reporting of the average results there were 133 users of Facebook and 67 non users of Facebook, with the 67 non users stating they used Facebook for travel information search 0 times. The unusable data is highlighted in red.

Furthermore, table 4.4 above shows the average usage per month of Facebook to research travel information search. The overall average of the results of the 133 respondents that use Facebook for travel search is 3.47. On average the population sample uses Facebook to research travel information 3.47 times per month. However, more interestingly, the outliers show higher results. The outliers that are between the usage of 3-6 times per month in the sample are 122. That means that 122 of the 133

respondents use Facebook to research travel information more than 3 times but less than 7 times per month, which is a relatively high number of respondents.

There were even higher outliers in the data, some 11 individuals stated their average times to be between 7 and 10 per month of using Facebook for travel information search. There were no respondents that reported that they use the social networking site for travel information search higher than 11times per month on average.

The number of users that did not use Facebook at all, with a score of 0 is 67 in the sample that is a representation of 33.5% in the sample population. This shows that there is a minority out of this sample data that do not use Facebook as a tool for travel information search. However, conversely there are 133 out of 200 respondents that do use Facebook as a tool for travel information search and that is a 66.5% confirmation in the sample population. This also means that 8.27% of respondents use Facebook 7-10 times per month on average to search for travel information and then within that 66.5%, 60.99% of respondents use Facebook 3-6 times per month on average.

Given the number of users that do not use Facebook for travel search these statistics suggest that a good majority of respondents in this sample use Facebook for travel information search and that could have a swaying effect on the study question of social media having a role in online travel information search.

**Graph 4.1 Distribution of Facebook users worldwide (as of October 2018)**
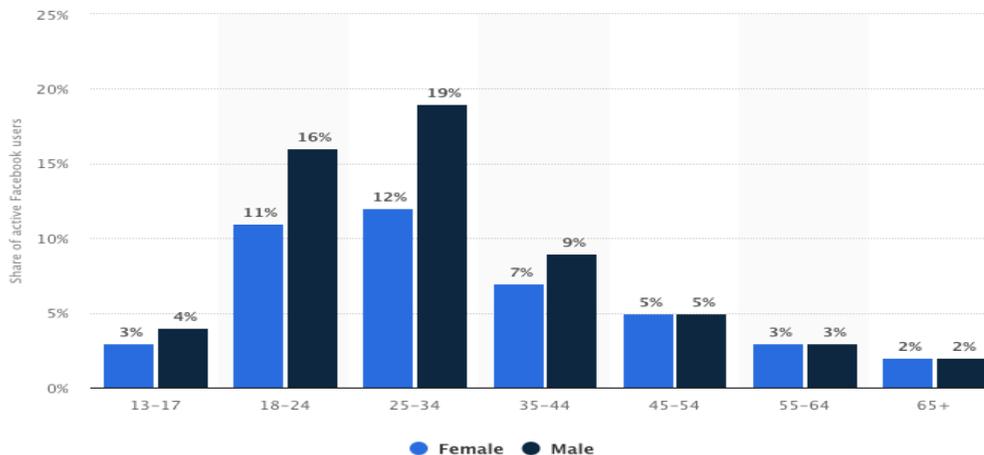
The above graph obtained from .: ("Distribution of Facebook users worldwide, as of October 2018 by age and gender,") indicates the distribution of active Facebook users worldwide, grouped together according to age group and gender. Furthermore, the above graph shows males between the ages of 25 to 34 are the most frequent users of Facebook (19%), followed by males aged between 18 to 24 (16%). Individuals who are 65 years of age or older use Facebook the least, as indicated in graph 4,1 above with 2% for both males and females.

## 4.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The prime objective of this research study is to conduct an exploratory study (not an inferential study) to determine differences between users of Facebook and non-users of Facebook who search for travel information on this social networking site. Furthermore, the study was also conducted to determine whether social media platforms do in fact have a role in online travel information search and if they do the extent of influence social media has on online travel information search.

As a starting point, the averages of users who conduct travel research on Facebook, and non-users who do not use Facebook at all to search for travel information were conducted using Statistica, an advanced analytics software package. The dependent variable was social media consumption (CON1 to CON6), and the factors were perceived enjoyment (PE1 to PE7), perceived ease of use (PEOU1 to PEOU7), perceived usefulness (PU1 to PU7) and lastly trust (T1 to T7). Within these averages, outliers i.e. observation points that are distant from other observations would serve the purpose of identifying the extreme results that are far from the average. The means and standard deviations are presented respectively in table 4.5.

### 4.3.1.1 Means and standard deviations: Users of Facebook and Non-users of Facebook

The data used in order to derive these averages was obtained from the data capture excel spreadsheet containing information on all the research instrument statements answered by the 200 respondents, and essentially dividing this data into respondents who use Facebook for travel-information related purposes, and those who do not use Facebook for this purpose at all. In addition, the averages were seperately identified and

compiled for the two groups of data (users and non-users of Facebook) by conducting simple, basic descriptive statistics for the dependent variable and each factor used in order to form the four-factor model for this research study, namely social media consumption as the dependent variable (CON1 to CON6), perceived enjoyment (PE1 to PE7), perceived ease of use (PEOU1 to PEOU7), perceived usefulness (PU1 to PU7) and lastly trust (T1 to T7).

Based on this data, it was found that for users of Facebook only, the majority of respondents clustered around 2, represented by the "strongly agree" scale in the research instrument. Scores for users of Facebook to conduct travel search mainly fell in the range of 2.60 to 2.90. Furthermore, it was also found that scores for PE4 and PE5 did not fall in the range 2.60 to 2.90, but rather indicated higher scores of 3.11 and 3.00 respectively. These scores can therefore be considered to be outliers since they lie outside of the average range associated with users of Facebook.

In addition, the scores of each factor with regards to the average number of respondents who use Facebook for travel search can be summarised as follows; social media consumption indicated an average of 2.81, perceived enjoyment 2.86, perceived ease of use 2.79, perceived usefulness 2.83 and lastly trust 2.80. Based on these averages, the 133 respondents who are users of Facebook and conduct online travel information search on Facebook agree with the statements highlighted in the research instrument since the results cluster more closely to 3.

Based on the data contained in table 4.5 the means for non-users of Facebook indicate that in terms of social media consumption, perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and trust, respondents clustered around scores above 4 which is identified by the "neither agree nor disagree" scale in the research instrument.

The average scores of each factor with regards to the average number of respondents who do not use Facebook to conduct travel research can be summarised as follows; Social media consumption (CON1 to CON6) 4.15, perceived enjoyment (PE1 to PE7) 4.08, perceived ease of use (PEOU1 to PEOU7) 3.96, perceived usefulness (PU1 to PU7) 4.15 and lastly trust (T1 to T7) 4.18. Only the perceived ease of use factor produced a score below 4 (3.96), indicated by the "agree" scale in the research

instrument. Reasons for this may be that respondents felt that they agree with statements relating to Facebook's perceived ease of use from a general point of view, but since these respondents do not use Facebook for the purpose of specifically conducting travel search, they neither agree nor disagree when it comes to the other factors having an influence on travel search on Facebook because these factors do not affect their use of Facebook in such a case.

Some of the items for the factors in table 4.6 below produce results that do not fall within the average range. These results are outliers, representing observation points that are distant from other observations. For dependent variable (CON), outliers identified for non-users of Facebook were CON3 (3.85) and CON 4 (3.98). In terms of perceived enjoyment, outliers were PE3 (3.89) and PE6 (3.71), and for perceived ease of use outliers were identified for PEOU5 3.71, PEOU6 (3.85) and PEOU7 (3.58). Lastly, no outliers were identified for perceived usefulness and only one was identified for trust (T4 3.88). These deviations from the average are genuine, but extreme values that have resulted from respondents' interpretation of the research instrument statements. In addition, since these respondents do not use Facebook for the purpose of conducting travel research, this may be another reason as to why non-users produced more outliers than users of Facebook.

**Table 4.5 Means: Users and non-users of Facebook**

| Descriptive Statistics (Spreadsheet2) | | | | | | Descriptive Statistics (Spreadsheet5) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Valid N | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | Std.Dev. | Variable | Valid N | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | Std.Dev. |
| CON1 | 133 | 2.699248 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.100860 | CON1 | 67 | 4.119403 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.482447 |
| CON2 | 133 | 2.864662 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.260002 | CON2 | 67 | 4.328358 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.682243 |
| CON3 | 133 | 2.721805 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 0.979745 | CON3 | 67 | 3.850746 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.448654 |
| CON4 | 133 | 2.706767 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.013410 | CON4 | 67 | 3.985075 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.408766 |
| CON5 | 133 | 2.932331 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.431229 | CON5 | 67 | 4.417910 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.538882 |
| CON6 | 133 | 2.947368 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.321820 | CON6 | 67 | 4.253731 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.428533 |
| PE1 | 133 | 2.766917 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.205337 | PE1 | 67 | 4.298507 | 2.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.435639 |
| PE2 | 133 | 2.691729 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.244262 | PE2 | 67 | 4.104478 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.426315 |
| PE3 | 133 | 2.849624 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.076584 | PE3 | 67 | 3.895522 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.415652 |
| PE4 | 133 | 3.112782 | 1.000000 | 5.000000 | 1.077695 | PE4 | 67 | 4.373134 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.357759 |
| PE5 | 133 | 3.007519 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.062417 | PE5 | 67 | 4.074627 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.520700 |
| PE6 | 133 | 2.879699 | 1.000000 | 5.000000 | 0.929627 | PE6 | 67 | 3.716418 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.584068 |
| PE7 | 133 | 2.759398 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.001139 | PE7 | 67 | 4.149254 | 2.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.351248 |
| PEOU1 | 133 | 2.849624 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.062417 | PEOU1 | 67 | 4.134328 | 2.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.358425 |
| PEOU2 | 133 | 2.842105 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 0.991189 | PEOU2 | 67 | 4.208955 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.365565 |
| PEOU3 | 133 | 2.872180 | 1.000000 | 5.000000 | 0.972450 | PEOU3 | 67 | 4.134328 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.444902 |
| PEOU4 | 133 | 2.751880 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.061774 | PEOU4 | 67 | 4.104478 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.404908 |
| PEOU5 | 133 | 2.699248 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.029747 | PEOU5 | 67 | 3.716418 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.545335 |
| PEOU6 | 133 | 2.819549 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 0.927971 | PEOU6 | 67 | 3.850746 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.373491 |
| PEOU7 | 133 | 2.714286 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.145290 | PEOU7 | 67 | 3.582090 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.457990 |
| PU1 | 133 | 2.774436 | 1.000000 | 5.000000 | 0.974031 | PU1 | 66 | 4.272727 | 2.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.183807 |
| PU2 | 133 | 2.842105 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.106743 | PU2 | 67 | 4.014925 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.532403 |
| PU3 | 133 | 2.879699 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.059142 | PU3 | 67 | 4.089552 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.400556 |
| PU4 | 133 | 2.804511 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.137905 | PU4 | 67 | 4.104478 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.447404 |
| PU5 | 133 | 2.879699 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.381905 | PU5 | 67 | 4.283582 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.464799 |
| PU6 | 133 | 2.939850 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.057150 | PU6 | 67 | 4.119403 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.512798 |
| PU7 | 133 | 2.744361 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.329469 | PU7 | 67 | 4.208955 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.419959 |
| T1 | 133 | 2.827068 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.118110 | T1 | 67 | 4.373134 | 2.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.084824 |
| T2 | 133 | 2.819549 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.006303 | T2 | 67 | 4.283582 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.390509 |
| T3 | 133 | 2.759398 | 1.000000 | 5.000000 | 1.081178 | T3 | 67 | 4.283582 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.368542 |
| T4 | 133 | 2.631579 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.111058 | T4 | 67 | 3.880597 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.451461 |
| T5 | 133 | 2.766917 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.260635 | T5 | 67 | 4.238806 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.338130 |
| T6 | 133 | 2.954887 | 1.000000 | 5.000000 | 0.886470 | T6 | 67 | 4.164179 | 2.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.188289 |
| T7 | 133 | 2.857143 | 1.000000 | 6.000000 | 1.067018 | T7 | 67 | 4.074627 | 1.000000 | 7.000000 | 1.329313 |

### 4.3.2 Factor loading interpretation

Based on results conducted through data analysis using Statistica, the factor loadings are quite correlated and as a result have caused all items to load on Factor one. A few items cross-load onto other factors, which presents a major problem with regards to interpretation of the data. In addition, this indicates those items or the interpretation of items by respondents are too similar in its wording, meaning or interpretation by respondents. As a result of items loading onto one Factor, the measuring instrument can be reported as being invalid. The measuring instrument used for this study did not display the necessary validity required and therefore the correlation analyses could not be conducted.  This is indicated in table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.6 Factor loadings**

| Variable | Factor Loadings (Unrotated) (Spreadsheet10 in Workbook3) Extraction: Principal components (Marked loadings are >.400000) | | | |
| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CON1 | -0.71579 | 0.171367 | 0.433131 | -0.342396 |
| CON2 | -0.75563 | -0.500574 | 0.021393 | 0.085310 |
| CON3 | -0.69201 | 0.423402 | 0.348093 | 0.110092 |
| CON4 | -0.74005 | 0.119557 | 0.360803 | -0.314221 |
| CON5 | -0.74450 | -0.554719 | 0.015934 | 0.059886 |
| CON6 | -0.77924 | 0.037049 | -0.312675 | -0.092994 |
| PE1 | -0.80849 | -0.073744 | -0.254262 | 0.004681 |
| PE2 | -0.80835 | -0.028187 | -0.257497 | -0.058315 |
| PE3 | -0.75685 | 0.016576 | -0.118342 | -0.037845 |
| PE4 | -0.77302 | -0.029071 | 0.037225 | 0.471298 |
| PE5 | -0.78526 | 0.113823 | -0.300770 | -0.087134 |
| PE6 | -0.65121 | 0.458319 | 0.225739 | 0.191595 |
| PE7 | -0.84907 | 0.031996 | 0.234581 | 0.009503 |
| PEOU1 | -0.78479 | -0.195523 | 0.205801 | -0.196715 |
| PEOU2 | -0.78018 | 0.222860 | 0.067416 | 0.313268 |
| PEOU3 | -0.75592 | 0.315935 | 0.105211 | 0.325486 |
| PEOU4 | -0.81486 | 0.004739 | -0.286245 | -0.041009 |
| PEOU5 | -0.69731 | 0.365608 | -0.093885 | -0.386611 |
| PEOU6 | -0.71559 | 0.320996 | 0.091842 | 0.168951 |
| PEOU7 | -0.65880 | 0.385119 | -0.165622 | -0.342874 |
| PU1 | -0.82984 | -0.076081 | 0.289851 | -0.096798 |
| PU2 | -0.80756 | 0.142228 | -0.259306 | -0.042210 |
| PU3 | -0.81725 | 0.148007 | -0.015848 | 0.172653 |
| PU4 | -0.81139 | 0.088961 | -0.326325 | -0.058407 |
| PU5 | -0.78099 | -0.227175 | -0.257722 | 0.162648 |
| PU6 | -0.84734 | 0.112214 | -0.246705 | -0.099629 |
| PU7 | -0.80627 | -0.430460 | 0.131239 | -0.003734 |
| T1 | -0.79609 | -0.104249 | 0.282859 | -0.125712 |
| T2 | -0.79790 | -0.077213 | -0.253118 | 0.096007 |
| T3 | -0.81618 | -0.218398 | 0.220588 | -0.147802 |
| T4 | -0.72216 | -0.423381 | 0.119174 | -0.078972 |
| T5 | -0.80861 | -0.427132 | 0.104739 | -0.017416 |
| T6 | -0.77260 | 0.050691 | 0.184018 | 0.372690 |
| T7 | -0.84974 | 0.062892 | -0.181698 | -0.013622 |
| Expl.Var | 20.47866 | 2.324814 | 1.752091 | 1.332259 |
| Prp.Totl | 0.60231 | 0.068377 | 0.051532 | 0.039184 |

### 4.3.3 T-test data interpretation

Statistica was used in order to conduct multiple t-tests. T-tests are a type of statistical analysis used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups which may be related in certain features. Furthermore, t-tests look at the t-statistic, the t-distribution values and the degree of freedom to determine the probability of difference between two sets of data. This study utilised t-tests with the purpose of identifying major differences for each item of each factor, and data from both users as well as non-users of Facebook was used to conduct the t-test analyses.

**Table 4.7 Perceived Enjoyment t-test results**

| | Users | | | | Non-Users | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | P | DF | T-Value | | P | DF | T-Value |
| PE1 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,94541 | PE1 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,945406 |
| PE2 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,21080 | PE2 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,210795 |
| PE3 | 0.000000 | 198 | -5,81633 | PE3 | 0.000000 | 198 | 5,816329 |
| PE4 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,13875 | PE4 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,138752 |
| PE5 | 0.000000 | 198 | -5,77111 | PE5 | 0.000000 | 198 | 5,771114 |
| PE6 | 0.000005 | 198 | -4,69920 | PE6 | 0.000005 | 198 | 4,699201 |
| PE7 | 0.000000 | 198 | -8,21022 | PE7 | 0.000000 | 198 | 8,21022 |

**4.3.3.1 Perceived Enjoyment of Users and Non-users of Facebook for Travel Information**

PE1: based on this item, users of Facebook who conduct travel research on the site derive a high level of enjoyment from Facebook while searching for information. As indicated in table 4.7 above, the significance value for most items for perceived enjoyment of users of Facebook is 0.000000 which indicates a high level of statistical significance and difference between users of Facebook and non-users.

PE2: the layout of Facebook's website highly stimulates user experience when searching for travel information, enabling them to enjoy their research experience.

PE3: enjoyment plays a major significant role to users of Facebook who use the social networking site to search for travel information.

PE4 and PE5: Since users utilise Facebook with the intention of researching travel information, they are satisfied with the information they obtain because they find using Facebook to be highly enjoyable while conducting travel-related research, as shown by both PE4 and PE5 which indicate a significance value of 0.000000 (highly significant difference).

PE6: based on the significance result of 0.00005 using Facebook to conduct travel research does not highly stimulate a prospective traveller's curiosity, indicating that alternative travel search methods may stimulate their curiosity to a higher degree.

PE7: Travellers perceive Facebook to be convenient when researching travel information as a result of the internet being easily accessible, as well as due to the large amount of information available to them since Facebook contains large amounts of user-generated content.

With regards to perceived enjoyment of non-users of Facebook for travel information, based on the significance the Perceived Enjoyment as a whole group of items, the results suggest that non-users of Facebook for travel information search selected the option "neither agree nor disagree" mainly, indicating that they are neutral and undecided in terms of the level of perceived enjoyment they derive from Facebook. Non-users also do not enjoy the layout and do not believe that the website stimulates their experience when searching for travel information [PE2]. Enjoyment is important for non-users and the results show that they do not experience this when using the site, additionally convenience and the stimulation of curiosity are all lacking for non-users when using the site [PE3, PE4, PE5, PE6, PE7]. Thus, based on the above analysis of the results, the non-users group has justified their non-use of Facebook for travel information search through the first aspect of enjoyment, they do not use Facebook for travel information search because they do not enjoy using Facebook for that purpose and it does not stimulate them.

**Table 4.8 Perceived Ease of Use t-test results**

| | Users | | | | Non-Users | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | P | DF | T-Value | | P | DF | T-Value |
| PEOU1 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,33285 | PEOU1 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,332851 |
| PEOU2 | 0.000000 | 198 | -8,07511 | PEOU2 | 0.000000 | 198 | 8,075111 |
| PEOU3 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,31524 | PEOU3 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,315243 |
| PEOU4 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,60474 | PEOU4 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,604745 |
| PEOU5 | 0.000000 | 198 | -5,53823 | PEOU5 | 0.000000 | 198 | 5,538231 |
| PEOU6 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,27586 | PEOU6 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,275857 |
| PEOU7 | 0.000007 | 198 | -4,60388 | PEOU7 | 0.000007 | 198 | 4,603882 |

**4.3.3.2 Perceived Ease of Use of Users and Non-users of Facebook for Travel Information**

PEOU1: users feel that Facebook is simple and straightforward to use when they conduct travel research, therefore the simplicity of the site greatly enhances their research experience. This is shown in the significance values of 0.000000 for PEOU1 to PEOU6, with PEOU7 being the exception.

PEOU2: users of Facebook perceive their interaction with the website to be extremely clear and understandable while searching for travel information, therefore they experience little to no difficulty in using Facebook to search for travel information.

PEOU3: due to Facebook's simplicity, users feel that they can become highly skilled at using Facebook for the purpose of finding relevant travel information they are looking for.

PEOU4 and PEOU5: users find their interaction with Facebook to be very simple when finding various types of travel information, therefore as a result users also believe that learning to operate Facebook would prove to be a relatively easy task.

PEOU6: user interaction of Facebook is perceived to be highly significant in relation to users finding travel information that is relevant to the destination they want to travel to.

PEOU7: users feel that navigating through the Facebook website is not highly significant, as presented by the significance value of 0.000007.

In terms of perceived ease of use of non-users of Facebook for travel information, non-users generally do not find Facebook easy to use when researching travel information. However, more specifically, non-users do not find Facebook simple to use, they don't feel that their interactions are clear and understandable and thus they do not believe that they could easily become skilful at using Facebook for searching for travel information [PEOU1, PEOU2. PEOU3, PEOU4]. Furthermore, non-users do not find learning to operate Facebook for travel search purposes would be easy, also more importantly their navigation and interaction is not easy for them and this is the non-users perception of Facebook and using it for travel information search [PEOU5, PEOU6 PEOU7], this being part of the reasons why they do not use Facebook for travel information search.

**Table 4.9 Perceived Usefulness t-test results**

|  | Users | | | | Non-Users | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | P | DF | T-Value |  | P | DF | T-Value |
| PU1 | 0.000000 | 198 | -9,24338 | PU1 | 0.000000 | 198 | 9,243381 |
| PU2 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,19027 | PU2 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,190265 |
| PU3 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,82107 | PU3 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,821067 |
| PU4 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,94389 | PU4 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,943893 |
| PU5 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,64563 | PU5 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,645629 |
| PU6 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,41180 | PU6 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,411801 |
| PU7 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,18672 | PU7 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,186717 |

**4.3.3.3 Perceived Usefulness of Users and Non-users of Facebook for Travel Information**

PU1: users of Facebook find the website to be highly useful when they search for travel information, as indicated by the significance value of 0.000000 for each item of perceived usefulness.

PU2 and PU3: based on the significance results of these two items, users believe that using Facebook would highly improve their ability to search for travel information, and as a result of this improvement they would be able to save a lot of time through using

Facebook to search for travel information instead of alternative methods, since they are extremely proficient at searching for travel information on Facebook.

PU4: users of Facebook perceive the site to be highly significant and resourceful in providing them with relevant travel information.

PU5: Users of Facebook believe the site is a highly significant source of travel information because it is the first social networking site they refer to when searching for travel information.

PU6 and PU7: users of Facebook find the site to be highly helpful and significant with regards to them finding travel information relevant to their needs, therefore as a result users feel that using Facebook greatly improves their search results when conducting travel information search.

With regards to perceived usefulness of non-users of Facebook for travel information, the results of non-users are show that they do not find Facebook to be useful when conducting travel information search [PU1]. Non-users do not find Facebook to provide them with many resources when researching and it is not the first platform they access when wanting to do travel information search. The website does not improve their research and lastly, they do not believe that Facebook saves them time when searching for travel information [PU2, PU3, PU4, PU5]. When conducting research, it is efficient to have your research needs fulfilled, and non-users feel that this is not the case with the Facebook website and thus their search are not results are not improved by using Facebook [PU6, PU7]. Overall non-users do not perceive Facebook to be useful when conducting travel information search.

**Table 4.10 Trust t-test results**

| | Users | | | | Non-Users | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | P | DF | T-Value | | P | DF | T-Value |
| T1 | 0.000000 | 198 | -9,32136 | T1 | 0.000000 | 198 | 9,321361 |
| T2 | 0.000000 | 198 | -8,50703 | T2 | 0.000000 | 198 | 8,507026 |
| T3 | 0.000000 | 198 | -8,58744 | T3 | 0.000000 | 198 | 8,587444 |
| T4 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,75075 | T4 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,750745 |
| T5 | 0.000000 | 198 | -7,63396 | T5 | 0.000000 | 198 | 7,633955 |
| T6 | 0.000000 | 198 | -8,09400 | T6 | 0.000000 | 198 | 8,094003 |
| T7 | 0.000000 | 198 | -6,99938 | T7 | 0.000000 | 198 | 6,99938 |

**4.3.3.4 Trust of users and non-users of Facebook for Travel Information**

T1: Users of Facebook believe the site is highly significant in terms of providing accurate travel information, and this could potentially result in users continuously using the website to search for travel information.

T2: users also believe that the information they obtain on Facebook is uploaded and posted by trustworthy users, and this belief will lead them to continuously refer to the site.

T3: users' level of trust in Facebook is highly significant in that this high level of trust provides them with the motivation to continue to search for travel information on Facebook instead of using an alternative method.

T4: users of Facebook believe it is a highly significant source of obtaining travel information through other individuals' user-generated content.

T5, T6 and T7: based on significance results for these three items, users of Facebook perceive the travel information they obtain on the site to be highly reliable, credible and authentic. This directly causes them to refer to Facebook as the first social networking site they utilise when conducting travel-related information research.

With regards to trust of non-users of Facebook for travel information, the significance results of trust provide some interesting insight on the relationship between non-users, trust and the Facebook website. [T1] Non-users do not trust that Facebook can provide them with accurate travel information, they also do not view that the related content is posted by trustworthy users [T2] which in turn does not give them the perception to browse the social media site for travel information with full confidence [T3]. One of the objectives of this study is to determine how the travel content on Facebook is perceived, whether that content is perceived as reliable, credible and authentic. Non-users based on the results do not perceive that content to be that way as the significance of this group is the opposite of the users, thus non-users do not use Facebook for travel information search because they do not trust the website, its users or users who post travel information [T4, T5, T6, T7].

## 4.3.4 SOCIAL MEDIA CONSUMPTION (CON) LITERATURE CORRESPONDENCE

In terms of social media consumption, the majority of the respondents did fall mainly within two of the five options under the age demographic, namely the age ranges 18-30 and 31-40. This indicates a close resemblance to what was discussed and stated in the literature review section i.e. the transition of users from MySpace to Facebook can be attributed to the multi-generational and multi-functional nature of Facebook, as well as the Facebook site having an average range of users in the 18-44 age-range according to McNeil (2012:1).

## 4.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the sample description has been analysed in relation to demographic factors such as gender, age and ethnicity. The empirical findings were done and encompass the means and standard deviations of Facebook users and non-users, a factor loading interpretation was analysed, and t-test results for both users of Facebook and non-users were analysed extensively and in detail.

In the next chapter (chapter five), main findings from the literature review, main findings from the empirical section from chapter four, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed in detail. Furthermore, shortcomings of the research, future research ideas and self reflection will also be identified and discussed.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, various research objectives, design and the main findings from both the literature and empirical investigation will be presented. Summary and conclusion of the study will be discussed. Practical and realistic recommendations will be presented. The evident as well as shortcomings of the research study will be shown, as well stating what future research can be possible based on what has been done in this investigation.

## 5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

### 5.2.1 Primary objective

With regards to this study, the main objective is to conduct an exploratory study, as well as investigate any differences that may arise between users and non-users who search for travel information on Facebook. In addition, this study aims to determine whether social media platforms do in fact have a role in online travel information search and if they do, examine the level of influence social media has on online travel information search.

### 5.2.2 Secondary objectives

In terms of secondary objectives, this study, investigates the extent to which online travel information is believed to be trustworthy in the minds of users searching for this information. In addition, this study also seeks to investigate how social media can impact demographic variables such as age, gender and race with regards to online users of travel information search. Lastly to investigate the role that trust plays in using Facebook for online travel search.

### 5.2.3 Methodological objectives

- To carry out  a literature review on the major components relating this study with regards to how Facebook is used by people to conduct travel information search
- To develop a model that incorporates the information presented on Facebook, including the factors that influence social media consumption in terms of the

decision-making behaviour of people who search for travel information on Facebook.

- To create a suitable measuring instrument that will be used to empirically test the data collected from the sample of respondents

- To present conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

## 5.2.4 Research questions

The research questions in relation to this study will be as follows:

- To what degree do users and non-users of Facebook discern the information presented on the site to be trustworthy in terms of conducting online travel information search?

- In what manner does the perceived usefulness of Facebook affect users and non-users' decision to conduct travel search using Facebook?

- Taking perceived ease of use into account to what degree is the information not only easily accessible, but also relevant to the user? ,

- To what extent does perceived enjoyment of Facebook affect individuals' decision-making to conduct travel search using the site?

## 5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

As reported by Thomas (2010:292) a research paradigm is described and explained as an all-inclusive system that comprises of interconnected practices and thinking which explain the nature of enquiry with regards to the three major recess processes, namely ontology, epistemology and methodology. Moreover, research paradigms can be distinguished between two major themes, namely positivism which is quantitative in nature and deals with facts, and also argues reality is based on what is available to the five senses and that inquiry must focus on scientific observation. Interpretivism and inquiry must be based on scientific observation as well as deal with facts. Interpretivism is qualitative in nature and deals with actions of an individual (Thomas, 2010:295). In relation to this study, a positivistic research paradigm utilised alongside a quantitative research methodology will be carried out because as a result of the nature of our study, it will require collecting and analysing primary data from a sample size selected from the

population of people who search for travel information online using the Facebook social networking site in the city of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. In addition, a descriptive research approach will be utilised.

Furthermore, non-probability sampling applied through the convenience sampling technique will be used, and a survey questionnaire will serve as the primary method used to collect data from respondents. In order to attain and reach the objectives of this research study, primary and secondary research will be conducted.

### 5.3.1 Literature review (secondary research)

An extensive literature search will be carried out to determine as many factors as possible that could positively or negatively impact the success of the role social media has with regards to users of social media conducting travel information search online. Furthermore, international and national data search will be done through the use of Google Scholar, Google Books as well as past dissertation papers and the Nelson Mandela University library. Lastly, additional data will be accessed through international and national libraries by means of the inter-library loan facilities available at Nelson Mandela University. As far as can be determined, there has been no similar research study previously undertaken in South Africa.

### 5.3.2 Empirical investigation (primary research)

As previously mentioned, a positivistic research paradigm will be adopted, and the theoretical model emphasised in chapter two of this research study will be tested by carrying out a large-scale empirical study.

### 5.4 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section of this research study set out to provide relevant knowledge and information regarding the role social media plays in terms of individuals conducting online travel information search. In addition, the study set out to answer the following research questions:

- To what degree do users and non-users of Facebook discern the information presented on the site to be trustworthy in terms of conducting online travel information search?

- In what manner does the perceived usefulness of Facebook affect users and non-users' decision to conduct travel search using Facebook?

- Taking perceived ease of use into account to what degree is the information not only easily accessible, but also relevant to the user? ,

- To what extent does perceived enjoyment of Facebook affect individuals' decision-making to conduct travel search using the site?

Therefore based on these questions, including the research objectives of the research study, the main findings from each section of the literature review are discussed below.

### 5.4.1 E-business

The main objective of this study was to conduct exploratory research for the purpose of investigating differences between users and non-users who conduct online travel information search. This study also sought out to determine whether social media platforms do in fact have a role in online travel information search and if they do the extent of influence social media has on online travel information search. From an e-business perspective, it was found that e-business has proven to be a revolutionary catalyst that enables more efficient services to be provided by a company to customers and clients. In addition, e-business utilises and integrates internet technologies to redesign business processes in ways that will enable companies to achieve enhanced competitive advantage. Therefore businesses that utilise Facebook in order to advertise, promote and provide travel-related information are providing a service that can essentially respond to any fluctuations or negative impacts in real time i.e. as the events occur.

E-business has also created an entirely new economy that is changing the way in which businesses conduct transactions. This is evident in the wide array of goods and services that can be purchased online over the internet,  which have made buying goods online not only an increasingly attractive option, but also more convenient for consumers all over the world who have access to the internet.

Furthermore, the global reach of the internet has proven to be advantageous for all companies who utilise the internet in order to, for example provide transparent access to

consumers so they can conduct transactions or enquire about a product or service provided by a company at any time of the day, and from any location in the world.

## 5.4.2 E-Commerce

In terms of e-commerce, websites have become extremely effective for businesses to conduct online transactions. Websites are advantageous in terms of marketing a company's product or service, and also serve as effective and efficient branding platforms with the aim of reaching a broader range of customers through distinctive marketing campaigns and advertisements carried out on certain sites. Another main finding was that the Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) feature allows hotels to place advertisements on Facebook and create Facebook pages that provide prospective customers with all of the necessary information an individual would require about the business such as types of rooms available, price and security features. These Facebook pages also have rating scales that enable previous travelers to a certain hotel to rate the service of a business; therefore individuals can view other people's ratings and decide for themselves whether they want to proceed with travelling to a certain destination.

## 5.4.3 E-Marketing

In terms of the main findings of the literature review in relation to e-marketing, it was found that due to the rapid developments in web-based and internet technologies, traditional marketing methods are increasingly becoming less effective when compared to digital marketing methods. Furthermore, the way in which companies conduct business has drastically changed and these changes can be attributed to the emergence and rise of the World Wide Web and internet-based technologies, therefore it was found that it is imperative for businesses in the 21st century to utilise online digital methods of marketing and promotion with the aim of attracting as well as interacting with a broader consumer base.

Mass customisation is a major contributing factor to the dominance of digital marketing, enabling customers to purchase unique products at an affordable price when, where and how they want these products. Moreover, mass customisation also allows customers to apply their own modifications to a company's product line. There is no limit to the reach of customers a company can potentially have in a particular target market and a

company can optimise this advantage in order attract customers in untapped markets, in the process increasing their sales and profits. Secondly, due to the nature of the internet, consumers are provided the opportunity to first conduct research on a product, then decide whether they would like to purchase the product or not at the click of a button. This is convenient and time-efficient in that consumers do not physically have to travel to a store to view and purchase a product. E-marketing also enhances customers' interactivity capabilities.

### 5.4.4 Trust

The research questions formed in relation to this study pose questions relating to the authenticity of the information presented online, whether the public nature of Facebook compromises the validity of the platform and how easily accessible the information presented online is to the customer. With that being said, by conducting an extensive literature search it was found that since privacy issues arise from conducting online transactions between a company and consumer, trust is an important element that needs to be established in order for consumers to feel a certain level of safety that will enable them to conduct online transactions on a regular basis. It was found that social media content is in most cases prone to containing unverified information, misinterpretations as well as fabricated content. Furthermore, a large majority of users experience difficulties in terms of distinguishing between information that is true or false on social networking sites.

Additionally, another main finding relating to trust is that trust is affected by factors such as the source of the information, history of the interaction with a certain source, as well as content characteristics. Furthermore, an important determinant of a user's trust in social media information is how a user processes and evaluates user-generated content, which can greatly affect a prospective traveler's decision to travel to a certain destination or not.

Furthermore, with regards to the research question 'does the public nature of social media platforms compromise the validity of a certain platform?' it was found in literature that a large majority of individuals value trust to be one of the most essential elements that they consider when conducting travel information search on Facebook. It was also

found that if individuals were skeptical in using Facebook to conduct travel search, they preferred to use other means such as researching travel websites or even resorting to using traditional methods (travel agents/agencies) since they placed a higher level of trust in these alternative methods of conducting online travel information search.

## 5.4.5 Evolution of the World Wide Web: Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

Web 2.0 i.e. the second generation of the web/internet was found to be a key turning point in the development of the internet in that the first generation of the web (web 1.0) was passive in nature, and was characterised by limited to no user interaction between individual users of a website. Web 2.0 capabilities now allow for users of social networking sites to view past experiences of travelers, share their own travel moments in the form of pictures and real-time videos, as well provide them with the ability to interact with other travellers/potential travellers about various destinations they have been to or would like to travel to. This type of interactivity would not have been possible while web 1.0 was still the dominant web technology.

## 5.4.6 Social media consumption

Secondary objectives of this research study were identified with the purpose of investigating the extent to which online travel information is perceived to be trustworthy in the minds of users of the information, and secondly to investigate how social media influences demographic variables with regards to online users of travel information search. Based on these secondary research objectives, the main findings from a social media consumption perspective are that due to the multi-generational and multi-functional nature of Facebook, the site appeals to a much broader age group that ranges from the ages of 18 to 45, and aims to bridge the generational gap between older users and younger users.

Furthermore, the customisation feature spearheaded by Facebook in its early days is a major contributing factor to the site's success and it was found that this feature is not only beneficial to individuals from a general everyday use point of view, but has also proven to be utilised extensively by business professionals and the corporate world. Major corporations from various types of industries have increasingly begun to use

social media in order to increase their marketing efforts, improve brand image and place advertisements on these platforms.

### 5.4.7 Technology Acceptance Model

With regards to the Technology Acceptance Model, it was found in literature that a user's motivation for using a particular system is affected and influenced by three determining factors, namely perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and the user's attitude toward using a particular system. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use have a major impact on the way in which a user utilises Facebook to conduct travel-related search. Furthermore, the more difficult users perceive the site to be (for example with regards to site navigation) and the more irrelevant users find information presented on the site to be, the more negative their attitude will be towards using the system.

In addition,, the behaviour of an individual in relation him or her accepting or rejecting the particular system in question is largely influenced by taking into consideration his or her prior intent, as well as the beliefs that the person would have for the given behaviour. A most influential predictor of the behaviour is the behavioural intention, while the influence of the attitude on the behaviour is mediated through the intention.

### 5.4.8 Perceived Enjoyment

With regards to perceived enjoyment, information from the literature indicated that intrinsic satisfaction received by the user from using a particular information technology system enhances the behaviour, as well as the intention behind the adoption of the particular system or technology. If a user of the system does not perceive the system to be enjoyable, then this user will not derive any enjoyment or satisfaction from the system's use, resulting in the user refraining from using this technology on a regular basis or not use it at all.

Secondly, the intention to make use of a satisfaction-centered system or technology is determined by the factor of enjoyment. Therefore, the more pleasure and satisfaction a user derives from using a particular technology, the more he or she will utilise the system because they perceive it to be enjoyable. The user will continuously make use of a social networking site such as Facebook if the site continues to successfully provide perceived enjoyment.

## 5.5 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The empirical findings are made up of the sample size of 200 individuals that received and completed the questionnaires. After analysing the questionnaires and capturing the respondents' answers into an excel spreadsheet, it was found that out of the 200 individuals, only 133 respondents actually used Facebook for the purpose of searching for online travel information, and 67 respondents did not use Facebook with the intention of searching for travel information.

Therefore, while conducting a data analysis of the 133 users of Facebook and 67 non-users, it was found that the average that was found of respondents using Facebook for travel search is 3.47 times per month. However, there were various outliers outside this average, such as 11 respondents stating they use Facebook 7-10 times per month on average. Within the results from the questionnaire, it was found that the averages of factors and their responses range from 3.18 to 3.27 which represents an "agree" in the questionnaire, scale and this means that on average respondents agreed with the questions and assumptions that were asked. There were also numerous outliers in the different factors, to provide some insight, the Perceived Ease of Use factor had 70 outliers that were placed in the strongly disagree and very strongly disagree scales of the questionnaire.  With regards to differences identified between users of Facebook and non-users, it was found that the majority of respondents clustered around 2, which indicates that they "strongly agree" with the statements provided in the research instrument. In addition, empirical findings found that users of Facebook fell within the range of 2.60 to 2.90. Interestingly, scores for the perceived enjoyment (PE) items of PE4 and PE5 produced scores of 3.11 and 3.00 respectively, and this indicates that for these two items, respondents did not strongly agree with the statements, but they opted to circle the "agree" option. Therefore, Pe4 and PE5 can be described as outliers for the perceived enjoyment factor in relation to users of Facebook who search for travel information on the site.

In terms of non-users of Facebook i.e. the individuals who do not use Facebook to search for travel information, it was found that the majority of these respondents clustered around 4, presented by the "neither agree nor disagree" option in the research

instrument. This suggests that individuals who do not use Facebook for the purpose of searching for travel information were mainly neutral or undecided as to whether social media does in fact have a role to play in terms of conducting online travel information search. Furthermore, it was also found that in relation to non-users of Facebook, more outliers were identified compared to users of Facebook. For example, the perceived enjoyment factor produced outliers of 3.89 (PE3) and 3.71 (PE6), whereas the trust factor produced an outlier of 3.88 for the item T4. Perceived ease of use produced outliers of 3.71 (PEOU5), 3.85 (PEOU6) and 3.58 (PEOU7). These outliers could have been due to respondents being able to relate with certain items in relation to the perceived enjoyment and trust of Facebook from a general point of view, but do not necessarily feel that these factors largely affect and influence their use of Facebook, more especially from a travel information search perspective.

When the Exploratory factor analysis was conducted in Statistica, it was found that the factor loadings were quite correlated and have mainly loaded under one factor, as indicated in table 4.7 of chapter 4. This phenomenon means that the measuring instrument had to be reported as invalid. This meant that the study had to take other measure within Statistica in order to analyse the data.

Furthermore, multiple t-tests were also conducted to investigate and examine differences between users of Facebook who search for travel information on the site, and non-users who do not search for travel information on Facebook. It was found that users of Facebook largely responded positively to the statements contained in the research instrument, and individual items for each factor namely perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and trust, largely produced significance values of P=0.000000 which is much lower than the cut-off point of 0.05. This indicates a high degree of statistical difference and significance between users and non-users of Facebook.

There is a statistically significant difference in means between users and non-users of Facebook, and based on these differences certain conclusions can be drawn between users and non-users of Facebook in relation to the four factors (perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and trust).

**5.6 CONCLUSIONS**

This study has sought to investigate the role played by social media, particularly Facebook and the influence it has on travel search. While exploratory in nature, this study offers various useful insights on the domain of online travel information search. More specifically the investigation confirms the increasing importance of social media in the online travel search sphere.

There is existing literature that focuses on usability and web aspect of this study, there is, however, very little that is known about users perceptions of the web based information, their opinions of it and the users experience with the technology and  that allows them to conduct online travel searches. By showing the consumers of information perception and their user experience on social media when conducting online travel information searches, this study attempts to bridge the gap between what exists in the literature and what the consumption of online travel information provides as insight to the investigation.

Thus, the role that social media plays in online travel information search can be ascertained, measured and reported, as accurately as possible. The literature findings of the study show Facebook to be a continuously growing and popular social network, including one for travel information searches as the tourism research industry evolves from traditional methods to more contemporary and modern approaches such as website and social networking sites in general, but specifically, Facebook. In response to the above mentioned perceptions of consumers toward online travel information, online travel marketers need to push their content toward consumers adequately in order to better service and reach their needs. Additionally online travel marketers need to understand the dynamic of the technology that is social media and how it can be used specifically to fit their content and market offering.

Various changes on the internet and social media have allowed for much easier content generation and this is beneficial for marketers, however can pose a number of threats for consumers as they are exposed to any type of content through the use of a social media platform as a search engine for travel information.

This study provides a preamble to the potentially turbulent relationship between the two providers and consumers of online travel information, online information that act as a representation of the tourism industry and the online consumers themselves. This relationship and its success poses a threat to the authenticity, credibility and validity of the perception of online consumers. The study revealed that trust is vital in the perception and mind of the consumers, thus it is imperative for travel information providers or content creators to be aware of this perception that consumers have and use it to tailor their information in way that reassures their potential customers. This is one of the various vital insights that the study revealed through the use of the research instrument, the questionnaire. This study highlighted the differences between users and non-users of Facebook for online travel information search.

The research instrument was tailored in order to investigate the users of Facebook, their opinions and responses in relation to online travel information search. The TAM model was adopted as a basis of the model of this research, however only two factors were considered. The TAM was chosen because it is a widely known and trusted model that has served the research community for years since its inception. The other factors in the model revolve around it and are well related to the study and its objectives.

The research instrument highlighted that demographically there were more females in partaking in the study than males, however global statistics suggest that the Facebook website has more males than females per age group as a whole. A notable difference in statistics between the sample and whole population. However were there was a similarity in the sample and population, the age group participation data.

The age group that is between 18 and 30 years old is the most in number of respondents in the study through the research instrument and that is also true with the global statistics of usage by people of that age group on Facebook in the global statistics. Online travel marketers should be wary of this fact that mostly younger consumers are consuming their travel content and should market it as such that it will appeal to the younger, majority of the demographic but not to exclude the older consumers simultaneously.

The study overall found that Facebook, representing social media, plays a large role in the online travel information search as it can be seen from the empirical data collected. The empirical showed that in general the factors that are incorporated in the model are all quite vital when dealing with Facebook to search for travel information. Respondents expressed that trust is important to them, ease of use as well, enjoyment is highly regarded among the users and usefulness also plays a major role in the perception of the users of online technology. Social media exists in numerous forms and fulfils various purposes.

## 5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Facebook clearly has a large following of users who use the platform for conducting travel information search. Thus, it would help them better serve their consumers if they ensured that the information that they are exposed to is authentic, credible and reliable. This would not only boost their current consumers' positive perception of the platform but also gain them new users. Facebook can go about doing this by removing and disabling phony accounts that post illegitimate material, they can verify and show confirmations of legit accounts that post relevant and truthful travel information consistently and this can be done through contacting the various account owners and conducting due diligence's with them. This process may take up significant resources and time but would be worth it against the benefit of more revenue, exposure and confidence from consumers especially if they know Facebook is taking these steps to protect them and ensure they are catered for.

An aspect that was found while conducting this research was the perspective of the providers of travel information on Facebook, whether it is businesses or individuals. The user generated content can be made to be more appealing through various stimulating and design focused strategies but the most important aspect of user generated content is its honesty. The owners of the content should only be allowing themselves to post truthful content that is not deceiving. Furthermore, they should ensure that the correct marketing is done to ensure a growth of the social media travel information consumer market, because according to the results in this study it is an untapped resource for

travel marketers, especially if a reliable system can be incorporated into the social media platform to protect both consumer and provider.

## 5.8 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE RESEARCH

This research study initially began with a sample size of 200 respondents, but could only make use of 133 of these respondents. This created a major limitation and challenge to the investigation since a smaller sample size affected the interpretation of the research study's results. Furthermore, a smaller sample size affected the statistical analysis of results, in the process producing unreliable results. While conducting empirical data analyses using Statistica, it was found that items loaded onto a single factor instead of all four factors of this research study. The cause of this was due to items or the interpretation of items by respondents being too similar (too similar in its wording, meaning or interpretation by respondents). There was also a lack of reliable data that placed a limit on the scope of the data analysis, as well the size of the sample for the purpose of conducting suitable data analyses. This proved to be a significant obstacle with regards to trying to find trends or meaningful relationships in the data, therefore an alternative method of analysing the data had to be conducted, for example reporting on averages and identifying any outliers.

Formulation of research aims and objectives was a limitation. The formulation of the research objectives for this study was initially too broad, and as a result the focus of the study was not clear and this also produced conflicting as well as remotely related ideas regarding the investigation of the research problem. In order to narrow down the focus of the study so that the objectives were more logical, the study was narrowed down from focusing on social media as a whole to specifically focusing on Facebook and how individuals conducted travel search specifically using Facebook.

## 5.9 FUTURE RESEARCH

With regards to future research being conducted in relation to the role of social media in online travel information search, an un-anticipated finding was identified that from conducting empirical investigations and analyses, 67 individuals did not use Facebook at all for the purpose of conducting online travel search. This may have been due to underlying reasons such as a lack of perceived enjoyment from the use of Facebook for

the purpose of conducting travel search, or from the lack of trust in the information being presented on Facebook because user-generated content may contain information that is not credible. Therefore future research into this study can be conducted by means of an extensive qualitative study for the purpose of determining why a group of individuals in a particular location are more accustomed to conducting travel-related search on social media platforms. This can be accomplished through formulating psychographic profiles on these individuals, and comparing the psychographic profiles of individuals more accustomed to using social media for travel-related purposes versus those who are not so accustomed to using Facebook for this purpose.

Additionally, future research into this study can be conducted by developing studies which introduce the technological profiles of respondents ( for example conducting interviews with persons of interest to find out how adept they are at using a particular technology or social media platform for the purpose of conducting travel-related information search) as a moderating variable, as well as conduct preliminary qualitative research that would allow for further refinement or revising of items used to measure the constructs that are not directly observable such as intelligence or motivation in relation to an individual conducting travel-information search on social media.

Furthermore, other studies can conduct interviews with information providers, travel consultants and tourism entrepreneurs to gain deeper insight. Additionally, this study was based only in the Port Elizabeth Area. Therefore, future studies can investigate the role of social media in online travel information search in different geographical regions.

## 5.10 SELF REFLECTION

From conducting this research study, we gained knowledge and skills regarding how to use Statistica in order to analyse data. We also learnt the importance of using the funnel technique in order to make research flow in a logical manner i.e. start broadly, then narrow the content down to your main area of focus. Thirdly, this research study has changed our perceptions with regards to how effective modern methods of conducting travel-related search are, and how developments in web-based technologies (web 1.0 to web 2.0) have contributed to the advancement of social media and its global dominance. With the vast amount of articles and journals we read when conducting this research, it

was vital to quickly learn the skill of disseminating large amounts of information and extrapolating the most relevant information to the study.

**List of sources**

A.Firat, K. Kutucuoglu, I.A. Saltik, O. Tuncel. 2013. Consumption, Consumer Culture and Consumer Society. Journal of Community Positive Practices, [Online]. 1, 182-203. Available at: 2247-6571 [

Abdollahi, G., Leimstoll U. 2011. A Classification for Business Model Types in Ecommerce. Association for Information Systems, [Online]. 8:6, 1-15. Available at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1154&context=amcis2011_submissio ns [Accessed 14 May 2018].

Adams, J., Khan, H., Raeside, R. 2014. *Research methods for business and social science students*. 2nd ed. India: SAGE publications India.

Ajzen, I., Fishbein, M. (1980). Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs.

Akram, M. S., & Albalawi, W. (2016). *Youth's Social Media Adoption: Theoretical Model and Empirical Evidence.* International Journal of Business Management, 11(2), 22-30.

Andam, Z.R.B. (2013). E-Commerce and E-Business. Manila, Phillipines.

Antwi, S., Hamza, K., 2015. Qualitative and quantitative research paradigms in business research: a philosophical reflection. *European journal of business and management*, 7 issue 3, 217-225.

at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304339244_Comparison_of_Convenience_ Sampling_and_Purposive_Sampling?enrichId=rgreq- bf5b0eb8e8f469cc5c068fabc91c640e- XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlOzMwNDMzOTI0NDtBUzo0NjAxNTcxODU0NjYzN jIAMTQ4NjcyMTQzMDYxNQ%3D%3D&el=1_x_3&_esc=publicationCoverPdf [Accessed 20 September 2018].

Ayeh, A., Au, N., Law, R. 2013. Do we believe in TripAdvisor? Examining credibility perceptions and online travelers' attitude toward using user-generated content. *Journal of travel research*, vol 52 issue 4, 437-452.

Ayeh, N. Au, R.Law. 2012. Perceptions and strategies of hospitality and tourism practitioners on social media: An exploratory study. *Journal of hotel and tourism management*, [Online]. 1, 1-12. Available at: [0.1007/978-3-7091-1142-0_1](#) [Accessed 18 July 2018

Azjen, I., Fishbein, M. 1980. Understanding attitudes and predicting social behaviour. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. Prentice-Hall.

Baker, K.R., White, K.M. 2011. In their own words: Why teenagers don't use social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, behaviour, and social networking*. 14 (6). pp 395-398.

Bartle, C., Avineri, E. And Chatterjee, K. 2013. Online Information Sharing: a qualitative analysis of community, trust and social influence amongst commuter cyclists in the UK. *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour,* 16. Pp. 60-72. ISSn 1369-8478 Available from: [http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk./17096](http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk./17096)

Batinić, I, 2015. THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF INTERNET MARKETING IN MODERN HOTEL INDUSTRY. Journal of Process Management, [Online]. 3:3, 34-38.

Bhalekar P., Ingle S., Pathak, K. 2018. THE STUDY OF E-COMMERCE. Asian Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology, [Online]. 4:3, 25-27. [Accessed 15 May 2018].

Bieger, T., Laesser, C. 2004. Information sources for travel decisions: towards a source process model. *Journal of travel research*. 42 (4). pp.357-371. ISSN 0047-2875

Bogdanovych,A., Berger, H., Simoff, S., Sierra, C. (2010). Travel Agents vs Online Booking: Tackling the Shortcomings of Nowadays Online Tourism Portals. Catalonia. Artificial Intelligence Research Institute.

Boyd, D. (2015). *Social Media: A Phenomenon to be analysed*. Social media and Society Journal (SAGE Journals). 48, 1-2.

Casero-Ripollés, A, 2017. Producing Political Content for Web 2.0: Empowering Citizens and Vulnerable Populations. El profesional de la información, 26:1, 13-19.

Chakravarthi, J. S. K., Gopal, V. (2012). Comparison of Traditional and Online Travel Services: A Concept Note. *IUP Journal of Business Strategy.*

Chaudhary, A K., Israel, G D., 2018. Influence of importance statements and box size on response rate and response quality of open-ended questions in web/mail mixed-mode surveys. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 31(3), 140-159.

Chu, S.C., Kim, Y. 2011. Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) in social networking sites. *International journal of advertising.* 30 (1). pp 47-75.

Chung, N., Han, H. 2017. The relationship among tourists' persuasion, attachment and behavioural changes in social media. *Technological forecasting and social change*, 123, 370-380.

Collis, J., & Hussey, R. 2014. *Business research: a practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students.* 1st ed. London United Kingdom: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Combe, C., 2012. *Introduction to e-business.* 1st ed. united kingdom: Routledge.

Daniel, J., 2011. *Sampling essentials: practical guidelines for making sampling choices.* California United States: SAGE.

Das, Lall, S.K., G.S., 2018. Traditional marketing VS digital marketing: An analysis. International Journal of Commerce and Management Research, [Online]. 2:8, 5-11. Available at: http://www.managejournal.com/archives/2016/vol2/issue8/2-7-24 [Accessed 15 May 2018].

Davis, F. 1989. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS quarterly.* 13 (3). pp 319-340. Management information systems research centre, University of Minnesota. United States of America.

Dehkordi, J., Rezvani, S., Rahman, M., Fouladivanda, F., Jouya, S. 2012. A Conceptual Study on E-marketing and Its Operation on Firm's Promotion and Understanding Customer's Response. International Journal of Business and Management, 7:19, 1-11.

Dewing, M. (2012). Social Media: An Introduction. Social Affairs division. Parliamentary Information and Research Service. 1.

Dhar, J., Jha, K. 2014. Analysing social media engagement and its effect on online product purchase decision behaviour. *Journal of human behaviour in the social environment*. 24 (7). pp 791-798.

Dixit, S., Sinha, A.K. 2016. E-retailing challenges and opportunities in the global marketplace. *Advances in e-business research*. 1st edition. United States of America. IGI Global.

Etikan, I.  2016. Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, [Online]. 5, 1-4. Available

Fathema, N., Shannon, D and Ross, M. 2015. Expanding the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to Examine Faculty Use of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) In Higher Education Institutions. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*,

Fodness, D., Murray, B. 1997. Tourist information search. *Annals of tourism research*. 24. Pp 503-523

Fotis J., Buhalis D., Rossides N. (2012) Social Media Use and Impact during the Holiday Travel Planning Process. In: Fuchs M., Ricci F., Cantoni L. (eds) Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2012. Springer, Vienna

Gamboa, A., Goncalves, H. 2014. Customer Loyalty through Social Networks: Lessons from Zara on Facebook. *Business Horizons Journal*, 57, 709-717.

Granic A., Marangunic N. (2015). Technology acceptance model: a literature review from 1986 to 2013. 1.

Gupta, M., Dubey, A. 2016. E-commerce- study of privacy, trust and security from consumer's perspective. *International journal of computer science and mobile computing*, 5 issue 6, 224-232.

Gursoy, D., McCleary, K.W. 2004. An integrative model of tourists' information search behaviour. *Annals of tourism research*. 31 (2). pp 353-373.

Hakansson, P, 2015. Social media and trust- a systematic literature review. *Journal of Business and Economics*, 6. 517-524.

Hamid, Razak, Bakar, Salihin, Abdullah, A, 2015. The Effects of Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use On Continuance Intention To Use E-Government. Procedia economics and finance, [Online]. 35, 644-649. Available at: i: 10.1016/S2212-5671(16)00079-4 [Accessed 18 July 2018].

http://www.inboundmarketingagents.com/inbound-marketing-agents-blog/bid/246005/Traditional-Marketing-vs-Inbound-Marketing-15-Shareable-Stats

Ismail, S., Latif, R. A. (2013). Authenticity Issues of Social Media: Credibility, Quality and Reality.International Journal of humanities and Social Sciences. 7(2).

Jacobsen, J. K. Munar A. M. 2012. Tourist Information Search and Destination Choice in a Digital Age. Tourism Management Perspectives, 7, 39-47.

Jager, K. (2014). Choosing between Travel agencies & the Internet. Department of Tourism Management. M140001 Dissertation.

Johnston, M, 2014. Secondary data analysis: a method of which the time has come. *Qualitative and quantitative methods in libraries (QQML)*, 3, 619-626.

Kaplan, A., Haenlein, M. 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons Journal*, 53 1, 59-68.

Kong, D. Dirks, K Ferrin, D, 2014. INTERPERSONAL TRUST WITHIN NEGOTIATIONS: METAANALYTIC EVIDENCE, CRITICAL CONTINGENCIES, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH. Academy of Management Journal, 57. 5, 1235-1255. Available at: ink.library.smu.edu.org [Accessed 18 July 2018].

Kunjur, P., Chhetri, B. 2015. Evolution of World Wide Web: Journey from Web 1.0 tto Web 4.0. Department of Computer Science. India.

Lange-Faria, W., Elliot, S. 2012. Understanding the role of social media in destination marketing. *An international multidisciplinary journal of tourism*. 7 (1). pp 193-211.

Lavrakas, P J, 2008. Closed-Ended QuestionS. *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*, [Online]. 1. Available at: http://methods.sagepub.com/reference/encyclopedia-of-survey-research-methods/n65.xml [Accessed 20 September 2018].

Lenhart, A., Madden, M. 2007. Teens, privacy, and online social networks: How teens manage their online identities and personal information in the age of MySpace.

Ljepava, N., Orr, R., Locke, S. And Ross, C. 2013. Personality and social characteristics of Facebook non users and frequent users. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, [ONLINE]. 29, 1602-1607. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257252965_Personality_and_social_characterstics_of_Facebook_non_users_and_frequent_users

LoBiondo-Wood, G., Haber, J., 2014. *Nursing Research: Methods and Critical Appraisal for Evidence Based Practice*. 8th ed. St. Louis, Missouri, United States of America: Elsevier Inc.

Malhotra, B, 2014. E-Business: Issues & Challenges in Indian Perspective. Global Journal of Business Management and Information Technology,

Manzoor, A., 2010. *E-commerce: an introduction*. 1st ed. united kingdom: Routledge.

McKenna, K.Y.A., Green, A.S. and Gleeson, M.E.J. 202. Relationship formation on the internet: what's the big attraction? *J-Soc.* 58, pp 9-31.

McNeil, A., 2012. How Facebook Beat MySpace. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0212/how-facebook-beat-myspace.aspx. [Accessed 16 May 2018].

Metzger, M., Flanagin, A. (2013). Credibility and trust of information in online environments: The use of cognitive heuristics. Santa Barbara CA: USA.

Mohamed, K. (2014). Benefits and Challenges of E-Marketing in the contemporary firms. London American City College. UAE. 1.

Montalvo, R.E. (2016). Social Media Management. *International Journal of Management & Information Systems.* USA. 20(2).

Moriset, B, 2018. E-Business and E-Commerce. International encyclopedia of human geography, 2, 1-5.

Nanehkaran, Y A. 2018. An Introduction to Electronic Commerce. International journal of scientific & technology.

Nayak, R., Padhye, R., Wang, L., Chatterjee, K., Gupta, S. 2015. The role of mass customisation in the apparel industry, International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education, 8:2

Nguyen D. (2015). Understanding Perceived Enjoyment and Continuance Intention in Mobile Games. Masters Thesis.

Obiniyi, A., Oyelade, O. 2014. Social Network and Security Issues: Mititgating Threat through Reliable Security Model. *International Journal of Computer Apllications*, 103 9, 1-7.

Ozturk, A.B., Bilgihan, A., Nusair, K. And Okumus, F. 2016. What keeps the mobile hotel booking users loyal? Investigating the roles of self-efficacy, compatibility, perceived ease of use and perceived convenience. *International journal of information management*. 36 (6). pp 1350-1359.

Pee, L.G & Lee., 2016. Trust in User Generated Information on Social Media during crises: an elaboration likelihood perspective. Asia pacific journal of information systems,

Pinheiro, T., Tiago, M.B., Verissimo, J.C. 2014. Digital marketing and social media: why bother? *Business Horizons Journal*, vol 57 issue 6, 703-708.

Ryan, T., Xenos, S. 2011. An investigation into the relationship between the big five, shyness, narcissism, loneliness and Facebook usage. *Computers in human behaviour*. 27 (5). pp 1658-1664.

Salkind, N., 2010. *Encyclopedia of research design*. 1st ed. California United States: SAGE.

Sekar, M., Geetha, R. 2013. Challenges and opportunities of E-Marketing. International journal of scientific research and management (IJSRM

Sillaber C., Chimiak-Opoka J., Breu R. (2013) Understanding and Modeling Usage Decline in Social Networking Services. In: Uden L., Herrera F., Bajo Pérez J., Corchado Rodríguez J. (eds) 7th International Conference on Knowledge Management in Organizations: Service and Cloud Computing. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, vol 172. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.

Thomas, P. 2010. Learning Environment at the University of Botswana. (1), 292.

Thompson, S.K (2012). Sampling. (3rd ed.). : John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Van Dijck, J., 2013. The culture of connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media. 6th ed. Oxford England: Oxford University Press.

Van Rensburg, J. M. (2014). Relevance of Travel agencies in the digital age. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, vol. 3 (2). ISSN: 2223-814x. Graduate School of Business Leadership. UNISA.

Wahyuni, Dina 2012, The research design maze: understanding paradigms,cases,methods and methodologies, *Journal of applied management accounting research*,. 10, 1, winter 2012, 69-80.

Wilson, D.W., Lin, X., Longstreet, P. And Sarker, S. 2011. Web 2.0: A definition, literature review, and directions for future research. *AMCIS Proceedings*. pp 1-10.

Wilson, J., 2014. *Essentials of business research: a guide to doing your own research project*. 2nd ed. California United States: SAGE.

worldpopulationreview.com. 2018. *Population of cities in South Africa (2018)*. [ONLINE] Available at: http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/south-africa-population/cities/. [Accessed 21 September 2018].

Xiang, Z. Gretzel, U. 2018. Role of Social Media in Online Travel Information Search. Tourism Management, 31, 179-188. School of Merchandising and Hospitality Management, University of North Texas.

Xiang, Z., Magnini, V., Fesenmaier, D. 2015. Information technology and consumer behaviour in travel and tourism: Insignts from travel planning using the internet. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, 22, 244-249.

Xiang, Z., Magnini, V.P. and Fesenmaier, D.R. 2015. Information technology and consumer behaviour in travel and tourism: insights from travel planning using the internet. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*. 22, pp. 244-249.

## Annexure 1: Research Instrument

**FaceBook Travel Information Questionnaire**

For each of the questions below, please indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. If the statement is extremely uncharacteristic of your experience with FaceBook, please circle a "7". If the statement is very typical of your experience with FaceBook, please circle a "1". It s possible that you may not totally agree or totally disagree with a statement. Therefore if so, please circle the numbers in the scale that describe the best fit.

**General Information**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | F | M | | | |
| Age | 18 to 30 | 31 to 40 | 41 to 50 | 51 to 60 | 60+ |
| Race | Asian | Black | Coloured | White | Other |
| How long have you been a member of FaceBook?[months/years] | 1-12months | 1-3 yrs | 4-7 yrs | 10+ yrs | |
| How much time do you spend on FaceBook per month (Hours)? | 0-5 hrs | 6-10 hrs | 11-20 hrs | 20+hrs | |
| How frequently do you visit FaceBook per week? | 1-3 times | 4-6 times | 7-10 times | 10+ times | |
| On average, how many times per month do you use FaceBook for travel information searches? | | | | | |

| | | 1. Very Strongly Agree | 2. Strongly Agree | 3. Agree | 4.Neither Agree nor Disagree | 5. Disagree | 6. Strongly Disagree | 7. Very Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I believe that Facebook is a reliable source of user-generated content to obtain travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2 | I search for travel information on Facebook | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 | I frequently visit Facebook to search for travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4 | I find the travel information obtained on Facebook is reliable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5 | Using Facebook improves my search results when conducting travel information search | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6 | Trust gives me the perception to browse Facebook when searching for travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7 | I feel that using FaceBook is easy and simple for me when searching for travel information. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | I read other travellers' experiences and tips | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9 | I read hotel reviews from other travellers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10 | I trust that Facebook provides accurate travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11 | I find Facebook useful when searching for travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| # | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | I consider the use of Facebook for travel purposes to be of great convenience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13 | I looked at activity/attractions reviews of other travellers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14 | Using an online social platform such as Facebook for travel purposes stimulates my curiosity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15 | I feel that my interactions with Facebook are clear and understandable when looking for travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16 | I feel it would be easy to become skillful at using Facebook to search for travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17 | I intend on using Facebook as a travel information search tool because it gives me joy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18 | I find the travel information obtained on Facebook is credible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19 | I find interacting on the Facebook website to be easy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20 | Using Facebook would save me time when engaging in travel | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21 | Using Facebook would improve my travel information search | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22 | Using Facebook for travel research is enjoyable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23 | I find Facebook helps when conducting travel related research relevant to my needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24 | Learning to operate Facebook would be easy for me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25 | I find that navigating on the Facebook website is easy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26 | My usage of Facebook has increased significantly since I used the platform to conduct travel-related information searches | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27 | Using Facebook provides me with many resources when doing travel research | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 28 | I find my interaction with Facebook to be easy when finding various types of travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 29 | When using Facebook as a research platform, enjoyment is important to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 30 | I find the travel information obtained on Facebook is authentic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 31 | I trust that the information obtained on Facebook is posted by trustworthy users | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32 | Facebook is the first social network I go to when searching for travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33 | I enjoy researching travel information on Facebook | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34 | The layout of the Facebook website site stimulates my experience when search for travel information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |