THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE EXISTENCE OF VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The visitor information centre (VIC) play a valuable role in the distribution of tourism-related information in most areas in South Africa that are frequented by tourists. They also provide a contact point for human interaction where trust can be built between the VIC staff and visitor, thereby making the destination a more worthwhile and valued experience. The main role of the VIC is to provide information in the form of knowledge also referred to as value-added information. Today, the VIC, as intermediary, could be left behind as the Internet (of which social media is part) has become a powerful source of information for tourists and marketing tool for hotels and tourist attractions without them having to spend millions of Rands on alternative marketing strategies. This study sought to establish whether VICs still have a role to play in the South African tourist industry with the increasing presence of social media.

A mixed method research methodology was applied, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted with the staff and managers of selected visitor information centres in Cape Town and Johannesburg, respectively. The interviews were transcribed and the findings are presented in Chapter 5. Questionnaires was distributed, online, to a sample of 200 visitors, using Qualtrics.

Overall, the aim of the study is to furnish information about the value of VICs in the tourism industry, including the role played by demographics in respect of social media usage, in order to help improve the functioning of VICs as a knowledge base that adds value to the process of making South Africa one of the top 20 tourism destinations, globally, by 2020.

KEYWORDS: Visitor Information Centre, Social Media, Information, Knowledge, Communication and South Africa

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

Table 1: Abbreviations used in this document

Abbreviation	Meaning
AOI	Activities Opinions Interests
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CRM	Customer Relationship Management

CGC	Consumer-generated Content
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
DVR	Digital Video Recorders
GPS	Global Positioning System
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IT	Information Technologies
KM	Knowledge Management
NSW	New South Wales
PC	Personal Computer
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
RSS	Rich Site Summary
SANparks	South African National Parks
SMB's	Small and Medium Businesses
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
SNS	Social Network Site
TIC	Tourist Information Centre
WIFI	Wireless Fidelity
WOM	Word of Mouth
VIC	Visitor Information Centre
UK	United Kingdom

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE EXISTENCE OF VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND

Visitor information centres (VIC) play a valuable role in the distribution of tourism-related information in most of the areas frequented by tourists within South Africa. The promotion of tourism is the responsibility of all levels of government as one of their concomitant functions, (National Department of Tourism, 2011:15) According to South Africa's National Department of Tourism, one of the ways to do so is through the provision of information. In this regard, VICs play a prominent and important role in the tourism industry, since they often serve as a vital first point of contact between visitors and the tourist sites, thereby providing a value-added service to visitors. As such, VICs equip visitors with relevant information about tourism products and the services available at a destination or region (National Department of Tourism, 2011:15). They also provide a contact point for human interaction where trust can be built between the VIC staff and visitor, thereby making the destination a more worthwhile and valued experience.

Research into VICs in Australia and Canada has found that the presence of VICs in a tourism region corresponds with increased visitor spending. Research by Tourism New South Wales (NSW) has found that those who visit a VIC spend time in the region for a longer period and visit more attractions that increase their consumption of, and expenditure on products (SGS Economics and Planning, 2012). A national study on behalf of VisitEngland found that the impact of a VIC on visitors' spending influences their original travel plans by visiting other areas, staying over for additional nights and increasing their spending (National study of VisitEngland, 2009:5).

According to the SGS Economics and Planning (2012), a company based in Australia, a VIC's key role is to promote the importance of an area and to point visitors to local

attractions and businesses. VIC's that are pro-active in marketing their destinations, including via the internet, will achieve benefits for the local economy and tourism sector. A VIC can also perform other functions, such as playing a role in controlling and filtering visitor flows and standing in as guides for on-site visits to environmentally sensitive areas. Ongoing networking with other VICs in the region is also important in maintaining and improving service quality (SGS Economics and Planning, 2012). In addition, VICs can also provide space for community meetings and for the activities of tourism authorities in respect of administration and research (SGS Economics and Planning, 2012).

The ever-changing world of technology is becoming more and more advanced and VICs are in danger of becoming extinct in the tourism industry, because at the click of a mouse, potential clients can find reviews, flights and accommodation to almost any holiday destination in the world (Chowles, 2013:1). The VIC, as intermediary, could also be left out as the internet has become a powerful marketing tool for hotels and tourist attractions without them having to spend millions of Rands on alternative marketing strategies.

The role of the VIC has changed due to technology becoming more and more advanced. This shift in the role of VICs means they are no longer simply providers of visitor information, but are now centres of knowledge for the region: not only in terms of business generation, accommodation bookings, tours and cruises, but also by adding value to information (SGS Economics and Planning, 2012:1). VICs now provide an essential role in harnessing business for the local economy by maximising the dollars visitors spend in a region and funnelling them back into the appropriate businesses (SGS Economics and Planning, 2012:1) as well as by providing information through knowledge brokering, which is an exchange process between two individuals, with one seeking information and the other providing it (Wong & McKercher, 2011:492).

Mobile VICs are currently surfacing around the globe. Cape Town Tourism launched a mobile VIC named Thando in 2014. This mobile centre enabled tourists to obtain free bookings, tickets, free WiFi, insider tips, informed brochures and responsible tourism support. They also have the opportunity to learn about the local population, win prizes, get live updates and other useful information online (Candotti, 2014:1). Thando was only in operation from 9 to 27 June 2014. No further information regarding this mobile service has

become available and, to date, there has not been any indication as to whether Thando will make an appearance again in the future. In theory this was a valuable service, but research is required to investigate whether it is a viable option or not.

According to Molz (2012:3), more than 43% of travellers surveyed in 2011 reported that they consulted user-generated online content, up from 30 percent in 2009. It has been established that travellers consult social media when planning their vacations (Gretzel, 2006; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008, in Simms & Gretzel, 2013:1). This percentage increase proves that the use of social media is the future of tourism and intermediaries, such as VICs will have to adapt their way of distributing information to suit the needs of the modern tourist, if they wish to survive. According to Criteo (2015), the share of mobile bookings has almost doubled from 2014 to 2015, increasing from 12 percent to 23 percent worldwide, with a fairly consistent growth across all markets.

Developments in search engines, especially their carrying capacity and the speed of their networks have influenced the number of travellers around the world who use these technologies for planning and experiencing their travels (Buhalis & Law, 2008:609).

No matter how advanced technology becomes, the need for a VIC will always be important because the knowledge of a local population living in a region or destination is invaluable adjunct to the experience of the visitor and may not be found on the internet or social media. In addition, the location of a VIC is of utmost importance as it must be visible to the tourist.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The use of the internet has increased significantly over the past ten years giving a clear message to VICs, namely "Adapt or Die" (Davies, 2011:1). The importance of the internet for travel and tourism has increased over the years and this is causing problems for VICs (Davies, 2011:1). Based on the experience of VICs in the United Kingdom (UK), TICs face extinction (Davies, 2011:1). VICs are vanishing from the streets, while, at the same time, local communities are desperately trying to save their local asset as they realise that VICs are still of value to a country, because they provide local information, local advice, and for

many, they provide that personal touch (Davies, 2011:1), not to mention work opportunities. VICs must capitalise on 'the personal touch' aspect and adapt accordingly in order to address a need that applies especially to an ageing population who are not necessarily comfortable with technology.

Over the past few years, tourism globally, as well as in South Africa, has experienced major changes as a result of social media. According to the Department of Tourism, (2011:15), such change, in South Africa, for example, is the Facebook page, *I love Cape Town* (See APPENDIX G). It provides continuous, updated, user-generated content. Information is now immediately available and at hand for the tourist, at any time and any place.

The role of social media on the VIC as a source of information in South Africa is the main research statement. The second research statement is to determine whether visitors use social media to find information about an attraction and to determine whether visitors use the VIC to find information about an attraction.

1.3   PURPOSE STATEMENT

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role that social media play in the services offered by VICs with regards to their survival by comparing selected traditional roles played by VICs in the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg in South Africa.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how visitors search for information regarding an attraction before visiting it through the use of either social media and/or visiting a VIC, or both, as sources of knowledge.

The study will also investigate the role of VIC staff in terms of the provision of information through personalised services and/or social media by seeking information from the VIC staff in order to understand the role they play in respect of social media and the importance thereof.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

a) To identify the visitor demographics of a selected flagship attraction in Cape Town and Johannesburg,

b) To determine which social media mediums are currently used in the Cape Town and Johannesburg VICs and for what purposes,

c) To determine whether visitors regard the Cape Town and Johannesburg VIC as valuable knowledge sources with reference to personalised services,

d) To determine if a relationship exists between a geographic location and **i)** Visitor Information Centres, **ii)** social media, and **iii)** search engines,

e) To determine if a relationship exists between the VIC and i) social media, and ii) search engines,

f) To determine whether differences exists between the groups that use a VIC in comparison with those that do not, in respect of **i)** visitor information, **ii)** information usefulness and **iii)** technological experience,

g) To investigate whether meaningful profiles of respondents can emerge, taking the following seven variables into account: **i)** male and female, **ii)** Facebook usage, **iii)** place, **iv)** age, **v)** gender, **vi)** level of education and **vii)** the value of information and/or knowledge received.

1.5 ACADEMIC VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

During the literature survey, a number of sources were found regarding the impact of social media on VICs (Wong & McKercher 2011; Lyu & Lee 2015; Lyu & Hwang 2015, Buhalis 1998; Connell & Reynolds 1999; Xiang & Gretzel 2010; Ho, Lin & Chen 2012; Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier 2014). However, little direct comparison was made between the use of social media and the knowledge added value of VICs or how the latter must adapt to meet the challenges of technology. Lyu and Hwang (2015:62) suggest that further research is required to provide a better understanding about the demand for the use of VICs and TICs amongst both domestic and international visitors. This study proposes to

make a contribution towards gaining a better understanding about the issues underlying the necessity for VICs and TICs to continue existing as physical entities providing value-added information and knowledge services to the visitor/tourist.

Thus, this study proposes to furnish information regarding the value of VICs, including the role played by demographics in respect of social media usage in order to help improve the functioning of VICs as a knowledge base.

The Tourism Strategic and Annual Performance Plan of the South African National Department of Tourism (2010/11 to 2015/16) (Department of Tourism, 2010:21) states that consultants will be hired to provide information technology (IT) support for the development of VICs and planning for the national tourism information gateway in order to encapsulate the vision and mission of the National Department of Tourism. This study should add value to the process of making South Africa one of the top 20 destinations globally by 2020.

1.6   DELIMITATIONS

The major delimitating factor of this study is that the inclusion of all the VICs in South Africa is not possible, due to constraints imposed by time, the distance between Centres nationally and costs. Therefore, only traditional VICs in the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg are included in this study.

A further delimitating factor is that VICs may not be used to distribute questionnaires by external bodies, as it is against their policy and they are already conducting their own market research that the researcher could not gain access to.

1.7   DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This study includes a number of key concepts, including social media, visitor information centres, information, knowledge and communication. For the purpose of the study, these concepts are listed and defined below:

Information: a term that can be defined in a number of ways in relation to different contexts as follows:

a)   ***Information as a representation of knowledge:*** information is stored knowledge. Traditionally the storage medium has been books, but increasingly electronic media are becoming important (Madden, 2000:344).

b)   ***Information as data in the environment:*** information can be obtained from a range of environmental stimuli and phenomena, not all of which are intended to 'convey' a message, but which can be informative when appropriately interpreted (Madden, 2000:344).

c)   ***Information as part of the communication process:*** meanings are embedded within people rather than in words or data. Timing and social factors play a significant role in the processing and interpretation of information (Madden, 2000:344).

d)   ***Information as a resource or commodity:*** information is transmitted in a message from sender to receiver. The receiver interprets the message as intended by the sender. There may be added value as the information is disseminated or exchanged (Madden, 2000: 344).

Knowledge: "The use of skills and experience, to add intelligence to information in order to make decisions or provide reliable ground for action" (Cooper, 2006:52). In this study knowledge refers to the 'value' added to information by VIC staff to enable a visitor/customer make an informed decision about a tourism product or service.

Communication: an exchange of messages between members of the same species. The exchange can be interpersonal (between human beings), group-based (between some individual or media outlet and audiences) and mass-based (involving communication systems that encompass entire societies) (Danesi, 2013:167-8).

Social media: a term that encompasses different types of media, namely:

a)   ***Internet-based applications*** that carry consumer-generated content and encompass ''... media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers'' (Blackshaw, 2006:180; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:180).

b)   ***Information content*** created by people by using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies that are intended to facilitate communications, influence

and interact with peers and with public audiences, typically, through the Internet and mobile communication networks (Gretzel, Law & Fuchs, 2010:531).

c) ***A group of Internet-based applications*** that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlon, 2010:61).

Visitor Information Centre (VIC): a term defined in a variety of ways that provide a comprehensive description of VICs as follows:

a) A physical location that provides tourist information to visitors who travel locally within a destination or area (National Department of Tourism, 2011:15).

b) The name 'visitor centre' carries the widest definition. It can incorporate aspects of heritage centres and museums. A centre may hold some artefacts, but its prime function is to inform the public about the present situation, background history and future plans pertaining to the area. A visitor centre provides the best means to raise funds, especially if staffed entirely by volunteers. It provides an excellent opportunity to promote a restoration project. It relies on models, words, pictures and maps to tell its story. Its displays can cover a smaller area leaving extra space for sales and other fund raising activities (Beech, *n.d*).

c) The direct provision of travel information about tourist destinations, which visitors find helpful in making optimal decisions. (Lyu & Hwang (2015:54).

Mobile Visitor Information Centre: a vehicle that assists visitors in making bookings and buying tickets for local events and shows, since a digitally-minded generation of travellers wants to receive information where they are, rather than to go out and seek information (Wesgro, 2014:1).

The terms, visitor information centres (VIC) and tourist information centres (TIC), are used interchangeably throughout the study. The use of the word TIC is mostly used internationally. In South Africa, it is recognised as a VIC.

CHAPTER 2: INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Information, communication and knowledge management all form part of a VIC. This Chapter will provide an in-depth discussion on the three different concepts, including information, communication and knowledge management and discuss how they 'fit in' and contribute towards the overall success of a VIC.

As technology is changing every day, the way people find information has also changed. In the 21st Century, information can now not only be found in books, newspapers and magazines, but in the world of the Internet. More and more tourists use the Internet websites to book and/or get useful information (Bhat & Shah, 2014:1).

Communication permeates all aspects of our personal and professional lives (Williams, Krizan, Logan & Merrier, 2011:2). The ability to communicate and to have that message understood is vital in today's world (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:2). To communicate effectively can be quite complicated, especially when a diversity of audience members participates in the communication process (Püringer, 2008:55).

2.2 INFORMATION

2.2.1 INFORMATION IN TOURISM

With the information intense nature of the tourism product, small firms are not necessarily up to the task of marketing themselves online (Bhat & Shah, 2014:2). The Internet becomes a major channel for people to search for information (Fong, Lee, Leung & Law, 2013:519). People search for information from multiple sources in order to reduce their uncertainty during the decision-making process (Fong, Lee, Leung & Law, 2013:522). Additionally, people with more knowledge about the topic being searched may search for

information from a single channel (Fong, Lee, Leung & Law, 2013:523). Fong *et. al.* (2013:527) also found that the emergence of the online channel has not replaced the offline channel as this tends to maximise the information obtained, which, in turn, minimises uncertainty by diversifying information channels during the search process.

For tourism organisations and marketers, it is especially important to understand how travellers navigate through this new 'information ecosystem' while making their travel-related decisions, and how their choice of information sources ultimately influences their travel behaviour (Stienmetz & Fesenmaier, 2013:530). The results of a study in which the base sample comprised 8650 respondents, showed that 74.5% of these respondents visited websites to research and request additional travel information about the destination they visited, leaving a balance of 25.5% of visitors who did not use websites for travel-related information searches (Stienmetz & Fesenmaier, 2013:533).

As the technological capabilities and features that facilitate information sharing continue to develop, individuals who are particularly skilled and frequent users of social media may be more likely to trust the sources of social information that they use, which can influence how they assess the credibility of the information received from other social media users (Barbara, 2013:2). Results of a particular study, cited by Barbara (2013:60) indicate that users with higher social media efficacy tend to both trust and find the information shared by other social information sources credible, irrespective of the domain of the information. Information available via social media and the Internet appear to be approached quite differently by different people, as the results of this study suggest that perceptions of such information varies significantly depending upon a person's level of social media efficacy (Barbara, 2013:60).

2.2.2   INFORMATION FOR TRAVEL

Travellers often seek information as part of their travel-planning effort, considering it an important component of the travel experience (Hwang, Gretzel, Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2006:3). There are two information search processes, namely, pre-purchase and on-going searches. Pre-purchase information search efforts are those that aim at increasing product-related knowledge to inform a specific purchase decision (Hwang *et. al.,* 2006:3).

On-going search, on the other hand, provides additional benefits by focusing on the future use of the information obtained, as well as the satisfaction experienced during the search activity itself (Hwang *et. al.,* 2006:3). Therefore, the focus of the information environment needs to be different for visitors who are in a pre-purchase information search situation as opposed to those who are in an on-going information search mode, because of the differences inherent in the product and the search attributes of the two search strategies (Hwang *et. al.* 2006:3).

Fodness and Murray (1998:1470) indicate that a search for tourist information is part of a dynamic process in which travellers use various types and amounts of information sources in vacation planning. Later, they argue that information searchers select different search strategies during this process in which there are at least three dimensions, namely, spatial, temporal and operational (Fodness & Murray, 1999, In Ho, Lin & Chen, 2012:1470). The spatial dimension of an information search strategy refers to the locus of the search activity, both internally and externally (Ho *et. al.*, 2012:1470). The temporal dimension is related to the timing of the search activity, whether on-going or pre-purchase. The operational dimension corresponds to the way in which the search is conducted and focuses on the particular sources used. These three components constitute the skeleton of an information search process (Ho *et. al.*, 2012:1470).

One of the most important behavioural processes underlying travel decision-making can be generally described as the information search and processing model. (Hwang *et. al.,* 2006:3). Travel decisions require a large amount of internal as well as external information and potentially encompass a number of information search, evaluation and integration tasks and activities (Hwang *et. al.,* 2006:3).

According to Hwang *et. al.,* (2006:5) travel decision making consists of several stages of information search and processing. This process is also referred to as offline searching by Ho, Lin & Chen, (2012:1478-9) and is represented in Figure 1 below.
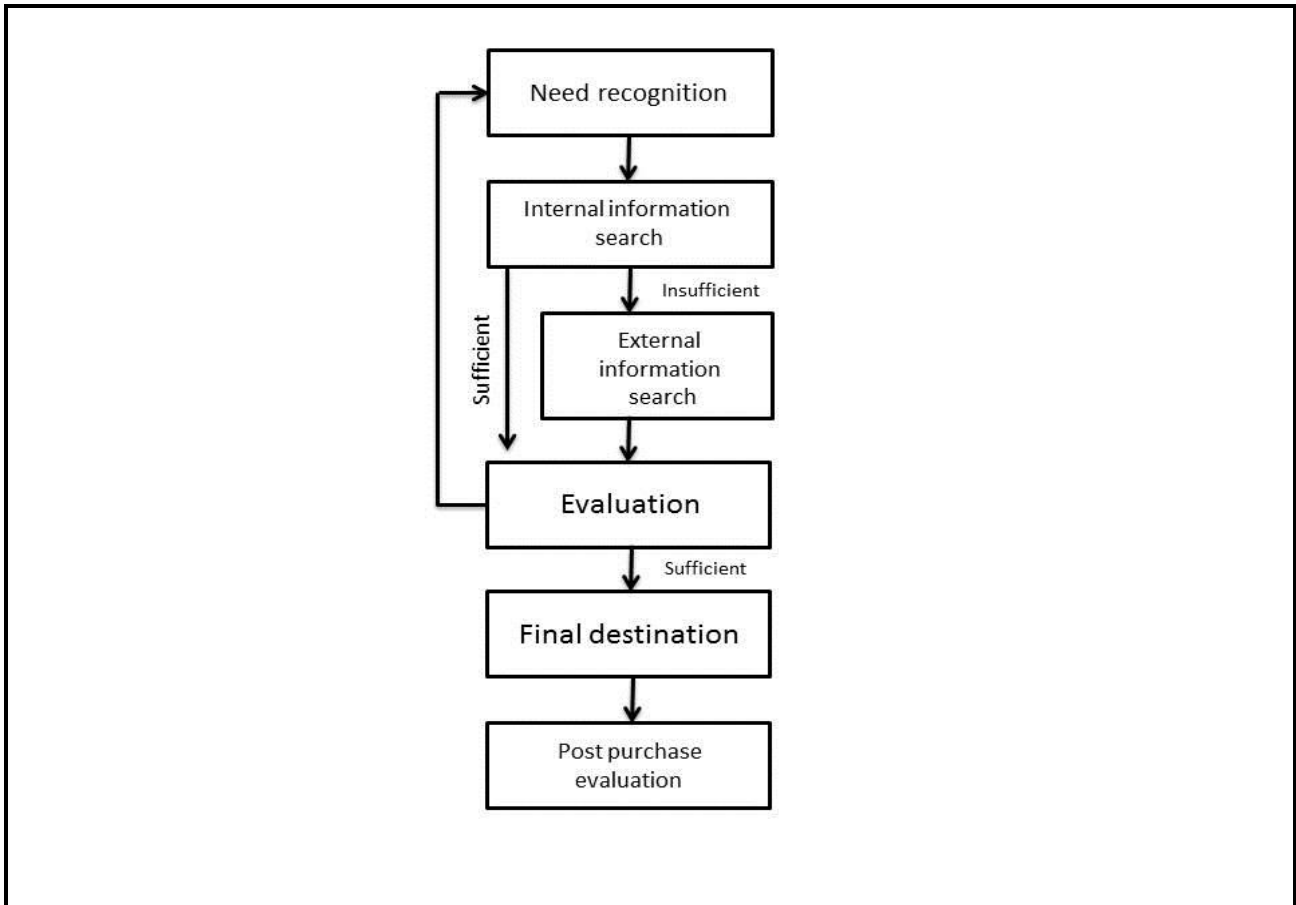
Figure 1: A general framework of travel information search and processing (Hwang, *et al.*, 2006:5)

Travellers begin the information search process by utilising internal memory sources to list product alternatives after recognising a purchase need. If this initial list of alternatives is satisfactory, the evaluation phase can begin. If the list derived from internal memory is not satisfactory, individuals start searching for information using external sources such as personal sources (friends and relatives), commercial sources (brochures and advertisements), non-commercial sources (virtual travel communities) and experiential sources (inspections and pre-purchase visits). Once a satisfactory amount of information has been accumulated, the various alternatives are evaluated and subsequently selected or eliminated.

Figure 1 demonstrates that information found through traditional ways can be insufficient, at which stage the tourist will then move to external information search methods. By taking into consideration the important role of search engines in the traveller's use of the Internet, Figure 2 below provides a conceptual framework illustrating the interactions between an

online traveller, a search engine, and the online tourism domain (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:180).
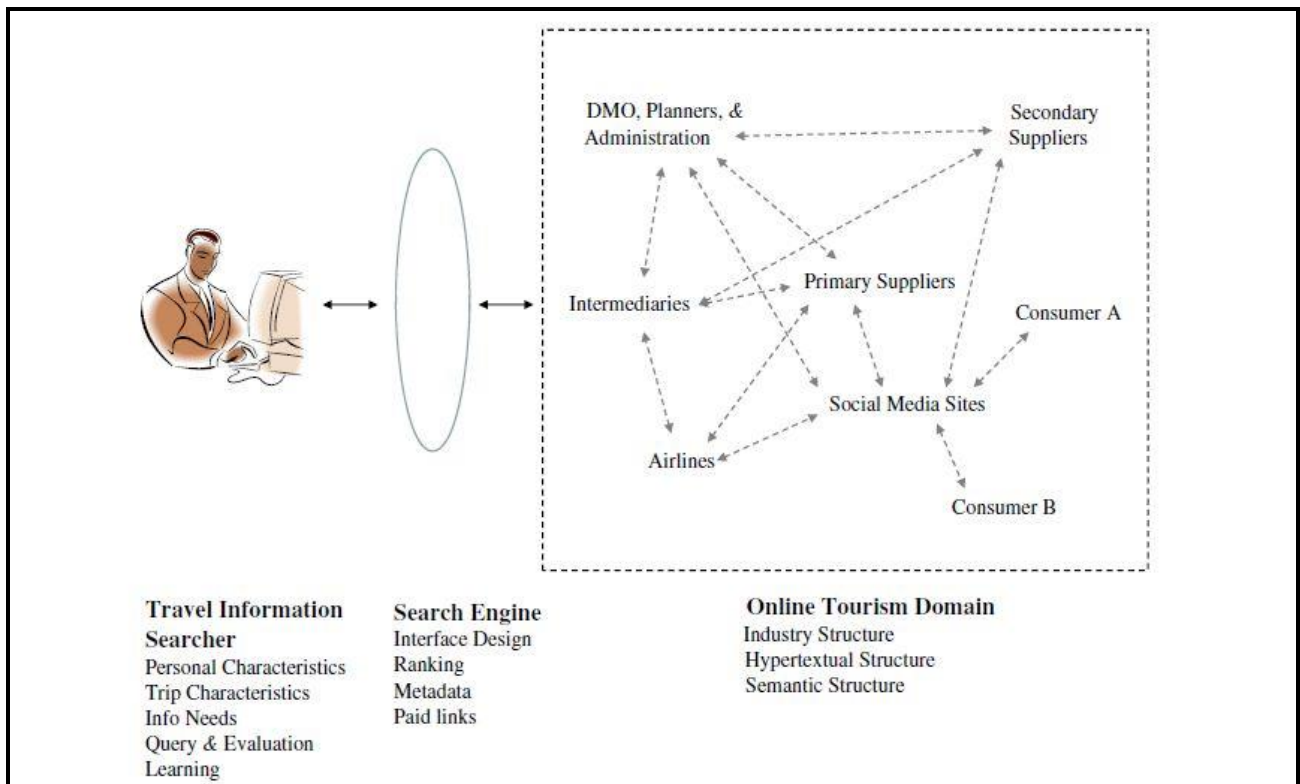
Figure 2: Social media and tourism domain in the context of using a search engine (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:182)

Figure 2 illustrates that interactions between the online traveller, search engines and the online tourism domain are extremely complex and include three key components, namely:

a)   *The online traveller*, who is driven by a number of personal and trip-related needs including questions about, and evaluation of the information acquired, all of which culminates in a learning experience.

b)   *The search engine* that, in large part, determines the representation of the tourism domain through the design of interface features, search result rankings, metadata, and paid links and, as a result, influences the traveller's perception and decision making.

c)   *The online tourism domain*, which is composed of informational entities provided by a number of 'players', including individual consumers through means of the social media. This tourism domain has a distinct semantic structure that is

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determined by the hyper textual nature of the Internet and the tourism industry structure (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:181).

This framework is useful in that it stresses the complexity of the online tourism domain and the dominance of search technology (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:181).

2.3   KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Koskinen and Philanto (2008:878) consider "... knowledge (as) an individual's perception, skills and experience, which are all dependent on what experiences the individual's worldview contains in the form of meanings." Skyrme (2001:502) defines knowledge management (KM) as the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge and its associated processes of creation, organisation, diffusion, use and exploitation.

Tacit knowledge represents knowledge rooted in experience that cannot be easily articulated, existing only in people's minds and involving cognitive features such as personal belief, perspective, values, mental models and know-how (Püringer, 2008:8-9). Explicit knowledge means knowledge that has been captured and codified and embedded into manuals, procedures and rules, so that it is easy to distribute and share (Püringer, 2008:9). The conversion of tacit to explicit knowledge is critical as there is so much tacit knowledge available in the tourism sector that could benefit not only VICs and its users, but also other organisations, destinations and government (Pearch & Butler, 2010:216).

The shift towards knowledge management frameworks occurred in the 20th Century when a transition was made between a matter-based economy to a knowledge-based economy in which most of a firm's value is embedded in knowledge assets (Nielson, 2005:102 in Hawkins, Elliot & Yu, 2012:36)

There are a variety of disciplines that have influenced the field of knowledge management. Pühringer (2008:12) describes a number of working definitions, namely:

a)   ***Knowledge management*** "... promotes development and application of tacit, explicit and embedded intellectual capital that is leveraging personal understanding,

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organisation action capabilities, and other intellectual assets to attain the enterprise's ultimate goals, such as ascertaining profitability, ensuring long-term viability or delivering quality services" (Wiig, 2000:14 in Püringer,2008:12).

b) *Knowledge management* is a "... conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping people share and put information into action in ways that strive to improve organisational performance" (Kakabatse & Kouzman, 2003 in Püringer, 2008:12).

c) *Knowledge management* is a means to capture and use the ideas and experience of organisational members, customers and suppliers to improve the organisation's overall performance (McKenzie & van Winkelen, 2004:5 in Püringer, 2008:12).

d) *Knowledge management* "... builds on generating, storing, transferring and using strategically-relevant knowledge. Thus, the management role is to use existing knowledge whereas at the same time creating new knowledge." (Translated from Lechner, Egger & Schauer, 2003, in Püringer, 2008:12).

Knowledge management plays an important role in VICs. In general, VICs take on a multitude of functions (Püringer, 2008:43). They strive to get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time, they provide quality information services about local tourism products and services to visitors at the destination and strive to attain the organisation's (i.e. the National Department of Tourism) goals.

There are a number of knowledge management constraints in VICs, namely:

a) Non-inclusion of knowledge issues in standing business plans, which highlight a missing link between strategies and the development and use of knowledge (Carson & Adams, 2004:119-121 in Püringer, 2008:44).

b) Irregular communication between the City Council and the VIC resulting in a strategic knowledge gap (Carson & Adams, 2004:119-121 in Püringer, 2008:44).

c) Absence of a reward and motivational system to support VIC staff capabilities (Carson & Adams, 2004:119-121 in Püringer, 2008:44).

d) Geographic separation and autonomy of the City Council that leads to impaired communication channels (Carson & Adams, 2004:119-121 in Püringer, 2008:44).

e)   Restricted internet/intranet access for staff to maintain email correspondence, databases, product information, booking systems and financial spread sheets (Carson & Adams, 2004:119-121in Püringer, 2008: 44).

The most important facilitator of knowledge management in information communication network technologies is the Internet and the World Wide Web (Hawkins *et. al.*, 2012:37). As a result, the global public is better informed (McPhail, 2010:105). The Internet is changing the nature and perception of the human environment (McPhail. 2010:105). This means that the Internet's global and instantaneous communication ability has changed public life forever (McPhail. 2010:105).

Knowledge management is related to any planned application, utilisation, and transfer of knowledge in order to achieve the mission or goals of organisations and businesses (Wiig, 1997, in Hawkins *et. al.*, 2012:98). Knowledge management is associated with the process and practices of transfer, while its use is the ultimate goal of information dissemination (Xiao & Smith, 2007, in Hawkins *et. al.*, 2012:98). For the knowledge-transfer process to occur, knowledge sources must be identified, and relevant tacit and explicit knowledge captured, codified, processed and evaluated before being transferred (Cooper, 2006; Weidenfield, Williams, & Butler, 2010, in Hawkins *et. al.*, 2012:99). This process demonstrates the importance of VICs in respect of repackaging information into value-laden knowledge documents to disseminate to the visitors in order to make their trip more worthwhile. VIC staff, as information brokers, have the freedom to use their own judgment in providing advice that may be coloured by what they personally perceive to be the benefits or costs of giving visitors access to a particular experience (Jennings & Weiler (2006, in Wong & McKercher, 2010:483).

Weidenfiled, Williams and Butler, (2010:607) identified four types of interconnected channels/mechanisms of knowledge transfer that may be present in VICs:

a)   ***"Learning by observation, imitation and demonstration ..."*** consisting of flows of information and knowledge transfers, which may be planned, unplanned and/or uncoordinated knowledge that spills across firms via observation, 'espionage', and/or through interchange within communities by association.

b) ***"Learning by inter-firm exchanges ..."*** that constitutes planned knowledge exchanges, as firms work together in the tourism chain. The collaboration may be either vertical or horizontal.

c) ***"Labour mobility ..."*** that is related to the mobility of individuals. Knowledge is transferred by the physical movement of workers who have been working in organisations with superior and different tacit knowledge bases.

d) ***"Knowledge brokers ..."*** who are influential individuals operating within and across distinctive knowledge communities, playing a key role in knowledge transfer in the tourism industry. This category may include development agents, consultants and representatives of multinational chains working across different countries and, as a result, transferring distinctive knowledge globally.

2.4   COMMUNICATION

2.4.1   THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

There is a vast importance to effective communication. But communication always includes certain barriers. To overcome communication barriers, it is vital to foster an open communication climate, a commitment to ethical communication and a mutual mind-set among senders and receivers and managers in order to be proficient in information and communication technologies (ICT) and to ensure an efficient creation and processing of information (Püringer, 2008:58).

In figure 3 (on p. 18), the communication process is described and explained. (Adapted from Williams *et. al.*, 2011:10).
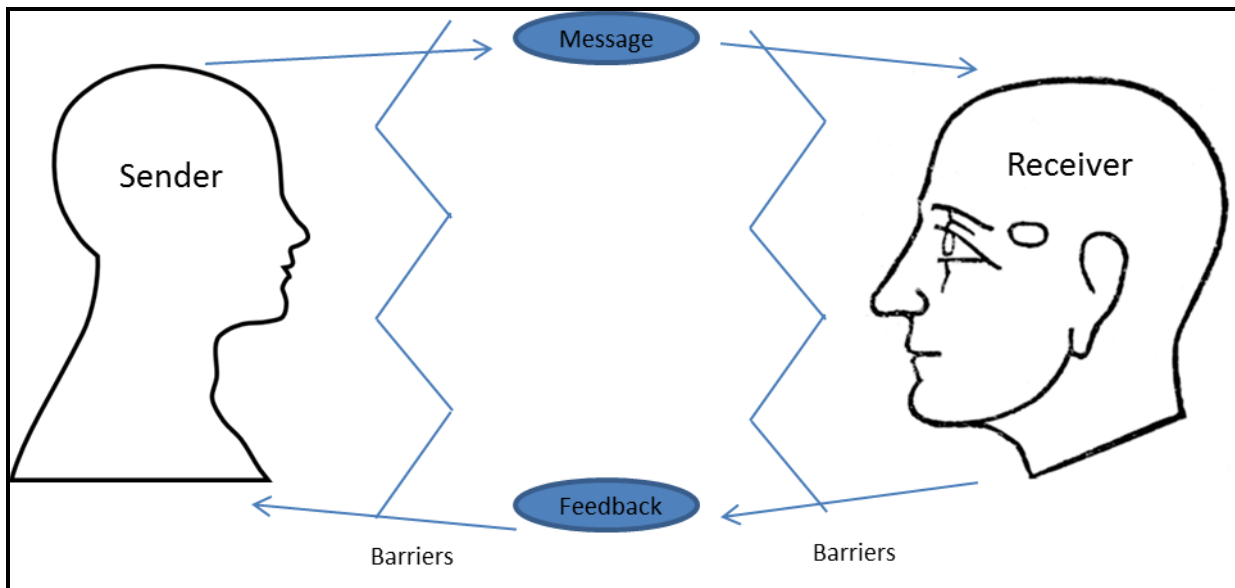
Figure 3: The communication process model (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:10)

The model in Figure 3 illustrates how the communication process operates in an environment that includes the sender, receiver, feedback and barriers to communication (Williams *et. al.,* 2011:9). The communication environment includes all the things the participants perceive through their senses, namely; sight, smell, sound, taste and touch. The communication process is distracting and complex. Communicators must overcome distractions to achieve the goals of business communication (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:10). In addition, they must recognise that each organisation has its own culture, a personality that affects the communication environment and the way the communication process is implemented (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:10).

The sender and receiver have important responsibilities in the communication process (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:11). The sender initiates the message, while the receiver is the listener, reader or observer in the communication process (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:12). Communication can occur verbally and nonverbally. Verbal communication uses words, but non-verbal communication does not. All communication travels from the sender to the receiver(s) through various communication channels (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:12). These channels may be written in the form of memos, letters, e-mail, web pages, notes, reports, newsletter and news releases or orally in the form of face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, voice mail, in-person conferences, video conferences or speeches (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:12).

The sender's role in implementing the communication process includes the provision of feedback to the receiver. In order to achieve this goal in business communication, senders can:

a)   Ask for the response either directly or indirectly; or

b)   Assist the receiver in giving a response (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:15).

The provision of information by a VIC is the main focus of the South African National Department of Tourism (2011), where the following guidelines are of importance:

a)   VICs should provide comprehensive information about the destination, accommodation, attractions, cultural activities and more, within the locality.

b)   A web-based booking facility should be available and staff at the VIC should be able to assist visitors by processing their enquiries.

c)   The VIC should have a notice board of current and upcoming events.

d)   The VIC should display a map of the given locality or area.

e)   The VIC should clearly display important information relating to emergency numbers for police and ambulance services as well the nearest health centre and any other significant service.

The manner in which VIC staff members communicate the above, whether verbally or non-verbally, is of utmost importance. Staff in destination service organisations such as visitor centres has the potential to influence the tourist experience and the quality of service provided (Smith & Holmes, 2012:562). According to Williams *et. al.,* (2011:4) effective business communication involves both the sender and the receiver, but the sender must take responsibility for achieving the four basic goals of business communication, namely:

a)   ***Receiver understanding:*** the message must be so clear that the receiver understands it as the sender meant it to be understood.

b)   ***Receiver response:*** it may be positive, neutral or negative and may be conveyed through words, actions or both. The situation will determine what mode of communication is appropriate.

c)   ***Favourable relationships:*** this focuses on the people involved in the communication process. In order to establish a strong business relationship, the sender and receiver should relate to each other in three important ways, namely, to

always be positive, both personally and professionally and they must both create and maintain a favourable relationship.

d) *Organisational goodwill*: the goodwill of customers or clients is essential to any business or organisation. If a company has the goodwill of its customers, it has their confidence and often their continued business.

Social media Websites, representing various forms of consumer-generated content (CGC) such as blogs, virtual communities, wikis, social networks, collaborative tagging, and media files shared on sites like YouTube and Flickr, have gained substantial popularity among online travellers' use of the Internet. Due to the huge amount of information available, searching has become an increasingly dominant mode in travellers' use of the Internet (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:179).

Due to the popularity of Internet applications, most tourism organisations, such as hotels, airlines, and travel agencies have embraced Internet technologies as part of their marketing and communication strategies (Buhalis *et. al.,* 2008). The more research undertaken on a trip and the more information found, the better visitor/customer needs can be served and met.

Well-informed consumers are able to interact better with local resources and cultures, to find products and services that meet their requirements and to take advantage of special offers and reduced prices (Buhalis & Law, 2008). In order to have well-informed customers, effective communication is very important. Companies use social networking sites to create an awareness of their brand image, to direct users to their own website and to learn new ideas for improvements or changes in products or services from their consumers and clients (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:62). Social networks allow global businesses to communicate with clients around the world (Williams *et. al.*, 2011:62).

The Internet has had a transformative influence in corporate communication from its beginnings to its current form as Web 2.0 (Goodman & Hirsch, 2010:43). The nature of the shift to internet-based communication seems so pervasive and all-encompassing that it can seem daunting to try and identify the salient features of this shift independently.

However, according to Goodman and Hirch (2010:43), there are seven distinct aspects of this revolution. They are:

a)   **Multi-modal:** Web 2.0 delivers communication in text, audio and visual form data, spread sheets, video and widget format as well as responses can also take any audio-visual form.

b)   **Time-agnostic:** information can be delivered in real-time.

c)   **Platform-independent**: the nature of the communication is not dependant on the delivery device involved.

d)   **Automated:** with increasingly sophisticated tagging, search and storage, information can be disbursed unprompted in response to a search, delivered through alerts, RSS feeds or by activated through link streams.

e)   **Transparent**: blogs, social media and other platforms such as Twitter create 'contact portfolios', making communication immediately transparent to multiple users

f)   **User-generated:** workplace wikis, polling systems and prediction engines are the tip of the iceberg in user-generated content that is developed by stakeholders, from employees to customers.

g)   **Searchable:** the use of social media platforms breaks down barriers between the various media and permits information and/or communication, or both, to take place on a given topic in order to create accumulated searchable knowledge.

These above-mentioned aspects generate wonderful opportunities for communication, but can also create a number of difficulties, as organisations have to control what they share with the visitor.

Many organisations do not allow their employees to visit certain sites. On the management side, the acceptability of social and other new media tools in the workplace is by no means considered a universal good (Goodman & Hirsch, 2010:49). Employers are experimenting with a variety of restrictions, including hours of the day when the Internet is available, special places, such as libraries where Internet access is unlimited or making web surfing a feature of 'casual Fridays' (Goodman & Hirsch, 2010:49). The accessibility of the Internet is one major element to consider when social media is used to communicate with customers.

In contrast to other media, the Internet integrates personal and mass media. It has, in fact, created a new mode of human communication, enabling participants to take part in two-way mass communication (Sade-Beck, 2004:2). Users of the World Wide Web are no longer passive audiences of data consumers as in media such as television and radio, but are active participants controlling the content of the information. They shape the quality of the data and respond to them.

The Internet may be said to be an aid in preserving personal and intimate ties in cases where face-to-face contact is impossible due to the physical distance between the parties concerned (Sade-Beck, 2004:3). Online interaction through the Internet exists mostly as a written medium, operating within a communications framework that takes place in 'real time' or as 'delayed interaction'. However, in either form, the Internet transforms the act of writing into 'speech' (Sade-Beck, 2004:3).

On the one hand, communication through the Internet provides immediacy, accessibility, and continuousness to the expression of emotion, while on the other hand, it differs from face-to-face communication (Sade-Beck, 2004:5). When both parties are present, physical and visual interaction provides details about the identity of users and about the situation eliciting the emotion (Sade-Beck, 2004:4). This phenomenon questions the essence of emotions, the degree to which they are concrete and their mode of expression in virtual space (Sade-Beck, 2004:9).

An in-depth understanding of effective internal communication is vital to an organisation's long term survival (Lahap, O'Mahony & Dalrymple, 2016:218). Effective communication between managers and employees and communication among peers is inevitable and important, because the effective and efficient dissemination of information is able to contribute towards proficiency in day-to-day routines.

Smartphones are the dominant driver of social media and are the future of social networking. The use of smartphones in travel lies not only in their adoption by the traveller, but also in a more holistic manner whereby the smartphone is naturally embedded in everyday life, and where the antecedents of adoption and uses of smartphones are linked to the tourist experience (Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2014:12).

According to Hancic *et. al.,* (2009:20) social media are not only tools in tourist-to-tourist communication as in the marketplace, but encompass a much wider variety of communicative relations. These include:

a)   ***Tourist-to-tourist communication,*** which encompasses traditional forms of word-of-mouth communication that is transformed into social media forms and extended, by various possibilities, to online reviews combined with user-generated pictures and videos. In this regard, communication not only has the goal of making recommendations to other travellers, but also includes other more 'mundane' yet extremely powerful functions of tourism as a social form of advocacy, for example, shared memories with friends or reliving the vacation experience (Wilson, Murphy, & Cambra Fierro, 2012, in Hancic *e.t al.,* 2009:20).

b)   ***Tourist-to-host communication*** *so*cial media are full of examples of communication about tourism destinations in which local people provide information to tourists (Miguens, Baggio, & Costa, 2009, in Hancic *et. al.,* 2009:20) or tourists praise specific destinations and flatter local people about the beauty of their home. However, much more research is needed regarding the positive effects of such communication in relation to tourism as a social force promoting international understanding.

c)   ***Host-to-host communication,*** which includes communication about tourism between those who are not travelling but *c*ommunicate with others about tourism-related issues that affect their daily lives in a tourism destination.

d)   ***Tourism industry-to-tourist communication,*** which is a conversation that takes place either in the traditional form of paid advertisements or in more creative ways by means of direct involvement with social media, for example, by providing blogs, profiles and channels using forms of communication that are familiar to users rather those used in traditional advertising formats (Hvass & Munar 2012, in Hancic *et. al.,* 2009:20).

e)   ***Tourist-to-tourism industry communication*** in which one of the argument*s* supporting the notion of tourist empowerment via social media is the fact that these media provide more possibilities for users to publish comments and pose questions to the tourism industry. However, empowerment happens only if the industry is willing to listen. In this instance, a specific characteristic of social media that is helpful to tourists in respect of VICs is their public character. In comparison to other

more traditional forms of providing feedback to the tourism industry, such as writing a letter to the manager, social media enable tourists to perform a potentially much more public feedback. The mere fact that others are potentially listening to the 'conversation' provides more incentives for the industry to truly listen and respond to this feedback. Previously, this opportunity was reserved only for those rare cases when tourists managed to publicise their complaints and, to a lesser extent, their praise in the mass media.

f)   *Communication of all the above activities to other social activities,* such as mass media and political systems.

Due to its heterogeneous nature, tourism practitioners must grasp the need for efficient and effective communication in order to foster the sharing and distribution of business data, information and knowledge (Pühringer, 2008).

VICs, as well as any forms of social media or website, are comprised of one or other type of word-of-mouth information. As one person learns about a destination, either through experiencing the destination first hand or via social media, this person will share their experiences with other people. The advances of information technology and the emergence of online social network sites have profoundly changed the way information is transmitted and have transcended the traditional limitations of word-of-mouth communication (Laroche, Yang, McDougall & Bergeron, 2005).

The following figure (Figure 4) highlights the conceptual model of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) communication:
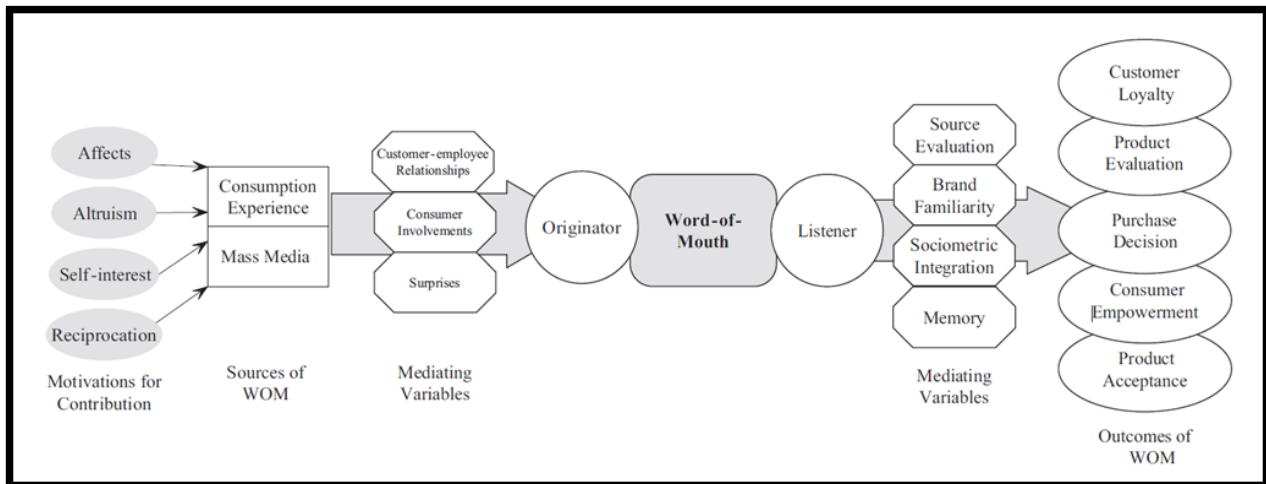
Figure 4: A conceptual model of word-of-mouth communication (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 20087:460)

In figure 4 above, Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008:460) consolidated the concept of WOM communication into the model represented in Figure 4 above. It is believed that before one can consider WOM communication for hospitality and tourism management, there are a few general questions that should be answered, as follows:

a) **Why do consumers spread WOM communication?** Consumer's affective elements of satisfaction, pleasure, and sadness all motivate them to want to share experiences with others.

b) **Where does WOM communication originate?** The key WOM player is an opinion leader, an active user who interprets the meaning of the content of the media's message for others, namely, the opinion seekers.

c) **What are the variables that mediate WOM communication?** Those factors that influence the message originator and those that influence the listener.

d) **What are the expected outcomes from the dissemination of WOM communication?** Positive WOM communication increases the probability of a decision to purchase a product or service, while negative WOM communication has the opposite effect.

VICs can fall into the category of the originators, and if social media applications are executed correctly, the outcome of word-of-mouth communication can bring many benefits to the VIC. WOM is not always in the best interest of the originator, but it will always have some impact on the destination.

2.4.2 COMMUNICATING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organisations, communities, and individuals (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011:250). This presents an enormous challenge for organisations, as many established management methods are ill-suited to deal with customers who no longer want to be talked at, but instead, want organisations to listen, engage appropriately, and respond to them (Kietzmann e*t. al.,* 2011:250).

Social media perform two promotion-related roles. Firstly the ability of the organisation to talk to their customers via social media platforms, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Flickr, and secondly, to ensure that customers can use the platform to communicate with one another (Mangold & Faulds, 2009:358). The second role does, however, limit the organisation's control over the dissemination of such information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009:359). The smartphone enables interactions between the tourist and both the physical and virtual worlds, regardless of location (Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2014:12). Furthermore, Gretzel and Jamal (2010:472) argue that the adoption and use of mobile technologies are the potential catalyst for a new generation of modern tourists, namely, the so-called 'creative tourist class'.

Social media have gained substantial popularity in the context of the online travellers' use of the Internet as travellers can share their experiences with friends and family, tourism businesses and strangers by posting their stories, comments, photographs and videos (Xiang & Gretzel, 2009, in Paris, Lee & Seery, 2010:1). Therefore social network sites and micro-blogging sites are increasingly employed as information channels by tourism organisations (Munar, 2011:292). However, Ho, Lin and Chen (2012:1477) have identified barriers to online searching, for example, the out-dated content and sources of the Web pages. Some information searchers become frustrated when what they find that the text posted on the sites does not correspond with their needs and they then have to click on another site to continue their search. Another distraction could be the slowness of the connection to the Website. These problems commonly lead to increased levels of frustration causing searchers to click onto another website. Failures to link the Web pages have also frequently been identified as a problem. In addition, searchers often find that the result pages have been removed.

Many social media sites are designed primarily to facilitate conversations among individuals and groups. These conversations happen for all sorts of reasons. People tweet, blog and update their status to meet new like-minded people, to find true love, to build their self-esteem or to be at the cutting edge of new ideas or trending topics. Yet others see social media as a way of making their message heard and impacting positively on humanitarian causes, environmental problems, economic issues or political debates (Beirut, 2009).

In June, 2013, the Facebook page *I love Cape Town* (APPENDIX G) won the international award for social media for Cape Town Tourism. It reached 280 000 fans and has been recognised as one of the top brand Facebook pages in South Africa (South Africa, 2013). It is all about managing social media in such a way that there are constant updates and contact with the customer. Having undertaken research on this Facebook page, the researcher found that the page, *I love Cape Town* and *Cape Town International Airport* are not linked to one another, which may be problematic.

The existence of social media occurs in various different forms and each serves a different purpose. Newly emerging online applications add substance to the information exchange among consumers (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:180). Today, Web 2.0, also referred to as 'Travel 2.0' in the tourism industry, includes a range of new technological applications such as media and content syndication, mash-ups, AJAX, tagging, wikis, web forums and message boards, customer ratings and evaluation systems, virtual worlds, for example, Second Life, podcasting, blogs, and online videos (vlogs) (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008:100).

There is also Google South Africa that launched the Mzansi Experience. It showcases the Google Street View collection that will provide local and international tourists with the opportunity to go on virtual tours of some of South Africa's top natural attractions. Google South Africa has created 360-degree imagery of the country's iconic locations, which enables visitors to go on a virtual tour and see the sights for themselves on their phones, tablets or computers. The Discover South Africa on Google Maps collection includes Table Mountain National Park; Cape of Good Hope; Kruger National Park; West Coast National

Park; Lion's Head; Signal Hill; Golden Mile; Sunset Beach; Clifton Beach; Hout Bay; Llandudno Beach; Camps Bay Beach; and Boulder's Beach (TourismUpdate:2016).

As stated by PhoCusWright's Social Media, in Travel 2012: Social Networks and Traveller Reviews (Juman, 2012), more than 75% of travellers use social networks to find shopping-related deals, while 30% specifically seek out travel-related deals. Fifty-two percent of Facebook users said that their travel plans were affected by seeing pictures of trips posted by friends. Fifty-two percent of travellers who had already made travel plans changed some part of their plan after checking out what was being said on social media channels. In addition, 33% changed their hotel bookings, 10% changed their original planned resort, 7% changed their destinations and 5% changed their airlines. According to the study, travellers are looking for tips and inspiration on social media (Kiráľová & Pavlíčeka, 2015:361).

CHAPTER 3:SOCIAL MEDIA AND VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part in the decision-making for businesses. Social media can comprise of various benefits if managed correctly. This Chapter includes an in-depth discussion of the importance of social media, the role of social media in online travel information search, as well as the challenges of using social media.

Thereafter, a discussion follows on VICs. This includes a section on social media marketing in the context of VICS, VICs in a global context, mobile VICs, the importance of VIC's in South Africa and then finally relates to the role of social media on VICs.

The Internet has fundamentally reshaped the way tourism-related information is distributed and the way people plan for and consume travel (Buhalis & Lay, 2008). When faced with new technology for tourism purposes, travellers often use information searches in the Internet and, in addition, gain valuable travel information from various sources and according to Chung & Coo (2015:215), 'connecting' and 'exchanging' have replaced the keywords 'selling' or 'searching' in various industries. Social media has become a part of peoples' everyday routine and it is an essential role of VICs to take advantage of social media for online information search about a destination.

3.2 SOCIAL MEDIA

3.2.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media applications have become part of the standard communication repertoire for many companies including collaborative projects, micro-blogs/blogs, content communities, social networking sites, and virtual worlds (Kaplan, 2012:129). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) define social media as "... a group of Internet-based applications that build on

the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Cohen (2011:1) summarised 30 definitions of social media from different perspectives, which include the characteristics and nature of social media as follows:

a) Social media are online tools, applications, platforms and media, and therefore, depend on information technology.

b) Social media are peer-to-peer communication channels, which enable the interactive web's content creation, collaboration and exchanges between participants and the public: facets that introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organisations, communities and individuals.

c) Social media enable users to form a virtual community by using cross-platforms, thereby affecting people's behaviours and real life (Cohen, 2011:1).

While there is a lack of a formal definition, 'social media' can generally be understood to be any Internet-based application that carries consumer-generated content that encompasses ''... media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers'' (Blackshaw, 2006; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:180, in Gretzel, Kang & Lee, 2007:3). Social media includes a variety of applications, in the technical sense, which allow consumers to 'post', 'tag', or 'blog' on the Internet.

The core focus of social media can be defined as information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies that are intended to facilitate communications, influence and interact with peers and public audiences, typically, through the Internet and mobile communication networks (Gretzel, Law & Fuchs, 2010:531).The control that a VIC has over the content shared with the customer is restricted, since the customer also has access to information that may be shared with the VIC and other customers: a situation that could cause the VICs to refrain from using social media.

Social media play an increasingly important role in many aspects of tourism, especially in information search and decision-making behaviours (Fotis, 2012) as well as by focusing on best practice for interacting with consumers via social media channels, for example, social sharing of holiday experiences The leveraging of social media to market tourism products

has proven to be an excellent strategy (Fotis, 2012). Globally, there is an explosion of online, content-generated information via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter so that it becomes imperative for the tourism industry to take cognisance of, and make use of these freely available social media mediums.

The success of social media has had a tremendous impact on small businesses. An example of this is the success of income generated by small and medium businesses (SMB) in North America. The roughly 1.3 million SMBs in North America generate an astonishing $5.5 trillion in annual revenue (Weis, 2014). According to a new study conducted by LinkedIn, social media are increasingly becoming the vital axis upon which a community rotates (Weiss, 2014).

In many cases, it is seen that small businesses do not have the funds to invest in all avenues of marketing and communicating information. There are a number of companies that can help small businesses to make sure they take advantage of all the benefits that social media sites have to offer. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr and LinkedIn have the option of creating a free online awareness campaign. It is vital that SMBs understand how to use these sites so that they have a beneficial and not a negative influence on a business.

From a destination perspective, an example of the destination outreach recently achieved by Tourism Australia's Facebook page (See APPENDIX G) indicates a total of more than five million fans, making it the largest Facebook page in Australia and the world's most popular destination page (Ali & Frew, 2013:137). This is evidence of a concerted social media strategy that not only facilitates the sharing of experiences and media, but also pays attention to the feedback loop (Ali & Frew, 2013:137).

Social media is at the core of everything and the starting point when it comes to helping a destination's brand (Baker, 2013:1). Tourism experience and social brands are more and more shaped by what people are saying about a destination and their experiences, which, in turn, shape the stories that are being told. The stories that people tell ultimately build brands in the minds of people who are listening to them. According to Baker (2013:2), there are five levels of social media sophistication. It is important for a VIC to take note of

the levels of social media sophistication, as illustrated below, in order to stay up to date with trends.

Table 2: Social media: Levels of sophistication (Baker, 2013:2).

LEVELS	CHARACTERISTICS
LEVEL 1 - IGNORING SOCIAL MEDIA	Leadership that is very sceptical of social media (e.g. "Facebook is a waste of time"; "I don't care what my old high school buddy had for dinner last night"; "Twitter is for young people"; etc.); Fear of negativity; Restricted staff access to social networking sites through policies or technology; Lack of an internal social media champion; Lack of social media knowledge at marketing agencies.
LEVEL 2 - EXPERIMENTING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA	Leadership that is sceptical, does not know what activities are happening, ignores them because of disinterest, allows it because an influential stakeholder asked questions, or is swamped dealing with politics; Fear of negativity and overreaction when something "bad" happens; Enthusiastic internal champions who have created rogue accounts, but sometimes lack skills to execute them properly. These people eventually leave the organisation to grow their skills properly elsewhere; Hit or miss results; Chasing anything that is new and hot; Lack of social media knowledge at marketing agencies; No or very little budget; No metrics.
LEVEL 3 - SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORTING MARKETING CAMPAIGNS	Leadership that realises social media can be powerful but still relies/insists on traditional methods because they are more comfortable with them, or do not know how to measure and compare the difference in results without understanding social media principles; Little integration or collaboration with members, partners and industry; Heavy scheduling and approval processes for social media activities; Broadcast-style communication in social media; Viewing and communicating with fans and followers in a traditional outbound marketing way, such as a consumer email database; Year-round efforts on Twitter, Facebook, etc., that lack strategic

LEVELS	CHARACTERISTICS
	direction;
	Social media black-outs when there are no campaigns in the market place;
	Frustrated and/or maxed-out staff who understand the potential of social media, but are not heard by the leadership and sometimes require more training;
	Often staff skilled in social media leave the organisation out of frustration;
	Budget that is a small portion of marketing campaigns;
	Lack of appropriate metrics, with success often measured either by big numbers (number of fans/followers) or a campaign's level of creativity
LEVEL 4 - FOLLOWING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY	Leadership that understands social media and has given it dedicated resources;
	Marketing campaigns that have a social agenda at the core;
	Agencies in place that are dedicated to social issues or a digital agency that really have social strategies that are tied to marketing goals and objectives that are in place;
	Stronger alignment and integration with members, partners, industry and other stakeholders;
	A move from mass to niche marketing;
	Activities that are measured and adjusted in real time;
	Staff that is trained in social media;
	Empowered staff who are allowed and encouraged to participate as professionals in social networks at a destination management organisation (DMO);
	Social media monitoring and engagement in collaboration with members, partners and industry;
	Social media that is incorporated in customer service;
	Relaxed social media access policies and limited approvals for posting content.
LEVEL 5 - EMBRACING THE SOCIAL MEDIA BUSINESS MODEL	Leadership that understands that business models from 15 years ago must change and is willing to undertake the pain of changing the organisation;
	Relentless focus on the consumer;
	Majority of marketing resources are allocated to digital platforms;
	A shift from destination marketing to destination management, where the customer experience is seen as the primary way to build brand;
	Marketing strategies that are a collaborative effort between the

LEVELS	CHARACTERISTICS
	DMO, industry, residents, passionate consumers and other stakeholders;
	A move from mass marketing to niche marketing;
	Culture of collaboration, internally as well as with members, partners, industry and even consumers;
	Flattened organisational hierarchy to increase efficiency and speed needed to respond and adjust quickly;
	Lean processes;
	Staff that is trained, empowered and supported to make decisions without requiring lengthy approvals or spending time in meetings designed by management to control every aspect of every tactic.

Table 2 provides a valuable tool for VICs to measure the level at which their centres functions and a guideline as to what has to be done in order to move up the scale to the next level of proficiency. It is important that tourism-related authorities understand and implement successful models that have been used elsewhere and adapt them to their own needs in the process of adopting newer and more effective marketing strategies.

3.2.2 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ONLINE TRAVEL INFORMATION SEARCH

Social media, which facilitate the interactions between online consumers, have emerged as an important component of the online tourism domain (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:180). Social media have the capacity to configure information in ways that have the power to precipitate instant mass engagement (Ali & Frew, 2013:121). Stemming from marketing campaigns, as a result of which individuals can download and/or view a video that can then be seen by millions of people within the space of a few days, the world is in an unprecedented information age where social connectedness is increasingly becoming a centre stage phenomenon (Ali & Frew, 2013:121). Social media includes social networking sites, consumer review sites, content community sites, wikis, Internet forums and location-based social media. Social media have emerged as the new way in which people connect socially through the integration of information and communication technology, such as the mobile 'phone and web-based technologies as well as in terms of social interactions, the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio. Social media are actually more than a

new way to communicate with others: it is an entire online environment built on participants' contributions and interactions (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014:28).

Individually and globally, the world of information has expanded drastically, as the web has barely been available for two decades (Ali & Frew, 2013:122). Social media can be expressed as online tools, applications, networks, and platforms, or as media that provide everybody with the ability to interact, collaborate, create and share information, which they or someone else has created (Ali & Frew, 2013:122).

Jacobsen and Munar (2012:44) stated that some 24% of the respondents in their study used information from social networks, such as Facebook, for their actual holiday tour. Nevertheless, only 5% of tourists found that the knowledge available on social media, as an aid to making holiday choices, was of little importance in their choice of matters such as accommodation, eating places, and activities. Even fewer found the information disseminated through the social media to be important in their choice of a tour operator or travel agency, should they be interested in a package tour. At this point, differences could be accounted for in terms of the age of the participants. The younger half of the sample, under 35 years of age, tended to acknowledge the value of information obtained from social media in respect of their choice of tour operator, agency and activities to a greater extent than their older fellow passengers (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012:44). Kumar 2001, in Ali & Frew, 2013:137) found that friends and family attach importance to status updates, pictures, videos and other social media postings, in their own destination decision-making process. In this regard Twitter was rated highest in ranking and Facebook a close second.

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) comprises a number of elements for the tourist at any stage of a trip. A degree of tangible access to information exists at VICs, very often in the form of brochures, catalogues or newspaper articles. Increasingly, the medium of access is electronic, in the form of television travel programming, documentaries and dedicated commercial travel channels or perhaps even indirect information gained from movies. However, today, this information is frequently accessed through the Internet. (Ali & Frew, 2013:109). These new technologies are creating a new global market place that is more competitive. With e-commerce and e-businesses, the market has more opportunities and possibilities than ever before. The

ability to reach a global audience, obtain instant market information and conduct electronic business transactions has increased economic efficiency and has opened markets for goods and services from the developing world (Shanker, 2008:50).

Information may be retrieved at a specific location, such as home or work, and increasingly it is being sought on the move (Ali & Frew, 2013:109). Whether local or more remote, whether the tourist is static or mobile, regardless of the stage of a trip, it is information that the tourist is after. The specific means of communication is secondary and only becomes important when the device becomes unreliable, slow, or in some other way a barrier to accessing the information (Ali & Frew, 2013:109). During the in-trip phase, the use of devices such as smartphones increasingly stimulates demand for access, although tourists are conscious of the high roaming charges and data download when travelling internationally. Thus, when at the in-trip stage, the tourist will encounter greater use of location-based services, such as the VIC (Ali & Frew, 2013:117). The most widespread technologies are used during the post-trip phase, for example, social networking sites, photograph and video sharing sites and personal blogs (Ali & Frew, 2013:119).

Social media is updated frequently, which 'invites' search engines to index social media pages more frequently (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:181). Due to the very nature of it being socially constructed, the index usually includes a lot of hyperlinks, which influences the media's ranking in the search for results in a positive way. This is mainly due to the fact that social media encourage online consumers to be actively engaged in organising the contents through activities like ''digging'' and ''tagging'', which, in turn, automatically creates an ever growing link structure on the Internet (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:181). All in all, social media is seen as extremely search engine friendly (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010:182).

3.2.3   THE CHALLENGES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA

To effectively use and communicate via social media platforms can be challenging. According to Whitehouse (2012:1), there are 12 social media trends that are specific to South Africa. A few of these trends include:

a)   *Demise of content:* in the world of social media, content is not king, but conversation is. People prefer bite-size titbits to discuss with friends and peers, as

evidenced by the frequent lively debates on Facebook and Twitter. They won't watch a five-minute video, unless it sparks a discussion.

b) **Rise of planning:** many local brands have been conducting their social media on an *ad-hoc* basis without having a comprehensive strategy or plan in place. As the industry becomes more sophisticated and established, even social media-phobic brands will start allocating more time to planning.

c) **The 'golden minute':** previously referred to as an hour, but that is old news. Rapid response times will become increasingly important for brands as South Africans spend more time interacting on social media channels.

d) **Social media fatigue:** consumers who have been interacting with social networks for a while will start to use fewer channels less frequently. Brands will have to be more relevant and useful to sustain engagement.

e) **Tighter budgets:** with a global recession looming, public relations and marketing budgets will be under even greater pressure. Companies will expect more for less and agencies will need to be innovative and money-savvy when engaging with online communities. The Telegraph newspaper in the United Kingdom (Khan, 2016) states that there is a one in three chance that the world economy will slip back into a recession this year. Recent data (Ismail, 2016) states that South Africa is already in a recession.

f) **More measurement:** despite tighter budgets, online measurement of reputations and monitoring will grow in importance as clients begin to appreciate the huge advantage of having what is, effectively, comprehensive customer research at their disposal.

g) **Increased skills development:** as social media matures and online brand management becomes more sophisticated, there will be a surge in the development of local skills. Advertising and public relations graduates will be expected to know their way around social networks, while clients will welcome training. The National Department of Tourism has been offering courses in VIC skills training with the expertise of the University of Pretoria's Tourism Management Division since 2014.

The above challenges relating to the 'rise of planning', has reference to many companies that decide to create a Facebook page, but in reality never use it. Therefore, when a decision is made to use social media, it is of utmost importance to ensure that it is used for

marketing purposes, communicating interesting items and replying to queries on a daily basis as mentioned under c) above, namely, the '*Golden Minute'*.

A further on-going challenge is 'tighter budgets'. Since most VICs are government owned, there is always a strict budget. Social media give these organisations the opportunity to market their centres for free, although the option of a business account for social media is also available.

Social media, both general, such as YouTube and Facebook and travel-specific, that is, TripAdvisor, are often hailed and feared as democratising the travel experience, because travellers are seen to have gained new, hitherto unprecedented powers in relating positive and negative information about tourism destinations to their fellow travellers (Mendes-Filho & Tan, 2009; Amersdorffer, Bauhuber & Oellrich, 2012, Lim, Chung & Weaver, 2012).

WOM communication on tourism destinations has always been the most significant influence in the tourism industry. This influence has been amplified by social media, since a single person not only reaches his or her acquaintances, but can also communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about a tourism destination (Hancic, Kurei, Brumen, Rosi & Rangus, 2013:17-18).

The potential tourist, when still at the pre-trip stage, is in the information seeking mode and will more likely be using a desktop computer or laptop, mainly for web browsing, rather than focusing on destination and hotel information and review sites and, therefore, is less likely to use social media to any significant extent (Ali & Frew, 2013:111). The tasks that tourists use to fulfil in the pre-consumption and post-consumption stages are now being fulfilled in the consumption stage with the assistance of the smartphone, thereby resulting in several changes to the tourist experience (Wang *et. al..*, 2014:24). Firstly, tourists are more likely to plan less before the trip, because they know that they can access online information sources during the trip in order to reserve hotels, select restaurants or find directions. Secondly, tourists are more likely to change their plans if they are dissatisfied with the original plan or are not able to execute the plan due to certain unforeseeable conditions (Wang *et. al.*, 2014:24).

3.3   VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

3.3.1   SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE CONTEXT OF VICS

VICs, also referred to as TICs, exist internationally. The strategic action plan 2010 to 2020 for England illustrates how the provision of information is a vital part of the marketing process at each stage of the visitor's journey. In addition to providing a valuable welcome and information service to the visitor during the 'in-destination' phase', VICs play a key role in converting the marketing inspiration element into the 'planning' and 'booking' stages as well as into the management of effective customer relationships (Strategic Action Plan for Tourism for England, 2010-2020)

Some of their key findings of the above Strategic Action Plan that include both challenges and opportunities for VICs are the following:

a)   Well informed visitors, who stay for longer periods at a specific destination, potentially move on to other English destinations and, most importantly, will want to return. The tourism industry must ensure that information is modernised, integrated nationally and maintains pace with technological advances.

b)   Social media will play an increasingly influential role in the ways that people gather information about a destination in advance during their visit through the use of smartphones.

c)   Methods of providing visitor information must evolve over time in response to advances in technology and changes in consumer behaviour. To enable this process to take place, information on market and technological trends, visitor behaviour and best practice in information provision must be more widely available to allow informed decision making at every level, thereby enabling Destination Management Organisations to learn from one another other and from other sectors.

d)   Face-to-face contact with some 24 million 'customers' each year should be a crucial element in understanding visitors. TIC's provide an opportunity to learn more about visitor profiles, their behaviour patterns and booking habits as well as influencing them into making repeated visits. TIC's can also play a key role in customer data

collection and e-marketing (Strategic Action Plan for Tourism for England, 2010-2020).

The main role of the VIC is to provide information in the form of knowledge also referred to as value-added information. Fallon and Kriwoken (2002:1) suggest that one of the most important elements in the provision of information is for staff to understand their audience. By so doing, the VIC will meet the needs of visitors, management and communities. As mentioned previously, it is also argued that the staff at VICs should provide personal experiences when disseminating information so that the VIC experience is 'real, intimate and friendly'. Fallon and Kriwoken (2002:1) also argue that if VICs have good signage, are placed in locations near the attractions and, ideally, provide distinct and innovative designs to the public, they have an opportunity to enhance the tourist experience. Under these circumstances, tourists may be willing to use classic knowledge brokers to check the quality and reliability of the travel information they have already obtained by using both online and offline sources (Hwang & Lyu, 2015:61).

As of June 2015 there are 231 VICs in South Africa, of which 92 are privately owned and 139 are government owned and operate on low budgets (National Department of Tourism, 2015: 1). Many VICs abroad are run by volunteers, although it is not known if this is the case in South Africa. Smith and Holmes (2012:562) investigated the degree of volunteer involvement in visitor centres. As visitor centre workers are often the first contact a tourist makes on arriving at a destination, they set the stage for the visitors' experience. Although workers can be part- or full-time paid staff, in many cases, volunteers deliver these services. Tourism studies overwhelmingly use general volunteer motivation survey instruments, for example, the Volunteer Function Index (Clary *et. al.*, 1998) to investigate generic motivations for volunteering (Smith & Holmes, 2012:563) These quantitative studies often fail to capture the specific motivation underpinning an individual's choice of a particular organisation, programme or volunteer role (Smith & Holmes, 2012:563) A small number of qualitative studies have begun to consider why volunteers are attracted to specific tourism organisations and programmes. It has been demonstrated that inter-related factors include the location, the nature and variety of the volunteering task, the image and status of the organisation as well as the influence of peers and financial

considerations (Broad & Jenkins, 2008; Smith, 2003; Söderman & Snead, 2008, in Smith & Holmes, 2012:563).

3.3.2 VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Technology has become a very important part of our lives. VICs used to be a place where the visitor could only find a few brochures, out-dated maps, and staff who appeared to be disinterested in their job. With the variety of technology that is available in the 21st Century, VICs have the world at their feet. On an international level, VIC premises range from commercial buildings, heritage buildings, chamber of commerce offices, city council offices and purpose built buildings or as an adjunct to a museum or tourist attraction. In smaller communities, the VIC is often a service offered in conjunction with other businesses or on premises occupied by a community organisation or the local municipality (National Department of Tourism, 2009:16).

A study done by Lyu and Hwang (2015:61) indicated that the development of information communication technology has a negative effect on the 'use demand' of VICs. The use of the Internet to search for travel information has decreased the demand for VIC usage by 27.6% and drops the probability of tourists visiting a facility by 18.5% (Lyu & Hwang, 2015:61).

Manchester's VIC seized the chance to switch its location to a better spot that was closer to busier thoroughfares and the main railway station. The Centre's management also decided not to replicate what they had before moving, and instead, decided to "... truly reflect the original modern essence of Manchester ...", but more importantly, those behind the new Centre wanted to incorporate as much new technology as possible in order to simply improve the experience of visiting the Centre in the first place (May, 2012:1).

According to May (2012), the new centre includes a number different technologically-led activities and displays, namely:

a)   A Mediawall;

b)   Twitter feeds;

c)   Desktop computers; and

d)   Microsoft Surface tables.

The Mediawall, for example, takes up the entire length of one end of the facility and is used to showcase events and products in the city: a display that visitors will presumably find difficult to ignore. Real-time information is streamed into the Centre on screens mounted on the walls, each carrying messages not only from the VisitManchester website, but also from local tourism businesses as well as residents and visitors. Andrew Daines, a former VisitBritain executive, who consulted on the project, says tweets are filtered to cut out non-desirable content. A number of desktop computers are positioned throughout the store, allowing visitors to search for, and book accommodation, transport and events (May, 2012:1).

Most impressive, is the use of Microsoft Surface tables where each device can be used to search and find content in a more sociable and fun way than a desktop personal computer As with other deployments of Surface tables, props can be used to interact with the maps so that users can find certain services, such as hotels, bars and restaurants. Daines (May, 2012:1) claims that it is the first time a European tourist office has used Surface tables in such a way.

Daines (2012:1) stated that the Centre has realised a number of key milestones, namely:

a)   Fifty two percent (52%) of visitors used the Surface tables or PCs to get more information. "Younger respondents particularly were more likely to use the surface tables and computer without assistance by a member of staff: 43% of those aged 16 to 25 used surface tables independently compared to 20% of those aged 36 to 45.";

b)   Fifty eight percent (58%) of visitors discovered new places to visit using the technology;

c)   Two-thirds of visitors cited the technology as a reason why they would use the Centre again.

Another excellent example of a VIC that incorporated social media into its Centre is the Copenhagen Visitor Centre that opened a social media lounge. In the new lounge area, extra sockets were put in place to recharge mobile 'phones or tablets that ran out of power

quickly as a result of taking photographs all day long. In addition, global positioning software (GPS) was installed to help visitors find their way around an unfamiliar city. Free WIFI is also available to gain information about Copenhagen, download applications, access email and, more importantly, to share experiences on social media (Visit Copenhagen, 2013).

Furthermore, "In the lounge area, we invite visitors to check in on Facebook, post, tweet and hashtag their photos and experiences from Copenhagen. We know that recommendations in social media from friends and acquaintances can be decisive in the choice of holiday destinations, so that way our guests can inspire others to visit Copenhagen, and if they like our Facebook page or follow our Twitter profile they can keep up to date on what is on in the city, even after they leave the visitors centre," (Seest, in, Visit Copenhagen, 2013:1). In addition, there is not just the lounge, but also personal assistance at the counter, as well as shelves with many brochures and a free map of the city (Visit Copenhagen, 2013:1). In other words, high technology is combined with the personal touch and traditional printed media.

The VIC in Port Adelaide (*n.d.*), in Australia, explains that the role of the VIC includes the following:

a) promotes visits to the Port and local area;

b) creates a positive experience for visitors by providing a high level of friendly and professional service;

c) provides an effective community information service to residents;

d) provides services and facilities that are open seven days a week;

e) provides brochures and advertising;

f) presents displays, signage and event banners;

g) provides computer access to the Port Adelaide Enfield (PAE) Council and associated tourism websites;

h) organises professional development workshops for local tourism and hospitality operators;

i) provides meeting rooms;

j) provides a courtyard;

k) provides public toilets; and

l)   provides for and organises volunteer tour guides.

According to World Luxury Tourism (2013), the five best social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, Wayne, Airbnb.com and TripAdvisor. Thompson (*n.d.*) stated that Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest fall under the top five social media sites. He mentioned that they are three of the biggest trends in social networking and that they cause headaches for tourism marketing departments all over the world. Social media can cause problems, because of the lack of time to update the content, blog or tweet new information. Therefore, the importance of developing an appropriate strategy is stressed.

Another great example of a VIC is the new centre in Belfast. VisitBelfast opened its new high-technology visitor centre right in the heart of the city in December 2013. The Centre follows an innovative approach towards serving its visitors. The concept focuses on creating a one-stop shop for tourists, where inspiration and information are provided through a unique mix of digital self-service technologies and traditional customer advisory services (VisitBelfast, 2013).

VisitBelfast sets out to create a new, modern visitor centre, which caters for both visitors and locals alike by providing them with information and attempting to stimulate an enthusiastic response towards Belfast and Northern Ireland. The aim is to create a setting that puts customer engagement at the core, by combining both traditional service encounters with the latest interactive technologies (VisitBelfast, 2013). Overall, the VIC aims to meet the following objectives:

a)   Implement the latest technologies in order to provide the best possible visitor experience.

b)   Inspire and inform visitors and locals about what Belfast has to offer.

c)   Maintain a balance between meeting commercial targets and providing valuable travel advice (VisitBelfast, 2013).

The latest digital technologies lie at the core of the VIC's set-up. It features a wide variety of gadgets, devices and tools, including the following:

a) ***Self-service Kiosks***: large scale touch-screens, which feature all the available products and pull content dynamically from the Visit Belfast websites and external social media channels.

b) ***Information & Story Islands:*** interactive screens which allow visitors to explore specific brand themes through a variety of media (e.g. videos, maps, texts)

c) ***Video Wall:*** to showcase image films, campaigns and other inspirational video content.

d) ***Interactive Stations:*** touch screens that allow visitors to create, save and send itineraries via email.

e) ***Social Media Wall:*** a large screen that displays the latest social media updates on Visit Belfast's Twitter channel.

f) ***Free Wifi:*** to enable visitors' engagement with digital channels and to allow download of custom itineraries to mobile devices (VisitBelfast, 2013:1).

VisitBelfast recognises the growing importance of social media as a customer service channel. In the past, social media was the sole responsibility of the marketing and communications department (VisitBelfast, 2013:1). This situation reflects the role played by social media in many destination marketing organisations around Europe, namely, that of an additional channel within the overall marketing-mix. By planning to empower front office travel advisors to handle customer enquiries directly on Belfast's social media channels, the organisation made a significant step towards adopting social media as an additional customer service channel (VisitBelfast, 2013:1).

The new visitor centre's social media wall bridges the boundaries between the digital sphere and the physical service environment and enables customers to view the latest updates from VisitBelfast's Twitter channels (VisitBelfast, 2013:1).

3.3.2.1   *Customer relationship management in visitor information centres*

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a strategic approach towards creating, maintaining and managing ties with consumers and consumer segments (Payne & Frow, 2008). During the process of adopting marketing strategies for Web 2.0, marketers had to vastly rethink their approach to CRM (Xiang & Tussyadiah, 2014:268). CRM now referred to as CRM 2.0 or social CRM, has changed from "... a strategy that was focused on

customer transactions to a strategy that incorporates both customer transactions and customer interactions" (Greenberg, 2010:410, Xiang & Tussyadiah, 2014: 268).

Yoo and Gretzel (2010) summarised the differences between CRM and CRM 2.0. These differences are as follows:

Table 3: The differences between CRM and CRM 2.0

CRM	CRM 2.0
One-way communication	Feedback from customer
Offline customer service centre	Online customer service
Limited customer data	Customer identification with data mining
Limited C2C communication	Virtual customer communities
Delayed response	Real-time communication

Facebook has become established as the main social network site (SNS) where travellers choose to connect with companies (Xiang & Tussyadiah, 2014:269). Facebook fan pages provide a simple and efficient way for marketers to connect with travellers and allow for the implementation of CRM 2.0 principles (Xiang & Tussyadiah, 2014:269). By using these new CRM 2.0 strategies and implementing them in social media, the way in which information centres communicate with their clients could be improved.

It is also very important to understand the 'new breed' of customer in order to take full advantage of CRM 2.0 strategies. Greenberg (2010:411) stated that social customers are not the customers of yore. They trust their peers and are connected to their peers via the web and mobile devices. They expect information to be available to them on demand and at the same time they have the tools and the desire to socialise and share this information with the same trusted peers, regardless of whether they actually know them or not.

The new breed of customers requires transparency and authenticity from their peers and the companies they choose to deal with. They get a feeling of some connection to the company and, most likely, receive rewards for their efforts on behalf of the company. Their

loyalty is attitudinal, not just behavioural. If things go well, they become advocates for the company. The core driver of this relationship is trust.

VICs should incorporate a strategy that does not only deal with customer transactions, but also customer interactions. By doing so, the visitor gains local knowledge from the VIC staff that is not available elsewhere.

3.3.3   MOBILE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

The concept of a mobile VIC, in which a vehicle is used, is fairly new. The first vehicle was launched in South Africa on the 2nd of May, 2014. Cape Town Tourism's new innovative mobile VIC was launched at the opening of World Travel Market Africa. These two events displayed a significant synergy as both the vehicle and the trade event were firsts for the continent of Africa. According to Wesgro (2014:1), there is less and less of a focus on bricks and mortar visitor centres because a digitally-minded generation of travellers habitually receive information where they are, instead of going out to seek it (Wesgro, 2014:1).

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Cape Town Tourism, Enver Duminy (Wesgro, 2014:1) said; "We have tracked a rising trend of visitors and would-be visitors using our online portals to access information about Cape Town. It is this call for mobility and ease of access that has inspired our move to create a personal interface that will be able to assist Capetonians and visitors at gatherings or in spaces where there is sudden seasonal traffic".

The Mobile VIC was manned by informed Cape Town Tourism hosts and had a built-in office to assist visitors to make bookings for any of the member products and South African National Parks (SANParks) establishments. Visitors were able to buy tickets for events and shows via Computicket and Webtickets. The attractive chill-out area, featuring locally designed chairs and tables, offered free Wi-Fi to all visitors engaging with the vehicle. A LCD screen showcased elements of Cape Town and feature detailed maps. The Official Cape Town Visitor's Guide was available at no cost, along with many other useful brochures, cleverly displayed on the inside of the open back doors of the van.

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The choice of a Mercedes Panel Van was deliberate as its Blue EFFICIENCY package optimised fuel consumption and reduced emissions, whilst boasting an eco-gear manual transmission and a diesel filter (Wesgro, 2014:1). The entire operations element of the unit was designed to be solar powered, thereby emphasising the importance of Responsible Tourism. The vehicle was named Thando, which is the word for 'love' in the local African language isiXhosa, (Wesgro, 2014:1). Why Thando stopped all operations after 27 June 2014 is unknown, in spite of apparently being such a well thought out integrated service including so many of the services that appear to have been so successful at many international destinations. It is extremely important to establish the reasons for withdrawing this service.

Globally, there are more examples of Mobile VICs than ever before. Cities across the United States are closing the doors on their storefront visitor bureaus and taking their message to the road. At least ten cities have done away with stationary institutions and are using pimped up trucks and vans with iPads, map murals and music to draw tourists to this new generation of visitor centres. The mobile visitor centres are used both to inform visitors already at a location, for example, the Arlington Convention and Visitors Service's truck that travels between the nearby neighbourhoods and draws tourists' attention to a new attraction, such as 'Visit Eau Claire's Fun Patrol' that attends music fairs across the State (Shankman, 2013:1).

The most recent mobile launch is from 'Visit Saint Paul', which unveiled its mobile visitor centre named Paul. Similarly, Missouri National Recreational River Centre rolled out a mobile ranger station to attract visitors in other parts of the State to the actual river. All tourism organisations emphasise the importance of taking their message 'to the people' when announcing a new initiative. Troy Thompson (in, Shankman, 2013:1) founder of the Travel 2.0 Consulting Group, spoke in favour of closing traditional visitor centres at the Missouri Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus Annual Conference in 2012 (Shankman, 2013:1).

3.3.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is acknowledged worldwide that there are various means of finding information. Information is crucial to the tourist's destination choice. The VIC is one way that tourists can find destination information. Tourists with a feeling of uncertainty regarding the reliability of travel information from mobile devices are more likely to visit the VIC (Lyu & Hwang, 2015:57). According to the National Department of Tourism (2011), VICs are the key to ensure, *inter alia,* a link between the industry and visitors, both domestically and internationally. VICs play an important role within the tourism industry, since they often serve as vital first points of contact and provide value-added services to visitors. The Framework for Visitor Information Centres that was developed for South Africa seeks to standardise the tourism information offerings throughout South Africa. The aim is to assist 'Destination South Africa' become more competitive in the information dissemination arena internationally, thereby positioning itself favourably for repeat visits (National Department of Tourism, 2009: 15). In 2015 a "Visitor Information Centres Handbook: A practical guide to VIC practitioners" was launched by the National Department of Tourism. This is an operational guide to assist VIC staff with interacting with visitors as well as improving the overall approach to managing the VIC. It serves as a guide covering key aspects of a typical VIC operational requirements and procedures, and does not replace any existing legislation or organisational policy (National Department of Tourism, 2015: 2).

The National Department of Tourism (2011) defines a VIC as a physical location that provides tourist information to visitors who tour the area locally. It may be:

a) A visitor centre, also called an interpretation centre, is usually found at a specific attraction or place of interest, such as landmarks, national parks, national forests or state parks. These centres provide information about matters, such as trail maps, camp sites, staff contacts and restrooms, as well as in-depth educational exhibits and artefact displays about natural or cultural history amongst other places of interest. Frequently, films or other media displays are on show. If the site has permit requirements or guided tours, the visitor centre is often the place where these are co-ordinated. These visitor centres often do not have staff as they provide stand-alone exhibits only. Although they provide information, a visitor centre can be regarded as a 'passive' information service, because there is no active face-to-face

interchange of dialogue or communication between the visitor and an information officer.

b) A TIC provides face-to-face information to visitors about the area's attractions, lodgings, maps, and other items relevant to tourism. Frequently, these centres are operated at an airport or other port of entry and are managed by the local government or Chamber of Commerce. A visitor centre is often simply called an information centre. Such a tourist/visitor information centre is distinguished from the previously mentioned 'visitor centre' in that there is a staff contingent that offers daily face-to-face information.

The National Department of Tourism also highlighted the following important functions of a VIC, as facility that:

a) makes bookings;

b) provides information about the availability of accommodation;

c) offers integrated services and a call centre;

d) provides a database that is maintained; and

e) Internet facilities that is available to the public.

The National Department of Tourism (2011), commissioned a study of TICs internationally. Once the results were received, VICs in South Africa were compared to VICs in London, Dublin, Berlin, Hamburg, Sydney and Singapore. The audit showed that the VICs in South Africa have sufficient parking and 58% cater for people with disabilities (National Department of Tourism, 2009:25). Signage, on the other hand, is a feature that presented alarming negative results with only 49% of VICs having adequate route signage (National Department of Tourism, 2009:25). Most of the VICs require maintenance with regards to visitor amenities. An important challenge requiring serious attention is a dynamic electronic display, which could be attributed to the lack of a visitor information system to manage the electronic display, the unit and the system (National Department of Tourism, 2009: 28). It also provides an excellent opportunity to promote a restoration project. A centre relies on models, words, pictures and maps to tell its story. The displays should cover a relatively small area leaving extra space for sales and other fund raising activities (Beech, n.d.).

As important as VIC's are in the distribution of information for destinations, the centre itself must also adhere to certain objectives. According to the National Department of Tourism (2011), these objectives are to:

a) provide accurate information about the tourism product offerings that could be consumed by visitors at a destination;

b) support tourism growth by influencing visitor flow throughout the country;

c) provide generic tourism material, a user-friendly e-business platform that provides the necessary tools for information and reservation management as well as professional tourism services to visitors;

d) assist small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) development by facilitating the sale of their goods and services;

e) assist in promoting the products of SMME's to the world market; and

f) contributes to the local economic development of the region through the facilitation of higher spend by visitors to the area.

In addition to having a physical location, the need for a VIC to use social media to market its services is universally important.

3.3.5   VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

With the world becoming smaller through the utilisation of ICTs, it is one of the key features of a VIC to offer the visitor access to the web and to have a strong ICT system in place. It is clear that visitors require information that is easily available and also permits access to a 'self-service' option such as interactive touch screens (National Department of Tourism, 2011:27). Most tourism enterprises, national tourism organisations and local destination marketing organisations increasingly disseminate considerable amounts of information, through the Internet (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012:40). The phenomenon of social electronic media such as Facebook and their potential to influence tourism has resulted in numerous and diverse scholarly contributions, which are still predominantly of an exploratory nature (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012:40).

With the growth of information in all facets of the tourism experience, search engines such as *Google* and *Yahoo!* have become the 'hub' of the Internet galaxy, enabling travellers to

navigate through this space so as to find information that might be useful in the travel planning process (Xiang, Wober & Fesenmaier, 2008:140).

Communication and 'staying in touch' are important to all visitors (National Department of Tourism, 2011:27). Therefore, another critical element of a VIC is the availability of Internet and email facilities in order to stay in touch. The 2014 global audit revealed that 60% of all VICs in South Africa have access to public internet but only 16% have Internet facilities on site (National Department of Tourism, 2011:27).

Managers, of VIC's, are faced with many alternative means for the provision of information, including pamphlets and other printed material, personal client services supported by the Web and online touch screens for information and perhaps reservations (Mistilis & D'ambra, 2008:36).

Web accessibility can be broadly defined as "... an approach to web design that aims for maximal inclusion, both in terms of people who use websites, and the technologies that are utilized in the process" (Alexander, 2003:70). This means that websites should be designed with the idea that they are accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, disability, education, income, culture, and religion (Shneiderman, 2000; Witt & McDermott, 2004, in Shi, 2005:830), or whether they use different agents, for example, a PC, notebook, personal digital assistant (PDA), mobile device, WebTV, or surf with different web browsers (etc. Firefox, Chrome and Internet Explorer).

Internet marketing has rapidly become the most important form of marketing and the major information communication tool for destination marketing organisations around the world. For travellers, the Internet is now also the most important information source and planning tool for trips. The information provided must span the domain from what the destination is, why it should be visited and what should be visited, as well as extending to all the other components of the experience (Morrison, 2013:371). VICs can use the internet and social media to their advantage in order to market their Centre.

Market segmentation is one the key professional principles of marketing and is an extremely important step in selecting a marketing strategy. The following seven segments can be used to differentiate between markets (Morrison, 2013:88):

a) **Trip purpose:** defining the marketing segment in accordance with the main purpose of the visitors' trip. This comprises four main divisions, namely business, including, meetings and conventions; pleasure, whether vacation or leisure; visiting friends and relatives and personal.

b) **Geography:** describing markets by place of residence.

c) **Socio-demographics:** profiling tourists according to census-style characteristics such as age, education, occupation, income and household composition.

d) **Psychographics:** dividing up visitors in terms of their psychological orientations, lifestyles or activities-interests-opinions (AOI)

e) **Behaviour:** differentiating between groups of visitors based upon their past purchasing and travel behaviours or future travel purchase intentions.

f) **Product-related:** using some aspects of the product to define the market segment, such as ski slopes and alpine skiers, golf courses and golfers, reefs and scuba divers.

g) **Channel of distribution (business-to-business):** applying different criteria to specific travel trade intermediaries that are divided into sub-groups. For example, this might include defining travel agent markets by geographic area or commission volume level Tour operators might also be defined geographically or by speciality or the destination served.

The above criteria may not necessarily be of interest to the VIC, as they are not a destination management organisation (DMO). However, it would be a positive move if they use the criteria as a point of reference to improve the services on offer.

It is a new world for marketers as the potential for marketing through social media is enormous and the pay-off is huge (Holzner, 2008). The early part of the 21st Century has witnessed an explosion in the number of media that marketers can employ to reach their customers. This began in the 1990s with the use of the Internet as an advertising medium. Web pages became the 'new' medium with banners and other types of similar advertisements, for example, buttons and rectangles, requesting customers to click on

them and be sent to the advertiser's Web site (Winer, 2009:108). Internet advertising augments the set of communication tools that marketers have used for a number of years, namely, television, radio, print in both magazines and newspapers, and outdoor billboards (Winer, 2009:108). These traditional media are not disappearing. However, it is clear that major marketers are shifting their budgets into new media categories (Winer, 2009:108).

It would be useful for marketers to know what types of search queries are likely to generate more search results that represent the social media content, or what types of social media emerge as search results for a specific destination (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Such knowledge will allow tourism marketers to effectively monitor the shifts in channels of information distribution in order to develop successful strategies for their online marketing efforts (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

According to Winer (2008), there are four factors that are driving the movement towards new media. These factors are as follows:

a)   The existence and improvements of new technologies at home and in the workplace. For example, the rapid penetration of digital video recorders (DVR's) that enable people to fast-forward through television commercials means that advertisers need to seek other ways of reaching their target markets.

b)   Today, marketers are talking about creating 'experiences' for their customers in an attempt to differentiate their products and services from competitors. It is difficult to do this with traditional media that tend to be one-way communications from seller to buyer. As a result, marketers are looking for ways to interact more with their customers as well as to allow their customers to interact more with them.

c)   While advertisers still talk about the popular 18-34 year old demographic, there are vast differences in the media habits and how information is obtained when an 18-year old is compared to someone who is aged 30. The general opinion that is frequently expressed is that marketers are becoming fragmented with the traditional demographic breakdowns becoming less and less useful.

d)   Marketers are more interested in 'behavioural targeting' and focusing on developing personalised messages based on what people are doing on the web or where they are in respect of their personal GPS 'system', namely, their mobile phone.

The number of companies with Facebook pages, Twitter feeds or online communities continues to grow. Marketing's primary objective is to reach consumers in the moment or at touch points, that influence their purchasing behaviour (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2014:4445). Social media is an exclusive component of the consumer's decision journey. It is the only form of marketing that can target consumers at each and every stage of the decision-making process, from the time when they are pondering over different brands and products, right through to the period after a purchase, as their experience influences the brands they prefer and their potential advocacy of the brand influences others (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2014:4445). In order to build viral campaigns and foster online word of mouth marketing (WOM), trust must be established and subsequently reinforced in order to overcome any reluctance on the part of the would be consumer (Miller and Lammas, 2010:7). With the emergence of new technologies, customers have begun to look at social media instead of Google or other search engines in order to get information about companies and their products (Newman, 2013:5112).

The real-time provision of tailored travel information to different social network channels could be beneficial to the tourism industry by increasing 'visit demand' to information centres as well as user satisfaction (Lyu & Hwang, 2015:61). Although, the use of social media as a marketing tool is important, the findings of Lyu and Hwang (2015:54) indicate that traditional tourism facilities are still important promotional elements that play a central role in determining the quality of their clientele's experiences.

Currently, there is a vast amount of literature available on VICs, TICs and social media. The research of this study will focus more specifically on VICs in South Africa by including Cape Town and Johannesburg in the data collection. The next chapter will explain exactly how the research was conducted.

CHAPTER 4:RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology used in order to achieve the research objectives of the study. It describes the research design and strategy and gives a clear description of the target population and sampling size. The techniques used for statistical purposes are explained in the data analysis section, followed by a motivation stressing the importance of the quality and rigour with which the study was conducted as well the associated ethical considerations.

4.2   DESCRIPTION OF INQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

A literature study was carried out pertaining to the role of VIC's, to gain in-depth knowledge and insight into the current situation in South Africa as well as to determine the viability of VICs in terms of the role of social media in the information searching behaviour of visitors to tourist destinations. These findings, in conjunction with the objectives of the study, provided the framework on which decisions regarding the research design were made. The literature study also provided a base-line from which appropriate recommendations could be drawn.

The research design method to get the best end-result for this study was the multiple methods of research design. Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks.

The research approach in multiple methods may use either deductive or inductive approaches and is likely to combine both approaches (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:164). In this study, a concurrent mixed methods research design is used. The method, referred to as a

single-phase research design, involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods within a single phase of data collection and analysis (Saunders *et. al.,* 2012: 167). The main reason for choosing a multiple method research design is to allow for a greater diversity of views that inform and can be reflected upon during the research process (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:169).

Through the utilisation of basic versus an applied study, this study focuses on a basic research method to expand the researcher's knowledge of the processes of business and management and findings of significance and value to society in general (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012:11). In the case of using primary data versus secondary data, primary data was used with secondary data providing valuable information and insights into social media and other channels of communication in relation to VICs and was included in the study (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:304). The research in this study is cross-sectional, in that it deals with the collection and analysis of data from respondents. A longitudinal study's strength is its capacity to study change and development. Since this study did have time constraints, doing such research was not of value to this study (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:190).

The following figure is an example of mixed method studies. The figure shows the different steps in conducting mixed-methods in research:

Figure 5: Flowchart of the Basic Procedures in Implementing a Convergent Design (Creswell & Plano Clark:79)

The information that follows explain the different steps in conducting mixed-methods in depth:

a) Strand Design:
1. Design the Quantitative Strand: State quantitative research questions and determine the quantitative approach.
2. Design the Qualitative Strand: State qualitative research questions and determine the qualitative approach.

b) Data Collection: Collect the Quantitative Data:
1. Obtain permissions.
2. Identify the quantitative sample.
3. Collect closed-ended data with instruments.

c) Collect the Qualitative Data:
1. Obtain permissions.
2. Identify the qualitative sample.
3. Collect open-ended data with protocols.

d) Analysing Data:
1. Analyse the Quantitative Data: Analyse the quantitative data using descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and effect sizes.
2. Analyse the Qualitative Data: Analyse the qualitative data using procedures of theme development and those specific to the qualitative approach.

e) Use Strategies to Merge the Two Sets of Results:
1. Identify content areas represented in both data sets and compare, contrast, and/or synthesize the results in a discussion or table.
2. Identify differences within one set of results based on dimensions within the other set and examine the differences within a display organized by the dimensions.
3. Develop procedures to transform one type of result into the other type of data (e.g. turn themes into counts). Conduct further analyses to relate the transformed data to the other data (e.g. conduct statistical analyses that include the thematic counts).

f) Interpret the Merged Results:

1. Summarize and interpret the separate results

2. Discuss to what extent and in what ways results from the two types of data converge, diverge, relate to each other, and/or produce a more complete understanding.

The motivation behind choosing the convergent design, was based upon certain factors. These factors are:

• The researcher has limited time for collecting data and must collect both types of data in one visit to the field.

• The researcher feels that there is equal value for collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the problem.

• The researcher has skills in both quantitative and qualitative methods of research.

• The researcher can manage extensive data collection and analysis activities. In view of this, this design is best suited for team research or for the sole researcher who can collect limited quantitative and qualitative data.

This design has a number of strengths and advantages (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:78):

• The design makes intuitive sense. Researchers new to mixed methods often choose this design.

• It is an efficient design, in which both types of data are collected during one phase of the research at roughly the same time.

• Each type of data can be collected and analysed separately and independently, using the techniques traditionally associated with each data type. This lends itself to team research, in which the team can include individuals with both quantitative and qualitative expertise.

As known, all designs are not perfect and do have certain challenges. Although this design is the most popular mixed methods design, it is also probably the most challenging of the major types of designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:80). Here are some of the challenges facing researchers using the convergent design as well as options for addressing them:

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- Much effort and expertise is required, particularly because of the concurrent data collection and the fact that equal weight is usually given to each data type. This can be addressed by forming a research team that includes members who have quantitative and qualitative expertise, by including researchers who have quantitative and qualitative expertise on graduate committees, or by training single researchers in both quantitative and qualitative research.

- Researchers need to consider the consequences of having different samples and different sample sizes when merging the two data sets. Different sample sizes may arise because the quantitative and qualitative data are usually collected for different purposes (generalization vs. in-depth description, respectively).

- It can be challenging to merge two sets of very different data and their results in a meaningful way. Researchers need to design their studies so that the quantitative and qualitative data address the same concepts. This strategy facilitates merging the data sets.

- Researchers may face the question of what to do if the quantitative and qualitative results do not agree. Contradictions may provide new insights into the topic, but these differences can be difficult to resolve and may require the collection of additional data. The question then develops as to what type of additional data to collect or to re-analyse: quantitative data, qualitative data, or both?

The results of the study are included in a description of the findings of the in-depth interviews, along with the results of the questionnaires that were distributed. The results provide a discussion of the findings on traditional VICs with the aim of making recommendations to the selected VICs as to how social media can be used to improve services at their Centres for continued existence.

4.3   QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN

Quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2014:4). The difference between quantitative and qualitative research design is to differentiate between numeric data or numbers and non-numeric data or words, images, video clips and other similar material (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:161). The basic characteristics of quantitative research examine relationships

between variables, which are measured numerically and analysed using a range of statistical techniques (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163-164). It often incorporates controls to ensure the validity of data, as in an experimental design (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163-164). Because data are collected in a standard manner, it is important to ensure that questions are expressed clearly so they are understood in the same way by the participants (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163-164). This methodology often uses probability sampling techniques to ensure generalisability (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163-164). The researcher is seen as independent from the subjects being researched, which are usually called respondents (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163-164).

The quantitative focus of the study was an online questionnaire using Qualtrics, an online survey software and insight platform tool. The questionnaire was distributed online via email and social media using Facebook, LinkedIn and Reddit.

4.3.1 TARGET POPULATION, CONTEXT AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS

It is not possible to collect data from the entire population for the majority of quantitative studies using a survey strategy, due to impracticalities such as limited time and budget constraints as well as difficulties associated with access to whole populations. Instead, a sample drawn from the full set of cases in a meaningful way was chosen (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:260).

Various techniques to select respondents are available. The best technique to use in this study was simple random sampling for the online questionnaire. This technique involves selecting the sample at random from a sampling frame using either a computer or random number tables (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:273).

The choice of the target population of visitors was based on random sampling, targeting people who have visited the six chosen attractions in Cape Town and Johannesburg, namely, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Table Mountain and the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, Gold Reef City, Soweto and the Cradle of Humankind in Johannesburg and its environs. The target population for the in-depth interview was selected by the specific VIC's heads of department who gave the researcher permission to hold personal and

telephonic interviews with their staff. A limitation relating to in-depth interviews concerns the reliability of the results, which is related to bias on the part of the interviewer, the interviewee and in terms of the responses received (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:381).

4.3.2   SAMPLING METHOD

The method of sampling used in the quantitative data collection was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling (whereby elements are drawn from a subpopulation according to its accessibility and research interests) is a form of purposive sampling usually used within quantitative research designs (Gelo, Braakman & Benetka, 2008:275) Convenience sampling is primarily guided by the convenience to the researcher such as accessibly, geographical proximity, known contacts (Kumar, 2014). With convenience sampling (also known as accidental sampling), no pretence is made of identifying a representative subset of a population (Leedy & Omrond, 2013:214). It takes people or other units that are readily available. Convenience sampling may be appropriate for some research problems (Leedy & Omrond, 2013:214). Although convenience sampling is used widely, it is prone to bias and influences that are beyond the researcher's control (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:291).

Firstly, a sample size of 384 is for a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level – "we never work with a confidence level of 5%" (Pohl, 2016, at the Faculty of Economic & Management Sciences, University of Pretoria). "Secondly with a sample size of 200, the margin of error is 6.89% and the confidence level is 95% - thus according to this rule, the sample size of 200 respondents is acceptable. Thirdly, these values are just one way of calculating a sample size and there are many rules for choosing a sample size, depending on the research undertaken and the type of analysis required. Fourthly, this way of determining sample size (margin of error and confidence level) is specifically relevant when one is interested in point estimates such as the percentage of voters for a specific party. Point estimates were not tested in this study" (Pohl, 2016).

Sampling means that respondents were not selected from the entire population, but from the tourism population, more specifically, the many people visiting the specific chosen attractions. The sample size for this study included 200 respondents who were selected at

random. The sample of two hundred (200) respondents was split equally between the City of Cape Town and the City of Johannesburg (100 respondents per city).

The following Table includes a summary of the chosen attractions. These are explained bellows in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of attractions chosen for quantitative research

Attractions selected for quantitative research	
City of Cape Town	**City of Johannesburg**
Table Mountain	Gold Reef City
Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens	Cradle of Humankind
Cape of Good Hope Castle	Soweto

The choice of cities was predominantly made due to the fact that a tourist can internationally fly to Cape Town International and O. R. Tambo International Airport. The third main airport hub is Durban, and one can also enter this airport internationally. According to South African Tourism (2016), the two top cities for tourism include Cape Town and Johannesburg.

According to Cape Town Tourism, a Cape Town landmark, the Castle of Good Hope, is a prime example of a "star fort". Built between 1666 and 1679 by the Dutch East India Company, it's the oldest existing colonial building in South Africa. Its position marks the original shoreline before years of land reclamation changed the Table Bay coastline. According to AFP Relaxnews (2012), Table Mountain became one of the world's new seven wonders of nature. Table Mountain was crowned one of the natural wonders in 2012 after a global poll that allowed anyone in the world to vote via telephone, text messages or social media networks. According to Cape Town Tourism, the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden is one of the most incredible and beautiful gardens in Africa. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004, it's found on the verdant slopes of Table Mountain and is part of the mountain's national park.

According to Abrahams (2013), Gold Reef City is one of the top five theme parks that promises plenty of fun. Gold Reef City is the first theme park mentioned in this article, and therefor the decision was made to choose this theme park as one of the attractions in Johannesburg. Although the Cradle of Humankind lies about 50km from Johannesburg, it

was chosen upon the reason for its status as a World Heritage Site (South Africa, 2016). South African Tourism defines Soweto as "Known the world over for its role in the struggle for democracy". Soweto hums day and night, and its vibe is electrifying. It's Gucci and ghetto, Hummers and hip-hop, Loxion Kulcha (a sought-after local fashion brand that originated in the townships) and livestock, glamour and gogos (grannies) (South Africa, 2016).

The City of Cape Town and the City of Johannesburg have many other attractions, but the choice of the six chosen attractions was made by the researcher based on the information of various sources, as discussed above.

4.3.3   THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The units of analysis of a study refer to the entities about which the researcher wished to draw conclusions (Terre Blance & Durrheim, 2004:37). The units of analysis for this study included the points of view from both the visitors who used VICs, both locally and internationally, as well as the employees who work at the VICs.

The units of analysis for the visitors were based on the questionnaires answered by the100 respondents from the Cape Town attractions and 100 from the Johannesburg attractions.

The units of analysis, from which conclusions have been drawn for this study, are individual visitors from an array of age-groupings. It was important to establish how visitors representing the different age groups relied on social media in order to find information about an area they wished to visit for leisure purposes.

4.3.4   DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data collection instruments for this study included online questionnaires, as well as self-completed, paper-based questionnaires that were distributed via Internet-mediated access and at the physical attractions. The data collection instrument can be found in APPENDIX B.

The data collection instrument used for the online questionnaires was an online structured questionnaire distributed via Internet-mediated access. Primary, quantitative data was collected by means of an online survey using Qualtrics. The specific attributes measured included age, male/female, level of education and technological experience. The main objective of utilising this particular quantitative collection instrument was to measure how different age groups respond to social media relative to using a VIC.

An electronic system called Qualtrics was used to distribute the questionnaires. This software manages responses and records the data online. The recorded data findings are in Chapter 5, where the calculations of relevant cross-tabulations are illustrated.

Self-completed questionnaires may be sent using the Internet (Internet-mediated or Web-based questionnaires) or the Intranet (intranet-mediated questionnaires). They may also be posted to the respondents who return them by post after completion (postal or mail questionnaires) or they may be delivered by hand to each respondent and collected at a later stage (delivery and collection questionnaires) (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:419). In the case of this study, the self-completed questionnaires were distributed electronically by using the Internet, to be completed by the respondents in order to obtain the quantitative data (See APPENDIX B for data collection instruments). Questionnaires were also distributed at the physical attraction.

The researcher initially started the study by trying to get respondents to complete the questionnaire at the various attractions. The following numbers of questionnaires were completed at the attractions:
- Table Mountain, Cape Town:12
- Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, Cape Town:14
- Cape of Good Hope Caste, Cape Town: 3
- Gold Reef City, Johannesburg: 4
- Cradle of Humankind, Johannesburg: 5
- Soweto, Johannesburg: 4

The number of respondents willing to complete the questionnaire at the attractions was too few. The researcher then decided to move the questionnaire onto an online platform

named Qualtrics. The completed face-to-face questionnaires amounted to 42 out of 200. Only 13 respondents completed the questionnaire at the attractions for Johannesburg, and 29 respondents completed the questionnaire at the attractions for Cape Town. 151 respondents completed the questionnaire online, by either using a computer or mobile device.

Questionnaires were completed online as well as face-to-face. The online questionnaire had one extra question, which was:

- "Please select the attraction you have visited:" and then listed the six chosen attractions", namely Table Mountain (Cape Town), Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (Cape Town), the Castle of Good Hope (Cape Town), Gold Reef City (Johannesburg), The Cradle of Humankind (Johannesburg) and Soweto (Johannesburg).

This question was included in the online questionnaire for the respondents to select the attraction they have visited. However, the face-to-face questionnaire did not include this question, since the respondent was aware of the attraction as the questionnaire was completed at the particular attraction by the respondent. In order to analyse the data in one set, the researcher decided to enter the details of the face-to-face questionnaire onto the Qualtrics system

For face-to-face questionnaires, an informed consent form was shown to each respondent when completing the questionnaire. Although face-to-face respondents did not sign this form, they acknowledged participation with a tick on the physical questionnaire.

The 49 questionnaires that were completed face-to-face were entered into Qualtrics by the researcher, and question 1 asking about the attraction was also completed by the researcher as the researcher was aware of which questionnaire was completed at each attraction.

The face-to-face questionnaire included pictures to draw the attention of respondents. Pictures also help respondents identify a question swiftly. This assisted in the time spent to complete the questionnaire face-to-face. Qualtrics does not allow for a researcher to add

pictures to the questionnaire, therefore it was decided to include a definition of a Visitor Information Centre in the online questionnaire to ease the effort in completing the question and to make sure the respondent understands the question. It is however possible that respondents might have understood the definition differently and this can thus be seen as a limitation.

The researcher succeeded in keeping the questionnaire short, this created limitations to the study. The study includes two sections of literature. Chapter 2 discusses information, knowledge and communication. Chapter 3 discusses social media and visitor information centres. Within the literature, there are many factors that research is needed on, such as the information seeking behaviour of visitors.

Question number 7 should have included another option such as "personal interaction with a locally knowledgeable source of information". Although this question could be seen as obvious, since the VIC is made for personal interaction, it would have been a valid question to include in the questionnaire, which indicates a limitation.

4.3.5   DATA COLLECTION METHOD

There are various ways of data collection and types of access, which include traditional access, Internet-mediated access intranet-mediated access, and finally, hybrid access (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012: 208). Two types of access were needed for this study namely traditional access and Internet-mediated access (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012: 210).

Internet-mediated access involves the use of different computing technologies, to gain virtual access to administer questionnaires in order to conduct archival research, discussions, experiments or interviews, or to gather secondary data. This access would be needed when sending out an online survey with a series of questions.

The research instrument used for respondents was the self-completion questionnaire, which according to Saunders, *et. al.*, (2012:419), is the ideal type of questionnaire which is sent electronically using the Internet and, ideally, the web-based Internet. A limitation

relating to this choice is certainty that the respondent is the person who should be answering the questions and the reliability of the responses (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:420).

Prior to using the questionnaire to collect data, it is necessary to conduct a pilot test (Saunders, *et. al.,* 2012:451). The purpose of the pilot test is to refine the questionnaire to ensure that the respondents have no problems in answering the questions and that there are no problems in recording the data (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:451). In addition, the pilot study enables the researcher to obtain an assessment of the questions' validity and the likely reliability of the data that is to be collected (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:451). Pre-testing, in this case was done by sending out the questionnaire to relevant specialists and, based on the results, minor changes were made to the instrument, namely, re-alignment of the questionnaire and re-phrasing of questions.

The National Department of Tourism (NDT) was contacted to schedule a meeting with the Head of Visitor Information Centres in South Africa. The meeting was held in June 2014 and the researcher found valuable information to include in the final questionnaire after this meeting. The final draft questionnaire was then sent to five anonymous respondents to test ease of use.

The only special requirement needed was access to a computer in the case of web-based questionnaires. . The requirement for a respondent to complete the questionnaire online was not only limited to a computer, but could also be completed on a mobile device, such as a tablet or smartphone. Data collection were done via Internet-mediated access, in an unbiased and objective manner. It involved using different computing technologies to gain virtual access to administer the questionnaires. No interference took place in administering the questionnaire. The primary data was collected between April and November 2015.

4.3.6   MEASUREMENT

Appropriate measurement scales were used to calculate the quantitative data. The questionnaire mostly made use of close-ended questions. The main measurements scales included a list of questions, category questions and rating questions. Questions 2, 5, 6 and 7 were all listed questions. A list of questions offers the respondent a list of responses,

any of which they can choose from (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:433). Questions 1, 4 and 9 were category questions. Category questions are designed so that each respondent's answer fits into only one category (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012:434). Questions 3 and 8 were rating questions. Rating questions are often used to collect opinion data. Rating questions most frequently use the Likert-style rating in which the respondent is asked how strongly he/she agrees or disagrees with a statement or series of statements, usually on a four-, five-, six- or seven-point rating scale (Saunders, *et. al*,. 2012:436).

4.3.7   DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

The data collection instruments are included in APPENDIX B (page 143) and APPENDIX C (page 150) respectively. Questionnaires were distributed online, and also where possible, questionnaires were distributed physically at selected attractions. The questionnaires were distributed evenly between Cape Town and Johannesburg, but were not evenly distributed between the flagship attractions, due to the fact that the comparisons made in the study are between the two tourism destinations and not per attraction.

The physical questionnaire's data was then entered into Qualtrics. The reason for using Qualtrics as a tool for conducting research is because of its simplicity when using the programme. The collected data were stored on and also downloaded from Qualtrics. The questionnaires that were completed physically, were also entered onto Qualtrics by the researcher to ease the process of data analysis.

4.4   QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN

4.4.1   DESCRIPTION OF INQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The basic characteristics of qualitative research include studying participants' meanings and the relationships between them, the use of a variety of data collection techniques and analytical procedures to

develop a conceptual framework (Saunders Lewis & Thornhill, 2012:163). Data collection is non-standardised so that questions and procedures may alter and emerge during a research process that is both naturalistic and interactive (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163). It is likely to use non-probability sampling techniques (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163). The success of the researcher's role is dependent not only on gaining physical access to the participants but also in building a rapport with them and demonstrating sensitivity in order to gain cognitive access to their data and thought processes (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:163).

In-depth interviews were conducted with the managers of specific VICs by the researcher, either face-to-face or by means of telephonic interview due to problems related to the distance to two of the centres and time constraints. The selected visitor information centres were chosen by the VIC head of each destination. For Cape Town, the chosen visitor information centres include Burgh Street, Simon's Town, Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, Blouberg Strand, Somerset West and for Johannesburg, the chosen visitor information centres include Head Office for visitor information, Park Station and Soweto.

The analysis of qualitative data can have several aims (Flick, 2014:5). The first aim may be to describe a phenomenon in some or greater detail. The phenomenon can be the subjective experiences of a specific individual or group (e.g. the way people continue to live after a fatal diagnosis). This can focus on the case (individual or group) and its special features and the links between them. The analysis can also focus on comparing several cases (individuals or groups) and on what they have in common or on the differences between them. The second aim may be to identify the conditions on which such differences are based. This means to look for explanations for such differences (e.g. circumstances which make it more likely that the coping with a specific illness situation is more successful than in other cases). The third aim may be to develop a theory of the phenomenon under study from the analysis of empirical material (e.g. a theory of illness trajectories).

4.4.2 TARGET POPULATION, CONTEXT AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The choice of the specific VIC staff was made by the heads of the respective departments. The interviews were organised and conducted personally and telephonically by the researcher.

In-depth interviews were scheduled with the various employees, as chosen by the branch managers and head of departments (Refer to Appendix C). Although the interviews were not conducted anonymously, the transcriptions have been anonymised.

4.4.3 SAMPLING METHOD

For the qualitative research, non-probability purposive sampling was used for the VIC staff because it was necessary to purposively 'handpick' the most 'information-rich' individuals. A decision was made that the respective head of departments would choose the staff to be interviewed by the researcher at the Cape Town VIC's for Burgh Street, Simon's Town, Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, Blouberg Strand and Somerset West as well as for Johannesburg VIC's at the Head Office for visitor information and the Park Station and Soweto centres.

The eleven (11) respondents had a holistic view of the travel information available at their respective VICs and were aware of the value of information and knowledge. They were geographically located in Johannesburg and Cape Town respectively. The table that follows, depicts the information to explain where each interview was conducted:

Table 5: In-depth interview summary

Interview number	Specific VIC	Location	Interview recording number	Appendix F: Page number
Interview 1	Burgh Street VIC	Cape Town	DM0009	178
Interview 2	Burgh Street VIC	Cape Town	DM0010	184
Interview 3	Simon's Town VIC	Cape Town	DM0011	188
Interview 4	Blouberg Strand VIC	Cape Town	DM0013	193
Interview 5	Somerset West VIC	Cape Town	DM0014	195
Interview 6	Cape Town International	Cape Town	DM0015	198
Interview 7	Kirstenbosch Botanical	Cape Town	DM0016	200

	Gardens			
Interview 8	Joburg Tourism Head Office	Johannesburg	DM550017	203
Interview 9	Park Station	Johannesburg	DM550018	207
Interview 10	Joburg Tourism Head Office	Johannesburg	DM550019	209
Interview 11	Soweto Toursim	Johannesburg	Voice 001	213

4.4.4   THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The units of analysis of a study refer to the entities about which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions (Terre Blance & Durrheim, 2004:37). The units of analysis for this study included the points of view from both the visitors who used VICs, both locally and internationally, as well as the employees who work at the VICs.

The VIC staff and managers participating in the interviews were employed at the selected VIC's in Cape Town (7) and Johannesburg (4).

4.4.5   DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data collection instruments for this study included in-depth interviews that were done face-to-face and telephonically. The data collection instruments can be found in Appendices B (Questionnaire) and C (In-depth interview).

The in-depth interviews were administered with face-to-face interviews and telephonic scheduled interviews, with permission by the relevant managers of Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism. The researcher managed to complete 7 interviews from Cape Town VICs and 4 from Johannesburg VICs. The researcher had to obtain permission from the Heads of the VICs in Cape Town and Johannesburg and could therefore only obtain 11 interviews. A summary of the interviews and their location can be found in Table 5.

4.4.6   DATA COLLECTION METHOD

There are various ways of data collection and types of access, which include traditional access, Internet-mediated access intranet-mediated access, and finally, hybrid access

(Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012: 208). Two types of access were needed for this study namely traditional access and Internet-mediated access (Saunders, *et. al.*, 2012: 210).

Traditional access involves face-to-face interaction, telephone conversations, correspondence or visiting data archives. This access was needed when conducting in-depth interviews with the representatives of the VIC.

In-depth interviews were held with the employees of the various chosen VICs. There were a number of advantages in using in-depth interviews in this study. Firstly, during the interview and conversations, the respondent's answers could be probed more deeply, responses could be easily followed up and topics could be pursued further. Secondly, the interview provided the only opportunity to collect data about abstract issues that could not be observed. Thirdly, a large amount of useful data and information could be produced from the interviews (Keyton, 2011:291).

On the other hand, there are a number of limitations associated with the use of in-depth interviews. Firstly, the conversations or interview might stray off course so that the topic relating to the research is not properly discussed. In order to avoid this from occurring, an interview schedule and set questions should be kept on hand to ensure that the conversation does not stray. Secondly, while the respondents might have agreed to participate in the interview, they may be hesitant to talk or engage in the conversation. This limitation could be averted by ensuring that the respondents' anonymity is assured. (Keyton, 2011:291). In respect of this study, this assurance, together with that of confidentiality, was conveyed to the participants in the 'Informed Consent Form" that respondents were required to sign prior to the commencement of the study (APPENDIX D).

4.4.7   DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

The in-depth interviews are stored on Google Drive and a hard drive. Access to this tool is provided on a no fee paying basis for postgraduate students at the University of Pretoria. A data recorder and smartphone was used to capture the in-depth interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using MSWord.

4.5 ASSESSING AND DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR THE PROPOSED RESEARCH DESIGN

There are certain errors that can occur in the data collection process. Firstly, respondents who receive the questionnaire may completely disregard the email and, therefore, no response will be received. Secondly, participation error could include the fact that the questionnaire is sent out during an insensitive time period, which could include the periods before lunch time or right before leaving work.

Furthermore, language could be considered to be another barrier. If the sample includes international respondents, the language of the questionnaire or in-depth interview could be a problem. As the questionnaire was self-completed, it was not be possible for the researcher to assist the respondent by explaining the precise meaning of the questions.

Certain other factors could have contributed towards biased results. A non-response could be due to a refusal by the respondent to answer questions, ineligibility of the respondent, an inability to locate the respondent or the respondent could be located but not contactable (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:267-8). In addition, The American Association for Public Opinion research (2008) defines four levels of non-response that could influence the degree of bias in the findings:

 a) ***Complete refusal:*** none of the questions are answered;
 b) ***Break-off:*** less than 50% of all questions are answered;
 c) ***Partial response:*** 50-80% of questions are answered;
 d) ***Completed response:*** over 80% of questions are answered

Measurement bias is another form that could have an effect on the data. Two types of measurement bias can occur (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012: 329):

 a) ***Deliberate or intentional distortion of data:*** data recorded inaccurately, on purpose, is difficult to detect;
 b) Changes in the way data is collected.

Quality issues may also influence the data collection. These include reliability, forms of bias, generalisability and validity. The lack of standardisation of questions in the in-depth

interviews may lead to concerns about reliability (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:381). Interviewer bias occurs when the comments, tone, or non-verbal behaviour influences the respondent. Interviewee bias is caused when the respondent has a certain perception about the interviewer. Participation bias may occur when the nature of the individual or organisational cultural influences the participants who are being interviewed. Generalisability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study are applicable to other settings, and lastly, validity refers to the extent to which the researcher has gained access to a participant's knowledge and experience and is able to infer meanings that the participant intends from the language used by that person (Saunders *et. al.*, 2012:381-2). The researcher attempted to be as unbiased and objective as possible as to not influence the data collected during the in-depth interviews.

4.6   RESEARCH ETHICS

Several ethical issues need to be taken into account when conducting research. Most of these can be anticipated and dealt with during the design stage of the research project (Saunders *et. al.,* 2012:237).

Specific ethical issues that may have an impact on this study are listed below:
   a) ***Help to gain access:*** certain questions need to be answered in order to gain access to information;
   b) ***Assessment of the research risks***: specific questions need to be asked such as will the study harm those participating in the study, how intrusive are the research methods and how sensitive are the proposed questions?;
   c) ***No pressurisation*** of individuals to participate in the study;
   d) ***Participants need to be informed*** about certain issues, such as the purpose of the study, is it being funded, who is or will be undertaking the research?;
   e) ***Personal safety*** when data is collected is very important;
   f) ***Copyright and plagiarism:*** all sources that were, and will be used during the study and the literature review are cited in the list of references;
   g) ***Physical or emotional harm*** is to be avoided at all costs;
   h) Use of incentives is prohibited;

i) ***A consent form*** is included in the questionnaire and the ***anonymity*** of the participant must be respected;

j) ***Permission*** from the relevant parties, for example, the National Department of Tourism to contact the VIC is very important;

k) ***Storing the data*** is of utmost importance; and

l) ***No falsification*** is permitted.

Copyright is limited to the University of Pretoria, as the study was conducted there. A declaration of plagiarism also been signed. Participation in the research project was completely voluntary and respondents could decline or withdraw from participating at any time without providing a reason. This would only affect the response rate of the researcher and have no negative impact on the respondent. Each respondent who participated in the study had to give their consent in writing (see APPENDIX E), prior to commencing with the research. The information obtained from each respondent remains confidential and can only be accessed by the researcher. The questionnaire was anonymous and no names have been mentioned in the results or on the online-software tool, Qualtrics.

The in-depth interviews were also conducted anonymously, and consent was given by the respective managers of Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism. The time the interview took to be completed was also clearly stated and appointments were scheduled with the interviewees.

It is ultimately the researcher's responsibility to make sure that no data is altered and to ensure honesty throughout the entirety of the research. The following chapter presents the findings, results and discussion of the study.

CHAPTER 5:FINDINGS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, was conducted in order to support the theoretical foundation of the study. Chapter 4 explained how the study was conducted. The transcription of the 11 in-depths interviews completed with the staff of the various visitor information centres can be found in APPENDIX F. A total of 200 questionnaires were completed and the findings are clarified under Sections 5.2 and 5.3 in this Chapter (5). A copy of the initial report from Qualtrics can be found in APPENDIX F.

5.2 VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS

The questionnaire that was distributed included a section on visitor demographics (APPENDIX B: Question 10). The information obtained from this question comprised age, gender, level of education, occupation and country of origin. The information that follows contains findings and results obtained in respect of the demographic profile of the participants.

5.2.1 FINDINGS FROM THE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Figure 6 that follows depicts the demographic information provided by the respondents in accordance with the questions that were asked.

Question 1: Please select the attraction you have visited:
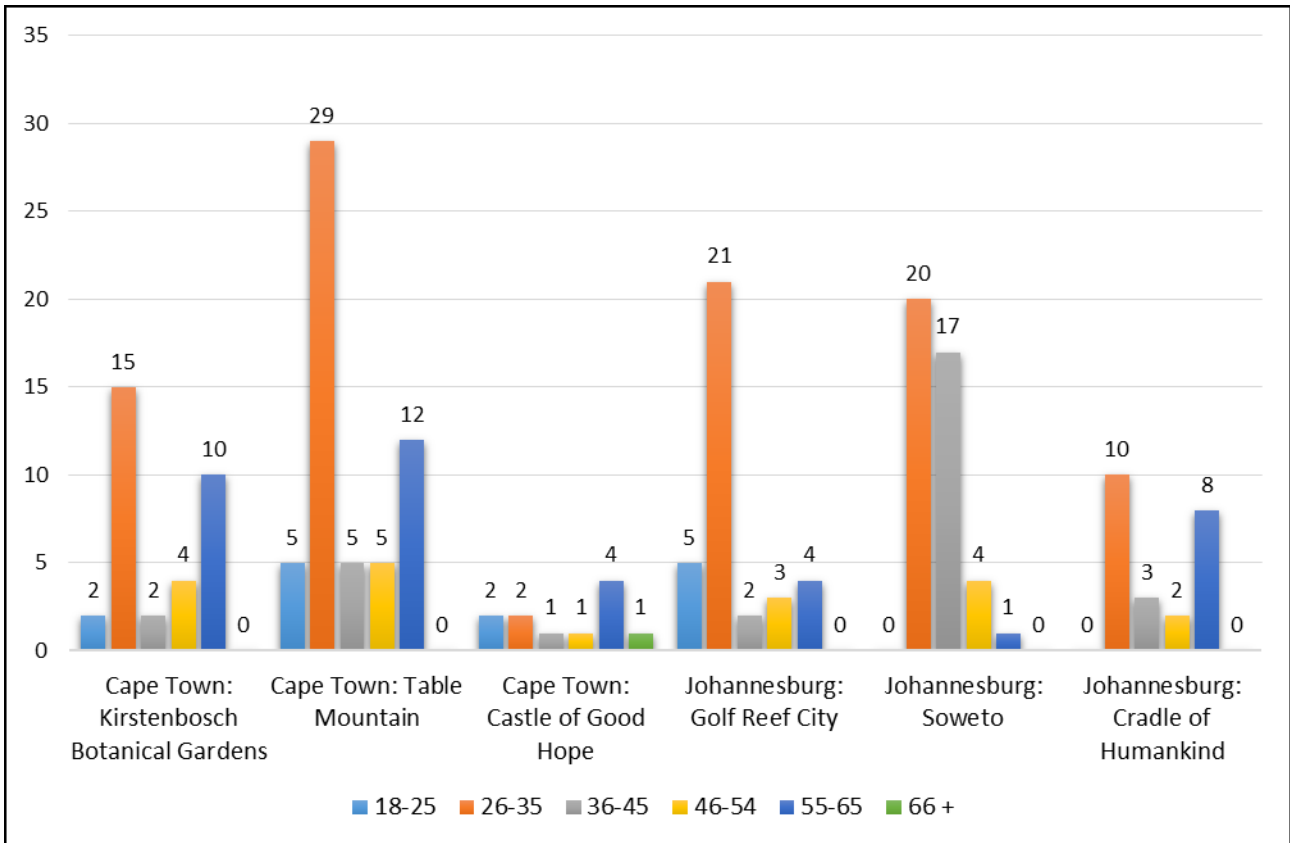
Figure 6: A Correlation between age and attraction visited

The visitor demographics for the three selected flagship attractions in Cape Town varied quite extensively. The two age groups that stood out fell within the 26-35 age group (46%) and the 55-65 age group (26%). There was only one visitor from the 66+ age group (1%), 9 visitors from the 18-25 age group (9%), 8 visitors from the 36-45 age group (8%) and finally, 10 visitors from the 46-54 age group (10%).

The visitor demographics for the flagship Johannesburg attractions were distributed quite evenly. There were only 5 visitors in the 18-25 age group (5%), 41 visitors in the 26-35 age group (51%) and 22 in the 36-45 age group (22%). There were 9 visitors in the 46-54 age group (9%), 13 in the 55-65 age group (13%) and none in the 66+ age group (0%).

It is clear that the majority of visitors in both Cape Town and Johannesburg were in the 26-35 age group, constituting a total number of 97 out of the 200 visitors (48.5%). The second highest number of visitors were in the 55-65 age group (19.5%), the third highest was the

36-45 age group (15%), the fourth highest were in the 46-54 age group (0.5%), the fifth were in the 18-25 age group (7%) and lastly, the smallest was the 66+ age group (0.5%).

From these findings, 59% were female, and 41% were male. Most of the respondents had a postgraduate qualification (56%), while 35% had an undergraduate qualification with 7% having a matriculation qualification and 2% a high school qualification. These results in terms of visitor demographics can be related to Research Objective a) as stated in paragraph 1.4, page 5.

The following occupations were most commonly represented amongst the respondents:

a)   Quality manager;

b)   Audit manager;

c)   Engineer;

d)   Librarian;

e)   Lecturer;

f)   Personal assistant;

g)   Sales director;

h)   IT specialist;

i)   Translator;

j)   Teacher;

k)   Graphic designer.

l)   Statistician

m)   Quantity surveyor

Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents were from South Africa and the remaining 20%, were international visitors from Ghana, Uganda, Belgium, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Taiwan, Namibia and Nigeria.

5.3   FINDINGS FROM VISITOR BEHAVIOUR

The results of the questionnaire are depicted in this section (APPENDIX F: Questions 2-9). Please note that the online questionnaire and printed questionnaire have different numbering. The numbering used in the graphs that follow is from the online questionnaire.

5.3.1   FINDINGS FROM VISITOR BEHAVIOUR

The results of the questionnaire are as follows:

Question 2: Have you ever been to a visitor information centre? A visitor information centre is a physical location that provides tourist information to the visitor who tours the place or area locally (National Department of Tourism, 2011).
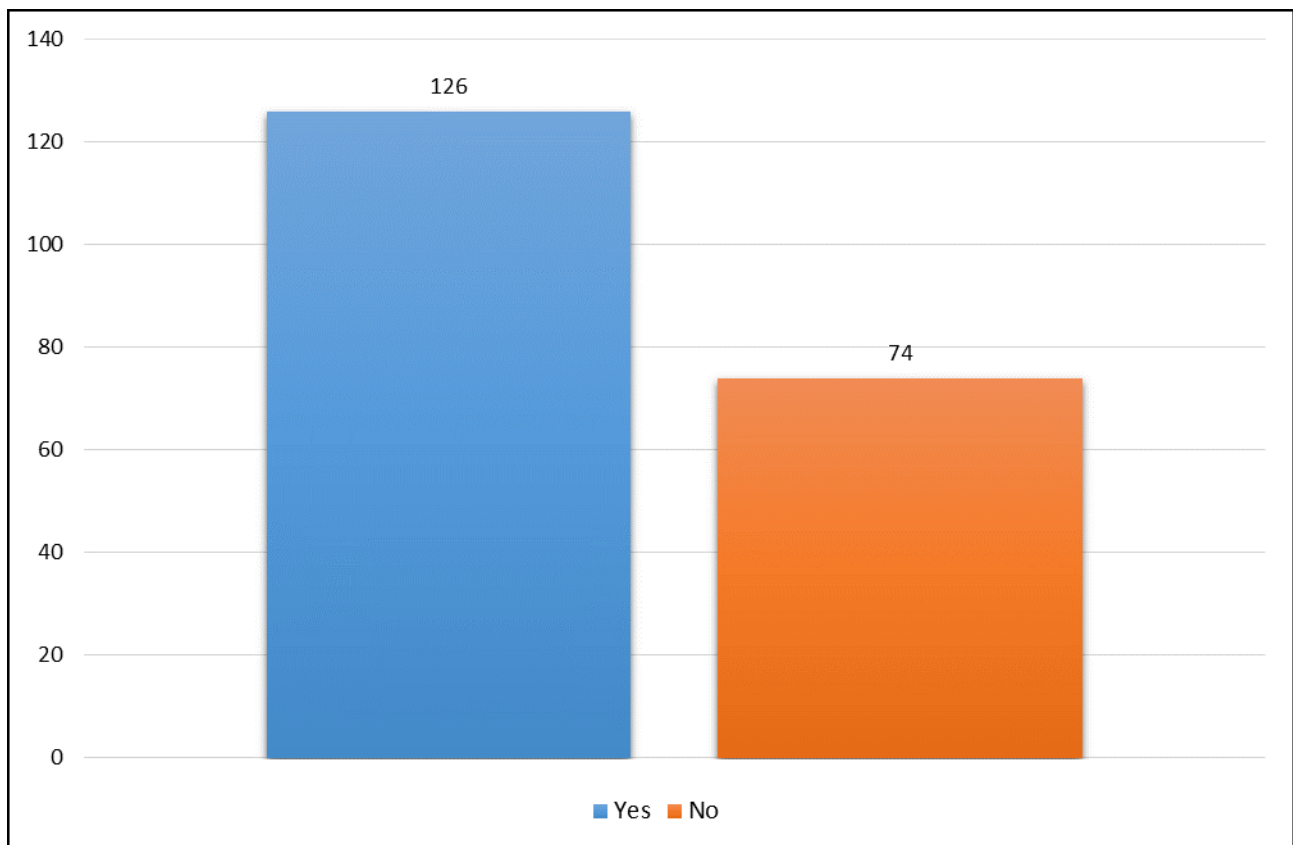
Figure 7: Usage of visitor information centres

From the 200 responses received, 126 visitors (63%) had visited a VIC. Only 73 visitors of the respondents (36.5%) had never visited a VIC. One of the respondents (0.5%) did not answer this question.

Question 3: How did you get information about this attraction? (The numbers on the graph are out of a total of 200 and include all attractions).
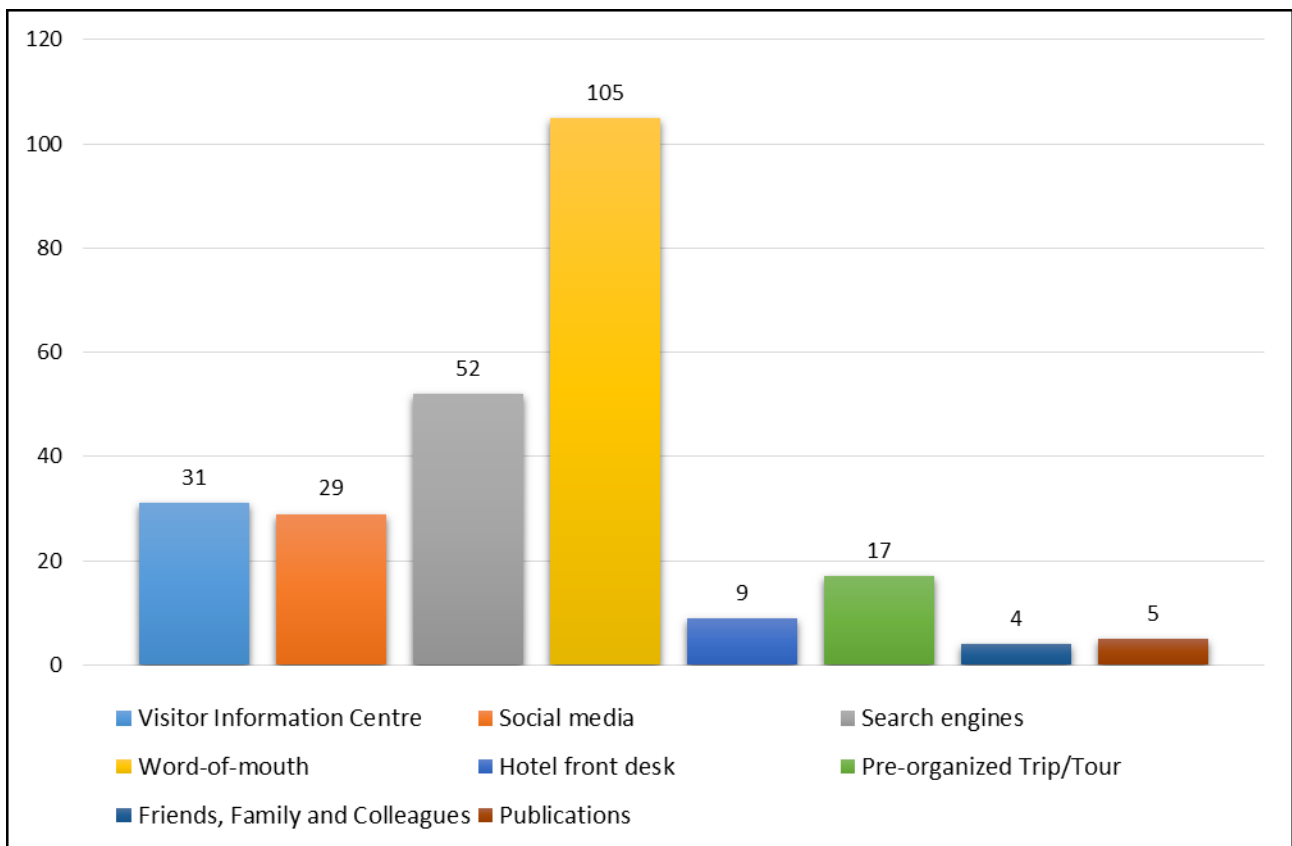
Figure 8: How visitors obtained information about an attraction

Most visitors received information about the attraction via word-of-mouth (52.5%), whereas search engines were also a popular way of finding information (26%). From the results, 16% of visitors found information using the VIC and 15% of visitors used social media platforms. Only 8 visitors received information about an attraction from a hotel front desk (4%). Other means of finding information included books, from childhood memories, from parents, from an organised group visit, travel guides, friends, functions and newspaper articles. These other means included 32 of the 200 respondents (16%). The results indicate that since less than a fifth (16%) of respondents used the VIC to obtain information, and more than half (52.5%) used word-of-mouth (not including VIC

personalised sources), indicating that the VIC is not necessarily regarded as a valuable knowledge source. These results can be related to Research Objective c) (par 1.4:5).

Question 4: How valuable did you find the information provided?
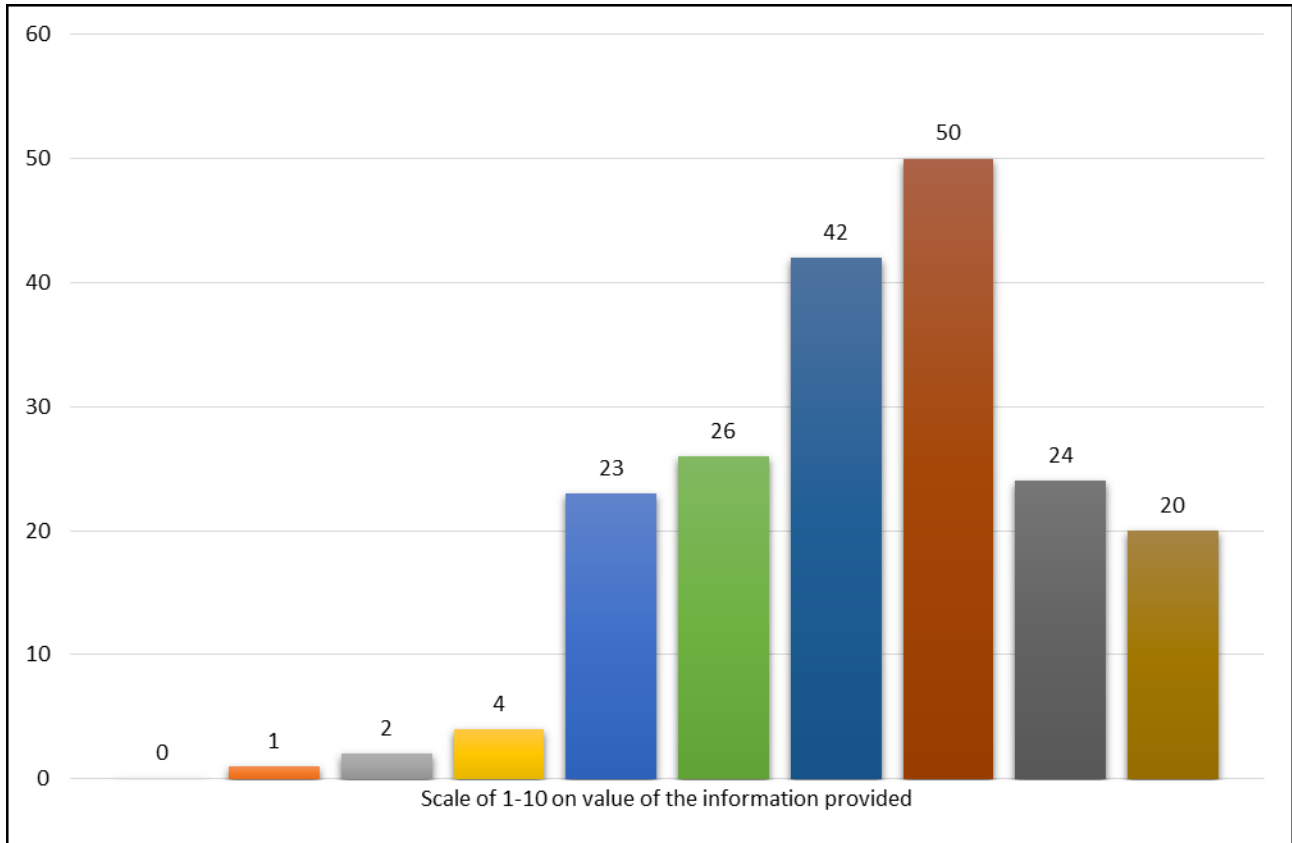
Figure 9: Value of the information provided by the various information providers

Of the 200 respondents, 196 completed this question. Most respondents felt that the information provided was sufficient (82%), on the scale from 6 and above. A mere 17% of the visitors did not find the information provided to be relevant to their needs. Results indicate that respondents found information provided by word-of-mouth and search engines to be valuable. A limitation is that the findings did not measure the value of information provided personally by VIC staff explicitly.

Question 5: Did you make use of the visitor information centre at this attraction?
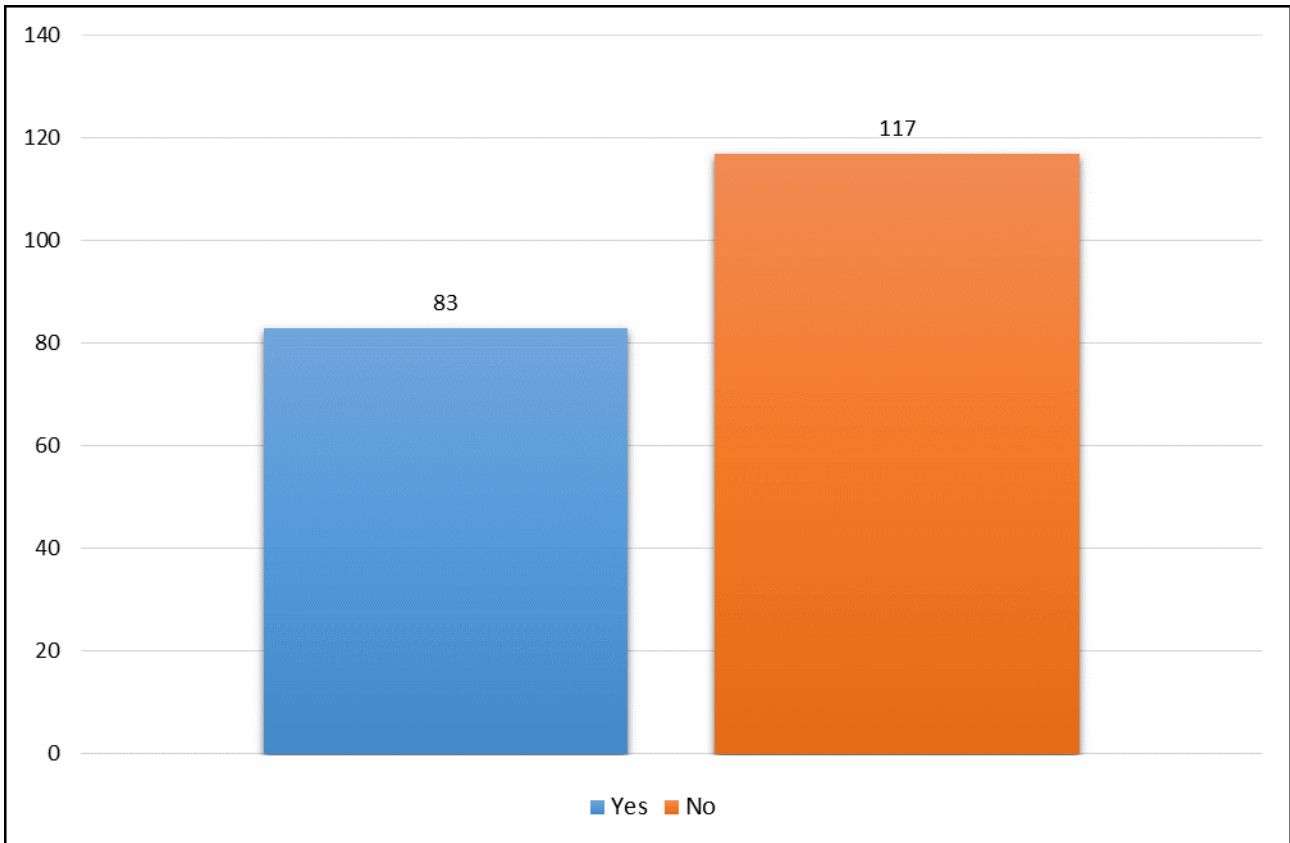
Figure 10: Visitor information usage at an attraction

Forty two percent (42%) of the visitors indicated that they did make use of the VIC or information kiosk at the specific attractions. Most respondents (58%) did not make use of the VIC due to a variety of reasons. These reasons are discussed under Question 6 that follows or in APPENDIX F.

Of the 100 respondents who visited the Cape Town attractions, 99 respondents answered this question. Only 39% (39) of the respondents made use of the VIC at the three different attractions in Cape Town, while 60% (60) of the respondents did not make use of the VIC at the attraction.

Of the 100 respondents who visited the Johannesburg attractions, all answered this question. Forty four or 44% of respondents visited the VIC at the attraction, whereas 66% (66) of respondents did not make use of the VIC at the three different attractions in Johannesburg.

Results from both Cape Town and Johannesburg indicate that more than half (58%) of respondents did not use a VIC with 42% that used a VIC; the main reason being that respondents had found relevant information before visiting an attraction and consequently did not find it necessary to visit a VIC for additional information or for a personalised service. These results can also be related to Research Objective c) (par 1.4:5) in terms of VICs as valuable knowledge source with personalised services.

Question 6: If not, what is the reason for not using the visitor information centre?
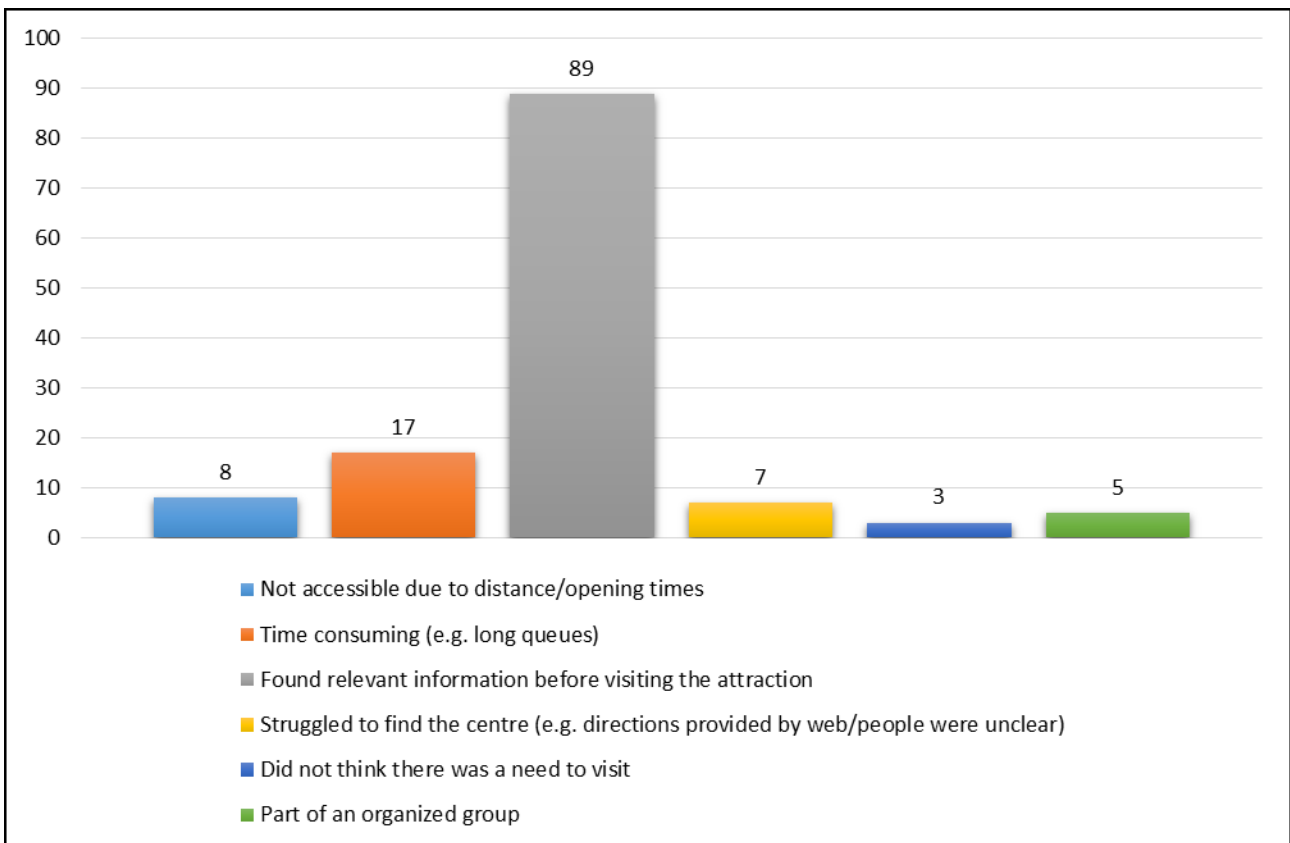
Figure 11: Why visitors did not make use of the visitor information centre at the attraction

Of the 133 respondents (66.5%) that completed this question, 71% of these respondents found relevant information before visiting the attraction. Fourteen percent (14%) found that it was too time consuming to visit the VIC with 7% stating that the VIC was not accessible due to either the distance or the opening times, while 5% of respondents struggled to find the Centre. There were also various other reasons as to why respondents did not visit the Centre. Twelve percent (12%) of respondents said that they did not know of any VIC in the area, were part of an organised tour, searched the Internet or were not looking for a VIC or

had no knowledge of the Centre as no information had been provided concerning its existence.

These results indicated that many respondents did not have a need to visit VICs for a variety of reasons. Respondents only needed to complete this question if they did not make use of the VIC at the specific attraction. However, 68% (68) completed this question for the three chosen attractions in Cape Town. Most respondents (69% or 47 of the 68) found relevant information before they visited one of the three chosen attractions in Cape Town. Only 0.5% of the respondents (3 of 68) stated that the VIC was not accessible due to opening times or distance. Sixteen (16%) of the respondents (11 of 68) stated that they felt it was time consuming. A further 0.5% (2 of 68) said they had struggled to find the Centre, and 0.5% (5 of 68) had other reasons for not visiting the Centre. These reasons duplicated those cited above.

In respect of the three chosen Johannesburg attractions, 65 of the 100 respondents completed this question. Sixty one percent (61%) of the respondents (40 of 65) found relevant information before their visit to the attraction. One percent (1%) stated (6 of 65) that the Centre was not accessible due to opening times or distance. One percent (1%) of the respondents (5 of 65) said it was too time consuming, and 1% of the respondents (4 of 65) said that they struggled to find the VIC. while 15% had other reasons why they did not visit the Centre which duplicate those already mentioned.

Question 7: Would you make use of a visitor information centre if they have the following (facilities or services) available?
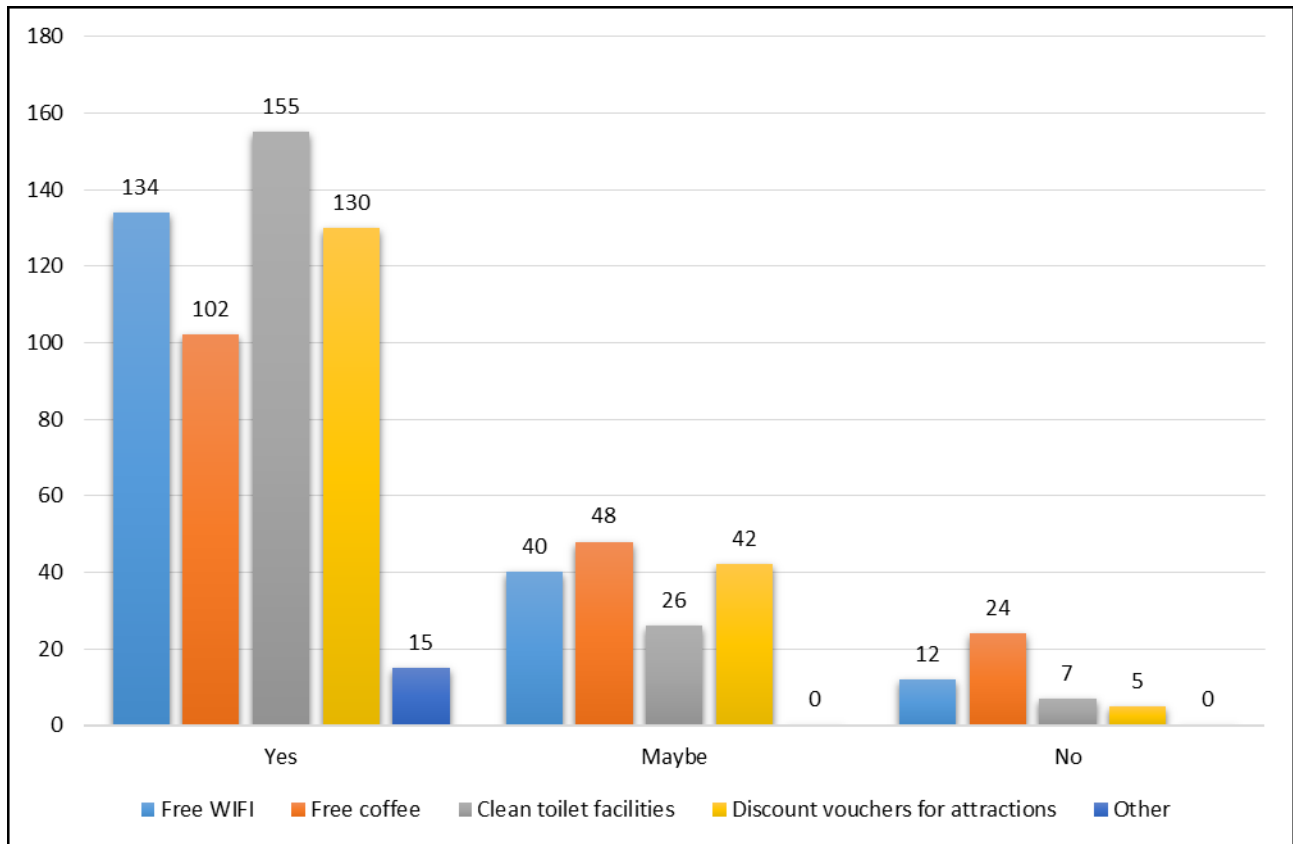
Figure 12: Facilities or services that would increase usage of a visitor information centre

Clean toilet facilities and free WiFi were the two main motivating factors for visitors to visit the VIC. One hundred and eighty seven (187) respondents completed the question on clean toilet facilities. Eighty two (82%) indicated that they would make use of the VIC if there were clean toilet facilities available, 13% indicated they might visit if there were clean toilet facilities, and a mere 3% indicated that clean toilet facilities would not affect their decision to visit the Centre. Of the 185 visitors that answered the WiFi option, 71% of respondents indicated that they would visit the Centre should there be free WiFi available. Twenty one percent (21%) of the respondents said they might visit should free WiFi be available, while 6% indicated that WiFi was of no importance to them.

Discount vouchers and free coffee were also listed under the motivating factors for going to a VIC. Of the 176 respondents who answered the option of discount vouchers at the attractions, 73% indicated that it would motivate them to visit the VIC, 23% of the respondents said they might visit the VIC if discount vouchers were available and only 2%

indicated that it was not be a motivating factor. Of the 173 respondents who answered the question regarding free coffee, 58% indicated it would a motivating factor, 27% said that it might motivate them to visit the VIC, while 4% stated it was not a motivating factor.

In respect to the other options, respondents said they would go to the VIC if it was clearly signposted, if the VIC had free brochures and pamphlets on the attraction, brochures about other attractions, if the environment was friendly and clean, if they were allowed to take photographs, or if they were lost. Another motivating factor was the option for 'fun' activity packs for kids.

Question 8: Which social media sites do you use the most?
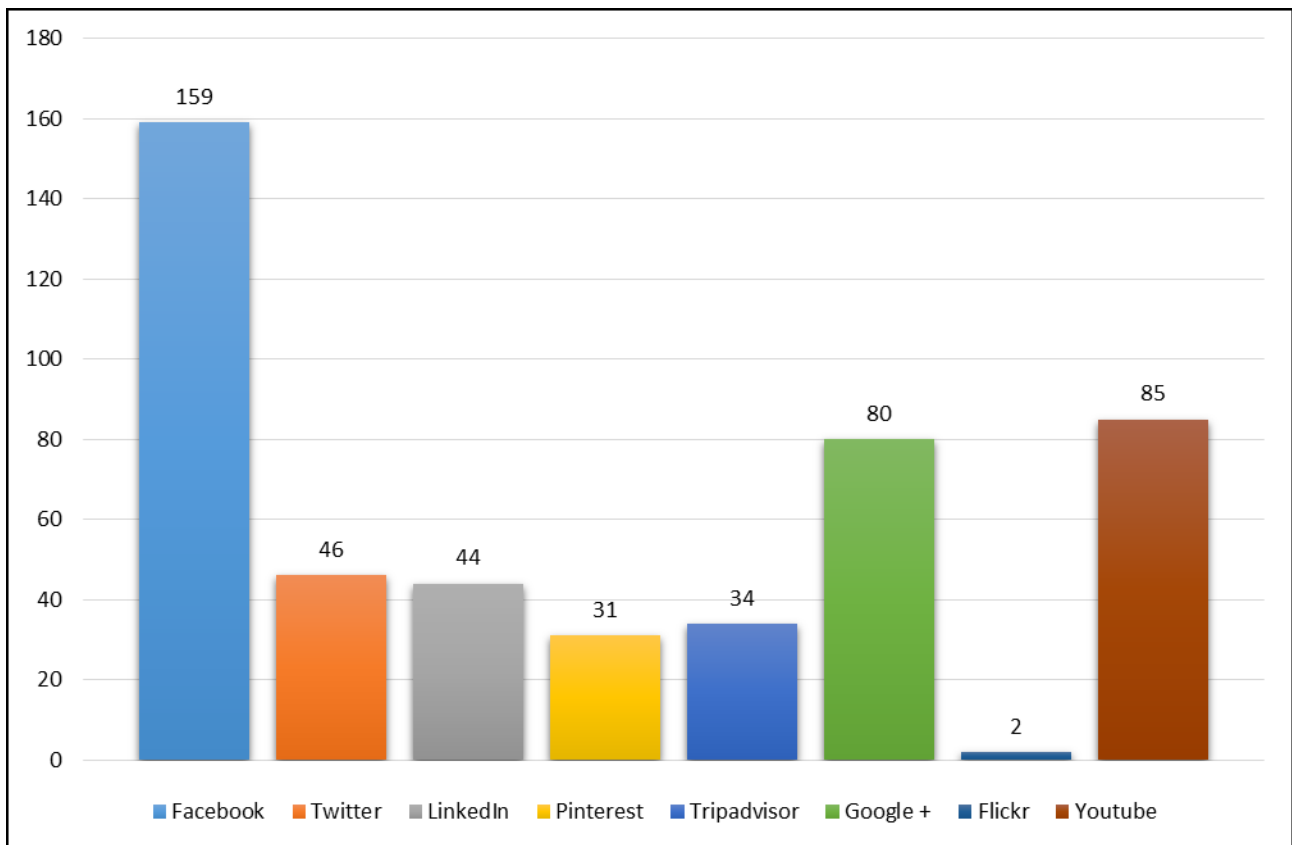
Figure 13: Social media sites most used

In this question, the respondents were asked which social media sites they visited most frequently. They were provided with the following options and also given the option to select more than one:

a)   Facebook;

b)   Twitter LinkedIn;

c)   Pinterest;

d)   TripAdvisor;

e)   Google+;

f)   Flickr;

g)   YouTube.

Seventy nine percent (79%) or 158 of 200 of the respondents indicated that they made use of Facebook, 43% (85 of 200) made use of YouTube and 40% (40 of 200) used Google+. These social media sites were the most popular of all the options. Twitter and LinkedIn's usage were very close options with 23% (46 of 200) of the participants making use of Twitter and 22% used LinkedIn (44 of 200). Seventeen percent (17%) (34 of 200) made use of TripAdvisor with 16% (31 of 200) making use of Pinterest. Only 1% of the respondents (2 of 200) made use of Flickr.

Most respondents indicated that they use more than one of the social media sites. Seventy nine percent (79%) of respondents indicated that they make use of social media

Results indicate that the majority of respondents (79%) use social media to obtain information, with Facebook the most popular social media medium, indicating the importance of word-of-mouth/mouse for obtaining information. Other social media mediums in order of popularity are YouTube, Google, Twitter, LinkedIn, TripAdvisor, Pinterest and Flickr. These results can be related to Research Objective b) (par 1.4:5).

Question 9: How would you rate yourself where technology is concerned?
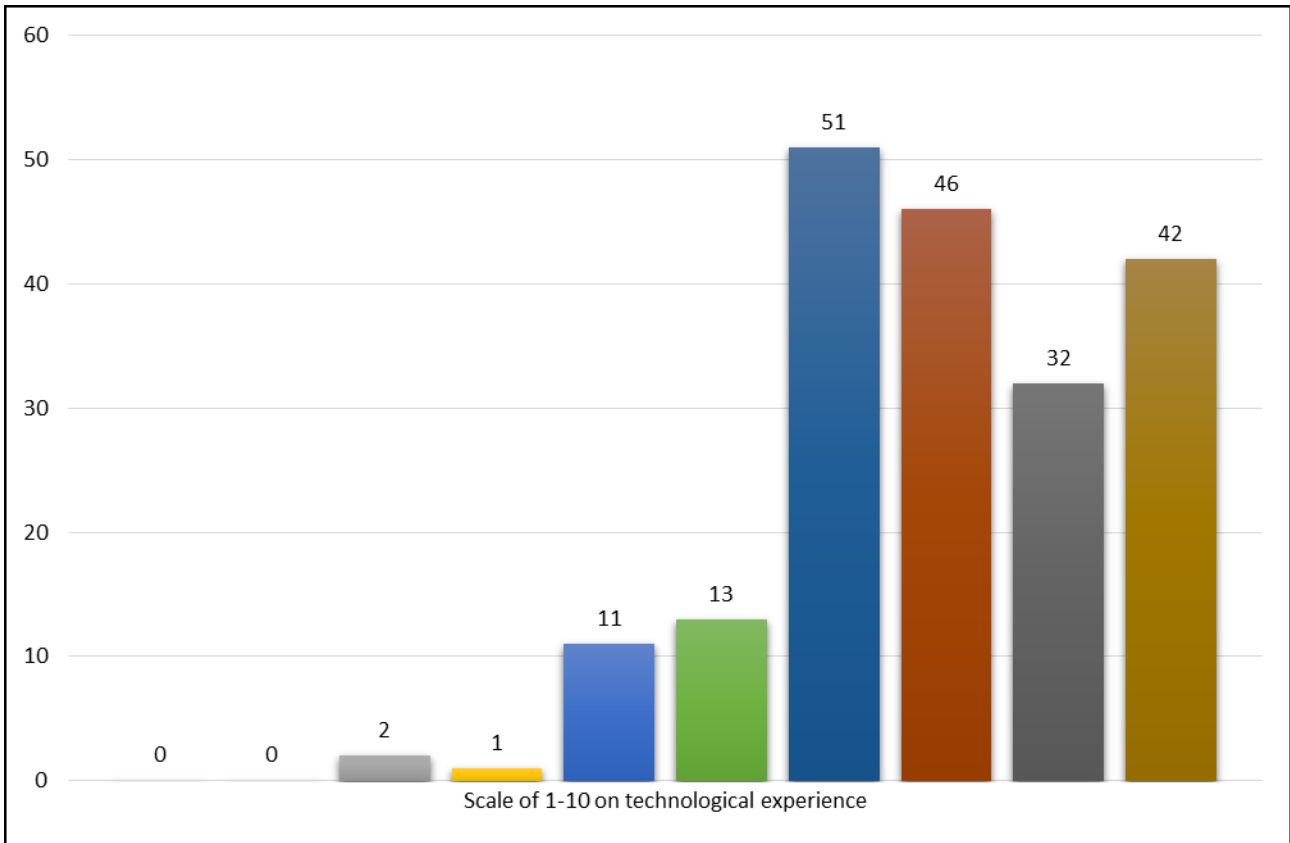
Figure 14: Level of experience with regard to technology

Of the 200 respondents, there were 198 who answered this question. Most respondents (92%) consider their knowledge of technology as very good, as reflected on a scale from 6 to 10, while 8% of the respondents felt that their knowledge of technology was below average, as selected on a scale from 0 to 5. Results indicate that most respondents (92%) regard their knowledge of technology as very good. This result can be related to Research Objective f) iii) (par 1.4:5)

5.3.2 RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS

In response to the answers received from the research questions, a test was done to see if a relationship exists between the geographic location and i) VICs, ii) social media and iii) search engines. The Pearson Chi-Square test was used to check for independency between the following variables.

5.3.2.1 *Relationship between geographic location and visitor information centres*

The calculations demonstrating the relationship between the geographic location and VICs are demonstrated in Tables 6 and 7 below:

Table 6: Cross-tabulation of geographic location and visitor information centres

Crosstab					
			Using a VIC to get information about an attraction (Q3_1)		Total
			0	1	
Destination: (place_2g)	Johannesburg	Count	86	14	100
		% within place_2g	86.0%	14.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_1	50.9%	45.2%	50.0%
	Cape Town	Count	83	17	100
		% within place_2g	83.0%	17.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_1	49.1%	54.8%	50.0%
Total		Count	169	31	200
		% within place_2g	84.5%	15.5%	100.0%
		% within Q3_1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7: Chi-square test of geographic location and visitor information centres

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Chi-Square Tests					
Pearson Chi-Square	0.344[a]	1	**0.558**		
Continuity Correction[b]	0.153	1	0.696		
Likelihood Ratio	0.344	1	0.558		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.696	0.348
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.342	1	0.559		
N of Valid Cases	200				

The above results indicate that the relationship between the geographic location and VICs is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance (p=0.558). These results can be related to Research Objective d)i) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that there is not a significant relationship between geographic location and VICs.

5.3.2.2 *Relationship between geographical location and social media*

The calculations demonstrating the relationship between the geographic location and social media are demonstrated in Tables 8 and 9 below:

Table 8: Cross-tabulation of geographic location and social media

Crosstab				Using social media to get information about an attraction (Q3_2)		Total
				0	1	
Destination: (place_2g)	Johannesburg	Count		82	18	100
		% within place_2g		82.0%	18.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_2		48.0%	62.1%	50.0%
	Cape Town	Count		89	11	100
		% within place_2g		89.0%	11.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_2		52.0%	37.9%	50.0%
Total		Count		171	29	200
		% within place_2g		85.5%	14.5%	100.0%
		% within Q3_2		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 9: Chi-square test of geographic location and social media

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.976[a]	1	**0.160**		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.452	1	0.228		
Likelihood Ratio	1.993	1	0.158		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.228	0.114
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.966	1	0.161		
N of Valid Cases	200				

The above results indicate that the relationship between social media and the geographic location is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance (p=0.160). The results can be related to Research Objective d)ii) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that a significant relationship does not exist between geographic location and social media.

5.3.2.3 _Relationship between geographical location and search engines_

The calculations demonstrating the relationship between the geographic location and search engines are demonstrated in Tables 10 and 11 below:

Table 10: Cross-tabulation of geographic location and search engines

Crosstab					
			Using search engines to get information about an attraction (Q3_3)		Total
			0	1	
Destination (place_2g)	Johannesburg	Count	69	31	100
		% within place_2g	69.0%	31.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_3	46.6%	59.6%	50.0%
	Cape Town	Count	79	21	100
		% within place_2g	79.0%	21.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_3	53.4%	40.4%	50.0%
Total		Count	148	52	200
		% within place_2g	74.0%	26.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_3	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 11: Chi-square test of geographic location and search engines

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Chi-Square Tests					
Pearson Chi-Square	2.599[a]	1	**0.107**		
Continuity Correction[b]	2.105	1	0.147		
Likelihood Ratio	2.611	1	0.106		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.146	0.073
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.586	1	0.108		
N of Valid Cases	200				

The above results indicate that the relationship between search engines and the geographic location is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance (p=0.107). The results can be related to Research Objective d) iii) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that a significant relationship does not exist between geographic location and search engines.

5.3.2.4   *Relationship between visitor information centres and social media*

The calculations demonstrating the relationship between the VIC and social media are demonstrated in Tables 12 and 13 below:

Table 12: Cross-tabulation of visitor information centre and social media?

			Using social media to get information about an attraction Q3_2		Total
Crosstab					
			No (0)	Yes (1)	
Using a VIC to get information about an attraction (Q3_1)	No (0)	Count	144	25	169
		% within Q3_1	85.2%	14.8%	100.0%
		% within Q3_2	84.2%	86.2%	84.5%
	Yes (1)	Count	27	4	31
		% within Q3_1	87.1%	12.9%	100.0%
		% within Q3_2	15.8%	13.8%	15.5%
Total		Count	171	29	200
		% within Q3_1	85.5%	14.5%	100.0%
		% within Q3_2	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 13: Chi-square test of visitor information centre and social media

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.075 [a]	1	**0.784**		
Continuity Correction [b]	0.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	0.077	1	0.781		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	0.520
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.075	1	0.784		
N of Valid Cases	200				

The above results indicate that the relationship between social media and the VIC is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance (p=0.784). The results can be related to Research Objective e) i) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that a significant relationship does not exist between VICs and social media.

5.3.2.5 *Relationship between visitor information centre and search engines*

The calculations demonstrating the relationship between the VIC and search engines are demonstrated in Tables 14 and 15 below:

Table 14: Cross-tabulation of visitor information centre and search engines

Crosstab					
			Using search engines to get information about an attraction Q3_3		Total
			0	1	
Using a VIC to get information about an attraction (Q3_1)	No (0)	Count	125	44	169
		% within Q3_1	74.0%	26.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_3	84.5%	84.6%	84.5%
	Yes (1)	Count	23	8	31
		% within Q3_1	74.2%	25.8%	100.0%
		% within Q3_3	15.5%	15.4%	15.5%
Total		Count	148	52	200
		% within Q3_1	74.0%	26.0%	100.0%
		% within Q3_3	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 15: Chi-square test of visitor information centre and search engines

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Chi-Square Tests					
Pearson Chi-Square	0.001[a]	1	**0.979**		
Continuity Correction[b]	0.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	0.001	1	0.979		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	0.587
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.001	1	0.979		
N of Valid Cases	200				

The above results indicate that the relationship between search engines and VICs is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance (p=0.979). The results can be related to Research Objective e) ii) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that a significant relationship does not exist between VICs and search engines.

5.3.2.6   *Conclusions drawn from the relationship analysis*

From the analysis above it can be seen that none of the different sources of information and the relationships between geographic location and i) visitor information centres, ii) social media and iii) search engines is statistically significant. Thus the geographic location does not have an impact on what information sources the average person uses. It also became evident that the person using search engines and social media is highly unlikely to use a VICs to gather extra information about an attraction. Of those respondents who visited a VIC, only 12.9%, in the case of social media and 25.8%, in the case of search engines, also used social media and search engines.

5.3.3   T-TEST ANALYSIS

The T-Test analysis is done to see if there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two independent groups for a variable of interest.

Table 16: T-Test

T-Test						
		Means	Std. Deviations	Level of Significance	t-test value	t-test significance
Using a VIC to get information about an attraction (Q3_1)	0	7.06	2.008	0.147	-1.813	0.071
	1	7.74	1.341			
Using social media to get information about an attraction (Q3_2)	0	7.15	1.941	0.497	-0.324	0.746
	1	7.28	1.907			
Using search engines to get information about an attraction (Q3_3)	0	7.15	1.929	0.322	0.271	0.787
	1	7.23	1.957			

The T-Test was done to compare the means between the groups that did use a VIC and the group that did not, in respect of (i) the value of information provided, (ii) information usefulness and (iii) the technological experience. Not one of the tests demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the means of the variables. Therefore, the use of a VIC did not result in a change with regard to their perception of (i) the value of information provided, (ii) information usefulness and (iii) the technological experience.

The results can be related to Research Objective f) i-iii) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that a significant relationship does not exist between the use of VICs with regard to i) visitor information, ii) information usefulness, and iii) technological experience.

5.3.4 KRUSKAL-WALIS TEST

A Kruskal-Walis test was performed to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the different age groups with regards to (i) their technological experience and (ii) how valuable the information regarding an attraction is. The results are shown in the Table 17 and 18 below:

Table 17: Kruskal-Wallis ranks

Ranks	age_adj	N	Mean Rank
How valuable did you find the information provided? (Q4)	1.00	13	83.50
	2.00	96	92.56
	3.00	29	120.67
	4.00	19	109.92
	5.00	39	96.08
	Total	196	
How would you rate yourself where technology is concerned? (Q9)	1.00	14	144.18
	2.00	96	110.40
	3.00	30	84.12
	4.00	19	93.79
	5.00	39	71.24
	Total	198	

Table 18: Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistics

Test Statistics[a,b]	How valuable did you find the information provided? (Q4)	How would you rate yourself where technology is concerned? (Q9)
Chi-Square	7.484	24.911
df	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.112	**0.000**

The results reveal that:

a) No statistical significance was found between the different age groups with regards to the value of information provided (5% level)

b) A highly statistical significance (1% level of significance) was found between the different age groups with regard to the level of technological experience (p=0.000).

Furthermore, the mean ranks indicate that the youngest group (mean rank = 144.18) is perceived to have much more experience with technology than the older groups, with the oldest group having the least experience with technology (mean rank = 71.24).

The results can be related to Research Objective g)iv, vii) and Research Objective f)iii) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that a significant relationship does not exist between the different age groups and value of information. However, results indicate a highly statistical significance between different age groups and technological experience.

5.3.5 CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Cluster analysis seeks to divide a set of objects into a small number of relatively homogenous groups on the basis of their similarity over *N* variables. Conversely, variables can be grouped according to their similarity across all objects. Cluster analysis can be viewed either as a means of summarising a data set or as a means of constructing typology (Byrne & Uprichard, 2012:101).

A cluster analysis was conducted to investigate whether meaningful profiles of the respondents emerged, taking the following variables into account: i) male and female, ii) Facebook usage, iii) place, iv) age, v) gender, vi) level of education and vii) the value of information. The cluster quality reported a silhouette measure of cohesion (0.3) and separation that was acceptable (fair) as indicated in Table 19 below:

Table 19: Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation
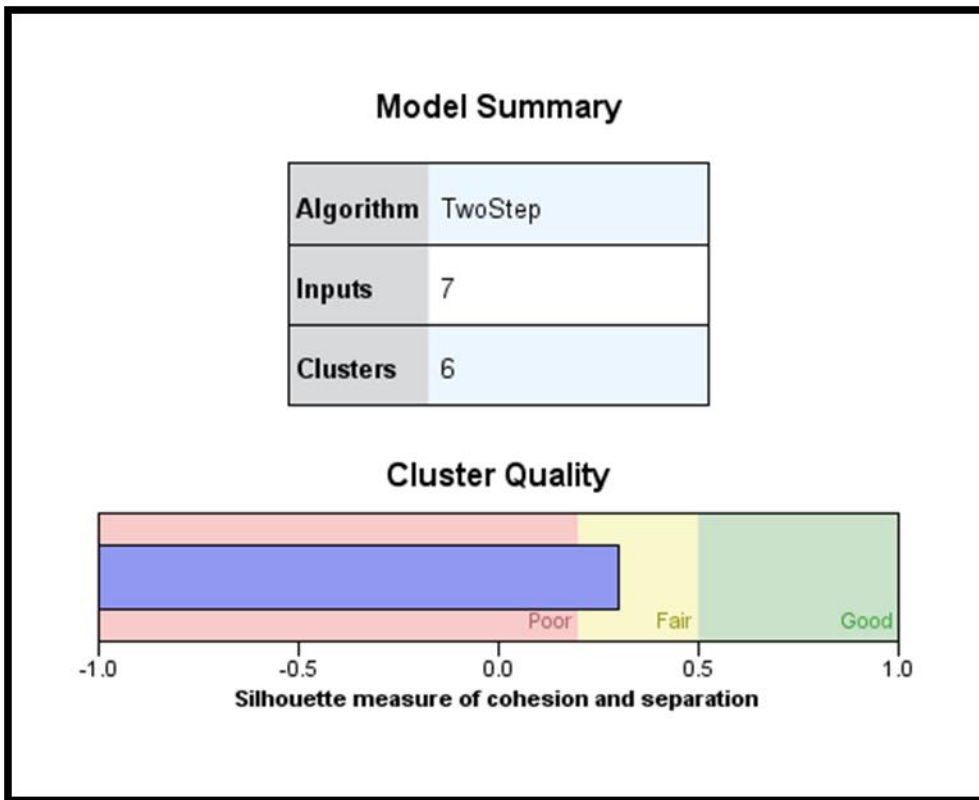
Six clusters were formed. These clusters are depicted in Table 20 below:

Table 20: Cluster depicting male and female visitor who made use of Facebook or who did not make use of Facebook

Clusters

Input (Predictor) Importance
■1.0 ■0.8 □0.6 □0.4 □0.2 □0.0

Cluster	4	5	3	1	6	2
Label						
Description						
Size	27.0% (51)	22.8% (43)	17.5% (33)	13.8% (26)	10.1% (19)	9.0% (17)
Inputs	Q11 2 (100.0%)	Q11 2 (100.0%)	Q11 1 (100.0%)	Q11 1 (100.0%)	Q11 2 (100.0%)	Q11 1 (100.0%)
	Q8_1 1 (100.0%)	Q8_1 1 (100.0%)	Q8_1 1 (100.0%)	Q8_1 1 (100.0%)	Q8_1 0 (100.0%)	Q8_1 0 (94.1%)
	place_2g 2.00 (100.0%)	place_2g 1.00 (100.0%)	place_2g 2.00 (100.0%)	place_2g 1.00 (100.0%)	place_2g 1.00 (68.4%)	place_2g 1.00 (70.6%)
	age_adj 2.78	age_adj 2.74	age_adj 2.27	age_adj 2.50	age_adj 3.68	age_adj 3.94
	Q9 7.71	Q9 7.84	Q9 8.42	Q9 8.35	Q9 8.42	Q9 6.82
	eduadj 3.55	eduadj 3.35	eduadj 3.70	eduadj 3.58	eduadj 3.42	eduadj 3.06
	Q4 7.37	Q4 7.30	Q4 7.48	Q4 6.81	Q4 7.11	Q4 6.24

The table (Table 21) below shows the importance of each of the variables that are included in forming the clusters:

Table 21: The importance of variables in the cluster analysis.
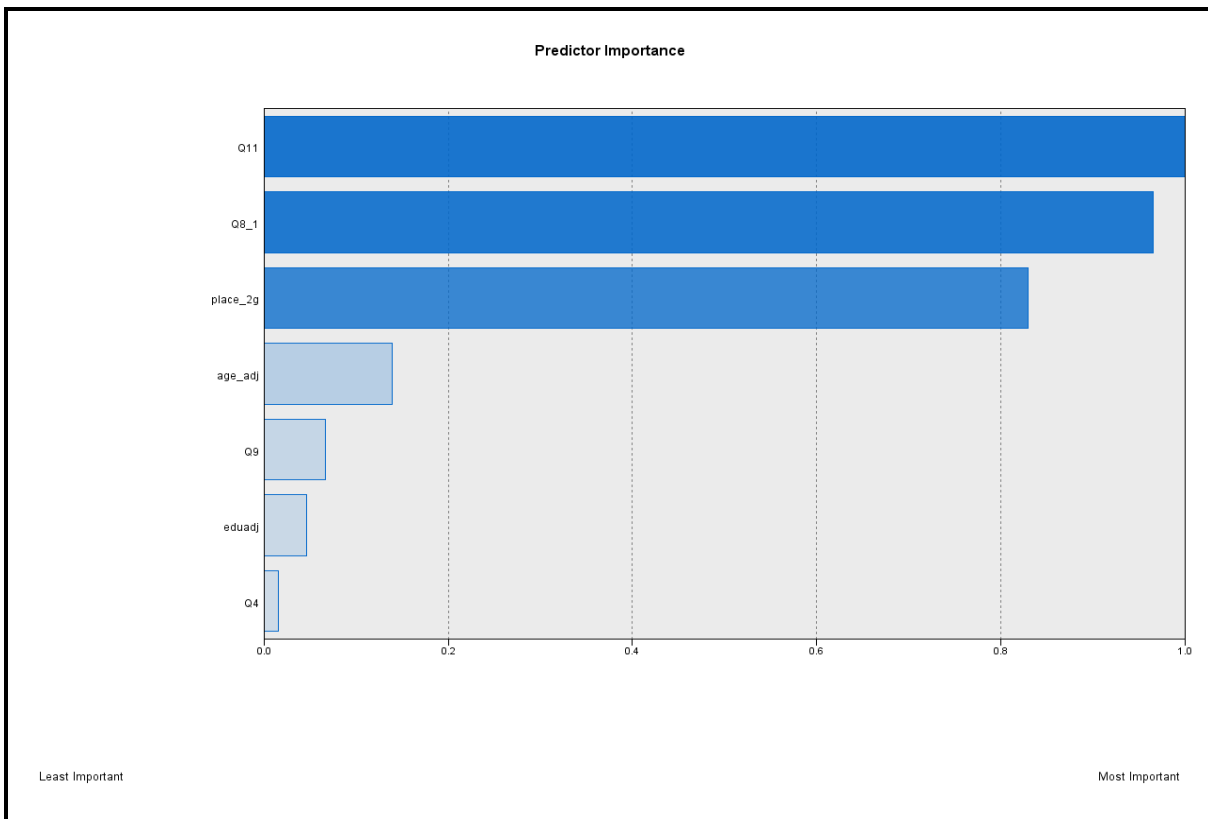
From the cluster groupings identified in Table 20, the following differences between the groups were observed:

Cluster 1 (n=26) included only males from Johannesburg, who did use Facebook to gather information about an attraction. Their age tended to be between 26 and 45 and they rated highest on the educational level, having either a degree or a postgraduate degree. This cluster regarded their experience with technology (mean=8.35) to be very high, as well as regarding the information that they gathered from Facebook as being valuable (mean=6.81).

Cluster 2 (n=17) included males from Johannesburg, who did not use both Facebook to gather information about an attraction. Their age tended to be between 46 and 54 and they rated their level of education to be as high as a degree. This cluster regarded their experience with technology (mean=6.82) to be average and the information they gathered from Facebook as being valuable (mean=6.24).

Cluster 3 (n=33) included only males from Johannesburg, who did use Facebook to gather information about an attraction. Their age tended to be between 26 and 35 and they rated highest on the educational level, having either a degree or a postgraduate degree. This cluster regarded their experience with technology (mean=8.42) to be very high, as well as regarding the information that they gathered from Facebook as highly valuable (mean=7.48).

Cluster 4 (n=51) included only females from Johannesburg, who did use Facebook to gather information about an attraction. Their age tended to be between 26 and 45 and they rated highest on the educational level, having either a degree or a postgraduate degree. This cluster regarded their experience with technology (mean=7.71) to be high, as well as regarding the information that they gathered from Facebook to be valuable (mean=7.37).

Cluster 5 (n=43) included only females from Johannesburg, who did use Facebook to gather information about an attraction. Their age tended to be between 26 and 45 and they rated their level of education to be as high as a matriculation or degree qualification. This cluster regarded their experience with technology (mean=7.84) to be high, as well as regarding the information that they gathered from Facebook as being valuable (mean=7.30).

Cluster 6 (n=19) included females from Johannesburg, who did not use Facebook to gather information about an attraction. Their age tended to be between 46 and 54 and they rated their level of education to be as high as a degree. This cluster regarded their experience with technology (mean=8.42) to be very high and the information they gathered from Facebook as being valuable (mean=7.11).

From the information depicted above, it became clear that cluster 3 stands out. From the clusters who did use Facebook to gather information about an attraction (cluster 1, 3, 4 and 5), cluster 3 found the information most valuable. They also rated their level of education the highest of all the clusters that used Facebook and also regarded the information they found as highly valuable.

The results can be related to Research Objective g)i)-vii) (par 1.4:5) and indicate that in terms of profiles of respondents, cluster 3 (males aged 26-35 – (i, iv, v)) from Johannesburg (iii) is the most noteworthy as this cluster uses Facebook (ii) to gather information about an attraction and found the information most valuable (vii) with the highest level of education (vi).

5.4   FINDINGS FROM THE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE STAFF

In-depth interviews were completed by 11 staff members from Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism. Seven (7) in-depth interviews were conducted with the staff from the various VICs in Cape Town, and 4 interviews with staff from Johannesburg Tourism VIC.

From the perspective of the Cape Town VICs, the staff said that the manner in which they receive most queries is through personal visits to their VIC. Conversely, staff from the Johannesburg VICs had different experiences regarding the format as to how queries are received. Telephone calls are the major source of their queries, although a large number are also received via email and personal visits.

The in-depth interviews clearly revealed that VICs do not receive the majority of their visitors on specific days, but rather during peak seasons or specific events. Interviewee No.1 said that February is the busiest month for their Centre, because of conferences. Interviewee No. 2 stated that they are quieter on Saturdays and Sundays and very busy during peak seasons, from May to September. Interviewee No. 3 indicated that the summer season, especially over the Christmas period and the Easter holidays, are their busiest time and that the number of visitors is not really linked to specific days. Interviewee No. 4 reported that the Centres are busiest on a Friday as well as during the holiday and peak seasons. Their busiest times could not be linked to specific events. Interviewee No. 5 stated that their VIC is busiest from Mondays to Wednesday or whenever there is a market or a function. Interviewee No. 6 said they are busiest during holidays and specific events, but mostly during specific events. Interviewee No. 7 reported that their busiest days are Fridays and Saturdays as well as some Sundays. Interview numbers. 1 to 7 are all from Cape Town Tourism (APPENDIX F).

The following interviewees (No's 8 to 11) are all from Johannesburg Tourism Interviewee No. 8 said their busiest time cannot be linked to specific days, but rather to specific events, such as the Mercedes fashion week. Interviewee No. 9 stated that they are busiest from Monday to Friday, whereas Interviewee No. 10 reported that their busiest times are during holidays and events. Interviewee No. 11 reported that they experienced their highest volume of visitors during public holidays, school holidays and just before specific events.

It is clear that the highest volume of visitors differs from VIC to VIC, depending on the location of the centre.

The most frequently asked questions at the two different destinations are, by and large, mostly the same. Tourists visiting Cape Town ask for advice in respect of where to go and what to see. They want advice on different accommodation establishments, which wine farms to visit and some ask for directions. They enquire about Table Mountain, Robben Island, the Garden Route and which restaurants to visit.

Tourists visiting Johannesburg ask questions about accommodation, tour operators and attractions to see in Johannesburg. They receive a large number of queries about excursions and also specific questions about an event, such as where the venue is located. Some queries also relate to the availability of job vacancies and internships.

The VIC staff does not personally make use of social media for promotion purposes, but do, however, fall under the umbrella of Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism respectively, both of which have a marketing department that handles all social media marketing matters. Certain staff members, however, did state that they do enter posts on social media in their personal capacity, for example, when they attend an event that is related to tourism in the area, they will Tweet about it or post something on Facebook.

The most popular forms of social media that Cape Town Tourism uses include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest, whilst those at Johannesburg Tourism include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pinterest. All of the interviewees stated that social media definitely helps to make their VIC function more effectively. Social media

does get the word out as not everybody is aware of the VIC or specifically thinks about visiting them.

It is also evident that under the umbrella of Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism, no specific amount of time is designated for the use of social media, since the respective marketing departments are responsible for this function including the constant updating all the social media platforms. Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism and their marketing departments, together, comprise a team, the members of which are mutually dependent on the other. The teams need to keep abreast of the posts and updates frequent, such as when a new package or information becomes available. It is imperative that information is shared inter-departmentally with immediate effect in order that the tourist receives accurate up-to-date information through the social media of their choice.

The information that is typically shared on social media is all tourism-related. This includes information about the destination, what attractions the city offers, information about the surrounding areas, upcoming events, advertising general services, event articles and news releases. In addition, traditional information is still seen as highly valuable. Therefore, all the VICs still provide brochures, maps and guides to tourists who visit the VIC. It is clear that people still want something tangible to take home to their friends and family in order to show them what they have seen and experienced.

Results from the interviews in terms of which social media mediums (Research Objective b) (par 1.4:5) are used in Cape Town and Johannesburg are as follows:
Cape Town Tourism uses include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest, whilst those at Johannesburg Tourism include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pinterest. All interviewees stated that social media definitely helps to make their VICs function more effectively. Social media does get the word out as not everybody is aware of the VIC or specifically thinks about visiting them.

The VICs do not make use of social media for promotion purposes as they fall under the umbrella of Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism. Both however have a

marketing department that handles social media marketing and staff members enter posts on social media in their personal capacity by Tweeting or posting on Facebook.

The following table (Table 22) summarises the findings from the in-depth interviews as described above:

Table 22: Summary of in-depth interviews.

Summary of in-depth interviews
Cape Town VICs receive most queries is through personal visits
Johannesburg VICs receive most queries is through telephone calls
VICs receive the majority of their visitors during peak seasons or specific events
The most frequently asked questions are where to go and what to see
VIC's have a marketing department that handles all social media marketing matters
The most popular forms of social media are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.
Social media helps to make their VIC function more effectively
Teams need to constantly keep abreast of social media
VICs still provide brochures, maps and guides to tourists who visit the VIC but information contained is supported by Social media

5.5   DISCUSSION

Based on the above section a discussion follows relating the findings and results to the Research Objectives stated in paragraph 1.4 (refer to page 5) and an indication of relevant research from the literature.

a)   **To identify the visitor demographics of a selected flagship attraction in Cape Town and Johannesburg**

According to the online survey of visitors, visitor demographics of the majority of respondents in both Cape Town and Johannesburg were in the 26-35 age group, constituting a total number of 97 out of the 200 visitors (48.5%). The second highest number of visitors were in the 55-65 age group (19.5%), the third highest was the 36-45 age group (15%), the fourth highest were in the 46-54 age group (0.5%), the fifth were in the 18-25 age group (7%) and lastly, the smallest was the 66+ age group (0.5%).

Of the respondents 59% were female, and 41% were male. Most of the respondents had a postgraduate qualification (56%), while 35% had an undergraduate

qualification with 7% having a matriculation qualification and 2% a high school qualification.

According to the VIC staff interviews in Cape Town and Johannesburg, visitor demographics were not available at the time of the interviews.

Not much research has been done into the demographics of social media users for tourist information, with Wang, et.al,.(2014) researching 19 smartphones users, of which the majority (12) fell in the 18-30 year category that had used a smartphone for a maximum of two years; whereas the rest of the respondents fell into smaller categories with similar usage. Results indicated that the use of smartphones increased the flexibility of tourists during trips. Ho, Lin and Chen (2012) interviewed 30 graduate and undergraduate students and found that nearly 90% spent 30 minutes online on travel-related websites indicating the prevalence of social media usage.

b) **To determine which social media mediums are currently used in the Cape Town and Johannesburg VICs and for what purposes.**
According to the online survey the majority of respondents (79%) indicated that they use more than one of the social media sites to obtain information, with Facebook the most popular social media medium at 79%, indicating the importance of word-of-mouth/mouse for obtaining information. The other social media mediums indicated in order of popular use are YouTube (43%), Google+ (40%), Twitter (23%), LinkedIn (22%), TripAdvisor (17%), Pinterest (16%) and Flickr (2%).

According to the VIC staff interviews Cape Town Tourism uses include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest, while Johannesburg Tourism uses Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pinterest. All interviewees stated that social media definitely helps to make their VICs function more effectively as it gets the word out as people are not necessarily aware of VICs or think of using them to obtain tourist information. Clearly social media are actively used by all selected respondents to obtain and promote tourist information. The recent literature (Buhalis, 1998; Connell & Reynolds, 1999; Ho, Lin & Chen, 2012; Lyu & Hwang, 2015; Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2014; Wong & McKercher, 2011) indicates that there is

widespread acceptance of Internet technology related to online tourism information search.

c) **To determine whether visitors regard the Cape Town and Johannesburg VIC as valuable knowledge sources with reference to personalised services.**

The online survey respondents from both Cape Town and Johannesburg indicate that 58% of respondents did not use a VIC with 42% that used a VIC; the main reason being that 71% respondents had found relevant information before visiting an attraction and consequently did not find it necessary to visit a VIC for additional information or for a personalised service. Fourteen percent (14%) found that it was too time consuming to visit the VIC with 7% stating that the VIC was not accessible due to either the distance or the opening times, while 5% struggled to find the Centre. Twelve percent (12%) of respondents said that they did not know of any VIC in the area, were part of an organised tour, searched the Internet or were not looking for a VIC or had no knowledge of the existence of a VIC. The conclusion being that a VIC is not perceived by respondents as a valuable knowledge source with personalised services.

Interviews with Cape Town VIC staff indicate that information queries from visitors were personal visits during peak seasons and for specific events, whereas Johannesburg VIC staff differed by receiving telephone calls as the major source of their queries as well as emails, with personal visits during holidays and for specific events.

In both Cape Town and Johannesburg, accommodation, excursions, directions, attraction information and tour operators were the most common visitor queries. Interpreted results indicate that visiting a VIC and making use of personalised services offered by VIC staff is not deemed as necessary by the respondents as they can access most needed information via social media. Wong and McKercher (2011:492-496) found that the service attitude of staff was instrumental in the overall experience of the visitor and indicated that information exchange should meet the visitor's needs as well as satisfy the requirements of the information staff.

Connell and Reynolds (1999:507) however suggest that staff in VICs/TICs need more training in the use of innovative technology to provide a super-hub visitor information point. Whereas research by Lyu and Hwang (2015:61) indicates that the development of ICT has a negative effect on the formation of TIC/VIC use demand.

d) **To determine if a relationship exists between a geographic location and i) Visitor Information Centres, ii) social media, and iii) search engines.**

Based on the online survey results the Pearson Chi-Square test was used to determine whether a relationship exists between the following variables: geographic location and i) Visitor Information Centres, ii) social media and iii) search engines.

No statistically significant relationship was found to exist between geographic location and VICs; between geographic location and social media; and between geographic location and search engines. Refer to tables 6-11. Consequently, geographic location as variable has no impact or influence on the use of VICs, social media or search engines. Research pertaining to the physical accessibility (geographic location) of VICs was mentioned by Connell and Reynolds (1999:505) as important with a call centre to get information; as well as "touch screens when the TIC is closed where you can drive and park" and access information. The relationship between social media and search engines has been undertaken by a number of authors (Buhalis, 1998; Ho, Lin & Chen, 2012; Lyu & Hwang, 2015; Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2014; Wong & McKercher, 2011.

e) **To determine if a relationship exists between the VIC and i) social media, and ii) search engines.**

Based on the online survey the Pearson Chi-Square test was used to determine whether a relationship exists between the variables: visitor information centres and i) social media and ii) search engines.

The results indicate that a significant relationship does not exist between VICs and social media; neither does a significant relationship exist between VICs and search engines. Refer to Tables 12-15.

From the relationship analysis above (for both Objectives d) and e)) it can be seen that none of the different sources of information and the relationships between

geographic location and i) visitor information centres, ii) social media and iii) search engines is statistically significant. Thus the geographic location does not have an impact on what information sources the average person uses. It also became evident that the person using search engines and social media is highly unlikely to use a VICs to gather extra information about an attraction. Only 12.9%, in the case of social media, and 25.8%, in the case of search engines, of those respondents who visited a VIC also used social media and search engines. Ho, Lin and Chen (2012:1471) studied both online and offline tourist information searching but did not include traditional VICs in their offline search but focused on guidebooks, brochures, word-of-mouth referrals and travel agents. Their results for online searching indicated that some information searchers are found to be loyal to a specific search engine and access a specific portal website; although it is not unusual for a couple of search engines to be used for cross searching.

f) **To determine whether differences exists between the groups that use a VIC in comparison with those that do not, in respect of i) visitor information, ii) information usefulness and iii) technological experience.**
Based on the online survey the T-Test was done to compare the means between the groups that did use a VIC and the group that did not, in respect of (i) the value of information provided, (ii) information usefulness and (iii) the technological experience.

Not one of the tests demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the means of the variables. Therefore, the use of a VIC did not result in a change with regard to their perception of (i) the value of information provided, (ii) information usefulness and (iii) the technological experience. Clearly the role of the VIC in terms of a valuable knowledge resource and personalised services was not perceived as noteworthy by the respondents.

Although not related to a specific Research Objective, a Kruskal-Walis test was also performed to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the different age groups with regards to (i) their technological experience and (ii) how valuable the information regarding an attraction is. Refer to Tables 17 and 18.

No statistically significance difference was found between the different age groups with regards to the value of information provided (5% level), although a highly statistically significance (1% level of significance) was found between the different age groups with regard to the level of technological experience (p=0.000). Accordingly the mean ranks indicate that the youngest group, aged 26 to 35 (mean rank = 144.18) is perceived to have much more experience with technology than the older groups, with the oldest group having the least experience with technology (mean rank = 71.24). Whereas a study by Lyu and Hwang (2015:58) amongst Korean domestic tourists found that respondents with a mean age of 38.3 years were the heaviest social media users and tended to visit tourist information centres more frequently.

g) **To investigate whether meaningful profiles of respondents can emerge, taking the following seven variables into account: i) male and female, ii Facebook usage, iii) place, iv) age, v) gender, vi) level of education and vii) the value of information received.**

A cluster analysis was conducted to investigate if meaningful profiles of respondents emerged. The cluster quality reported a silhouette measure of cohesion (0.3) and separation that was acceptable (fair) as indicated in Tables 19-21.

Six clusters were formed that are depicted in Table 20, with cluster 3 standing out as males (iv) aged between 26-35 (iv) from Johannesburg (iii). Cluster 3 (also clusters 1.4 and 5) use Facebook (ii) to gather information about an attraction; with cluster 3 finding the information most valuable (vii). Cluster 3 also rated their level of education (vi) the highest of all clusters that used Facebook and also regarded the information they found as highly valuable (vii).

Although research by Lyu and Hwang (2015:61) indicates that the development of ICT has had a negative effect on the general usage of VICs, middle-aged respondents (of 38.3 years) were found to be not only the heaviest social media users but also visited VICs more frequently than other age groups.

In the above discussion an attempt was made to relate the research objectives stated in paragraph 1.4 with the findings and results of the empirical fieldwork (the online

survey of visitors and VIC staff interviews) in Cape Town and Johannesburg at selected attractions and VICs.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research results were presented and linked to this study's research objectives in a discussion. In the final chapter, the study will be concluded. This research project was not without these limitations and these will be addressed. Finally the recommendations for future research in this area will be discussed and linked to the research that was completed by the researcher.

6.2   CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the research investigating the role of social media on visitor information centres as a knowledge source in South Africa is most topical, as all indications are there that the impact of social media on the existence of visitor information centres is regarded as important by the majority of the selected visitors visiting flagship attractions. The majority of visitors are in the 26-35 age group with a post-graduate qualification and the role of social media is imminent as this group of visitors are technologically literate and prefer to use search engines and social media rather than visit traditional VICs, with Facebook being the most popular and used site.

VICs are not necessarily regarded as valuable knowledge sources and the selected 26-35 aged visitors prefer to use word-of-mouth/mouse (Facebook) to obtain information about visitor attractions, rather than feel the need for a personalised information/knowledge services based in a VIC. The second highest number of visitors was in the 55-65 age group and they also made use of social media as a source of information. Most groups indicated that they use more than one social media platform and search engine to search for information. The literature (Gretzel & Jamal, 2010; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012) however indicates that older people prefer personalised information services, although this was not evident in this research.

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The majority of respondents also indicated that they found relevant information on social media about an attraction before actually visiting it. Less than half of visitors found information using the VIC at a specific attraction. Consequently it appears that personalised information provision at a VIC needs to be repackaged and promoted to encourage visitors to make use of VICs.

Most complaints around VICs included lack of signage, location/distance, opening hours, time consuming, although the majority of visitors indicated that they would use the VIC if there were clean toilet facilities, free Wifi and discount vouchers for attractions. These have been addressed in the recommendations under accessibility.

Furthermore, there appears to be no relationship between the geographic location and the VIC, social media and search engines; therefore the geographic location does not have an impact on what information sources the average person uses. Nor was there a relationship between VICs and social media and search engines; therefore the VIC as a physical entity also does not have an impact on what information sources the average person uses.

In terms of differences between groups that use a VIC and those that do not, the use of a VIC did not result in a change with regard to any groups' perception of (i) the value of information provided, and (ii) information usefulness. However, a highly statistically significance was found between the different age groups with regard to level of technological experience, indicating that the youngest group is perceived to have much more experience with technology than the older groups, with the oldest group having the least experience with technology.
'
With regard to profiles of respondents, males aged between 26-35 from Johannesburg (cluster 3) is perceived as the most noteworthy who use Facebook to gather information about an attraction and that found the information most valuable. This cluster also rated their level of education the highest of all clusters that used Facebook. Clearly young males (from Johannesburg) appear the most informed, educated and technologically literate and perceive information (from social media) as valuable.

In conclusion the research indicates that social media is used more often by visitors for their tourist information needs than making use of the traditional Visitor Information Centre with its personalised information/knowledge services within the areas investigated.

6.3   LIMITATIONS

The study had several limitations. Firstly, only a selected number of VICs were included in the study and that only selected flagship attractions were used in the online survey of visitors. The decision was made by the researcher to use only Cape Town and Johannesburg as destinations. In addition the fact that the Cradle of Humankind is 50 kilometres from Johannesburg can also be regarded as a limitation as it is not in the immediate metropolitan area of Johannesburg, but is regarded as a flagship attraction due to its World heritage site status and included for this reason.

Secondly, the selected VICs were not able to assist with the distribution of questionnaires. This limitation impacted on the number of responses received in total. Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism undertake their own research and the researcher was not able to access or obtain information about it.

Thirdly, Research Objective (c) was not sufficiently covered in the questionnaire. The objective needed to answer the question on the value of a VIC as a knowledge source and questions exploring this were not sufficiently covered by the questionnaire.

In the in-depth interview, question six (6) referred to "a better VIC". Since there was no formal definition to what can be constituted as a better VIC, the question could have been interpreted differently by each of the interviewees. Therefore, it is seen as a limitation to this study.

Respondents were not asked from which city they were, but were asked more general the country of origin. Therefor it is therefore uncertain whether respondents that completed the questionnaire for Johannesburg are residents from Johannesburg or not. This can be seen as another limitation due to uncertainty of location.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

From the results of the online survey, as well as the in-depth interviews from staff members at the VICs, it is indicated that some tourists still seem to value the services that are provided by these VICs especially if they provide brochures, free pamphlets, quick information guides, which they already do, and in addition, clean toilet facilities, free Wifi and coffee. However, a number of visitors did not know what services are offered by the visitor information centre. Therefore it could be recommended that the visitor information centre put more focus on the following areas:

a) **ACCESSIBILITY OF VIC** in terms of physical location, signage, queuing, opening hours and more:

Signage to the visitor information centre should be clear. Of the visitors, 5% indicated that they struggled to find the visitor information centre. In order to make it exciting for the visitor, a game could be developed (such as PokemonGo) to draw the visitor to the visitor information centre. The application could be to catch some of the famous attractions on a map of the area. VIC could then also have small prizes for the visitors that arrived at the centre using the mobile application, discounted tickets to the attraction, or tickets to forthcoming events

Some visitors indicated it was time-consuming to visit the centre. Whether it was because of the time spent on travel to get to the VIC or physical queuing, is unknown. Regarding long queues, information specialists could walk around in the VIC and ask the visitors what specific queries they have. Research by Wong and McKercher (2011:493) reported little difference in the duration of participants' encounters during crowded and un-crowded times, but did note a qualitatively different type of exchange of information.

Opening times were indicated as a deterrent by some visitors. Even though it was a low percentage (0.05%), it is still an important factor. When traveling internationally, the flights usually arrive early. If the visitor needs information about specific attractions, or hotels and restaurants, there could be an option to "Ask a question"

on the website. The visitor information staff member assigned to this task could then reply directly via phone, email or WhatsApp.

Although not mentioned in the literature for this research, VICs need to reinvent themselves to attract visitors. This can be done by offering events that suit the local attractions, involve local artists and storytellers to entice visitors to come to the VIC. This would impact on opening hours and staff time, but would provide a visible platform for visitors to want to visit the VIC and then come into contact with the value added personalised services. These events need to be advertised on social media. Balancing the electronic and personal touch is the key to success for the VIC to survive and continue to exist within the South African context, especially if the emerging domestic tourism market is to be reached.

b)   **ONLINE PRESENCE OF THE VIC:**

Many visitors stated that the VIC was not visible on social media. In both Cape Town and Johannesburg Tourism, all VICs fall under the umbrella of Cape Town Tourism and Johannesburg Tourism, so there are no specific social media pages for specific VICs. It did seem, from the different respondents, that they assume each VIC will have their own social media pages. From the umbrellas of Cape Town and Johannesburg social media pages, it should be stated clearly that all VICs fall under the one umbrella brand of social media for the specific tourism authorities.

Even though the staff stated that they receive many visitors personally, it is also evident that many visitors send emails and phone the VIC in order to find information about an attraction. The online presence of the VIC is of utmost importance. Locals in the different areas could volunteer to share their knowledge on the attractions and history on the destinations via social media. It is important for the tourism authorities to stay up to date with ways to market their online presence. A visitor that is excited about planning a trip and spends time searching for information does not want to wait hours for a reply from a VIC. The information searchers of the 21st Century want the information right now.

Regarding the invisibility of the VIC on social media, one strategy that could improve this is to market the social media right at the point of entrance. The airport, for many visitors, is their first contact with a new destination. Big screens could attract attention, especially if it advertises valuable information. The Twitter feed could show on the screen, linking to other social media mediums like Facebook, and this way the visitor could follow the information from the right tourism authorities. Balancing the electronic and personal touch is important.

c) **COMMUNICATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE**:

Although this was not explicitly addressed in the current research, the VIC should stay connected and keep open communication between all parties involved in the tourism industry such as the city council, municipality, local communities, chamber of commerce, tourism business owners, the National Department of Tourism, and most important, the visitor and tourist as major stakeholders.

The service attitude of staff is instrumental in the overall experience of the visitor and information exchange should meet the visitor's needs as well as satisfy the requirements of the information staff (Wong & McKercher 2011:492-496). Additional training of VIC staff in the use of social media to provide a one-stop 'super-hub' information service is highly recommended (Connell & Reynolds, 1999:507) with both an offline and online presence

Studies by Mendes-Filho & Tan, 2009; Amersdorffer, Bauhuber & Oellrich, 2012, Lim, Chung & Weaver, 2012 have made it evident that social media sites are often hailed and feared as democratising the travel experience. Therefore it is of utmost importance to VICs to take advantage of this opportunity and use social media to become more visible. It is vital for the VICs to know their audience and attract visitors accordingly.

6.4.2   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research of this study can be used as an exploratory study for future nationwide studies focusing on South African VICs to determine which social media sites are used most often and also to look at the demographic information with regard to the use of social media and the impact of the level of education. Future studies into the role of social media

on VICs can be expanded to include the use of mobile phones and tablets when searching for information. Research into the impact of the use of a Mobile VICs as a knowledge source for tourists could be invaluable.

For future studies, research into using social media as a marketing tool is imperative as it will build relationships between visitors and VICs by responding to questions and may be a life line for traditional VICs.

Research by Luy & Hwang (2015), Okazaki & Hirose (2012 and Hwang *et. al.* (2012) expressed significant dissatisfaction and confusion about travel information obtained from diverse Internet sources. It will be of value as this did not appear to be the case in this research study.

This research study also did not address the willingness of tourists to use the classic knowledge brokers to check quality and reliability of travel information they had already obtained by using both online and offline sources (Lyu & Hwang, 2015). This perspective could be of value for future studies.

The knowledge broker is still a highly trusted source of information and visitors know they will receive reliable information from the visitor information centre. While significant progress has been made in the area of information communication technology, the finding from Lyu and Hwang (2015) indicates that traditional tourism facilities are still important promotional elements that play a central role in determining the quality of their clientele's experience and needs further research.

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APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance Form

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Tel: +27 12 420 4102
E-mail: berendien.lubbe@up.ac.za

16 October 2014

<u>**Strictly confidential**</u>

Prof FA Fairer-Wessels
Division: Tourism Management

Dear Professor Fairer-Wessels

Project:	The role of social media in visitor information centres
Researcher:	L Swart
Student No:	04410785
Promoter:	Prof FA Fairer-Wessels
Co-promoter:	-
Department:	Tourism Management

Thank you for the application you submitted to the Committee for Research Ethics, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Committee formally approved the above study on an *ad hoc* basis on 15 October 2014. The approval is subject to the candidate abiding by the principles and parameters set out in the application and research proposal in the actual execution of the research.

The approval does not imply that the researcher, student or lecturer is relieved of any accountability in terms of the Codes of Research Ethics of the University of Pretoria if action is taken beyond the approved proposal.

The Committee requests that you convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

PROF BA LUBBE
CHAIR: COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS

cc: Prof BA Lubbe
        Student Administration

Members: Prof BA Lubbe (Chair); Prof RS Rensburg (Deputy Chair) ; Prof HE Brand; Dr CE Eresia-Eke; Prof JH Hall; Prof JF Kirsten; Dr MC Matthee; Prof JE Myburgh; Dr SG Nienaber; Ms K Plant; Prof C Thornhill; Prof R van Eyden; Prof SR van Jaarsveld, Dr M Wiese
Administrative officer: Mr M Deysel

Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences

Informed consent for participation in an academic research study

Dept. of TOURISM

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

<u>Research conducted by</u>:

Mrs. L Swart (04410785)

Cell: 083 270 1984

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Lidia Swart, a Masters student from the Department Tourism at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the role that social media play on visitor information centres.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an <u>anonymous</u> survey. Your name will not appear on the questionnaire and the answers you give will be treated as strictly <u>confidential</u>. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 5 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof F. Fairer-Wessels, (tel: 012 420 3955, email: felicite.fairer-wessels@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

_____   _____

Respondent's signature   **Date**

☐

APPENDIX B: Data Collection Instrument: Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

My name is Lidia Swart and I am a student at the Faculty of Economic Management and Sciences at the University of Pretoria. I am currently enrolled as a master's student in Tourism Management. The aim of this study is to research the role of social media in the Johannesburg Visitor Information Centre. Social media is an online platform where individuals can gather and share information, photos, videos and other forms of media with each other.

Please fill out the questionnaire below. There are no right or wrong answers. Your data will be entered onto a spread sheet where identification is impossible. Therefore, full anonymity is guaranteed.

I give my consent to participate in this study (Please mark box with an X):

Please complete this survey by marking the relevant field with an X, or filling in your answer in the space provided:

1. **Have you ever been to one of these?**

Yes		No	

2. **How did you get information about this attraction?**

Visitor information centre	
Social media	
Search engines	
Word-of-mouth	
Hotel front desk	
Other:	

3. **How valuable did you find the information provided?**

Not at all — Somewhat — Very valuable

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. **Did you make use of the visitor information centre at this attraction?**

Yes	
No	

5. **If not, what is the reason for not using the visitor information centre?**

Not accessible due to distance/opening times	
Time consuming (e.g. long queues)	
Found relevant information before visiting the attraction	

Struggled to find the centre (e.g. directions provided by web/people were unclear)	
Other:	

6. Would you make use of a visitor information centre if they have the following available?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Free WIFI			
Free coffee			
Clean toilet facilities			
Discount vouchers for attractions			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

7. Which social media sites do you use the most?

	Facebook		LinkedIn		Tripadvisor		Flickr
	Twitter		Pinterest		Google +		Youtube

8. How would you rate yourself where technology is concerned?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

9. Demographic information:

a. Age in years

18-25	
26-35	
36-45	
46-54	
55-65	
66+	

b. Gender

Male		Female	

c. Education

Highschool		Matric	
Undergraduate qualification/Diploma		Postgraduate qualification	

d. Occupation

e. Country of origin

Thank you for your participation in this survey. It is highly appreciated!

Online survey:

The role of social media on visitor information centres

Dear respondent,

My name is Lidia Swart and I am a student at the Faculty of Economic Management and Sciences at the University of Pretoria. I am currently enrolled as a master's student in Tourism Management. The aim of this study is to research the role of social media in the Cape Town Visitor Information Centres and Johannesburg Visitor Information Centres
Social media is an online platform where individuals can gather and share information, photos, videos and other forms of media with each other. Please fill out the questionnaire below. There are no right or wrong answers. Your data will be entered onto a spread sheet where identification is impossible. Therefore, full anonymity is guaranteed.

Q1 Please select the attraction you have visited:

- ☐ Cape Town: Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (1)
- ☐ Cape Town: Table Mountain (2)
- ☐ Cape Town: Castle of Good Hope (3)
- ☐ Johannesburg: Golf Reef City (4)
- ☐ Johannesburg: Soweto (5)
- ☐ Johannesburg: Cradle of Humankind (6)

Q2 Have you ever been to a visitor information centre?   Visitor Information Centre: A physical location that provides tourists information to the visitor who tour the place or area locally. (National Department of Tourism, 2011)

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q3 How did you get information about this attraction?

- ☐ Visitor Information Centre (1)
- ☐ Social media (2)
- ☐ Search engines (3)
- ☐ Word-of-mouth (4)
- ☐ Hotel front desk (5)
- ☐ Other: (6) _____

Q4 How valuable did you find the information provided?

- ☐ 0 (0)

- ☐   1 (1)
- ☐   2 (2)
- ☐   3 (3)
- ☐   4 (4)
- ☐   5 (5)
- ☐   6 (6)
- ☐   7 (7)
- ☐   8 (8)
- ☐   9 (9)
- ☐   10 (10)

Q5 Did you make use of the visitor information centre at this attraction?

- ☐   Yes (1)
- ☐   No (2)

Q6 If not, what is the reason for not using the visitor information centre?

- ☐   Not accessible due to distance/opening times (1)
- ☐   Time consuming (e.g. long queues) (2)
- ☐   Found relevant information before visiting the attraction (3)
- ☐   Struggled to find the centre (e.g. directions provided by web/people were unclear) (4)
- ☐   Other (5) _____

Q7 Would you make use of a visitor information centre if they have the following available?

	Yes (1)	Maybe (2)	No (3)
Free WIFI (1)	☐	☐	☐
Free coffee (2)	☐	☐	☐
Clean toilet facilities (3)	☐	☐	☐
Discount vouchers for attractions (4)	☐	☐	☐
Other (5)	☐	☐	☐
Other (6)	☐	☐	☐
Other (7)	☐	☐	☐

Q8 Which social media sites do you use the most?

- ☐   Facebook (1)

- Twitter (2)
- LinkedIn (3)
- Pinterest (4)
- Tripadvisor (5)
- Google + (6)
- Flickr (7)
- Youtube (8)

Q9 How would you rate yourself where technology is concerned?

- 0 (0)
- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- 8 (8)
- 9 (9)
- 10 (10)

Q10 Your age in years:

- 18-25 (1)
- 26-35 (2)
- 36-45 (3)
- 46-54 (4)
- 55-65 (5)
- 66 + (6)

Q11 Gender:

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q12 Education

- Highschool (1)

- Matric (2)

- Undergraduate qualification/Diploma (3)

- Postgraduate qualification (4)

Q13 Occupation:

Q14 Country of Origin:

APPENDIX C: Data Collection Instrument: In-depth Interviews

Faculty of Economic and

Management Sciences

In-depth questions for the employees that manage the Visitor Information Centre: Cape Town

1. In which format do you receive the most queries? Email, phone, personal visits, etc.

2. On which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors? (e.g: holidays, during a specific event)

3. What are the frequently asked questions?

4. Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre and how?

5. Which forms of social media do you make use of? Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest etc.

6. Do you think using social media help make you a better VIC?

7. How many hours a day do you spend updating social media?

8. What type of information would you give the client on social media?

9. Do you give visitors traditional information, not using social media or any form of technology?

10. Do you use social media as a marketing tool?

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent and Invitation Forms

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences

Informed consent for participation in an academic research study

Dept. of TOURISM

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

Research conducted by:
Mrs. L Swart (04410785)
Cell: 083 270 1984

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Lidia Swart, a Masters student from the Department Tourism at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the role that social media play on visitor information centres.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an <u>anonymous</u> survey. Your name will not appear on the questionnaire and the answers you give will be treated as strictly <u>confidential</u>. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.

- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 5 minutes of your time.

- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

- Please contact my supervisor, Prof F. Fairer-Wessels, (tel: 012 420 3955, email: felicite.fairer-wessels@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.

- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

_____   _____

Respondent's signature   **Date**

Questionnaire invitation email

Dear respondent,

Thank you for your time in reading this email.

I am a student at the faculty of Economic Management and Sciences at the University of Pretoria currently enrolled as a master's student in Tourism Management. The aim of this study is to research the role of social media in the Cape Town and Johannesburg Visitor Information Centre.

*(Social media is an online platform where individuals can gather and share information, photos, videos and other forms of media with each other)

There are six tourist attractions to choose from. Please note that if you have visited more than one of the attractions, you can complete the questionnaire more than once. The questionnaire answers will be specific to the choice of attraction.

If you consent to participate in this study, please follow the link to the questionnaire below - it will only take 5-10 minutes of your time. There are no right or wrong answers. Your data will be entered onto a spread sheet where identification is impossible. Therefore, full anonymity is guaranteed.

Follow this link to the Survey:

https://jfe.qualtrics.com/form/SV_6W1QpAXBWRVVdZz

Thank you in advance for contributing to my research.

Kind Regards,

Lidia Swart

APPENDIX E: Letters of Approval

Letter of approval: Johannesburg Tourism:

Hi Lidia,

You may proceed with the telephonic interviews. Hereunder are the relevant people to speak to…

Joburg Tourism Head Office – Phumzile for social media related questions (011 214 0700)

VIC Head Office – Refilwe (011 214 0700)

Park Station Tourism Information Centre – Lungile (011 028 7741/2/3)

Soweto Tourism Info Centre- Kgaugelo (011 342 4316)…the telephone currently have technical errors…it might be wise if you opt for email correspondence with Kgaugelo (kkgokolo@gmail.com)

Colleagues – please assist Lidia with her request

Kindest regards,

Rendani Khorommbi
Manager: Visitor Services Bureau

Johannesburg Tourism

Tel   +27 (0) 11 214 0700
Fax   +27 86 535 1166
Cell   +27 82 773 2999
Email   rendanik@joburgtourism.com

www.joburgtourism.com

Letter of Approval: Cape Town Tourism:

Dear Lidia

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

In order to contextualise my response to your request I think I have to explain our organisation's mandate. Cape Town Tourism is the city of Cape Town's official Regional Tourism Organisation, responsible for tourism marketing, visitor and industry services. As such, we don't only have a traditional visitor service but also an entirely separate marketing function. I've reviewed your questionnaire with this in mind and believe that questions one to three are applicable to our frontline team members while all of the other questions on our social media strategy should be answered by a representative of our marketing team. Elmarene as Tourism Services Manager is comfortable with you interviewing the frontline team members but we'll need to get an indication from you on how many team members you would like to interview if the total frontline team comprises 37 people i.e. how big a sample do you want.

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If you still wish to proceed with the surveys, we'll need to check the availability of a representative from our marketing team for the questions on social media. We unfortunately will not be able to grant you permission to survey our visitors, as mentioned earlier by Elmarene, because we survey them on an ongoing basis and feel that a second survey will cause friction.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Kind regards

Marisah

Marisah Smith
Research Coordinator

T: 0214876840 **F:** 0214876440
E: Marisah@capetown.travel **W:** www.capetown.travel

Blog: www.capetown.travel/blog
Address: Muizenberg Visitor Information Centre The Pavilion Beach Road Muizenberg

Cape Town is No 1 in The New York Times' '52 Places to go in 2014' List. **Read more**

Subject:	RE: Masters study from the University of Pretoria
Created By:	Marisah@capetown.travel
Scheduled Date:	
Creation Date:	2014/08/29 09:47 AM
From:	Marisah Smith <Marisah@capetown.travel>

Hi Lidia

Hope you are well.

You can liase with my colleague Elmarene Bernhardt, our Tourism Services Manager, on the best dates and VICs for you to interview our team members at. For the questions on Cape Town Tourism's social media platforms and strategy, the best person to speak to is Nicole Biondi, our Strategic Communications and Content Manager also copied on this email.

We would really appreciate it if in exchange for the opportunity to interview our team you would be willing to share the findings of your study with us as it is extremely relevant for CTT.

Kind regards

Marisah

Marisah Smith

Research Coordinator

T: 0214876840   **F:** 0214876440

E: Marisah@capetown.travel **W:** www.capetown.travel

Blog: www.capetown.travel/blog

Address: Somerset   West   Visitor   Information   Centre Southey's Vines 186 Main Road Somerset West

Cape Town is No 1 in The New York Times' '52 Places to go in 2014' List. **Read more**

Disclaimer: Information contained in this e-mail is intended for the use of the person to whom it was addressed. Click here for our Terms and Conditions.

Subject:	RE: Masters study from the University of Pretoria
Created By:	Marisah@capetown.travel
Scheduled Date:	
Creation Date:	2014/08/29 09:47 AM
From:	Marisah Smith <Marisah@capetown.travel>

APPENDIX F: Data Collection Results

Findings from questionnaire as from Qualtrics:

**Q1 - Please select the attraction you have visited:**
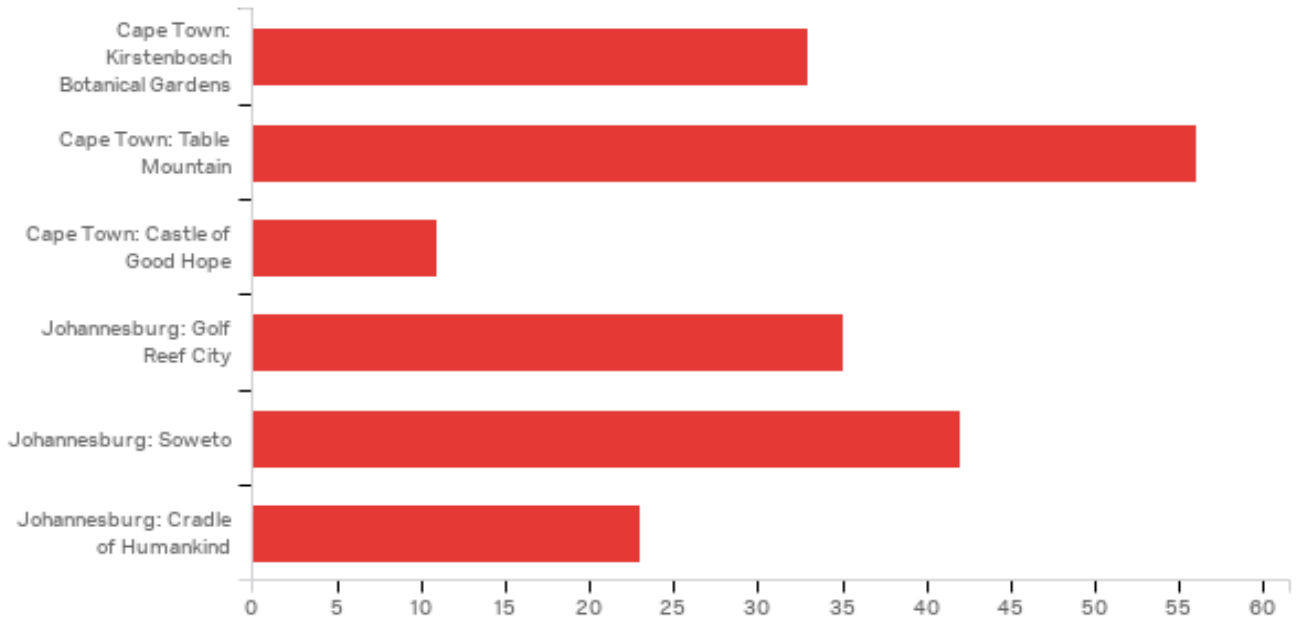
Answer	%	Count
Cape Town: Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens	16.50%	33
Cape Town: Table Mountain	28.00%	56
Cape Town: Castle of Good Hope	5.50%	11
Johannesburg: Golf Reef City	17.50%	35
Johannesburg: Soweto	21.00%	42
Johannesburg: Cradle of Humankind	11.50%	23
Total	100%	200

Q2 - Have you ever been to a visitor information centre? Visitor Information Centre: A physical location that provides tourists information to the visitor who tour the place or area locally. (National Department of Tourism, 2011)
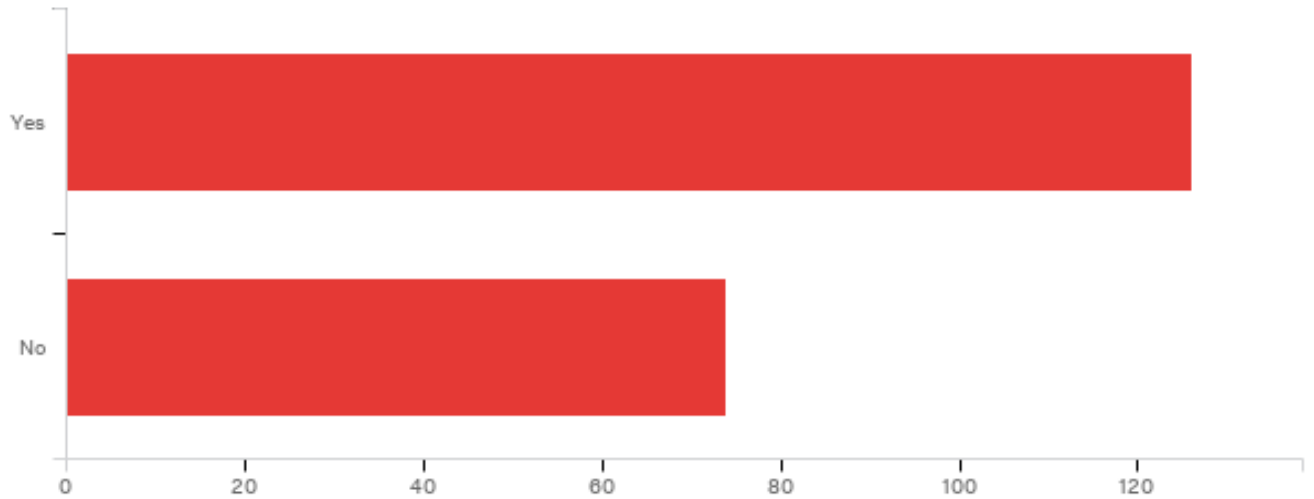
Answer	%	Count
Yes	63.00%	126
No	37.00%	74
Total	100%	200

Q3 - How did you get information about this attraction?
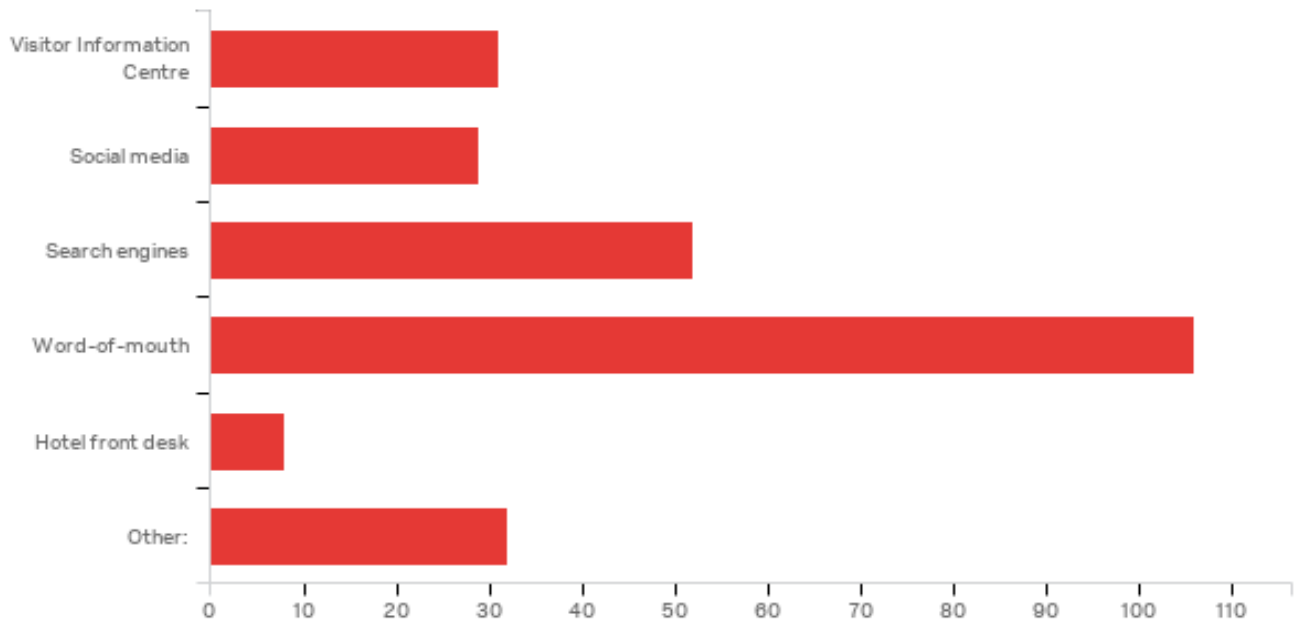
Answer	%	Count
Visitor Information Centre	15.58%	31
Social media	14.57%	29
Search engines	26.13%	52
Word-of-mouth	53.27%	106
Hotel front desk	4.02%	8
Other:	16.08%	32

Other:

Other:
Function
Part of tour
Friend
A Friend
Travel guides

I'm Capetonian. I can see the mountain from anywhere.

Attractions front desk

part of my progrmme

CPD programme

CPD

It was an arranged tour

host institutions took us

It just happened as It was in the time table of the CPD workshop

Tourist guide

The CPD group was recommended by the course co-ordinators to visit the centre.

It was an organised tour with our study group at UP

UP

Organised visit by the University

CPD PROGAMME

Through CPD Programme

We were taken there as a group

CPD University of Pretoria

Through CPD programme organisers

Saw it in passing

news paper articles

Taken to the attraction by parents whilst still a child

AS A CHILD, FROM PARENTS

School trip

Did not visit any of those places, but I had to choose.

Book

Q4 - How valuable did you find the information provided? - Group

30% Detractor	47% Passive	23% Promoter

-7.61

-100   100
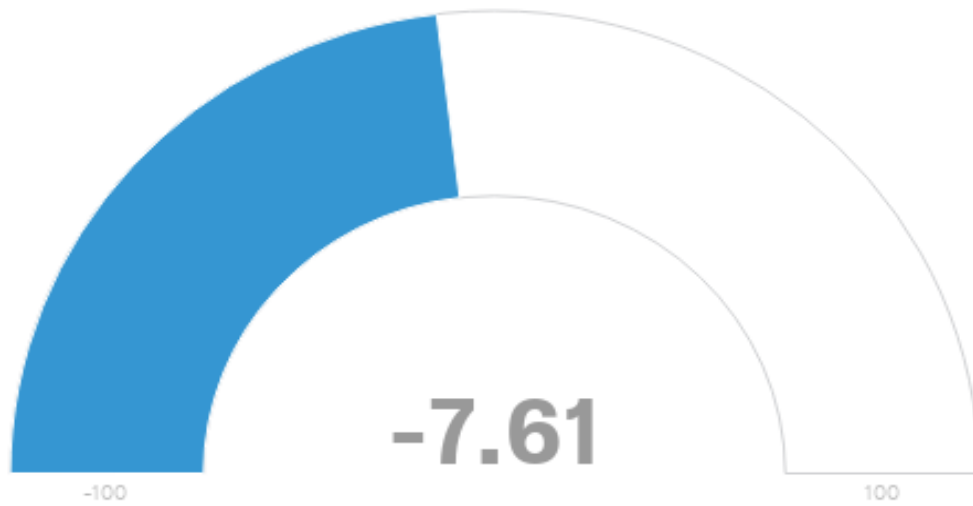
Q5 - Did you make use of the visitor information centre at this attraction?
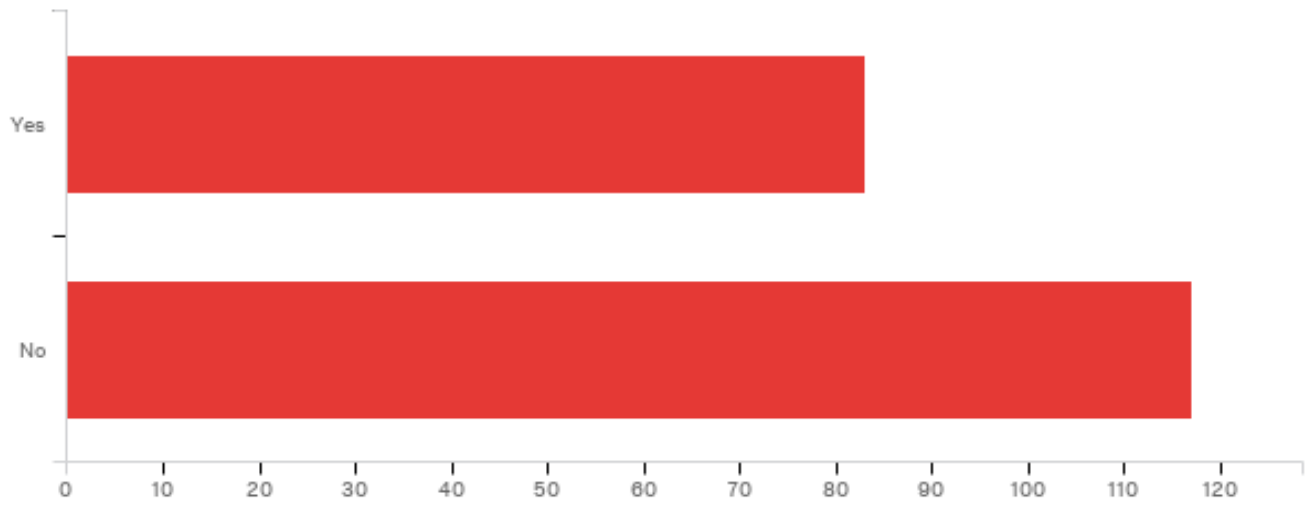
Answer	%	Count
Yes	41.50%	83
No	58.50%	117
Total	100%	200

Q6 - If not, what is the reason for not using the visitor information centre?
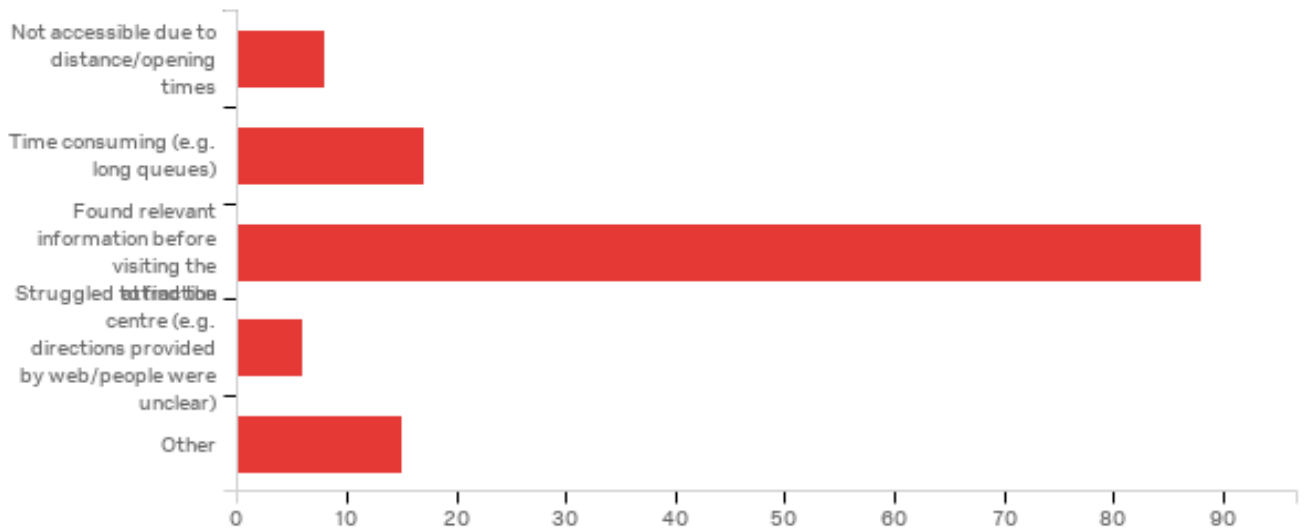
Answer	%	Count
Not accessible due to distance/opening times	6.50%	8
Time consuming (e.g. long queues)	13.82%	17
Found relevant information before visiting the attraction	71.54%	88
Struggled to find the centre (e.g. directions provided by web/people were unclear)	4.88%	6
Other	12.20%	15

Other

Other

Was not looking for it

Group didn't visit info centre

Searched Internet

Did not visit as yet

was with a school tour

No information provided about the centre for us to know where it is

It was just indicated in the time table hence there was no need to consult   information centre

We were with an organised tour guide

it was an organised visit so there was no need for the visitor information centre

Didn't know of any in the area

To vist a botinical garden, one doesn't need an information center

Was not there

Q7 - Would you make use of a visitor information centre if they have the following available?
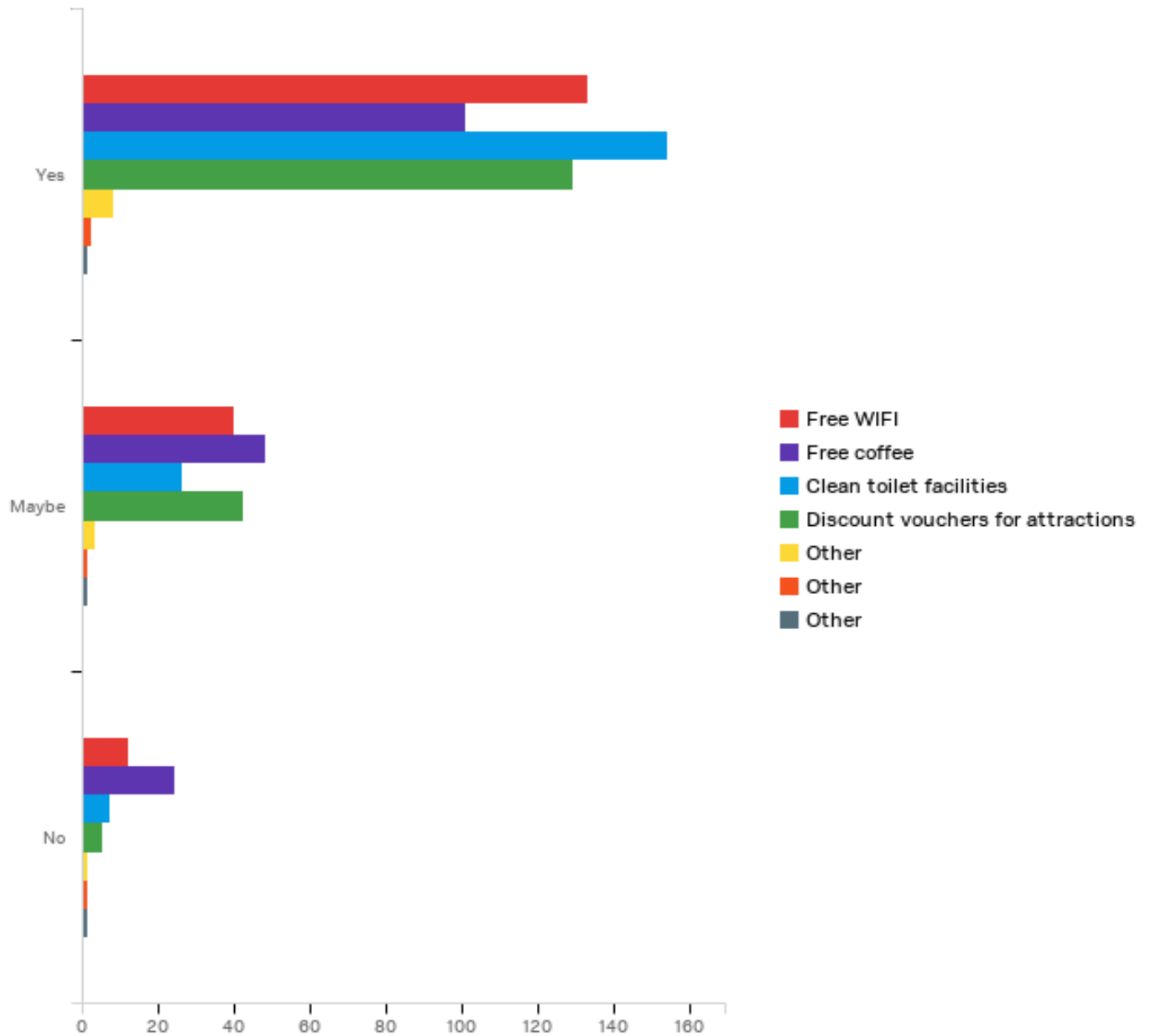
Question	Yes		Maybe		No		Total
Free WIFI	71.89%	133	21.62%	40	6.49%	12	185
Free coffee	58.38%	101	27.75%	48	13.87%	24	173
Clean toilet facilities	82.35%	154	13.90%	26	3.74%	7	187
Discount vouchers for attractions	73.30%	129	23.86%	42	2.84%	5	176

Other	66.67%	8	25.00%	3	8.33%	1	12
Other	50.00%	2	25.00%	1	25.00%	1	4
Other	33.33%	1	33.33%	1	33.33%	1	3

Q7_5_TEXT - Other

Other

Make part of ticket sales

Free pamflets

Advertise other touristic places in the area

Fun kids activity packs

Touch point Screens and maps

Great service

free air ticket for a study tour

If they allowed taking pictures

All of the above

Well trained and mannered staff

Brochures

Friendly clean environment

I am lost and they are clearly marked

Quick info guides (flow charts perhaps)

Brochures of other attractions

Other
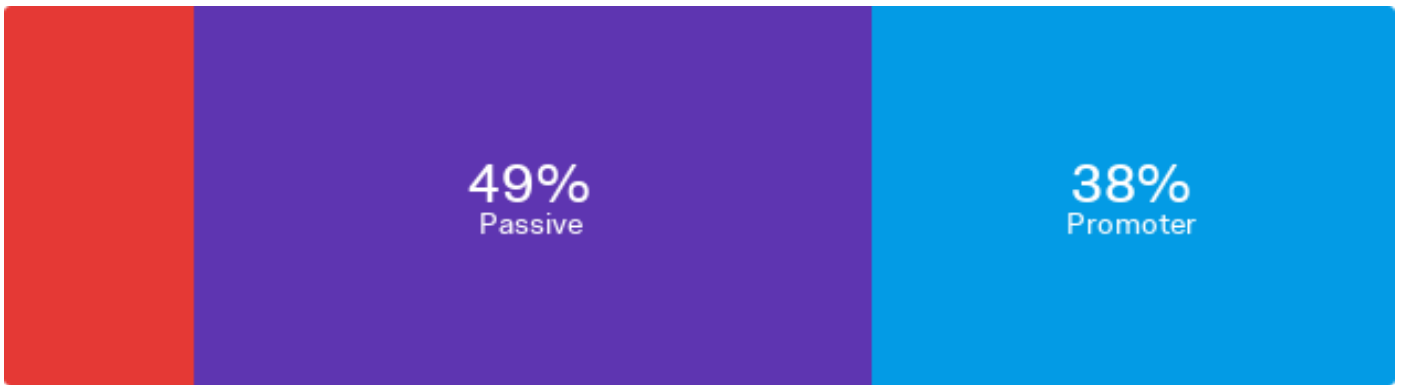
Other

Activities for kids

Well informed staff

Other

Other

Q8 - Which social media sites do you use the most?
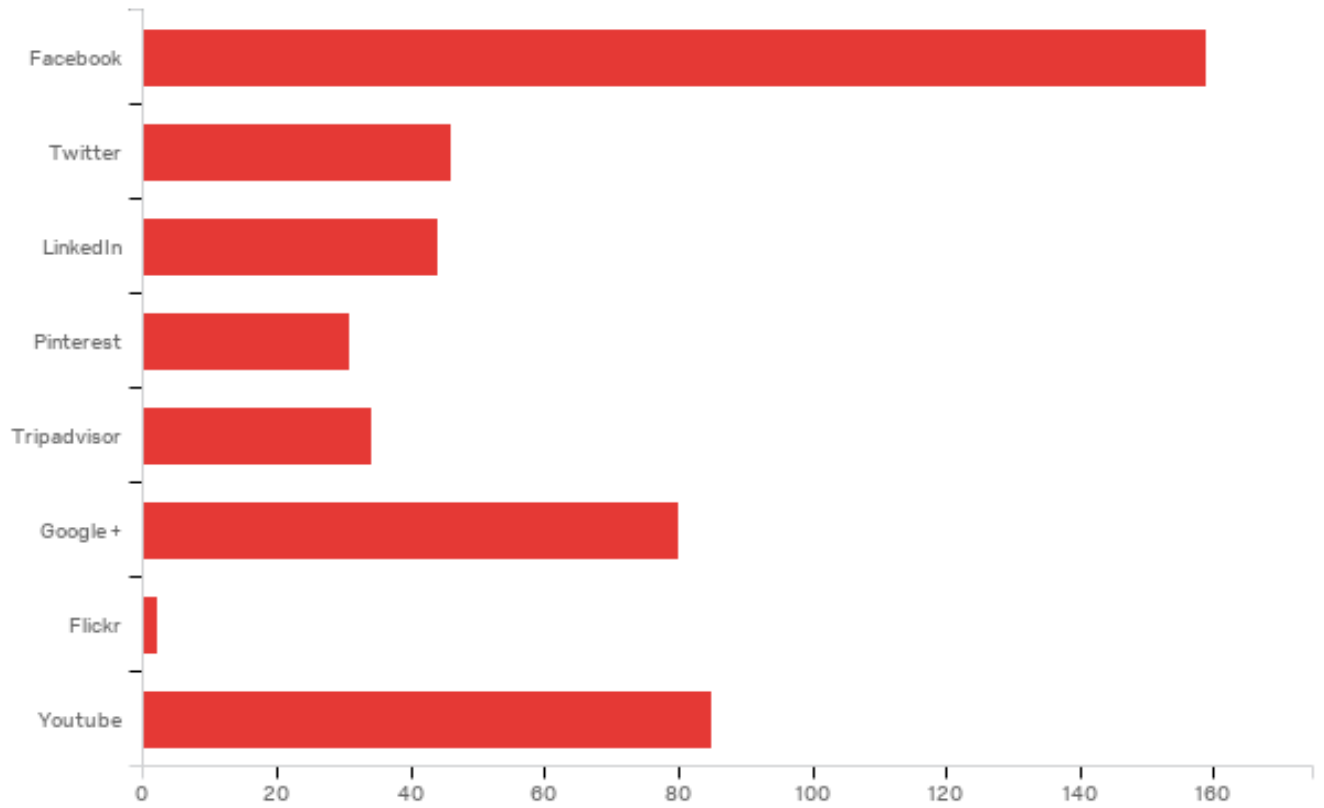
Answer	%	Count
Facebook	79.10%	159
Twitter	22.89%	46
LinkedIn	21.89%	44
Pinterest	15.42%	31
Tripadvisor	16.92%	34
Google +	39.80%	80
Flickr	1.00%	2
Youtube	42.29%	85

Q9 - How would you rate yourself where technology is concerned? - Group
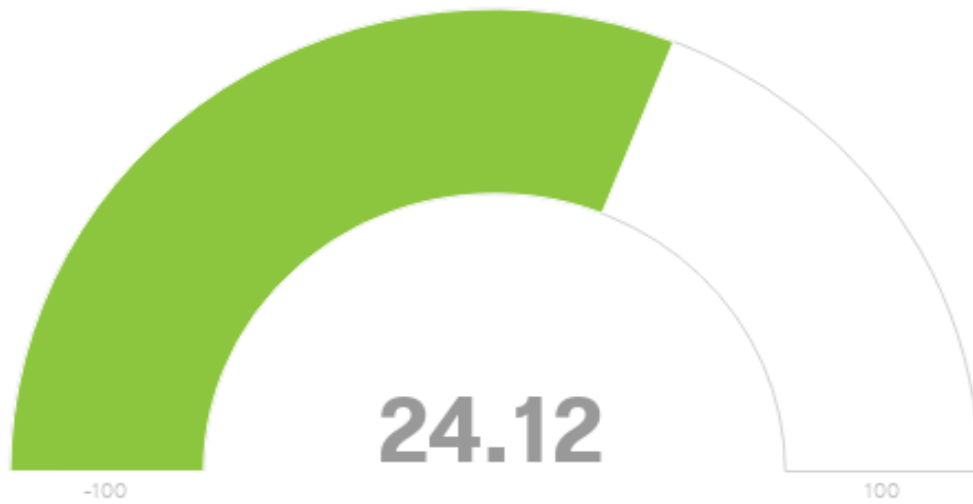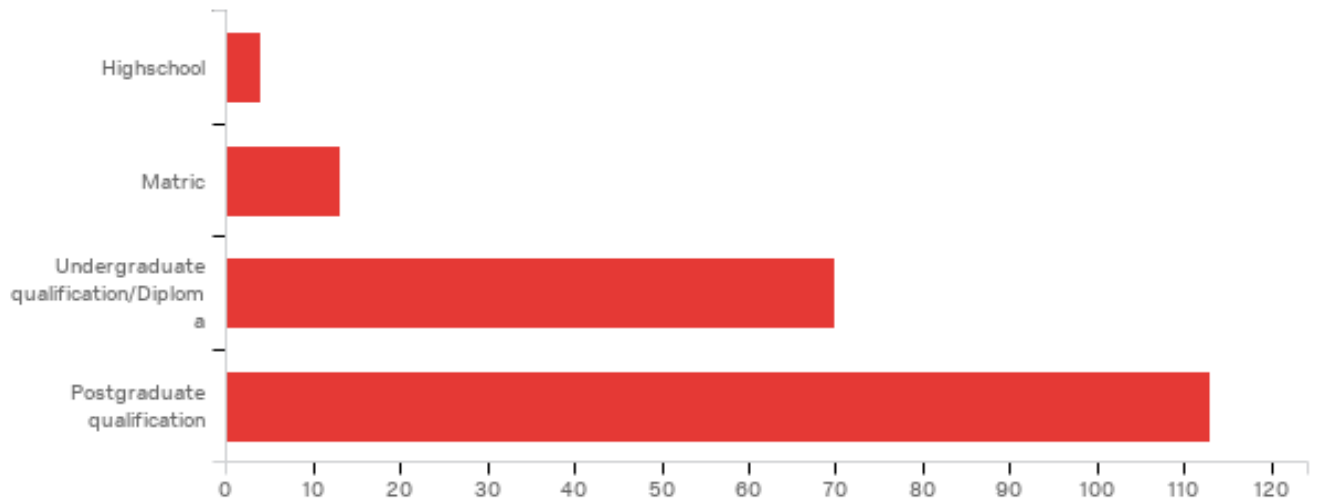
Q10 - Your age in years:
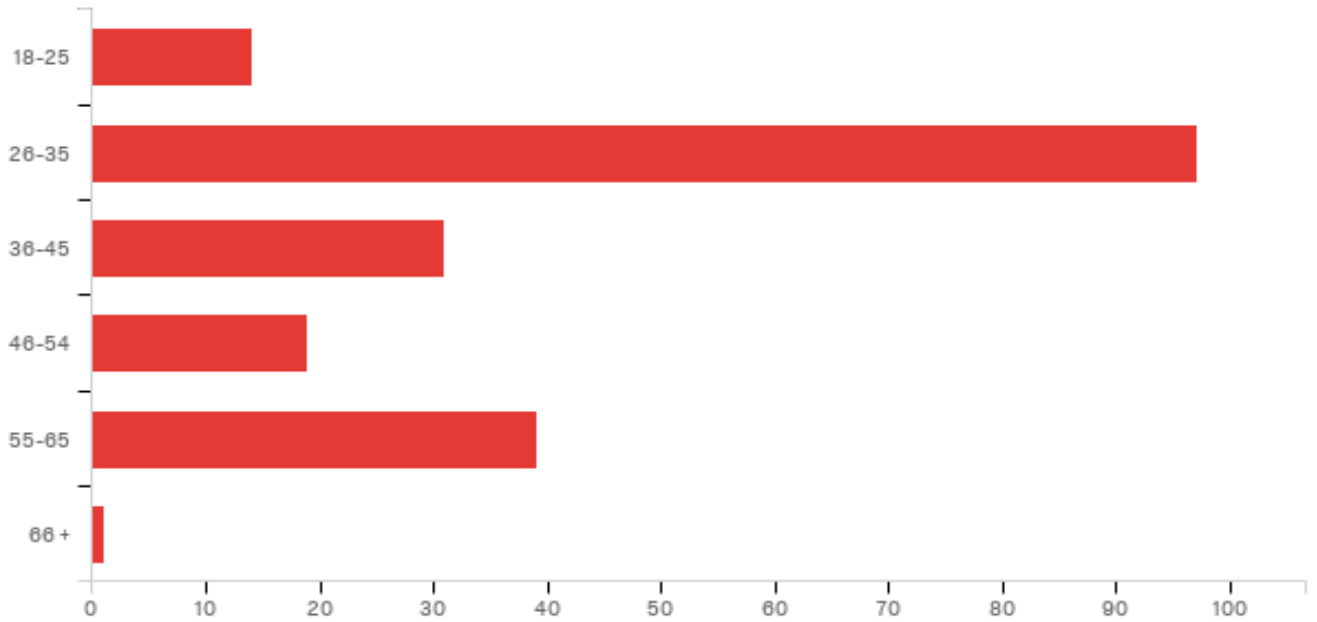
Answer	%	Count
18-25	6.97%	14
26-35	48.26%	97
36-45	15.42%	31
46-54	9.45%	19
55-65	19.40%	39
66 +	0.50%	1
Total	100%	201

Q11 - Gender:
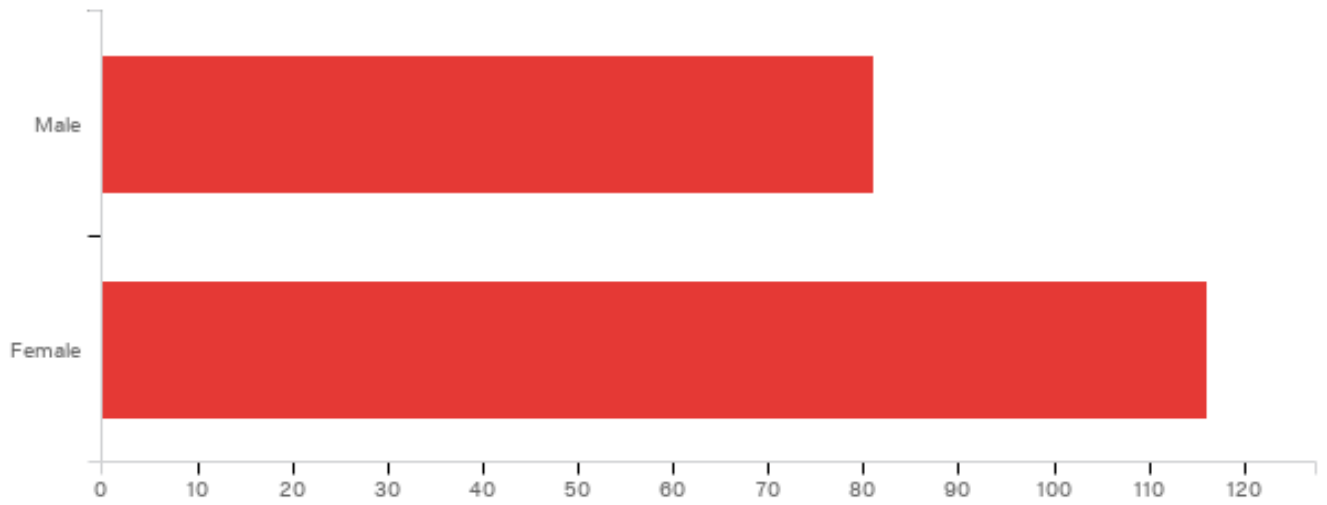
Answer	%	Count
Male	41.12%	81
Female	58.88%	116
Total	100%	197

Q12 - Education

Answer	%	Count
Highschool	2.00%	4
Matric	6.50%	13
Undergraduate qualification/Diploma	35.00%	70
Postgraduate qualification	56.50%	113
Total	100%	200

Q13 - Occupation:

Occupation	Count
Accountant	14
Tourism / Marketing	4
Attorney	4
Business Owner / Self Employed	6
Commercial diver	1
Consultant	2
Wirter / Language	6
Designer	6
Engineer	18
Housewife	1
Human Resources	1
Information Technology	2
Lecturer	9
Librarian	56
Management	18
Medical	7
Pensioner	3
Personal Assistant	6
Quantity Surveyor	1
Retail / Sales	4
Scientist	1
Secretary	1
Statistician	1
Student	10
Teacher	10
Volunteer	1

Q14 - Country of Origin:

Belgium	1
DRC Congo	1
Eritrea	1
Ghana	9
Namibia	2
Nigeria	8
South Africa	157
Taiwan	1
Tanzania	6
Uganda	8
Ugandan	1
Zimbabwe	2

FINDINGS FROM VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE STAFF:

Transcripts:

Interview 1: DM0009

Lidia: We are here at Cape Town Tourism, I'm going to have our first interview, uhm at the Burgh street Cape town visitor information centre. Ok so uhm, in which format do you receive most queries? Email, phone, personal visits?

Interviewee 1: I think most of it in emails, definitely phone, uhm, and the walk-ins. I mostly deal with, well; we mostly deal with the walk-ins at the front, from the front desk point of view…

Lidia: Yes…

Interviewee 1: Because we have a front desk and we have a contact centre

Lidia: Yes…

Interviewee 1: So Dory will tell you more about the contact centre…

Lidia: Ok…

Interviewee 1: How they receive it, but we will also receive, something similar, like telephones, where they would receive bulk, we received few of them, then the emails and then the walk-ins

Lidia: So it's first phone, then email…

Interviewee 1: Mostly walk-ins

Lidia: Mostly walk-ins

Interviewee 1: Mostly walk-ins. We used to receive a lot of emails, emails and telephone, until the contact centre was established

Lidia: Ok. When was the contact centre established?

Interviewee 1: About 2, 2, three years ago

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: Could be about three years ago.

Lidia: Ok perfect. Ok second questions: On which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

Interviewee 1: I can't put it in days

L: Ok

Interviewee 1: Ok. It's normally peak season we receive our visitors. Uhm, peak season which is our summer season, and the most busiest season, or our most busiest month is February month

L: February month

Interviewee 1: But if I put it in days, not really days, where like yesterday we had quite a few visitors, but then last Thursday, we had, I can't tell you Monday we have a hundred and, ja, I cant

Lidia: Ok, so it's mostly peak seasons

Interviewee 1: But I can put it in seasons

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: Which February is our busiest month.

Lidia: Yes, Yes

Interviewee 1: Our best month

Lidia: Ok, that very interesting, I would have thought it would be December, very interesting

Interviewee 1: No, February

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: Because we have a lot of enquiries for uhm , conferences as well

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: For February

Interviewee 1: January they are all a bit little quiet

Lidia: Yes

Interviewee 1: But then February comes and everybody wants

Lidia: Ok. Question number three. What are the frequently asked questions?

Interviewee 1: Where to go to, what to do, what to see in our mother City. The mountain

Lidia: Yes

Interviewee 1: There is a lot, it's just, I'm just giving the busiest….? The mountain, Robben Island, uhm, they would do the walking tours, uhm wine tours, Cape Point, and then also uhm, Game reserves close to us

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: But they are mostly private game reserves that we can book

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: Where national parks are, private game reserves that they can book.

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: Because lots of them don't get the chance to go to maybe go to the Kruger National Park, they don't have the time that they don't want to go, they don't have the time

Lidia: Ja, Especially if they are on holiday in Cape Town

Interviewee 1: Ja

Lidia: Ok, question number 4. Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre and how?

Interviewee 1: Yes we do as Cape Town tourism; we use the Facebook, Facebook and Twitter

Lidia: Mostly, ok, good. Question number 5. Which forms of social media do you make use of? Laughing

Interviewee 1: Facebook and twitter

Lidia: Facebook and twitter

Interviewee 1: Pinterest

Lidia: Also?

Interviewee 1: With pics nowadays

Lidia: Pinterest is very nice

Interviewee 1: Yes

Lidia: I really enjoy Pinterest as well. Ok question number 6: Do you think using social media help make you a better VIC?

Interviewee 1: Yes definitely

Lidia Ok:

Interviee1: It assist to just be able to engage with them

Lidia Yes

Interviewee 1: With our visitors

Lidia: Yes the tourism engagement because I've been uhm, I like the Facebook page as well and I've been seeing

Interviewee 1: Have you seen it

Lidia: And it's really amazing

Interviewee 1: Have you entered our competition?

Lidia: I haven't looked yet

Interviewee 1: On twitter it's I love cape town

Lidia: Oh yes yes that's correct

Interviewee 1: So you are here now, please go up to where you see the yellow frame

Lidia: Ja

Interviewee 1: At the Waterfront, take a picture

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: Post the photo

Lidia: I saw I saw that competition. Yes yes, but I mean I'm from Pretoria

Interviewee 1: No but you can still come down

Lidia: Oh Ja, I should (Laughing) Ok Question number 7: If yes to the above, which yes, how many hours a day do you spend updating social media?

Interviewee 1: Ok, Firstly, we don't.

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: I don't because we have team doing that

Lidia: Yes yes, and…

Interviewee 1: A special team that will do all the communications and social media sites

Lidia: Ok, do you perhaps know how many hours they on a regular basis spend

Interviewee 1: Nodding no

Lidia: Ok, so that's a question I should maybe ask "Amanda". Ok

Interviewee 1: Or you could, or you could just see.

Lidia: Ok question number 8: What type of information would you give the client on social media?

Interviewee 1: A bit of everything

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: A bit of everything especially uhm with all the sites they can visit

Lidia: Yes

Interviewee 1: Including Table Mountain, the museums, Robben Island, that is what they

Lidia: And also probably some interesting facts as well

Interviewee 1: Yes and yes, accommodation as well

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: I don't if you have been reading it on Facebook, but we punt our contact centre quite a bit

Lidia: Yes

Interviewee 1: Where they could book their accommodation now for December and next year

Lidia: Yes I saw that, that's very nice. And that's also a service that you offer, booking of accommodation

Interviewee 1: Yes, accommodation, tours, car hire. If need be and people want to book a restaurant, we will do it

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: We will basically do anything for them

Lidia: Ok and especially if it's someone who don't know Cape Town it's a very nice uhm service to have

Interviewee 1: Because they can come in here and book a restaurant, uh, we can book Table Mountain as well form here

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: Then there's Computicket we can book Robben Island

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: So we do most of the bookings for them. It's a, what do you call it, a one stop shop

Lidia: Yes, yes, and that is what you are

Interviee1: If there is a mapping problem we will show you how to get there!

Lidia: Exactly that's perfect. Ok uhm, question number 9: Do you still give visitors traditional information not using social media or any form of technology

Interviewee 1: Yes we do.

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: But let's just talk about traditional information like the brochures. We still hand out the brochures, we still get members, even though some members are on Facebook and social media websites, we still use brochures

Lidia: Good old fashioned brochures

Interviewee 1: People still ask for brochures

Lidia: Yeah

Interviewee 1: Some visitors still want to take that brochure of X Y Z home where they will show their family

Lidia: Yes. Do you do you would you consider that more uhm, maybe older generations or all generations

Interviewee 1: All of them

Lidia: Older, younger

Interviewee 1: Because sometimes the website doesn't really do justice to what they have

Lidia: Ja ja, whereas the brochures have the pictures in it

Interviewee 1: There we go

Lidia: Have the physical

Interviewee 1: And they get the physical brochure

Lidia: Great. And then the last question, question number 10: Do you use social media as a marketing tool?

Interviewee 1: Yes we do

Lidia: Ok

Interviewee 1: We post everything on Facebook

Lidia: Yes

Interviewee 1: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest

Lidia: So you use Instagram as well

Interviewee 1: Ja just to sell cape town as a destination

Lidia: Yes yes

Interviewee 1: A place where they love to be

Lidia: Ja, absolutely

Interviewee 1: I think that's why we love our jobs

Lidia: Yes, yes. And how large of a team do you have working at Burgh street

Interviewee 1: At Burgh Street Like with my team I have four of them and then I have two students so that's 6. And then we also have at the national parks board we have three

Lidia: So more or less 10 people

Interviewee 1: And they would assist there and Dottie would tell about the contact centre and they will assist there

Lidia: Everybody helps everybody

Interviee1: We are one big team

Lidia: Yes yes

Interviewee 1: We are one big team

Lidia: Ok I think that's it. Thank you very much

Interview 2: DM0010

Lidia: So this is our second interview at Burgh Street visitor information centre. Uhm ok, our first question: In which format do you receive the most queries?

2: Uhm our department specifically receive bulk enquiries via email or telephone as I work in the call centre

L: Ok

2: As for our other departments like Burgh Street, they receive uhm walk-ins and then basically difference is walk-ins, and telephone and email enquiries

L: Ok. But you guys receive…

2: Specifically bulk-bulk enquiries email

Lidia: Ok

2: Uhm and telephone enquiries. The volume of these is basically the same if you balance it out

L: Ok so it's not more email or more telephone

2: Exactly yes, so on a scale of 7-10, I would say telephonic is 8; email is exactly the same amount

L: Ok

2: Ok so there is not actually a difference

Lidia: Ok, perfect. And second question: On which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors

2: Ok well I will stipulate is down it will definitely then again be Burgh street because when we go into peak season, that is where we receive the most visitors and at the the airport we are a gateway so we receive the bulk visitors walk ins, but specifically with us uhm during peak we receive a lot of telephone enquiries and as well as emails, but specifically this year however we received quite a lot of email and telephone enquiries during low season

L: Ok

2: The reason why I can say that is because if you look at the statistics, uhm we've, our business unit starters has been exceeded so we've done our balance for this year specifically during low season

L: Ok. But on days you like…

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2: On days specifically, I would say I can't count in days because we do work over weekends; it's much more quiet on a Sunday specifically

L: Ok

2: But from the morning, I would say from 8 o clock until 12, those as our busiest, or busiest as well

L: Ok

2: But over weekends specifically quiet with telephone enquiries but we do however receive the email enquiries

L: Ok

2: In our Cape Town inbox and we respond to that but as I've stipulated previously, there is a balance so it's exactly the same

Lidia: Yes. And peak times are obviously more…

2: Much more yes

L: Ok, what do you consider peak time?

2: Peak time is from May to September specifically, but I would say peak time can be considered if you've been to stay in a place in Cape Town, then definitely we will receive bulk enquiries via telephone and email

L; So it's also event based

2: Event based doesn't matter if its low season we will still receive that bulk of enquiries

L: ok thanks. Question number 3: What are the frequently asked questions?

2: Oh definitely is what to see and do in Cape Town in our mother city and where they would like to stay

L: ok

2: And if uhm they send an email regarding those specifically that question then our answer will be what are your interest, what are your budget, how many people and all of that in order to put an itinerary together for the client that suits their needs

L: Ok thank you. And question number 4. Do you make use of social media to promote you visitor information centre and and how?

2: Ok yes definitely, Cape Town tourism has their own Facebook page, I don't know if you've seen

L: I liked it as well

2: Definitely a nice picture of Cape Town

L; Definitely I agree

2: But yes we do have our own Facebook page

L; Ok is that the only form of social media that you use

2: No definitely not the most social media platform for engaging visitors is through like I said Facebook, then we've got the Twitter, also have a significant portion of it, the Twitter account and then other platforms we are working on would be the Instagram and then YouTube as well

L: YouTube as well, Ok that's interesting

2: Yes, ja

Lidia: Ok so Question number 5, actually, you've actually answered that, which is which forms of social media do you make use of, so

2: Yes

L: So YouTube, do you use Pinterest at all?

2: Uhm yes, but not that much

L: Ok

2: Yes, I did stipulate it down, but not that much

L; Ok, ok. And I mean Pinterest is very nice for the pictures

2: Yes of course yes

L: Its uhm also a great way of sharing information I guess,

2: Yes

L: Because you can capture the picture as well

2: And as a memory of a lifetime

L: Exactly, definitely, thanks.

2: Ok

L: Uhm, question number 6: Do you think using social media hep make you a better VIC?

2: Yes definitely, I would say being able to engage with anyone interested in discovering Cape Town or the surrounding areas of Cape Town and through the platform of our social media, definitely

L: Ok, perfect. Question number 7: If yes to the above, which yes

2: Yes

L: How many hours a day do you spend updating social media?

2: Ok uhm, we've got a specific team that deals uhm on a daily basis with these uhm uhm clients that do queries, that's part of their job description and job activities. That is our marketing department and enquiries get distributed accordingly

L: Ok

2: However as well and after hours and after work they go out into Cape Town

L: Yes:

2: As whole as well as you know Cape Town tourism have taken over the mandate of Cape Town along with Cape Town routes unlimited which are the marketing team for the Western Cape

L: Ok. How big is the marketing team that handles the social media, how many people?

2: Uhm, I don't know specifically the amount, but we've gotten quite a huge amount of people that works in the marketing department

L: Ok because there's a lot people that enquire

2: Yes of course yes

L: Through social media as well

2: Yes we've got a group of people. I don't know the specific amount

L: Ok

2: But we've got quite

L: Ok thank you. Ok question number 8: What type of information would you give the client on social media?

2: All tourism-related information in General of Cape Town and surrounding areas. If I say surrounding areas, then I would say the whole Western Cape. Cape Town as a whole, the Overberg area

L: Ok

2: The Garden route, the West coast, route 62, whereby is the Wellington area of Robertson area

L: Ok

2: Until, I would say Tshitsikama National Park

L: Ok

2: Because that's how far our knowledge reach

L: Ok

2: If we do get an enquiry about maybe Kwa-Zulu Natal

L: Ok

2: What we will do however we will contact that tourism information centre

L: Ok

2: And then we would source the information on behalf of our client

L: Yes, because I mean you are Cape Town tourism visitor information centre

2: Yes

L: So you would think uhm, it's strange, you wouldn't think people would be needing information about Kwa-Zulu Natal

2: Yes

L: would contact you, so…

2: Yes and then definitely we make use of the GSA

L: Ok

2: Ok and the travel directory

L: Yes

2: In order just to gain more knowledge

L: Ok, ok perfect. Question number 9: Do you still give visitors traditional information not using social media or any form of technology?

2: Yes definitely, we are, especially during our low season we go on educationals in actual fact to sell the clients products our members our membership base to sell their products to our clients, so those are the information we give to our clients. Uhm its if you experience a product, if you explore something then you can sell it much better, and then along with that the experience we give it with the brochures as well

L; Ok and then the last question which is number 10: Do you use social media as a marketing tool?

2: Yes definitely. On Facebook the posts are all done in light with what Cape Town has to offer as a destination. As said Cape Town has taken over the mandate of Cape Town

L: Ok

2: And then furthermore what I've stipulated down, Twitter is mostly used to engage and we have started making use of it more than often to promote the destination

L: Ok thank you very much

Interview 3: DM 0011:

L: Ok so this is our interview for Simons Town visitor information centre. Ok so question number 1: In which format do you receive the most queries?

3: I would say walk-in, personal visits

L: Personal visits, ok

3: Yes absolutely

L: Ok perfect. Uhm uhm question number 2: On which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

3: Uhm, I would say summer season. Definitely over December, Christmas period

L: Ok

3: uhm New years

L: Yes

3: And then also I would say the Easter Holidays which links with public holidays

L: Ok

3: So definitely holidays

L: So it's not linked to days, but more to peak periods

3: Yes absolutely

L: Ok question number three: What are the frequently asked questions?

3: It's mostly area specific, so here ti would be where penguins

L: Ja

3: Cape point and then you know lots of historical questions with regards to Simon's town because of the history

L: Yes, yes

3: Uhm, so yes I mean also like you know local town info, like you know, where's the local pharmacy, where's the boats trips you know, whales, all things linked to the area

L: Ja

3: Definitely and then also Peninsula-related

L: Ok but mostly about historical and then the penguins

3: And then Cape point

L: Cape point

3: Absolutely

L: Ok question number four: Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre?

3: Personally no

L: Ok

3: Uhm cause we have the company, the marketing the whole marketing department sort of does that and they are crazy with the social media

L: Yes

3: So yes, everything, Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook, the works

L; Ja that's actually question number five, which forms of social media, ad what I, I understood from from Burgh street is that Facebook, Twitter…

3: Instagram

L: Instagram, And YouTube and Pinterest even Pinterest

3: Yes yes, so the company does

L: And you you obviously fall under Cape Town tourism

3: That's right

L: Which has this marketing team

3: That's right. Personally I would market the city, country and the province

L: Ok

3: Like on Facebook and Instagram, but not really the VIC

L: But do you do that personally?

3: Personally, my personal capacity yes

L: Ok

3: Like if I go and visit the wine lands for example

L: Yes

3: I go to a specific wine estate; I'll take pictures of the landscapes

L: Ok

3: And I'll put it on Instagram and say exactly where I am

L: Ok

3: You know hash tag hash tag blah blah

L: Ok perfect. Ok so question number 6: Do you think sing social media help make you a better VIC?

3: Ja, definitely, definitely

L: Ok. Ja because you fall under the Cape Town tourism, I agree

3: Absolutely

L: Ok question number 7, of course yes to the above, how many hours a day do you spend updating social media? But that I guess

3: Ja personally I would say about an hour for myself, my personal things

L: Ja

3: But they are probably constantly on it

L: Yes, the marketing team

3: Yes

L: Exactly

3: Yes

L: Ok, question number 8: What type of information would you give the client on social media?

3: Personally for my, if it's for me, if it's for my VIC I would say definitely our services, you know our times and where we are locate, because I mean look uhm I think last year round this time I sent out emails to all my friends saying that we sell the green card

L: Ok

3: And that's an awesome thing for Captownians, for locals, for holiday time

L; yes

3: So you know I would tell them this is where you can get it if here's the times and the prices what you need

L: Ok

3: So personally my personal capacity I sent to all my personal contacts

L: Ok, what does this green card do?

3: It's a an access card to Table mountain National Park only

L: Ok

3: So Cape point

L: Ja

3: Silvermine, Tokai, builders beak for the penguins. All our picnic spots which is within Table mountain National Park

L: Ok

3: Normally you would pay an entry to go in, but if you have this card you get 12 entries which you can use it for the year

L: Ok

3: And an entry gets clipped off

L: Yes, that's very nice to have

3: Ok that is R105

L: Once off

3: Once into cape point is a R105, so here you get 12 entries for R105

L: Exactly that's very nice

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3: So ja, it's a win

L: Ok it's good, now I know as well. Ok question number 9: Do you still give visitors traditional information, not using social media or any form of technology?

3: Absolutely yes

L: Ok

3: Uhm we, we've realised that people who come in here still want something that's tangible, that they can take with them

L: Ok

3: So it's maps, it's brochures of different products; it's guides for different areas, whether it be Cape Town, the wine lands, the regions

L: Ok

3: Uhm, I mean they wanna buy maps, they uhm, ja I mean, even verbal info, you know

L: Yes, the the uhm

3: The human contact

L: The human, there's another word that I'm looking for, that personal touch

3: Yes, yes

L: Because because you, you probably stay here, so you know the area very well

3: The areas, they would wanna know where you would go to, where the locals would go to

L: Yes

3: So

L: Especially, probably for the restaurants as well, it's nice to know where the locals go

3: Exactly, and what tastes nice

L: Exactly

3: You know, social media is not gonna always copy that

L: Yes yes and you don't know who updates the social media, so again that personal touch

3: Exactly, you won't talk to a machine the whole time

L: Ja, exactly. Ok and then the last question: Do you use social media as a marketing tool?

3: Yes, I do on a personal capacity, uhm, but I mean Cape Town tourism does the marketing

L: Ok

3: So ja

L: Ok and that is it

3: That was quick

L: I told you very quick. Thank you so much, I really appreciate it

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Interview 4: DM 0013

L: Ok, the first question I have for you: In which format do you receive the most queries? Email, phone or personal visits?

4: Ah, to my office I say personal visits

L: Personal visits, ok. And then question number 2: On which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

4: Mmmm, specifically weekdays, I'd say on a Friday

L: Yes

4: And over the weekends, and then obviously holiday periods, season periods

L: Ok so during during, and maybe during specific events, or not as much?

4: Not as much.

L: Ok

4: We are a coastal office, so we are very seasonal based on weather conditions obviously and on on holiday periods.

L: Ok perfect. Uhm, question number 3: What are the frequently asked questions?

4: Oh goodness, it ranges, it ranges definitely based on factors mentioned such as events and what have you. Uhm, in terms of volume it doesn't really impacts us as much uhm

L: Ok

4: But I would say, uhm , predominantly we get enquiries for the big 6, so uhm, Table mountain, Robben Island, Cape Point, uhm, accommodation, uh, self-catering accommodation particularly, uhm, what to do with the family, uhm, within a close radius

L: Ok

4: Uhm West Coast and Swaziland information

L: Wow that's interesting

4: Wine lands info

L: Yes

4: Uhm, and ja and events

L: OK

4: In summer time we get more enquiries about events, but we do get quite a bit uhm when we are in season

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L: Ok perfect thanks so much. Uhm question number 4: Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre?

4: Uhm not in this one in particular, we do it as a group

L: OK. And your visitor information centre is the Blouberg office, correct?

4: That's correct

L: Ok, uhm so you don't, you don't use social media, so question number 5 was, I was going to ask which forms of social media do you make use of, but that question is then uhm, void

4: What we do do Lidia, what I have done

L: Yes

4: We got very strict IS policies, so we don't advertise our individual office

L: Yes

4: You know, we advertise as Cape Town Tourism as a whole.

L: Yes

4: However, we do have local area pages such as The Table view neighbours page

L: Ok

4: We get a lot of requests not directed at us in particular where people would say I'm looking for accommodation, can somebody assist?

L: Ok

4: And then I'll ask them to uhm inbox me their details and I'll liaise with them via that, but we don't sort of market ourselves on those platforms

L: OK perfect

4: But I use a lead from that platform

L: OK. Uhm do you think that if you would use social media that it would uhm help make you a better visitor information centre

4: Absolutely

L: Ok. Uhm and then Uhm, if you would use social media in the future, how many hours would you spend updating social media, say per week, or per day, or whatever the case might be?

4: Ja, that's that's the thing, we wouldn't be able to manage it from our office

L: Yes, because of the

4: You know, just given the high volume of visitors in season

L: Correct

4: And the administration we've got here, the social media would have to be manage via our department in Cape Town

L: Yes the main

4: Of the VIC

L: Yes and as I understand you have a social media team as well, so they would probably manage that then

4: Yes, correct

L: Ok, and then what type of information would you give clients on social media if you had done that?

4: Uhm, obviously it's gotta come via them and we've got very strict policies, but I think uhm, just advertising our general services

L: Yes

4: You know the Computicket, Webticket, South African national parks, restaurant reservations, book tours, accommodation, car hire. So when people do come in here, people happen to sort of take a stroll along the office or pass the office and then they pop in here, they are quite surprised to see the extensive list of services

L: Yes

4: Uhm, I think we have to, to advertise that to the, especially to the local community via social media, definitely would drive more feet here

L: OK perfect. Uhm, of course then question number 9 I was going to ask do you still give visitors traditional information not using social media, but that question has already answered itself. And then uhm, the last question would have then also been would you use it as a marketing tool and I think you've already answered that as well, so…

4: Correct

L: Ok let me stop this recorder

Interview 5: DM0014

L: Ok Uhm the first question I wanted to ask you is in which format do you receive the most queries?

5: I'll say phone and personal visits, more of less exactly the same

L; Ok

5: Amount of people

L: Ok so phone and personal visits

5: Yes

L: Uhm second question. Which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors

5: It's normally Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays

L: So more weekdays?

5: Ja, more weekdays

L: And then uhm do you receive more visitors during specific uhm seasonal periods as well?

5: Uhm, no not really

L: Not really, ok

5: No it's just when we have a function here on the grounds which is a market

L: Yes

5: They have a market during summer season twice a month

L: Ok, so then there is also a lot of visitors of course

5: Yes, it's normally on a Saturday

L: Alright, uhm the third question: What are the frequently asked questions?

5L In this office it's more directional questions

L; Ok, can you…?

5: What to do in Somerset West Area

L: Ok and then what what do people regularly ask you?

5: It's just where to go to a particular wine farm

L: Ok so is it mostly on wine farms or are there other questions as well?

5: It's mostly on the wine farms and areas as well. Directions to the Garden Route and Stellenbosch

L: Ok so directions as well

5: Yes

L: Ok perfect. The fourth question: DO you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre?

5: Uhm no

L: Not personally, but as I understand you also have a social media team that works with

5: Yes

L: Works with the social media. Ok uhm

5L If I do go to functions I will normally Tweet on what is happening at the function on my personal capacity

L: Ok on your personal capacity mostly

5: Yes

L: That's also what I got from the Simon's Town visitor information centre mostly on the personal capacity

5: Yes

L: Uhm so you don't use social media for your VIC, but uhm which forms of social media would you make use of if you would ever go that route?

5: To promote our VIC?

L: Yes

5: Ah it would normally be on the Facebook, on the Facebook uhm uhm way of doing things

L:Ok and what about Twitter and Pinterest and those types of things or would it just be Facebook?

5: I think for for this area that I am working in, the Heidelberg area

L: Yes

5: Uhm most of the people in the community uses the Facebook page

L: Absolutely

5: As contact tool

L: Ok perfect and then uhm do you think if you would use social media it would help your visitor information centre become a better visitor information centre?

5: I would say yes, yes it would

L: Ok

5: Because it would bring out more awareness to people as well

L: Definitely. And at which, sorry again, at which VIC are you based

5: Somerset West

L: Somerset West ok

5: We call it *something vibe

L: Ok then uhm, if you would use social media, how many hours a day or week do you think you would spend updating the social media? So the Facebook page

5: I would say, it depends on interest, but I think 3-4 times a day

L: Ok yes yes

5: 3-4 hours

L: Because the more you update it the more awareness you create right

5: Ja

L: Ok what type of information would you give the client on social media, the tourist?

5: Normal services that we do and also uhm things happening in the area

L: In the area. Ok

5: Ja

L: Uhm second last question: DO you still give visitors traditional information, uhm like brochures nd those types of things?

5: Yes I still feel that people still need it

L: Yes and they they still like to go home with the brochure right?

5: Yes definitely with the language barriers that we have

L: Yes

5: Some of the people can read English on their own time

L: Yes

5: But if you explain it to them they don't they don't always grab what you are telling them

L: Ok perfect and then the last…

5: They feel more comfortable

L: Ok yes of of course I agree with you. And then uhm the last question uhm would you use social media as a marketing tool?

5: Yes I think with the necessary training yes because I know there is a lot of particular things you do in marketing through social media

L; Yes I agree

5: Actually in doing it in the industry basis yes

L: Absolutely. Ok thanks that's all the questions I have for you Jeremiah, just give me a few seconds to switch off this recorder.

Interview 6: DM550015

L: Ok, the first question I have for you is in which format do you receive the most queries?

6: Uhm we receive it mostly personal visits

L: Mostly personal visits

6: And we do get phone and email enquiries as well, but definitely mostly personal visits

L: Ok and you are based at the airport?

6: Yes we are

L; Ok that makes…

6: visitors get of their flights and arrange everything and they come to the desk and ja

L: Ok perfect. Ok the second question: On which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

6: Uhm on both holidays and specific events, but it's mostly with specific events

L; Mostly with specific events ok

6: Yes

L: Ok the third question: What are the frequently asked questions?

6: There's a lot of questions and would obviously be handled but most many people would ask for directions

L; Yes

6: And they come for hotel bookings

L; Ok

6: And they would want things to do in Cape Town, where they can go, what to see and restaurants and all that

L; Ok

6: And the require transport as well

L: Ok perfect uhm the fourth question: Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre?

6: Uhm not me personally but we have a marketing department

L; Ok

6: They do that on behalf of the company

L: Ok and then uhm do you know uhm which forms of social media they make use of?

6: It's Facebook and Twitter

L: Facebook and Twitter. Ok

6: Yes

L: Of the sixth question uhm, do you think using social media help make you a better VIC

6: Absolutely

L: Absolutely. Ok and then uhm how many hours a day is usually spend on updating social media? I now you don't do it directly

6: Ja uhm there isn't really a specific time frame, it depends on uhm what has come up at what time, for example if there's a package of special thing in Cape Town then they would immediately put it on their

L: Ok so it would be for specific things that that it would be updated

6: Yes

L: Ok uhm what type of information do you usually give a client on social media?

6: Uhm, anything that is tourism-related, uhm what specials are there in Cape Town, are there any discounts, and what new product there is, that's basically all

L: Ok and then the ninth question: Do you still give clients traditional information not using social media or any form of technology?

6: Uhm, we do. Mostly at the VIC's if somebody comes you can pick up from the question the person is asking, you can either sort of uhm give them

L: Yes

6: Or sell something to them

L; Ok and then do you give information uhm in the form of brochures as well?

6: Yes in brochures and in verbal

L: Ok and then the last question: Do you use social media as a marketing tool?

6: Yes

L: Yes I think that's already answered itself

6: Yes

L: Perfect of I'm going to switch of the recorder now, give me a few seconds

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Interview 7: DM550016 – Cape Town

L: Ok s my first question I wanted to know is in which format do you receive the most queries, email, phone or personal visits?

7: Well in our office you know we are one of the big six attractions so it's mainly personal visits

L: Personal visits, ok.

7: Ja

L: The second question I have is on which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

7: Well our type of enquiries with the type of services that we offer uh, our highest volumes are Fridays and Saturdays

L: OK

7: And some Sundays depending on the weather typically

L: Ok and is it also for specific events that you receive a high volume of visitors? Or is it mostly on Friday, Saturdays and some Sundays

7: Uhm you see because we sell the walking permits, uhm, when people come off from work, uh, so you know, that's why they'll mainly use Fridays and Saturdays and comes to the public holidays, that's when we get our enquiries as well.

L: Ok, all right. And what are the frequently asked questions?

7: Uhm, well, regarding related queries and then other things would be to see they vineyards, things to see in and around Cape Town, uh and we also got popular now is the coast is more in our area

L: Ok and you are based in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens right?

7L Yes, that's correct

L: Ok, the fourth question I have for you is do you make use of social media to promote your VIC

7: Uhm yes um on our website, or digital website, capetown.travel

L: Yes

7: We've got the Twitter, we've got the Facebook, we've got the website, but our VIC doesn't have its own uhm

L: Yes. Yes as I could understand from the previous I received as well is that its, there's a whole social media team that handles the social media, so it's not, it's not like for personal VIC's, that you have your own personal Facebook page

7: That's correct yes

L: Ok. Uhm the fifth question I have is uhm, which form of social media do they make use of?

7: Uhm our team?

L: Yes

7: They do Facebook, and a lot of them do twitter as well

L: Twitter as well

7: Ja

L: Uhm do you make use of Pinterest and YouTube at all, or is it mostly Facebook and Twitter?

7: Mostly Facebook and Twitter. They have a few YouTube which we submitted, uhm, I know the popular one was the uh, what's the name of this band, that was this craze that was our thing, Cape Town Tourism also submitted one, Gangam style and that you know

L: Ok, Ok

7: So they do upload some YouTube videos

L: Allright. Uhm the sixth question is uhm, do you think using social media help make you a better VIC?

7: Well it gets the word out you know, not everyone has idea of visiting a VIC

L: Yes

7: But uh, you know uh, the people who has access to the Facebook and that, you know uh, they now market out there that might not have access, and yet they can see from there where the VIC's are situated

L: Ok, uhm, the seventh question, well you obviously wouldn't know how many hours a day they spent on social media, but how many hours a day would you spend on social media, uh, updating it about your VIC, if you had that option?

7: Uhm, see uhm, if it has been on our Fridays and Saturdays, I don't think we'd hardly have chance

L: Yes

7: To update it as such

L: Yes yes

7: But during the weekdays, we could maybe update it say every two hours or so.

L: Ok, and it's probably also information specific, so if you have events and things like that

7: Yes

L: Of course.

7: And to answer queries and that

L: Allright. And then uhm, what type of information would you give on social media?

7: Well, that would be, it would be on upcoming events, uhm, services that we offer, uh…

L: Yes

7: You know changes to maybe the products that we selling, things like that

L: Yes yes. Ok, and the second last question is uhm, do you still give visitor traditional information like brochures and so forth?

7: Ok yes definitely, uh lots of the visitors that tour over here, we've got like a brochure stand, uhm, so they specifically will ask Like what we need for example Stellenbosch, wine lands, they'll want booklets on, pamphlets on the areas that they are visiting

L: Ok, and you can see that, is there some people that still mostly prefer the brochures, uhm uhm, instead of social media

7: Uhm well I can tell that from uhm our stand here uhm, we have brochures here we have to replenish it at least twice throughout the day

L: Oh wow

7: But because, yeah like I said we uhm we have got a lot of visitors that come through here

L; Ok

7: Sometimes unfortunately you know, it might be people that just take them because it's for free

L: Yes

7: But we do get people that want information on the big 6 attractions or uhm, you know information on Cape Town maps and everything around

L: Yes, ok

7: Things like that

L: Perfect. And then the last question I have for you is do you use social media as a marketing tool and I think that's kinda already been answered because of your social media team that you have

7: Yes yes that's correct ja

L: Ok, I'm quickly going to switch off this recorder

7: Ok

Interview DM550017 - Johannesburg

L: So Uhm, you are part of Joburg tourism

8: Yes I am

L: Ok, can I start with the questions so long?

8: Ok, no problem

L: Ok, in which format do you receive the most queries?

8: Uh, most of our queries are through phone, telephone

L: Telephone. Ok and then on which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

8: During specific events

L: Yes

8: So for example the Mercedes fashion week, that's when we get most of our enquiries

L: Uhm during, during specific events?

8: Yes

L: Ok. What are the frequently asked questions?

8: Uhm, with the event, or just in general?

L: Uhm well, with the event it would probably be event specific, and the general questions?

8: Ok, the event specific, they mainly call in and ask about the venue

L: Yes

8: And then especially of where the venue is located

L: OK

8: And especially the time of the event and what time it begins and what time the event ends.

L: Ok

8: And then on to the general

L: Yes

8: They mainly ask about tour operators

L: Yes

8: Accommodation around the CPD

L: Ok

8: Or different districts of Joburg

L: Ok

8: And so as attractions

L: Ok, perfects and then what I understand of Joburg is is it's mainly for business tourism as well. There's a lot for business tourism

8: Yes, that is

L: Ok. Uhm question number four. Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre?

8: Yes we do

L: And uhm how, which forms of social media do you make use of?

8: Uhm ok, mainly for our business corporates, we use our general website

L: Ja

8: But just in general we use Facebook and Twitter.

L: Facebook and Twitter. Ok perfect

8: Yes

L: Uhm do you think, using social media help make you a better Visitor information centre?

8: Yes it would

L: Definitely

8: Uhm the reason for that is with social media is when you update and use articles about certain events, they can see it on social media and if they're uncertain, they can always just call in

L: Ok ja, that makes sense.

8: Yes

L: Ok, question number 7. How many hours a day do you spend updating social media?

8: Uhm, for and event it would take us let's say 7 hours. Of the whole like on a working day

L: Yes

8: But if not, 3-4 hours

L: 3-4 hours per day?

8: Yes, per day.

L: Ok, and do you do that every day of the week?

8: Uh no, only when there is an event, or when we hosting a certain company or tour group.

L: Ok. Perfect. Question number 8. What type of information would you give the client on social media

8: Uhm, mainly events articles

L: Yes

8: And uhm news releases.

L: Ok. perfect. Second last question: Do you give visitors; do you still give visitors traditional information, not using social media or any form of technology?

8: Yes we do, we provide them with brochures

L: Brochures, ok.

8: Yes.

L: And then the last question uhm, do you use social media as a marketing tool?

8: Yes we do

L: Ok

8: That is our life.

L: Ok perfects. Ok let me just switch off this recorder.

8: Ok

DM550018 - Johannesburg

L: Ok uhm, in which format do you receive the most queries?

9: Uhm, walk-ins and telephone.

L: Telephone, ok. And which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

9: It actually, it does depend on the day, but then Mondays to Fridays it's just the same

L: Ok and is it sometimes event specific?

9: Uhm it actually depends, like now it's actually the students, there's an influx of people at the station

L: Ok

9: So in terms of events, it does happen sometimes, but usually they actually take uhm the website or they phone our marketing department

L: Ok perfect. Question number 3. What are the frequently asked questions?

9: Uh, they mostly ask about accommodation, tour operators and attractions to see in Johannesburg

L: Ok thank you. Question number 4: Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre?

9: Yes, our IT department actually takes care of that.

L: Of that. And which forms of social media do they make use of?

9: We have Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, uh, LinkedIn and what is the other one, ja, mostly we use those.

L: Those ones, ok perfect. And then do you think using social media help make you a better visitor information centre?

9: Yes it does, a lot of people are actually exposed to social media nowadays

L: Sure

9: The outreach is quite steepy

L: Ok. The seventh question. Uhm how many hours per day do you spend updating social media?

9: Uhm, that depends on our marketing department.

L: Ok

9: But I think they update it daily, I just don't know uh...

L: How many hours yes (laughing).

9: Yes, how many hours do we spend on it.

L: Ja I know that's quite a specific question, so I understand completely. Uhm, ok the third last question. What type of information would you give the client on social media?

9: Mostly it's events, and what's happening during that time, depends on seasonal events it can changeand things to do in Johannesburg, places to eat, restaurants and new places that are upcoming.

L: Ok. Second last question: Do you give visitors traditional information, not using social media or any form of technology?

9: Excuse me?

L: Uh, I'll repeat the question. Do you still give visitors traditional information, not using social media or any form of technology? Like say for instance brochures or so on.

9: Yes. We've got brochures in all our information offices.

L: OK. And then the last question. Uhm, do you use social media as a marketing tool?

9: Yes it's one of our marketing tools, but then we also an exhibition and trade shows.

L: Ok perfect. That was it, I'm quickly going to stop the recorder

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DM550019 - Johannesburg

L: To put on the recorder now. So uhm the first question is uhm in which format do you receive the most queries?

10: Usually the most queries are via email.

L: Via email. Ok

10: Because on our website we have a query for where they can contact us and that's where they send emails and they put their details in, a description of the question, then our peer manager normally handle the query of my manager, and then they reply to them, or if I can help them I'll patch in, or if it's an, if it's a tourism issue, then our information

officers, transfer it to our information officers, so like everyone is on hand with when it comes to queries that we get.

L: Ok perfect. And then uhm on which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

10: When it comes to highest volume of visitors, I can say it's different

L: Ok

10: Like now, in holidays, people want to come in Joburg, for entertainment because Joburg the place for entertainment

L: Yes.

10: so it will be on holidays, or when there's an event, like when there's people who flew from different countries to Joburg for physicals. In February or March they normally flew in for conventions, for a convention period event in Africa, so mostly I would say for events, people fly in to Joburg and then for entertainment, like when they want to visit apartheid museum, Villa on the street, Soweto to see which is in Soweto, the clubs

L: Ja there's a lot to do in Joburg.

10: There's a lot to do in Joburg

L: Yes, Ok. Question number 3. What are the frequently asked questions that you get?

10: On, ok let me think, on the website the frequently asked questions would be where can I go in Joburg.

L: Ok

10: Those are the frequently asked questions. If someone is sitting in Australia or Cape Town, when they are planning to come to Joburg, they will want to know which are the hotspots in Joburg

L: In Joburg.

10: Then we outline them and we say, if you want to dine and wine, you can go to Sandton, there are nice restaurants there, you can even go to Maboneng precinct. You know, like different questions for different periods.

L: Yes yes absolutely. Ok perfect. Uhm, do you make...

10: Or or can I please add on that, sorry

L: Yes

10: On question number 3, also they would ask on vacancies, like I mean tourism, and students, I would like to know if there is an internship there, that's also the most frequently asked question

L: Oh that's quite interesting.

10: Yes, they really query most about internship

L Oh wow, I had no idea. That's very interesting. Ok question number 4. Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre?

10: Yes

L: Ok

10: Uhm

L: In which forms?

10: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn

L: Those 4

10: Those are the most we use.

L: Ok and then do you think that using social media help make you a better Visitor information centre?

10: Social media helps a lot. It must be more than our common tourism website. You know, people have cultures, and they love to socialise. So something like Twitter, we post a new article on our website we put a description or an email to upload this article on Facebook and Twitter. You will get more like on Twitter, and more retweets on Twitter, and more likes on Facebook, unlike mostly on our website.

L: Ok that also interesting.

10: Social media helps a lot

L: So do you...

10: Even when I am report to the SEO, I would get ranking from Facebook and Twitter and YouTube, when I upload a video on YouTube, trust me they would love to...

L: A lot of views

10: Yes.

L: How many hours a day do you spend updating social media?

10: Uhm, I can't say hours per day.

L: Ok

10: But I would just say when I have something that I can upload, I don't take note of how many articles, how many videos, how many emails are uploaded, I just upload for what is relevant for everyone to see them

L: Ok perfect

10: Yes

L: And then uhm, what type of information would you give the client on social media?

10: Information, mostly we are a tourism destination which promotes Joburg. Information that we give will promote Joburg

L: Ok so it will be event specific, accommodation

10: Specific events, accommodation, the who and the what, which bed and breakfast is graded, uhm like Tshogo Sun, the who and the what, something like that, would be promoting them like the tourism officer, the who and the what for being the best tourism officer in Joburg. Stuff like that. Event stuff for things that would interest them, for tourism and Joburg.

L: Perfect. Uhm, do you give, do you still give visitors traditional information not using social media or any form of technology? Like brochures?

10: Yes we do have brochures in the office people would come in the office and approach us, and would even send an email, like we need a certain bulk of brochures then the marketing department, they will send it to us and they will send them brochures. Even the information officers, they normally handle it when someone sends an email or come to the office and say I need ten of them, I need maps, and I need ten of them and if we do have in stock it's mostly that we do.

L: Ok

10: You know organise for them

L: Yes. And then the last question: DO you uses social media as a marketing tool? But I think you already answered that one as well.

10: Yes

L: Of course you do. Ok I'm quickly going to switch off the recorder

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Voice 001 – Johannesburg

L: Ok so my first question is, in which format do you receive the most queries, is it email, phone or personal visits?

11: Mostly we receive uh most queries by personal visits

L: By personal visits, ok

11: Followed by phone and then we may respond by email

L: Ok, uhm, then uhm the second question. On which days do you receive the highest volume of visitors?

11: It's during the public holidays or the school holidays

L: Public holidays

11: Just before and event in and around near Joburg

L: Ok and then the third question what are your, what are the frequently asked questions?

11: Most of the questions they query is the query regarding access…

L: Uhm, can you repeat that again for me please?

11: Most of the questions that we receive are mostly regarding excursions, tourism excursions, like what to see in Joburg

L: Oh excursions, ok.

11: Excursions yes.

L: Ok, allright, and then the fourth question. Do you make use of social media to promote your visitor information centre

11: Yes, we do use this to promote our visitor information centre, but then we've got a division that deals exclusively with that is our marketing and PR division

L: Ok, so it's not per say your personal Visitor information centre, but more, it falls more under Joburg Tourism?

11: Ja, but then we have a division that deals with that exclusively

L: Sorry, Im struggling to hear you, can you repeat that for me again?

11: Ok, Im saying we have a division that deals exclusively with marketing of all social media

L: OK, yes that's how I understood it as well. Ok and then which forms of social media do you make use of? Or do they make use of?

11: We make use of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest as well

L: Those four, ok thank you so much. Ok then the sixth question: Do you think using social media help make the VIC a better VIC

11: Ja it does, it does make us a better VIC because the point is to actually read and not bought especially if it is about what could be happening in region or in the institute on social media

L: OK and then how many hours a day do you spend updating social media, or does the division spend on updating social media?

11: Like I said there is a division that handles it so I won't actually know how much they spend.

L: That's correct. Ok yes no problem. Ok then uhm what type of information would you give the client on social media?

11: As I mentioned, it's more related to tourism, like they called us Joburg Tourism

L: Ok, so it's accommodation, booking trips and those types of things.

11: Ja, ja

L: Ok then do you still give at your VIC give visitors traditional information not using social media or any form of technology?

11: Yes, we do make use of hardcopies of publications, tourism publications

L: Ok and brochures and those types of things?

11: Ja ja

L: Ok, and then the last question. Do you use social media as a marketing tool, but I guess that has also been answered, because it's your division that does that

11: Ja ja

L: Ok, just hold on for me one second.

APPENDIX G: Facebook Page Illustrations

Facebook page of I love Cape Town:

Facebook page of australia.com: