

Travellers' digital media use and risk perceptions: Implications for emerging destinations' digital media marketing and competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

The success of tourism lies in a destination's competitiveness. This is determined by a destination's ability to extend a mix of benefits distinct from what competition is offering; one of them being destination image. Behavioural intentions to revisit are fuelled by a positive brand image strengthened through destination marketing. The ultimate goal is to enhance destination competitiveness. Destination competitiveness is significantly influenced by travel risk perceptions. As a result, the recovery of a destination's brand image is contingent on the way in which travel risk perceptions are managed. In addition, these perceptions are undeniably a strong precondition for behavioural intentions to revisit. Such perceptions can be shaped by the nature of information shared on social media about a destination's resilience during a crisis. Tourists are more reliant on external sources of information, and therefore, find it risky to travel in an unsafe environment.

Destination image is shaped by travel risk perceptions, which in turn play a fundamental role in influencing revisit intentions. As a result, tourism demand is influenced by travel risk perceptions, especially during a crisis or pandemic such as COVID-19. The use of digital media in destination marketing has shown great potential in building competitive and resilient tourism destinations. Advances in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), therefore, act as an enabler of destination competitiveness especially when leisure tourists use digital media when visiting emerging destinations. Digital media marketing shows great potential to influence destination competitiveness through image by facilitating convenience and engagement with tourists. Digital media have eventually become a popular 'accessory' among travellers through their usage features.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. The study was structured around two phases, therefore the two demand conditions were investigated as follows: Phase 1: travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis; Phase 2: digital media usage (i.e., technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences). In Phase 1, the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit was tested. Further, moderation tests were done to determine the influence of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit brands South Africa and Zimbabwe amidst a crisis, more specifically COVID-19.

In Phase 2, the study sought to determine the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media by leisure tourists during travels. Understanding the above

relationships can lead to effective understanding of how travel risk intentions influence behavioural intentions to revisit. As a result, the management of travel risk perceptions and effective application of digital media marketing, in turn, will lead to a competitive destination. The case studies of South Africa and Zimbabwe were used as two competing tourism destinations within Sub-Saharan Africa.

The study incorporated two theoretical foundations from which to study destination competitiveness via brand image. In Phase 1, the theory was built around branding and risk perceptions, while Phase 2 presented a theoretical foundation on technology adoption in order to contextualise leisure tourists' technology readiness and acceptance to use different types of digital media during travel. The digital media under study were introduced and explained in view of their relevance to digital marketing in tourism. This presented an argumentation on the motivation of the study. The literature review started off with an examination of destination competitiveness models, current trends in international, emerging destinations, and Sub-Saharan Africa tourism was reviewed to provide a firm foundation of the background to the study.

This was followed by a review of literature on destination image, which is a key indicator of destination competitiveness. Given the impact of COVID-19 on destination competitiveness, travellers' risk perceptions could not be overlooked. Literature was examined to have more understanding of leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions and their behavioural intentions to revisit the two emerging destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. This provided the basis for arguing in favour of the use of digital media during travel, especially during a pandemic like COVID-19. This was a necessary call due to the rapid decline in arrivals globally caused by COVID-19. Literature was also reviewed to determine the extent of ICT adoption in emerging destinations as well as ICT readiness and destination images of those destinations.

Two conceptual models were developed for each Phase. In Phase 1, the independent variables included cognitive and affective brand image, while the dependent variable was behavioural intentions to revisit, along with risk perceptions as moderator. In Phase 2, the independent variables were technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences, with digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit as dependents respectively. To achieve the study aim and achieve the objectives of the two phases, a post-positivist research paradigm was adopted, where a modified quantitative technique was applied.

A cross-sectional survey was done using an online structured questionnaire containing a few open ended questions to bring clarity on the issue of travel risk perceptions. A cross-sectional survey was done using an online structured questionnaire containing a few open ended questions to bring clarity

on the issue of travel risk perceptions. However, while the study might be considered generalisable due to the extensive quantitative data gathered from the population, the qualitative data cannot be viewed in the same light. Qualitative data in this study merely reflects the travel risk perceptions of a few individuals. However, despite the limited amount of data on travel risk perceptions, some interesting trends were observed that warrant further investigation in future studies.

A total sample of 251 was achieved of which 124 had visited South Africa (SA), 184 Zimbabwe (Zim), and 57 had visited both countries. The questionnaire was hosted on the Qualtrics platform from 23 November 2020 to 31 May 2021. South African Tourism (SAT) and ZIMPARKS also distributed the questionnaire to international leisure tourists, in their databases, who had visited South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively. Having encountered a slow response rate (considering that the survey was launched a few months after COVID-19 had started), the researcher also shared the survey link through other means (i.e., via LinkedIn and colleagues). In both stages, convenient random sampling was conducted through available cases and snowball sampling.

Analysis in Phase 1 was done through thematic analysis for qualitative data. Scale refinement for destination image, travel risk perceptions and behavioural intentions, was done through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and lastly, moderated multiple regressions were done to determine whether travel risk perceptions influence the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. In Phase 2, factor dimensionality and reliability were done through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to confirm Technology Readiness Index (TRI) and Technology Acceptance model (TAM) factors. EFA was done for digital media usage. During the EFA, digital media usage was split into utilitarian and hedonic use. A series of regressions (multiple and hierarchical) were done to test the hypothesised relationships between TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit variables.

Results from Phase 1 indicated that risk perceptions had varied effects on the relationships between affective and cognitive brand image and behavioural intentions to revisit. During EFA, cognitive was split into two factors (i.e., Cognitive image 1 and Cognitive image 2) for both countries. Affective image emerged as one factor for South Africa and two for Zimbabwe (i.e., Affective image 1 and Affective image 2). Results show that in the absence of risk, both cognitive and affective images significantly positively influenced tourists' behavioural intentions to revisit destinations South Africa and Zimbabwe. In the case of South Africa, the effect of Cognitive image 1 (shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, general, transportation infrastructure and nightlife) on behavioural intentions to revisit was significantly moderated by travel risk perceptions.

For Zimbabwe, travel risk perceptions significantly moderated the effect of Cognitive image 2 (scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals) on behavioural intentions to revisit. None of South Africa's affective image attributes were moderated by travel risk perceptions. However, for Zimbabwe, both Affective image 1 (relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, and progressive) and Affective image 2 (interesting, authentic, entertaining, and pleasant) were significantly moderated by travel risk perceptions. The above variations indicate that destination image varies between destinations and so do travel risk perceptions.

High risk factors (drawn from EFAs) such as concern over the possibility of contracting COVID-19 during travel, had more influence on the above relationships. Furthermore, the feeling of coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic was also a major risk due to fear of contracting the virus when travelling to the two destinations. Overall, results show that the existing destination brand image perceptions were not strong enough for both South Africa and Zimbabwe (even though they may be positive) to keep the revisit intentions positive given the contagion and life-threatening nature of COVID-19.

Digital media marketing has the power to portray a destination's image as risky or safe. This is because a destination's brand image can either be induced or organic depending on how it is portrayed in the media. Tourists depend on media for important destination information, therefore digital media marketing could emerge as an effective way of brand image recovery during and post crisis. The main thrust of Phase 2 is, therefore, to build onto the significant role of digital media-enabled destination brand image on behavioural intentions to revisit and ultimately competitiveness.

Results from Phase 2 show that technology readiness and technology acceptance statistically significantly influence digital media usage by leisure tourists visiting the two emerging destinations. Results also show that hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage influence the affective image of a destination, while only utilitarian digital media usage influenced behavioural intentions to revisit. Findings show that despite high levels of technology insecurity, leisure tourists still used immersive digital media (3-D virtual reality videos and 3-D city tour guide), recommender apps (Foursquare) and social media sites (YouTube, TripAdvisor, and Facebook) during travel.

Preferences for digital media that allowed online sharing of tourism experiences and those that provided travel safety information were the main antecedents to hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, after accounting for technology readiness and technology acceptance. Affective image emerged as the only destination image factor influencing behavioural intentions to revisit, after

accounting for technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media usage and digital media preferences. This was true for both destinations.

The study contributes to our theoretical understanding of the study of destination competitiveness underpinned by destination brand image. Despite the extensive research on destination competitiveness, a major theoretical contribution was the development of the digital media preferences scale, where six features emerged as measurement items. This study also makes a novel contribution to the body of knowledge and destination marketing practice by revealing the specific digital media preferences linked to usage type (hedonic and utilitarian). In addition, the study also revealed specific digital media preferences linked to positive destination image formations and those linked to behavioural intentions to revisit.

This is facilitated by an investigation of the effects of travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis and digital media usage on a destination's competitiveness. Within the framework of competitiveness, destination images vary between destinations, as well as the digital media usage profile of travellers. This serves as a learning point for policy makers and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO) to consider hedonic and utilitarian affordances of different types of digital media when formulating digital media marketing strategies. This study helps marketers understand how travel risk perceptions, digital media preferences and digital media-enabled destination (cognitive and affective) images influence destination competitiveness. Policy makers and DMOs can mitigate travel risk perceptions through effectively applying relevant digital media types that enable portrayal of safety in different formats. This will build confidence among travellers during uncertain times such as the COVID-19 pandemic as the background to this study.

A call to action for incessant research is inevitable, given the continuous advances in technological developments and the dynamic nature of destination competitiveness. Over the years, international travel has intensified rivalry among competing destinations. As a result, a destination's brand image and tourists' travel behaviour have an exponential relationship with the competitiveness of a destination.

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GLOSSARY

- **Augmented reality (AR):** A type of virtual reality that augments the real-world environment, through context-sensitive, real-time information by overlaying computer-generated content (Cranmer, tom Dieck & Fountoulaki, 2020). Examples include 3D city tour guides (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019).
- **Behavioural intentions to revisit:** Tourists' future intentions to revisit a destination.
- **Context-aware recommender media:** media that use recommender technology to enable marketers to access consumer's external contextual information through sensors on the mobile devices (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015). Examples include Foursquare, Google Latitude, Yelp, Brightkite etc.
- **Destination competitiveness:** "What makes a tourism destination truly competitive is its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination...." (Ritchie & Crouch 2003:2).
- **Destination image:** "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Crompton, 1979:18).
- **Digital marketing:** novel and modern business practice using electronic and digital means for implementation of marketing strategies through electronic and digital means (El-Gohary & Eid, 2012).
- **Digital media (DM):** media and communication channels, for example, virtual reality (Li & Chen, 2019), context-aware recommender media (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015), social media (Kim, Lee, Shin & Yang, 2017) and websites (Jorge, Teixeira, Correia, Gonçalves, Martins & Bessa, 2018).
- **Digital media exposure:** Stages of exposure to digital marketing media for example, during, before, during, after, before and during, during and after, before and after the trip or not at all.
- **Digital media preferences:** Attributes that influence tourist preference for digital media applications (Rivera, Croes & Zhong, 2016).
- **Digital media usage:** Actual use of digital marketing media.
- **Discomfort:** Discomfort occurs when a customer lacks control and understanding of new technology (Parasuraman, 2000).
- **Emerging destination:** destinations that are scaling up their tourism development, characterised by prioritisation of tourism supported by requisite institutions, quality, and competitiveness (Christie, Christie, Fernandes, Messerli & Twining-Ward, 2014).

- **Frequency of travel:** A form of tourist behaviour measured by the number of visits to a given destination (Chark, Lam & Fong, 2020).
- **Immersive digital media:** digital media with interactive and immersive features (Rubio-Tamayo, Gertrudix Barrio & García García, 2017), for example, virtual reality and augmented reality.
- **Innovativeness:** This is when one is a thought leader and pioneer in technology-related issues (Parasuraman, 2000).
- **Insecurity:** Insecurity is when a customer is skeptical and lacks trust regarding the ability of new technology to satisfy their goals (Parasuraman, 2000; Lin, Shih & Sher, 2007).
- **Leisure tourist:** A visitor who is temporarily free of primary obligations (Ghanem, 2017).
- **Official tourism website:** A form of cost-effective digital marketing meant to enhance digital presence of Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) (Gupta, 2019) and act as a portal for advertising and marketing (Wu, 2018).
- **Optimism:** This is when one has high regard for technology believing that they can have control, be flexible, and be efficient (Parasuraman, 2000).
- **Perceived ease of use:** “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort” (Davis, 1989:320).
- **Perceived usefulness:** “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance” (Davis, 1989:320).
- **Recommender apps:** Apps that filter unwanted information while providing personalised and relevant information to tourists (Noguera, Barranco, Segura & Martínez, 2012), for example, context-aware recommender media.
- **Social media:** Xiang and Gretzel (2010:180) defined social media as “Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content.” Examples include YouTube, TripAdvisor, Facebook and so on.
- **Technology acceptance:** an individual’s acceptance of information systems as determined by perceptions of usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989).
- **Technology readiness:** “people’s propensity to embrace and use new technologies for accomplishing goals in home life and at work” (Parasuraman, 2000:308).
- **Virtual reality (VR):** is a communication channel for tourism data that generates and integrates personalised travel resources, including artificial intelligence for tourists (Huang, 2023). Examples include immersive computer-generated 3D environment (Guttentag, 2010).
- **Visitor:** “a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited” (www.unwto.org).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
AR	Augmented Reality
COVID-19	Coronavirus
DMO	Destination Marketing Organisation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
SAT	South African Tourism
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TTDI	Travel & Tourism Development Index
TRAM	Technology Readiness and Acceptance Model
TTCI	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VR	Virtual Reality
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Tourism Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
ZIMPARKS	Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority
ZTA	Zimbabwe Tourism Authority

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Competitiveness of a destination is determined by the superiority of its 'appeal' and attractiveness when compared to others (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Destination competitiveness is described as "the ability of a destination to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists" (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:376). Competitive rivalry among destinations has been intensified by the upsurge in international travel (Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020) and tourists' visit intentions are inextricably linked to destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Notably, competition among African destinations is growing exponentially owing to the changes in tourists' demand (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021, 2023). Africa is viewed as a continent with a huge potential for tourism and positive prospects for growth (Maphanga & Henama, 2019). This is despite the adverse impact of pandemics, such as Ebola (Cahyanto, Wiblishauser, Pennington-Gray & Schroeder, 2016) and COVID-19 (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2021).

Having endured the negative impact of COVID-19, the continent's policy makers and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) are faced with the mammoth task of tourism recovery, and it has become one of the main goals of any tourism destination, post-COVID-19 (WEF, 2022; World Tourism Organisation (WTO), 2022). Destination competitiveness is, therefore, a critical paradigm for the success of a destination's tourism sector. In order to bring confidence to visitors and non-visitors alike, destinations ought to extend a mix of benefits distinct from what competition is offering (see Nadalipour, Imani Khoshkhoo & Eftekhari, 2019). Nadalipour *et al.* (2019) add that there are factors that contribute to the competitiveness of a destination; one of them being destination image.

A strong image can be attained through marketing efforts to enhance a destination's appeal, resulting in its competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Selection and choice of a destination by tourists is contingent on the strength of its image (see Marques, da Silva & Antova, 2021; Gorji, Garcia & Mercadé-Melé, 2023) as a proven relationship exists between destination image and behavioural intentions (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). There are destination specific and social influences that shape a destination's image, which can result in revisit intentions (Cham, Lim, Sia, Cheah & Ting, 2021). Most importantly, the primary goal is to cultivate a positive destination image to elicit visit intentions (Kim, Shinaprayoon & Ahn, 2022).

Ultimately, the performance of a tourism destination is significantly influenced by destination image (Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018; Ragb, Mahrous & Ghoneim, 2020). However, some distressed tourism destinations tend to encounter mixed destination images as a result of their political and social instability (Ragb *et al.*, 2020). This makes it difficult for such destinations to be effectively promoted to establish a positive image. Mixed destination images can also be attributed to tourists' travel risk perceptions, given the impact of COVID-19 on travel (see Rastegar, Seyfi & Rasoolimanesh, 2021; Rasoolimanesh, Seyfi, Rastegar & Hall, 2021; Zheng, Luo & Ritchie, 2021).

Risk perceptions significantly influence destination competitiveness by shaping travel experience (Neto, Dimmock, Lohmann & Scott, 2020). Understanding travel behaviour, especially risk perceptions, is of paramount importance to the recovery of a destination's image (Golets, Farias, Pilati & Costa, 2023). According to Dowling and Staelin (1994:119) risk perceptions are "the consumer's perceptions of the uncertainty and adverse consequences of buying a product (or service)". In addition, tourism risk perception is associated with potential losses emanating from uncertainties of tourism activity (Chew & Jahari, 2014) and is shown to influence visit intentions in tourism (Zhu & Deng, 2020).

In the event of a crisis, perceived tourism risk may lead to the waning of revisit intention (Wen, Kozak, Yang & Liu, 2020; Nazneen, Hong & Ud Din, 2020; Perpiña, Prats & Camprubí, 2021). A study by Isaac (2021) revealed that individuals may decide to revisit a destination if their travel experiences show that the destination is attractive, regardless of the negative perceptions others may have of that destination. Notably, COVID-19 has shifted focus towards untact tourism due to the disease's high perceived risk (Bae & Chang, 2021). Regrettably, the disease has brought with it a plethora of mental health problems including perceived risk (Han, Lee, Kim & Ryu, 2020; Losada-Baltar, Jiménez-Gonzalo, Gallego-Alberto, Pedroso-Chaparro, Fernandes Pires & Márquez-González, 2021). Hence, the demand for tourism is attenuated by the level of a traveller's perceived risk during a pandemic (Rettie & Daniels, 2021; Kim, Park, Lee, Kim, Gonzalez-Jimenez, Lee, Choi, Lee, Jang, Franklin & Spence, 2021). Governments can, therefore, participate in curbing travellers' risk perceptions through pro-tourism policies (Foroudi, Tabaghdehi & Marvi, 2021).

Travellers are often instinctive as they search for travel-related information (Nazir, Yasin, Tat, Khaliq & Mehmood, 2022). As a result, they are exposed to both positive and negative media information about a destination. The latter has a negative impact on traveller risk perceptions (Parrey, Hakim & Rather, 2019; Nazir *et al.*, 2022). Instinctively, the quality of information relayed through the media has an influence on satisfaction and intention to visit a

destination (An, Choi & Lee, 2021; Kullada & Kurniadjie, 2021). The perceived risk theory alludes that perceptions of risk can be reduced if organisations are generous with information about a brand (Aaker, 1991).

The theory elucidates why consumers minimise perceived risk by naturally avoiding a brand due to negative aspects attached to it, and maximising anticipated utility (Chang & Chen, 2014). Competitiveness of destinations is, therefore, contingent on the level of resilience which could be attributed to investment in ICT tools by tourism destinations (Woyo & Ukpabi, 2022). Tourism in developed nations has been greatly transformed by mobile applications, resulting in enhanced destination competitiveness (see Nyaboro, Park & Park, 2021). To the contrary, some emerging destinations within the World Bank (in Christie, Christie, Fernandes, Messerli, Twining-Ward, 2014) classification are still in the infancy of their adoption of ICTs for destination marketing and growth (see Chipeta & Ngoyi, 2018; Adeola & Evans, 2020; Chirisa, Mutambisi, Chivenge, Mbasera, Sidambe, Muchenje, Mukwashi, Mabaso, Ncube & Zengeni, 2020).

Emerging destinations are characterised by the level at which they advance tourism activities and the prioritisation of such (Christie *et al.*, 2014). Notably, emerging destinations have the potential to utilise digital marketing technology for the growth of the tourism sector (Ketter & Avraham, 2021; Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). Some past studies focused on the adoption and implementation of digital marketing relative to business performance in developing countries (see Vieira, de Almeida, Agnihotri & Arunachalam, 2019; Pandey, Nayal & Rathore, 2020; Qalati, Yuan, Khan & Anwar, 2021) and more specifically, the tourism and hospitality sector (De Pelsmacker, Van Tilburg & Holthof, 2018; Mkwizu, 2019; Gupta, 2019). Given the slow pace of ICT adoption (Chipeta & Ngoyi, 2018; Chirisa *et al.*, 2020) and financial challenges faced by developing nations (Moyo & Takavarasha, 2020; World Bank, 2023d), digital marketing could be a valuable strategy because it is a low-cost and valuable promotional method for tourism destinations (Melović, Jocović, Dabić, Vulić & Dudic, 2020).

The digital evolution and the emergence of smartphones have effectively brought together tourists' home network and that of the destination (Fan, Buhalis & Lin, 2019). Generally, tourists use ICT and the internet to mitigate uncertainty as they search for travel-related information during travel planning (see Kang, Jodice & Norman, 2020; Goo, Huang, Yoo & Koo, 2022). In addition, ICTs are used for onsite price and quality comparisons of tourism products and services (Pencarelli, 2020). Tourists prefer more personalised experiences facilitated by digital media, such as augmented and virtual reality (see Gajdošík, 2020).

Moreover, digital media ease the burden of destination information search through personalisation (after Milićević, Petrović & Đorđević, 2020).

The resurgence of COVID-19 led to the proliferation and adoption of different forms of ICT in tourism to ensure resilience in the sector (Sigala, 2020). COVID-19 has influenced several adjustments in tourism operations through the technological revolution, resulting in the introduction of immersive virtual solutions (Alkier, Roblek & Petrović, 2021). Tourists prefer to use such technologies for easy access of destination information pre-visit and onsite.

Digital media subsequently act as innovative solutions and a means of survival for destinations to remain resilient in the event of a crisis and beyond (see Lekgau, Harilal & Feni, 2021; El-Said & Aziz, 2022). Digital media play a pivotal role in alleviating the challenges faced by travellers (Ndou, Mele, Hysa & Manta, 2022). There is a need to understand the readiness of travellers to adopt digital media and preferences during the travel-planning, decision-making process (Hailey Shin, Jeong & Cho, 2021). Bosio and Scheiber (2022) conclude that hedonic/utilitarian travel-related digital media are the most preferred by tourists due to the benefits accrued at all stages of travel. Notably, this study provides a theoretical foundation of the relationship between digital media preferences and the type of digital media (hedonic/utilitarian) used for travel purposes. In literature, this has not been fully addressed.

Digital media marketing is defined as “marketing via search engines, display networks, and social media” (Singh, Kushwaha, Chadha & Singh, 2021:149). Extant literature shows the influence of digital media marketing on destination image (e.g., Dubois, Griffin, Gibbs & Guttentag, 2020; Caridà, Colurcio & Pastore, 2021), while some post-COVID-19 studies explore the interface between e-marketing, the attraction of tourists, and their experiences (see Balogun & Raji, 2021; Rani & Singh, 2022). In addition, other studies have examined consumer acceptance and use of mobile technologies (see Dorcic, Komsic & Markovic, 2019; Chuang, 2020; Wörndl & Herzog, 2020). It can be deduced that consumers will adopt those mobile technologies and applications they deem helpful, easy to use, and compatible (Tandon, Ertz & Bansal, 2020; Oyman, Bal & Ozer, 2022). With destination image serving as a measure of destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010), destination marketers are inevitably faced with the task of implementing digital media marketing to influence both destination image and tourists’ future behavioural intentions (see Dubois *et al.*, 2020).

Numerous forms of digital media are used by destination marketers, while some forms appear to tourists as an attraction in itself (Li & Chen, 2019). Digital media (e.g., virtual and augmented reality, social media, websites and context-aware recommender media) have the potential to

influence destination competitiveness through image (e.g., Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013; Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019; Dubois *et al.*, 2020). The basis for such digital media is to engage with and convince potential visitors, and eventually convert them into actual visitors by influencing their destination image perceptions (Willems, Brengman & Van Kerrebroeck, 2019). In addition, literature shows that, generally, digital media marketing has a positive influence on consumer purchase intentions (Singh *et al.*, 2021; Zhou Barnes, McCormick & Cano, 2021). Moreover, technologies such as social media/networking sites provide a platform for co-creation, which also enhances destination competitiveness (e.g., Buhalis, 2020).

Digital media enable the sharing of information, perceptions and experiences between and among tourists during their travels (Marques *et al.*, 2021). During the pre-travel stage, tourists are much more concerned about their safety and security than anything else when selecting a destination (Ragab, Mahrous & Ghoneim, 2020). As a result, destination image is a key decision-making attribute on the choice of a destination (Marques *et al.*, 2021). Accordingly, advancements in ICT and travellers' adoption thereof, have resulted in destination managers thinking of new and innovative ways of staying competitive through digital media (see Prodingler & Neuhofer, 2022).

For tourism managers to come up with solutions that will spur destination competitiveness through ICT, there is a need for sufficient integrative knowledge on leisure tourists' use of digital media when visiting emerging destinations. Despite digital marketing having gained traction in some industries (see Vieira *et al.*, 2019; Mogaji, Soetan & Kieu, 2020), the use of different types of digital media and preferences of the same, when visiting emerging destinations, is yet to gain momentum in tourism-related empirical studies. It would, therefore, be judicious for this study to probe whether the different digital media used during travels can be adopted as tools for managing risk perceptions to build a competitive destination. Ultimately, destination image is a key destination marketing factor (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), amplifying and qualifying a destination's competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Prior research on destination competitiveness has mainly focused on the supply side of tourism (e.g., Crouch, 2011; Mikulić, Krešić, Prebežac, Miličević & Šerić, 2016; Michael, Ramsay, Stephens & Kotsi, 2019). However, it can be observed from extant literature that destination competitiveness studies examining the demand side of tourism (as outlined by Dwyer & Kim, 2003) are scant (see Cronjé & Du Plessis, 2020; Neto *et al.*, 2020; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023). The tourist's voice is instrumental in shaping a destination's competitiveness

by enabling DMOs to think ahead, considering perceptions about the destination's brand (Cronjé & Du Plessis, 2020).

In addition, destination competitiveness studies have paid much attention to developed destinations (e.g., Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019; Dodds & Holmes, 2020), while a few focused on emerging destinations (Cronjé & Du Plessis, 2021; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021), more specifically for emerging destinations exuding a perpetuity of political and economic upheavals, for example, Zimbabwe (see Woyo & Slabbert, 2020) and South Africa (see Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Tarisayi & Manik, 2020; Musavengane, Leonard & Mureyani, 2022).

While Sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) tourism destinations are uncompetitive when juxtaposed against the World Benchmark (WEF, 2011-2022), regional players, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe find themselves in the same predicament when compared with the regional benchmark (WTO, 2013-2022). South Africa and Zimbabwe are listed among 140 competing destinations globally (WEF, 2020), evidence that the two destinations are internationally recognised in terms of their contribution to the global tourism sector. Notably, literature on destination competitiveness has addressed contextual determinants of destination competitiveness (e.g., Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2010; Parra-López, & Oreja-Rodríguez 2014; Loureiro & Ferreira, 2015). Destination image is one such determinant used as a measure of competitiveness (see Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Mior Shariffuddin, Azinuddin, Hanafiah & Wan Mohd Zain, 2023; Nadalipour *et al.*, 2019).

Africa as a brand has always been associated with poverty, underdevelopment, danger and pestilence, among other woes (see Osei & Gbadamosi, 2011; Muhwezi, Baum & Nyakaana, 2016; Avraham & Ketter, 2017). Such negative publicity has overshadowed Africa's pride in its prevalent culture, art, and poetry, among other features (Avraham & Ketter, 2017). An added challenge is the COVID-19-driven closure of international borders that has crippled SSA tourism (Makoni & Tichaawa, 2021). Arguably, decision-making on the choice of tourism destinations under such circumstances is often influenced by perceived risk (Agyeiwaah, Adam, Dayour & Badu Baiden, 2021). Agyeiwaah *et al.* (2021) put forth that high perceived risk of travel during COVID-19 led to high negative emotions, which in turn reduced travel intentions.

According to the WEF (2022:15), the COVID-19 pandemic has been dubbed "the worst crisis the global Travel and Tourism sector has faced in modern times". Travel and Tourism experienced a loss of \$4.5 trillion in 2020 because of lockdowns, travel restrictions and consumer fears, among other factors (World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), 2021).

International arrivals for the first quarter of 2023 skyrocketed to an 80% increase in numbers recorded during the same period in 2019 (WTO, 2023).

However, despite the increase in vaccinations, relaxation of travel restrictions (WEF, 2022) and international tourist arrivals (WTO, 2023), tourism recovery for South Africa and Zimbabwe has still been growing at a slow pace (WTO, 2013-2022). Prior to COVID-19, the two competing emerging destinations have always had challenges in attracting significant tourist arrivals when compared to the regional and global benchmarks (WTO, 2013-2022). Hence, the need exists to further explore ways of increasing tourist arrivals for enhanced competitiveness of the two emerging destinations.

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a decrease of 87% in travel arrivals globally during the first quarter of 2021 (WTO, 2021). In addition, during 2020, compulsory testing and reduced traveller confidence, among other issues, curbed the number of international tourist arrivals (WTO, 2021). The COVID-19 global pandemic has also prompted risk perceptions among travellers, shifting their focus to untact tourism (Bae & Chang, 2021) where digital technologies replace one's physical interactions with a destination (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021).

Technological readiness is undoubtedly one of the key drivers of destination competitiveness (WEF, 2017-2018) as ICT gains traction in the knowledge economy. Technology adoption by both tourists and destinations has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Sigala, 2020). However, little is known about the influence of digital media on emerging destination competitiveness. ICT adoption is among the factors cited by WEF (2019) as hindrances to destination competitiveness, thus providing a firm grounding for this study. Arguably, for a destination to be competitive, it has to invest in transforming its image through ICTs (Han, Park, Chung & Lee, 2016; Cimbajević, Stankov & Pavluković, 2019).

Emerging destinations in Africa are still at infancy in their adoption of ICTs for destination marketing (Chirisa *et al.*, 2020). Subsequently, destination image may be compromised given that tourists are actively interacting with services via digital media platforms (see Dubois *et al.*, 2020). With ICT gradually gaining dominance through the internet, World Wide Web and digital technologies, marketing has been transformed (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Therefore, taking a demand-oriented perspective presents an opportunity for destination marketers to understand ICT-related factors influencing destination competitiveness. Adoption of ICT is inevitable as customers are becoming increasingly mobile and social (see Adeola & Evans, 2019a; WEF, 2020), prompting the need to invest in ICTs that enable customers to interact

with the service in real-time. Examples of such ICTs include augmented and virtual reality, social media, official tourism websites and context-aware recommender media.

Arguably, digital media marketing has emerged as a force to be reckoned with in destination marketing with impressive effects on selling and promotion of tourism products (Griffin, Giberson, Lee, Guttentag, Kandaurova, Sergueeva & Dimanche, 2017; Marasco, Buonincontri, van Niekerk, Orłowski & Okumus, 2018; Li & Chen, 2019; Dubois *et al.*, 2020), resulting in competitiveness (e.g., Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). Eventually, if tourism organisations adopt ICTs for destination marketing, more specifically digital media, competitiveness is likely to be enhanced through destination image (see Dorcic & Komsic, 2017; Cillo, Rialti, Del Giudice & Usai, 2021).

African governments ought to seriously embrace virtual technologies to build resilient tourism destinations (see Chirisa *et al.*, 2020) because the nexus between resilience and tourism destinations is not exclusively limited to pandemics only but unforeseen future “tourist shocks” (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021). Notably, smart tourism technologies have shown to be effective in building resilience for African destinations and safe environments for travellers during a crisis (Woyo & Ukpabi, 2022). Thus, the role of digital media in bringing resilience (see Verkerk, 2022) and competitiveness (see Woyo & Ukpabi, 2022) to the tourism sector cannot be overemphasised.

There seems to be fragmentation in literature concerning the desired format of digital media that tourists prefer to use during their travels. Examples include research on the singular use of either social media (Hays *et al.*, 2013), virtual reality (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019), augmented reality (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019), official tourism websites (Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Anaya-Sánchez & Buhalis, 2018) or context-aware recommender media (Choi, Ryu & Kim, 2021) in destination image formation. However, research on the above digital media is carried out in isolation and not within the same studies for comparisons to be made.

Furthermore, due to deficiencies in conceptual and empirical developments (see Zhang, Cheung & Law, 2018; Cronjé & Du Plessis, 2020), there is lack of sufficient data on the use of digital media in emerging destinations from a demand perspective. Rather, studies on digital media marketing, though negligible, are what characterise literature on ICT adoption for destination image (e.g., Lepp, Gibson & Lane, 2011; Ketter & Avraham, 2021) and competitiveness (e.g., Minde & Jani, 2016) in Africa’s emerging destinations.

The absence of such empirical data on digital marketing and destination competitiveness thus provides the basis on which this study is premised. In light of this, digital media are a critical component of this study as they make use of emerging ICTs to interact and augment the user's environment (see Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). Such ICTs and demand conditions ultimately influence competitiveness of tourism destinations (see WEF, 2017-2018; Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

Notwithstanding the increase in global tourist arrivals, SSA's competitiveness remains a cause for concern (WTO, 2013-2022; WEF, 2011-2022). In light of this, the general problem is that emerging regional tourism destinations in Africa remain uncompetitive, relative to the global benchmark (WEF, 2011-2022). It is already widely recognised that developing nations are still lagging in ICT adoption, despite its relevance and potential contribution in the competitiveness of a destination (Chirisa *et al.*, 2020).

The question on whether antecedents to ICT adoption influence leisure tourists' use of digital media visiting emerging destinations, needs to be addressed. Ultimately, this will act as a cursor on whether, going forward, digital media is indeed important in enhancing competitiveness of emerging destinations.

It is crucial to obtain insights into leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions for a better understanding of an emerging destination's image and behavioural intentions to revisit amidst a crisis. Additionally, an understanding of digital media usage during travel will aid in determining the different forms of digital media that influence competitiveness of emerging destinations in SSA. What appears to be scant in literature is an assessment of different forms of digital media used by tourists that could hold competitive advantages for an emerging destination's competitiveness. It is unknown whether the use of digital media during travels can lead to competitiveness by creating a resilient and safe destination for leisure tourists. The specific problem is that the SSA tourism sector is trailing behind in the adoption of ICT for destination competitiveness. As a result, South Africa and Zimbabwe, among other SSA emerging destinations, remain uncompetitive relative to the SSA benchmark (WEF, 2011-2022).

1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. The study was structured around two phases, therefore, the two demand conditions were investigated as follows: Phase 1: travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis; and Phase 2: digital media usage (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences). Firstly, the study seeks to determine

whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions influence emerging destinations' image and behavioural intentions to revisit amidst a crisis, more specifically COVID-19. Secondly, the study seeks to establish the way in which leisure tourists' technology readiness and acceptance link with the type of digital media during travel.

Understanding this relationship along with digital media preferences can lead to effective application of digital media marketing which, in turn, will lead to a competitive destination. The case studies of South Africa and Zimbabwe are used as two competing tourism destinations within SSA.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study consists of two phases, each with its own main and sub-objectives, guiding the study to achieve overall aim.

Objective 1

To determine whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions influence the relationship between destination image perceptions and behavioural intentions to revisit emerging destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sub-objectives

- To determine the relationship between leisure tourists' destination image and their behavioural intentions to travel to these destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To determine whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to travel to these destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective 2

To determine the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media by leisure tourists during their travels.

Sub-objectives

- To measure the technology readiness and technology acceptance of these leisure tourists.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital media.

- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' technology readiness and the type of digital media used during travel.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' technology acceptance and the type of digital media used during travel.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' digital media preferences and the type of digital media used during travel.
- To determine whether there is relationship between the type of digital media used during travel and leisure tourist's destination image perceptions.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourist's destination image perceptions and their behavioural intentions to revisit.

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research approach and the empirical investigation process followed to address the problem under review in a coherent manner. The section begins with a description of the research paradigm, followed by a description of the quantitative research design.

1.5.1 Research paradigm and design

This study was guided by a post-positivist philosophy. Post-positivism research, allows the testing of theories in order to have a better comprehension of the world around us (Creswell, 2003). As a result, this paradigm helps to bring out the explanatory power of the research, which is difficult to achieve through purely quantitative means (Creswell, 2003). Inquiry therefore involves measurement and analysis of relationships (hypotheses testing) where the mode of investigation is deductive, based on testing prior theories (Al-Masroori, 2006). Post-positivists believe knowledge is external, however it is imperfect and this calls for both quantitative and qualitative measures in order to reveal the absolute truth (Al-Masroori, 2006). Applying a post-positivism approach in the current study will enable the prediction of outcomes related to the proposed constructs in this study. For that reason, relationships stated in hypotheses statements are deduced from theory (Malhotra & Birks, 2007) and illustrated in the form of a conceptual model developed for this study.

The Technology Readiness and Acceptance Model (TRAM) (an amalgam of the Technology Readiness Index (TRI), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)) has been empirically tested in various tourism studies and other scientific fields (e.g., Davis, 1989; Walczuch, Lemmink & Streukens, 2007; Lin, Shih & Sher, 2007; Victorino, Karniouchina & Verma, 2009; Oh, Kim & Lee, 2013; Lee, Castellanos & Choi, 2012; Wang, So & Sparks, 2017). Destination

competitiveness measures have also been conceptually (e.g., Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Fernando & Long 2012) and empirically investigated (e.g., Ritchie & Crouch, 2010; Wang, Hsu & Swanson, 2012; Dorcic & Komsic, 2017). Informed by theory, this research was deductive in nature, accordingly, employing a confirmatory research design through quantitative methodology.

Cross-sectional research

A cross-sectional survey was employed, to confirm theory through hypothesis testing over a specified period of time. Cross-sectional studies are time bound, therefore, cannot be generalised over time (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Deductive research approach

Since the study is quantitative, the deductive method was applied to measure and analyse relationships through hypotheses testing (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The deductive approach guided by theory, informed hypotheses development, and testing of the TRAM, destination competitiveness and travel risk perceptions theories.

Confirmatory research

Confirmatory research entails validating theoretical assumptions through hypothesis testing (Benitez, Henseler, Castillo & Schuberth, 2020), confirming relationships (based on existing theory) between various variables through multiple regression and hierarchical regression analyses. In Phase 1, hypotheses tests were conducted by means of moderated regression analysis, while in Phase 2, multiple regression analyses were first conducted, followed by a series of hierarchical regressions (refer to Section 1.5.3 for a summary of this process).

Quantitative research

Quantitative research entails explaining and making predictions that allow generalisability of findings, which is usually done by confirming or modifying theory once relationships among tested variables are verified (Leedy, Ormrod & Johnson, 2021). The current study conducted a survey utilising a structured online questionnaire to fulfil the requirements of a quantitative study. The survey enabled the quantitative description of the relationship between travel risk perceptions, destination image, and behavioural intentions among leisure tourists visiting emerging destinations during a pandemic. Due to the dynamic nature of leisure tourists' travel behaviour as well as the evolving nature of digital media used in the marketing of tourism products and services (Dubois *et al.*, 2020), the survey also enabled the quantitative description of the relationships between TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

Adopting a mainly quantitative research was beneficial in this study because it is guided by facts collected objectively (Gray, 2013), thereby giving the researcher more control. The antagonists of objectivity however believe that the world is subjective and different paradigms are isomorphic to several realities in the society (Sefotho, 2015). To counter this assertion, qualitative measures were included in the survey instrument as a way of confirming the truth on traveller risk perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the aim of the study was to confirm theorised relationships between variables, thus, quantitative data facilitated hypothesis testing.

1.5.2 Sampling and data collection

A quantitative survey was employed as a means to collect data from the largest sample possible (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). The research was cross-sectional, and structured questionnaires were used to expedite the data collection process (Zikmund, 2003; Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Robson, 2011). Data was collected from international leisure tourists (18 years and above) that have travelled to South Africa and Zimbabwe. A sample size of 251 was achieved, of which 124 had visited South Africa and 184 Zimbabwe, where 58 respondents had visited both countries. The above sample size was sufficient to undertake the desired advanced statistical analysis. The current study took note of the large sample size required for inferential statistics for surveys, which according to Malhotra and Dash (2011) is in the range of 200-500. In order to reach this sample size, the survey instrument was issued to respondents over a 180-day period (i.e., six months). The Qualtrics software was used to build, distribute and analyse the survey. The link generated on Qualtrics was sent to ZIMPARKS and South African Tourism (SAT) for onward distribution to tourists in their databases on a convenience sampling, available cases basis.

The researcher resorted to sending the links (i.e., South Africa and Zimbabwe) separately to the LinkedIn platform on the 18th of April 2021 in an effort to generate more responses, after encountering a slow and low response rate which reflected on the Qualtrics platform. Convenience sampling in the form of a snowball sampling technique was also used in the selection of sample elements from the tourist population group. This was to increase the response rate and allow for a sufficient sample size. Snowball sampling was followed by sharing the survey links with colleagues in the Tourism and Hospitality Department at the Midlands State University's Faculty of Business Sciences, as well as colleagues in the tourism and hospitality sectors for distribution within their circles.

1.5.3 Data analysis

Data was cleaned using Microsoft Excel prior to being exported to SPSS 28 because it was anticipated that there would be a likelihood of missing data given the length of the survey instrument. During analysis, such missing data was identified in SPSS after running a descriptive analysis (see Pallant, 2013). In both phases of the study, descriptive analysis was done to describe demographic data (i.e., gender, level of education, annual household income, travel history and patterns).

Phase 1

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) determined dimensionality and validity of the destination image, travel risk perceptions and behavioural intentions scales. Principle component axis and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation were used to extract underlying factors with high scores. Simple linear regression was used to test the relationships between brand image and intention (sub-objective 1). Thereafter, moderated multiple regression was used to determine whether the relationship between the independent variable (destination image) and dependent variable (behavioural intentions to revisit) is influenced by the moderator (travel risk perceptions) (sub-objective 2). Thematic maps were produced using Atlas.ti 8 software to determine the emerging themes (constructs) on traveller risk perceptions of destination image amidst COVID-19, being comparable to the method used by Sharma Kraus, Srivastava, Chopra and Kallmuenzer (2022), who created thematic maps to develop constructs under the "COVID-19 and Innovation" theme.

Phase 2

Factor dimensionality and reliability was done through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to confirm the factors of the TRI. CFA was also conducted to confirm the factors of the TAM. Both models, according to literature, already have established scales (see Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Lin *et al.*, 2007; Kim, Park & Morrison, 2008). EFA was performed for digital media usage since the scale items were drawn from general literature. During the EFA, digital media usage was split into utilitarian and hedonic use. EFA for destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit was already carried out in Phase 1 of the study, therefore, the analysis was not repeated here. No EFA was performed for the digital media preferences scale as each preference scale item was treated as a separate variable. Path analysis was initially conducted to test the full conceptual/theoretical model. However, the results could not be accepted due to poor model fit.

Following the path analysis, two different techniques were used to test the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The theoretical model had three

dependent variables, namely, digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. First, multiple regression was done to test the influence of the individual factors of TRI (Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism), TAM (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use) and the respective digital media preferences on the two types of digital media usage (hedonic and utilitarian). Digital media usage was the dependent variable, followed by a series of hierarchical regressions to determine whether digital media usage predicts destination image when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and digital media preferences. Destination image was the dependent variable.

Furthermore, a series of hierarchical regressions were done to determine whether digital media usage predicts behavioural intentions to revisit when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and digital media preferences, with behavioural intentions to revisit as the dependent variable. Lastly, a final hierarchical regression was performed to determine whether destination image predicts behavioural intentions to revisit when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, digital media preferences and digital media usage. Behavioural intentions to revisit, was thus the dependent variable.

1.6 ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Despite the increase in the stream of literature on destination competitiveness, its measurement continues to be problematic (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021). This is especially true, given the uncertainties in the operating environment and travel risk perceptions arising as a result of the insurgence of natural disasters such as COVID-19 (see Woyo & Slabbert, 2021; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; WTO, 2022). In this regard, it makes the destination competitiveness concept equivocal due to its unstandardised measurement (see Dodds & Holmes, 2020). Based on the above, investigating the demand side of competitiveness was considered a significant contribution of this study, and was carried out by examining the role of leisure tourists' risk perceptions and the use of different forms of digital media on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. This contributes to the body of knowledge by toting to the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of destination competitiveness. The study's academic contribution is two-fold.

Firstly, Phase 1 of the study examined leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions of the two competing emerging destinations in SSA. The aforementioned was deemed necessary to help ascertain if leisure tourists were still willing to travel to emerging destinations in SSA, given the known impact of COVID-19 on destination image and future behavioural intentions. Past

studies focused on travel risk perceptions of those travelling to developed destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Bae & Chang, 2021; Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2021; Kim, Park, Kim, Lee & Sigala, 2022; Miao, Im, Fu, Kim & Zhang 2021; Shahabi Sorman Abadi, Ghaderi, Hall, Soltaninasab & Hossein Qezelbash, 2021). However, little is known about travel risk perceptions of those travelling to SSA's emerging destinations during the same crisis (see Mandina & Du Preez, 2022), making this is a key contribution of the current study. Travel risk perceptions vary according to destination (see de Rooij, van Liempt & van Bendegom, 2022) and nature of risk (e.g., Neuburger & Egger, 2021), and as such is something this study will fulfil by studying two competing emerging SSA destinations.

Phase 2 sought to understand leisure tourists' 'background' approach to using digital media in order to determine the types of digital media they used during travel. This was done by determining the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel. The relationship between the technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences versus the digital media used during travel was, thus, examined to ascertain if this could result in a resilient and competitive emerging destination brand post-COVID-19. The integrative examination of the above relationships is a major contribution to the body of knowledge. At most, past studies examine the relationship between technology readiness and acceptance (e.g., Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Iskender, Sirakaya-Turk, Cardenas & Harrill, 2022), technology acceptance and usage (e.g., Hew, Leong, Tan, Lee & Ooi, 2018; Jarrar, Awobamise & Sellos, 2020), digital media usage and destination image (e.g., Dubois *et al.*, 2020), technology acceptance and behavioural intentions (e.g., Govindan, Isa & Parkash, 2020; Lee, Xu & Porterfield, 2022).

Conceptually, the study's contribution entails the splitting of the digital media usage construct into "Hedonic usage" and "Utilitarian usage", something not addressed in current literature. A major contribution is the inclusion of digital media preferences and scale development of the same. The digital media preferences scale developed in this study enabled the determination of whether leisure tourists preferred to use digital media based on its hedonic or utilitarian benefits at different stages of travel. This was key in determining the preferences and type of digital media (hedonic/utilitarian) that would portray positive perceptions of a destination's cognitive or affective image and resultant behavioural intentions to revisit. The aforementioned was critical in defining factors that shape a destination's competitiveness and as such, is a major contribution to the body of knowledge, as these relationships, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, have not yet been tested empirically.

Digital media are increasingly becoming popular among travellers (Ho, Amin, Ryu & Ali, 2021). It is well-known that they are a less risky travel option given the implications of COVID-19 on one's health (Schiopu, Hornoiu, Padurean & Nica, 2021). Notably, this study provides a theoretical foundation of the relationship between digital media preferences on the type of digital media (hedonic/utilitarian) used for travel purposes. Literature is scant in this regard. Scholars advocate for digital technologies for destination marketing (Buhalis, 2000; Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Dubois *et al.*, 2020), although empirical evidence is lacking on whether adopting digital media marketing strategies results in destination competitiveness. Empirical studies have focused on e-tourism (Moreno, Hörhager, Schuster & Werthner, 2015; Ryu, Choi & Cho, 2018; Hori, Yoshida, Suzuki, Yiwen & Kurata, 2022), while some studies were premised on factors affecting digital marketing adoption for destination marketing (e.g., Hays *et al.*, 2013; Kiráľová, & Pavlíčka, 2015; El-Gohary & El-Gohary, 2016). However, even though this phenomenon of digital marketing (through digital media), has great potential, it remains unexplored.

For emerging destinations, investment in digital marketing is a somewhat slow-moving owing to the inadequacy of ICT infrastructure (see Ng & Tan, 2018; Goncalves, Oliveira & Cruz-Jesus, 2018; Chirisa *et al.*, 2020). Although scholars examine its relationship with general tourism performance and tourist experiences (see Lagiewski & Kesgin, 2017; Buhalis, 2020), it is worth noting that digital marketing has generally been gaining traction in the tourism sector globally. Studies, however scant, have examined the potential influence of e-marketing on destination competitiveness (Soteriades, 2012; Dorcic & Komsic, 2017). However, it is not unexpected, that such studies were conducted in developed nations that are more technologically advanced than developing nations.

This study, based on developing nations that are still transitioning into the digital era (El-Gohary & El-Gohary, 2016; Kotoua & Ilkan, 2017a; Tsokota, Von Solms & Van Greunen, 2017; Chipeta & Ngoyi, 2018), logically presents an integrative discussion on which technology readiness and technology acceptance (TRAM) factors have the greatest amount of influence on leisure tourists' digital media usage between augmented and virtual reality, social media, official tourism websites, and context-aware recommender media. Thus, the resilient capabilities of digital media usage in enhancing emerging destination competitiveness post-COVID-19 are worth examining in this study.

Past research shows that consumer use of digital media results in destination image formation (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Költringer & Dickinger, 2015; Caridà *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, studies have investigated destination image as an independent variable influencing loyalty

(Campón-Cerro, Hernández-Mogollón & Alves, 2017; Lee & Xue, 2020) or revisit intention (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Chen & Phou, 2013; Dubois *et al.*, 2020). To counter these deficiencies in research, this study incorporated demand conditions (travel risk perceptions, digital media usage), versus destination image and future behavioural intentions to revisit. This was done to establish whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions and digital media preferences are viable elements of destination marketing that could lead to emerging destination competitiveness. Such integration is yet to be explored in tourism and destination competitiveness studies, thus, becoming a significant theoretical contribution of this study.

To address the above, a conceptual model was developed in two phases, where Phase 1 examined the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. Further, Phase 1 illustrates the influence of leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit brands South Africa and Zimbabwe. The conceptual framework in Phase 2 presented the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, preferences) and outcomes (destination image behavioural intentions to revisit) of utilising different digital media during travel. Phase 2 also illustrated the relationship between digital media preferences and the type of digital media (hedonic/utilitarian) used while travelling, as well the relationship between varying destination images and future behavioural intentions to revisit the two emerging destinations.

The anticipated end result was to bring out a coherent picture of leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions and digital media usage as elements of competitiveness for emerging destinations. Three different theories were integrated, namely, TRAM, destination competitiveness and risk perceptions theories to reflect a demand perspective of destination competitiveness. This combination of theories provides a novel exploration of ICT adoption, marketing strategy, and destination competitiveness in the context of competing emerging destinations.

1.7 INDUSTRY RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

In as much as the current study contributes theoretically to the body of knowledge in destination marketing, it also has practical implications for policy makers and DMOs. The adoption of ICT is essential for destination competitiveness (WEF, 2018). It is argued that destination managers do not necessarily have to be experts in ICT to adopt it (Boes, Buhalis & Inversini, 2016). Destination managers need to appreciate how different digital media are interlinked with destination competitiveness (Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). Ideally, this study will facilitate appropriate segmenting, targeting, and positioning strategies according to tourists' preferences as determined by findings from this study. The findings will expedite the building

of an overall destination image by policy makers and DMOs, as prescribed by Kuhzady, Çakici, Olya, Mohajer and Han (2020). This will spur the development of the right 'mix' of digital media marketing strategies necessary to build the image of a destination (see Dubois *et al.*, 2020).

In the event of a crisis, digital media marketing can be a useful tool to DMOs for destination image restoration (see Ketter, 2016; Yang, Isa & Ramayah, 2022) as well as a less risky travel alternative (Schiopu *et al.*, 2021) and greater resilience in the future (Chirisa *et al.*, 2020). DMOs are expected to be vigilant by adapting to unanticipated situational 'shocks' and crises. Digital media are an example of ways policy makers and DMOs can keep the tourism business going by managing risk during a crisis.

It is, therefore, imperative to equip policy makers and DMOs with indispensable knowledge for smarter strategic decision-making concerning the use and implementation of tourism ICT for resilience post-COVID-19. In this regard, ICT investment and infrastructure are not a preserve of technology-driven companies whose domain is ICT but should also be extended to those more experienced in the tourism sector who may not be ICT experts. Moreover, tourism employees will be empowered with the requisite knowledge of ICT-based infrastructure ideal for destination marketing through various digital media. In turn, this improves the quality of traveller defined information (Lamsfus, Wang, Alzua-Sorzabal & Xiang, 2015) most likely to augment the image of an emerging destination.

Coupled with the increasing internet and mobile penetration rates from a literate population (WEF, 2020), policy makers and DMOs in emerging tourism destinations can tap into this benefit. This study is fundamental to tourism service providers as they better understand leisure tourists' needs and, in turn, personalise their offering to suit an individual's context. In addition, this will enhance leisure tourists' access to information and quality experiences. Furthermore, for tourism managers to develop solutions that will drive digital media usage, there's a need for satisfactory consolidative knowledge on what influences the interface between technology readiness and acceptance of digital media when visiting an emerging destination.

Knowledge is scant concerning the influence of different types of digital media on the competitiveness of an emerging destination. This study, therefore, facilitates the identification of hedonic/utilitarian affordances of different types of digital media by policy makers and DMOs when formulating digital media marketing strategies (see Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús, 2022). This will aid them in identifying the 'right' combination of digital media appropriate for a

destination in any given context. This is contrary to evidence shown in past studies where singular use of digital media marketing for destination competitiveness post-COVID-19 was applied (e.g., Chirisa *et al.*, 2020; Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022).

Notably, this study will help policy makers and DMOs understand digital media usage for branding and risk perception management, and ultimately, competitiveness for emerging destinations.

1.8 DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The scope and assumptions underpinning this study are outlined below.

1.8.1 Delimitations

- This study is limited to leisure tourists that have been to Zimbabwe and/or South Africa. The choice of two destinations is, technically speaking, that they are both emerging destinations based in SSA. They typically share the same target population constituting international leisure tourists from source markets targeted by both destinations.
- The post-positivist paradigm was applied to this study allowing the testing of TRAM and destination competitiveness theories adopted in this study, as well as enquiry on the external reality of travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis. The scope of the study was confined to a single time frame, specifically the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented a unique set of circumstances.
- The period covered is during COVID-19, and therefore, travel risk perceptions, destination image, the utilisation and preferences of digital media during travel are key considerations for emerging destination competitiveness post-COVID-19.

1.8.2 Assumptions

- It is assumed that the post-positivist paradigm adopted in this study helped to solve the research problem by addressing the set objectives.
- It is assumed that by comparing destinations at different levels of economic development, similar patterns among leisure tourists' digital media preferences as well types of destination images formed during travel were identified.
- It is assumed that leisure tourists who participated in the study accurately recalled their digital media usage during past travel.
- It is assumed that respondents answered the questionnaire honestly.

1.9 STRUCTURE FOR THE THESIS CHAPTERS

This section details the outline of the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 2: DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS, BRANDING AND RISK PERCEPTIONS

Literature on destination competitiveness models is reviewed in this chapter, as well as literature on the current trends in international, emerging destinations and SSA tourism to give a firm foundation of the background to the study. This is followed by a review of literature on destination image, which is a key indicator of destination competitiveness. Given the impact of COVID-19 on destination competitiveness, travel risk perceptions cannot be overlooked. Therefore, travel risk theory is put into perspective as well as travel risk perceptions tourists encounter during travel. This is followed by a review of literature on the determinants of risk perceptions as well as destination image amidst a crisis. Lastly, contextual information is given about destination South Africa and Zimbabwe as well as how the two brands are performing amidst COVID-19.

CHAPTER 3: ICT READINESS AND DIGITAL MEDIA MARKETING

This chapter reviews literature on ICTs, destinations and their competitiveness. It reveals the extent of ICT adoption in emerging destinations as well as ICT readiness and destination images of those destinations. Specifically, South Africa and Zimbabwe's ICT readiness is analysed. Furthermore, the chapter reviews literature on digital marketing in tourism and that of digital marketing and destination competitiveness. Lastly, a theoretical context on technology adoption is given in order to give context to the tourists' technology readiness to adopt different types of digital media during travel.

CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The chapter presents a two-phased conceptual framework proposed for this study. Phase 1 examined leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions of the two destinations, while Phase 2 of study sought to understand leisure tourists' 'background' approach to using digital media to determine the types of digital media they used during travel. The model development was guided by the TRAM, destination competitiveness and travel risk perceptions theories. The destination competitiveness theory revealed the moderating effects of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. The risk perceptions theory explicated the different ways that travellers assign meaning and interpret destination images during travels. TRAM facilitated the identification of digital media usage traits and their relationship with digital media usage. The destination competitiveness theory revealed the relationship between technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, destination image and behavioural

intentions to revisit. The chapter reviews empirical literature guided by the theoretical foundations and objectives of the study, thus guiding the formulation of hypotheses.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter gives an account of the guiding philosophy and explains the survey-based quantitative research design, which is cross-sectional in nature. Target population, sample size and data collection methods and measurement instrument are explained in this chapter. The rigour of the study is explained and justified as well as the data analysis tools and techniques used. The ethical principles governing research are also explained in terms of how they were applied to this study.

CHAPTER 6: EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In Phase 1, the nature of this study requires an understanding of leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions and their implications on destination image and future behavioural intentions. In Phase 2, the study examines antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel. Data analysis, presentation and interpretation is guided by the above. Both of these components are presented in respective sections of this chapter.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

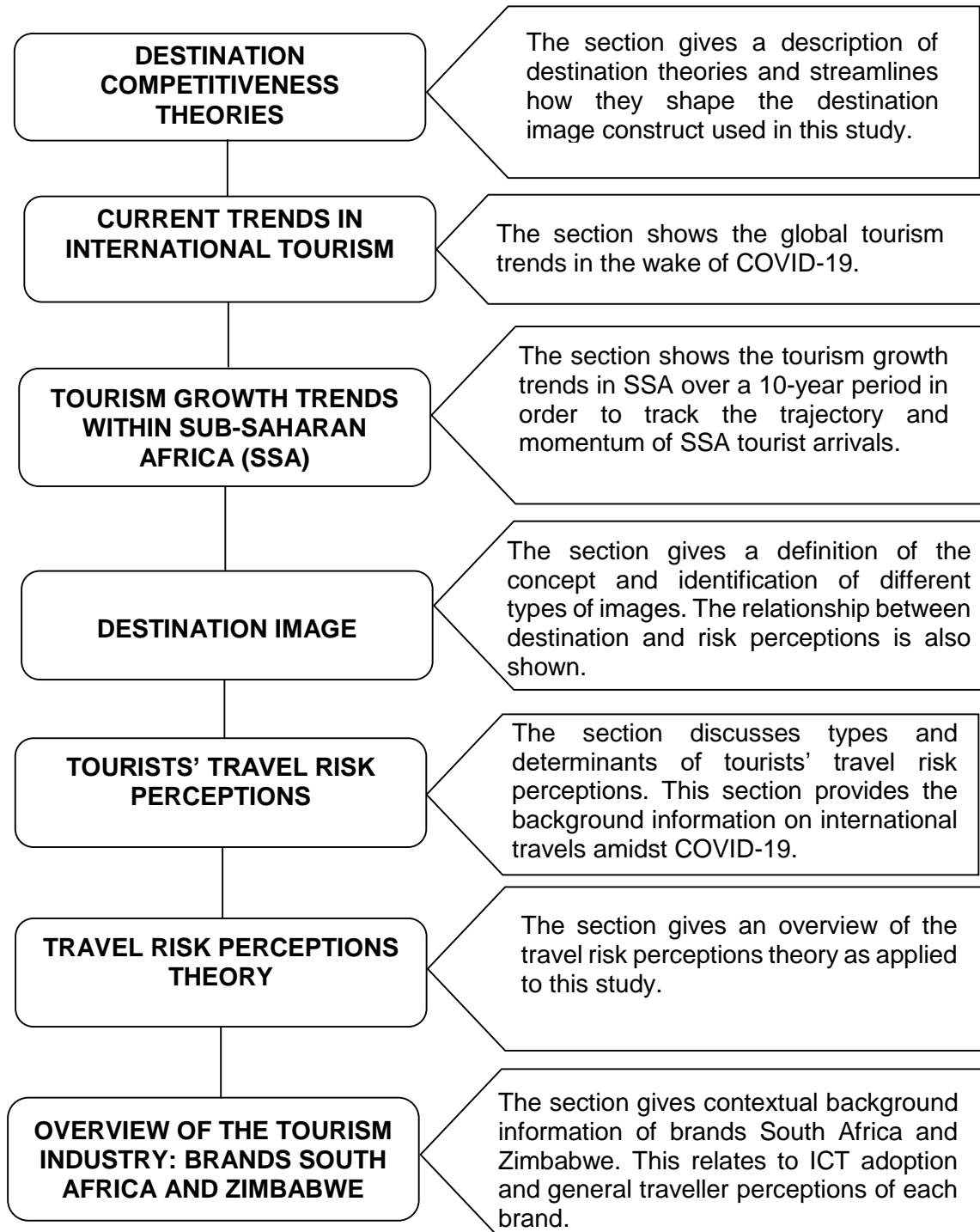
The chapter discusses the study's findings, which is done in relation to the existing literature. Anchored on the study objectives and the proposed hypothesis, the chapter discusses results on travellers' risk perceptions and intentions to revisit emerging destinations, and those of the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel. Again, both of these components are presented in respective sections of this chapter.

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter concludes the study by providing an overview of the entire research. The purpose is to consolidate theoretical and empirical findings directed by the main research objectives. The study's objectives are revisited to recollect and reflect on the purpose of this study. Theoretical and practical results are summarised to give a coherent picture of the study's purpose. Thereafter, the theoretical and practical contribution of the study is given, followed by limitations, conclusion and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS, BRANDING AND RISK PERCEPTIONS



2.1 INTRODUCTION

Destination competitiveness is complex in nature and its measurement equivocal. A significant component of destination competitiveness that needs consideration is its ability to establish a positive brand image and encourage revisit intentions. This chapter provides a theoretical foundation of destination competitiveness, destination image and risk perception theory in the context of emerging SSA destinations, more specifically South Africa and Zimbabwe. The chapter gives an overview of current trends in international tourism arrivals and competitiveness to shed light on the level of competitiveness and ranking of the two case study destinations according to WTTC and WEF measurements. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on destinations' competitiveness across the globe, and resultantly require researchers to revisit existing knowledge. One such aspect is the influence of travellers' risk perceptions on decision-making. Therefore, brand image and travel risk theories are put into perspective. Lastly, contextual information is given about destinations South Africa and Zimbabwe, and how the two brands performed amidst COVID-19.

2.2 DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS THEORIES

The field of destination competitiveness is wide in scope and presents a complex task to scholars and practitioners as they try to develop a composite measurement (Ritchie & Crouch 2003; WEF 2007). Destination competitiveness theories are summarised in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Summary of competitiveness theories

Name of Theory and Authors	Main arguments/key relationships	Main concepts/variables used in the Theory	Past Studies	Findings	Observations
Porterian Theories of Competitiveness					
Competitive advantage of Nations (Porter, 1990).	Competitiveness is dependent on long run productivity at the national/ macro level.	Thrust is on 4 main factors: factors endowments, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and the firm's strategy, structure and rivalry.	Smit (2010). Öz (2002). Esen and Uyar (2012).	-Suggests that the framework must be refocused in the context of the firm in order to add more value to its application. -The framework is applicable to a developing country setting. However, domestic rivalry and government role contradict Porter's hypothesis. -Model can be adapted in the tourism sector but is not sufficient enough.	-The model acts as a foundation or precursor to destination competitiveness. Therefore, it may help inform study through its four main constructs that help attain competitive advantage through innovation and re-investment at macro level.
Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theories					
Destination Competitiveness Indicators (DCI) (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).	-Model takes a supply-side perspective of macro and micro factors. -Model can measure competitiveness of any given destination. -Integrated Porter's (1990) diamond and Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) model.	6 main indicators were identified, each with sub-indicators. -Endowed resources, Created Resources, Supporting Factors and Resources, Destination Management, Situational Conditions, Demand Conditions.	-No empirical studies to date, though scholars acknowledge the model's contribution in the destination management literature. -No studies seem to have solely measured destination competitiveness focusing on	N/A	-Clearly outlines sub-indicators of destination competitiveness which show the outcome of destination competitiveness. -Takes into account destination image as a component of destination marketing. -Some of the dimensions can be adapted for developing countries, taking into consideration the uniqueness of each destination. -Lacks detail on specific factors affecting countries due to unavailability of data. -Overlooks the element of bias as information collected is subjective.

			all of the model's dimensions. Rather, studies use a priori data.		
Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI) (WEF, 2007).	Premised on macro indicators of competitiveness.	-Driven by 14 pillars and 90 indicators of destination competitiveness. -Macro perspective.	Lall (2001). Wang <i>et al.</i> (2012); Fernando and Long (2012).	-Methodology is flawed and not suitable for developing countries. -Destinations have unique attributes which most likely make TTCI indicators not to have a bearing on individuals' visit intention or experience outcomes.	-Focus is on composite factors of destination competitiveness being oblivious to the possibility of certain destination specific micro factors to influence competitiveness. -Technological readiness is one of the guiding determinants of destination competitiveness in this study, therefore, is key.
The Calgary Model (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999).	Takes a macro and micro approach to destination competitiveness.	-Destination competitiveness is dependent on comparative advantage and competitive edge. - Macro and micro.	Dwyer and Kim (2003). Kovačević, Kovačević, Stankov, Dragičević and Miletić (2018).	-Developed a model taking into consideration the key components of the Calgary model. -Using the model's measures of competitiveness results showed that stakeholders felt South Banat was not a Competitive tourism destination regionally. -This was despite its relative advantages of destination management and in the destination's policy, planning and development determinants.	-Indicators are broad and are not destination specific. Besides they do not show specific outcomes of competitiveness.
Tourism Competitiveness Monitor (CM) (Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005).	Model based on World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) based on 200 countries. 8	-Confirmatory factor analysis was used. Countries were grouped into	(Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005)	-Generally, countries perform better in human resources and price competitiveness than in human tourism and technology indicators.	-CM relies on data published by other institutions (i.e., WTTC, World Bank, United Nations website as well as UNDP). -Authors acknowledge that data is difficult to access, therefore, the competitiveness

	<p>indices were identified as measures of competitiveness.</p>	<p>competitive clusters. Macro perspective. -Indicators are as follows: human tourism, price, infrastructure, environment, technology, human resources, openness, and social. --Dimensions were drawn from WTTC and World Bank annual databases.</p>			<p>monitor may not be a reliable measure of destination competitiveness.</p>
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Having analysed different theories on destination competitiveness, it can be concluded that there lacks a holistically fitting conceptual model for measuring destination competitiveness (see Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Dodds & Holmes 2020; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021). The aforementioned models in Table 2.1 have their shortcomings. It can be deduced from Table 2.1 that most of the factors proposed in the conceptual models cannot be generalised, given unavailability of specific indicators in some destinations. It would appear as though scholars are looking through the telescope rather than the magnifying glass, which may enable them to identify those seemingly minute factors which distinguish one destination from another. As evidenced in past studies, it is difficult to completely measure TDC if it takes one side that is supply, (e.g., Enright & Newton, 2004; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005; Michael *et al.*, 2019), or demand (e.g., Kozak & Rimmington, 1999; Cronjé & Du Plessis, 2020; Neto *et al.*, 2020). It is apparent that the most accepted model of destination competitiveness is that of Crouch and Ritchie (1999), since it integrates both macro and micro competitiveness factors (see Nadalipour *et al.*, 2019; Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020).

Although the model by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) is not holistic in nature (as it does not apply to all destinations, specifically developing nations), it nonetheless forms the foundation of this study. It can be concluded that the Crouch and Ritchie (1999) Calgary Model is by and large appropriate to most destination and tourism markets, as it captures all potentially significant attributes of destination competitiveness. While researchers claim that destination competitiveness rests on how its tourist attractions perform (Hu & Wall, 2005; Ayikoru, 2015; Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019), some seminal scholars advocate for an integrative model of factors influencing competitiveness together with specific destination competitiveness indicators (Gomezelj, & Mihalič, 2008; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Dwyer and Kim (2003) developed the DCI model. Dwyer and Kim (2003) claim that DCI can measure competitiveness of any given destination, making it universal. The model is an amalgam of Porter's (1990) diamond and Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) models.

Six main determinants of destination competitiveness were identified by Dwyer and Kim (2003), each with sub-indicators. The determinants have been identified as; "destination management, created resources, supporting factors and resources, endowed resources, situational conditions and demand conditions" (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:400-405). These determinants were adapted from seminal work in the field of competitiveness (e.g., Porter, 1980; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999).

Dwyer and Kim's (2003) model clearly indicates the valence of demand conditions as key distinguishing determinants of destination competitiveness. The model outlines that preferences and perceptions influence visitation. Dwyer and Kim (2003) add that focusing on supply only gives an insufficient reflection of destination competitiveness. Furthermore, Dwyer and Kim (2003) assert that enhancing competitiveness of a destination entails development of a strong destination image through marketing, supported by Ritchie and Crouch (2010) who qualify destination image as an amplifier of competitiveness. Destination image as applied in this study is a component of the model by Ritchie and Crouch (2010) and is fundamental in illuminating destination competitiveness.

Eventually, successful destination marketing is driven by destination image (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), which in turn amplifies and qualifies its competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). This study makes a covert assumption that there is a link between leisure tourists' digital media preferences and destination competitiveness (see Dorcic & Komsic, 2017). It is expected that use of digital media will result in a competitive and resilient destination (see Nyaboro *et al.*, 2021; Woyo & Ukpabi, 2022) and future behavioural intentions (Dubois *et al.*, 2020).

Tourism managers are faced with the task of enhancing destination competitiveness through ICT and integrative knowledge on leisure tourists' use of digital media when visiting emerging destinations. Regardless of the momentum gained by digital marketing in some industries (e.g., Vieira *et al.*, 2019; Mogaji, Soetan & Kieu, 2020), the influence of different types of digital media usage and preferences of the same on emerging destinations' competitiveness remains unexplored. Conclusively, this study takes a demand perspective on destination competitiveness guided by Dwyer and Kim (2003) and Ritchie and Crouch (2010).

2.3 CURRENT TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

The WTTC (2021) reports that in 2020, the GDP from international Travel and Tourism declined by 49.1% due to the decline in spending by international visitors owing to travel restrictions, however, the year 2021 witnessed a 21.7% increase in arrivals. This increase in tourism arrivals in 2021 is an indicator that there is hope beyond COVID-19 (WTTC, 2022). The tourism sector has proved to be resilient through a further 57% growth by mid-2022 (WTO, 2022). North Africa, Eastern Africa and lower middle-income economies, among others, have been vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19, considering that they are to some extent more dependent on the export of travel and tourism services (WEF, 2022). From this observation, it is worth mentioning that COVID-19 has brought about the new norm that has birthed reliance on digital platforms to access tourism services (WEF, 2022).

WEF (2017) points out that digitalisation is an enabler of travel and tourism business through the gathering of consumer perceptions and preferences. Furthermore, online platforms enable travel and tourism service providers to reach and connect with global customers, affirming the notion that ICT readiness results in an increase in international tourism receipts (WEF, 2017). COVID-19 resulted in an emergence of digital nomads, making ICT-ready economies better placed to serve this 'new tourist', thereby shifting demand from traditional to online tourism (WEF, 2020). Digital tools such as the digital COVID-19 certificate, health passes and portals have been rolled out to facilitate smooth international travel (WTO, 2022).

In addition, because of the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the proliferation of digital technologies in tourism, the WTTC resorted to safeguarding international travel by developing digital solutions in the form of health passes and portals (WTTC, 2022). WTTC (2022) projects Travel & Tourism GDP to grow at an average rate of 5.8% per annum between 2022 and 2032. However, the projected growth rate may be decelerated by emerging variants (WTTC, 2022). Nonetheless, to realise these projections, robust strategies and measures need to be put in place. COVID-19 emerged as a call to action for the tourism sector to be on guard against future uncertainties. Hence, this study seeks to establish whether the usage of digital media by tourists can contribute towards tourism growth through effective implementation of digital media marketing for destination competitiveness.

2.4 TOURISM GROWTH TRENDS WITHIN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The tourism sector represents one of the most advancing sectors in the 21st century globally (WTO, 2019). Annual growth in global tourist arrivals averaged 41% for the period between 2012 and 2019 (refer to Table 2.2). However, due to disruptions brought about by COVID-19, the arrivals plunged by an alarming 72% in 2020 as shown in Table 2.2. Despite this, resilience in tourism saw the sector experiencing an 80% increase in international arrivals for 2023 compared to those recorded during the same period in 2019 (WTO, 2023), meaning that there is still a deficit of 20% in international arrivals, if the global tourism sector is to realise its pre-COVID-19 arrivals (WTO, 2023).

In the first quarter of 2023, international arrivals by continent indicated that Africa recouped 88% of its international arrivals as prior to COVID-19, while America recovered 85% (WTO, 2023). Despite international arrivals increasing post-COVID-19 (WTTC, 2022; WTO, 2023), one cannot help but observe that growth in tourist arrivals for Zimbabwe between 2020 and 2022 was characterised by some form of tardiness and variability (refer to Table 2.2). Zimbabwe recorded a sharp decline of 261,415 international arrivals in 2021, followed by a nominal growth of 693,498 in 2022 (Zimbabwe Tourism Performance Highlights, 2022).

However, in 2022, South Africa recorded a remarkable 5.7 million international travellers compared to 2.3 million who arrived in 2021 (South African Tourism, 2023). Despite these trends, there are high prospects for the tourism sector to contribute immensely to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment creation of countries across the globe (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2013; WTTC, 2023). The WTTC (2023) forecasts a 5.8% annual growth in international arrivals over a ten-year period from 2023-2033. GDP is expected to grow at 2.7% over the same period. Thus, it is not surprising that the tourism sector has generated heightened interest among policy makers, destination managers, and academics worldwide to map the way forward as a means to revive the sector.

Despite the exponential growth in global tourist arrivals, competitiveness of some regional destinations such as South Africa and Zimbabwe has been relatively weak against the global benchmark (refer to Table 2.3). These two destinations are of particular interest in this study because they are both emerging SSA destinations competing for the same market. Zhou (2016) posits that South Africa and Zimbabwe are considered rivals given their aggregate tourist arrivals. Furthermore, the two destinations share a similar tourism product (UNESCO, 2023). Numerically, South Africa continues to remain in the lead against Zimbabwe with regards to number of international tourist arrivals and competitiveness.

Table 2.2 shows that the tourism sector is already on a rebound, as evidenced by the slow but positive increase in global tourist arrivals. The increase in international tourist arrivals thus creates an opportunity for Africa to take advantage of digital marketing strategies in the digital era (Mkwizu, 2019). It is important to assess whether leisure tourists' preferences and use of different types of digital media could enhance destination competitiveness and could be a panacea to emerging destinations' competitiveness by possibly triggering behavioural intentions to revisit. As shown in Table 2.3 the emerging destinations' competitiveness is relatively lower than the global benchmark.

Table 2.2 indicates international tourist arrivals to the two destinations have followed a different path from the regional and global patterns. Paradoxically, South Africa and Zimbabwe's arrivals were contracting when regional and global arrivals were increasing, while increasing when regional arrivals were contracting. The above trends suggest that there could be some country-specific factors affecting the growth of the tourism sector for the two SSA destinations, bringing forth the quest to understand whether travel risk perceptions and digital media preferences could form the basis for resilient destination marketing strategies that could hold competitive advantages for emerging destinations.

Table 2.2: Tourist arrivals 2013-2022 (millions)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Global Arrivals	1,087	1,137	1,189	1,235	1,332	1,407	1,465	407	456	963
Regional Arrivals	35.1	34.8	35.8	39.6	41.3	44.3	43.4	13.1	13.1	27.5
South Africa SA Arrivals	9.5	9.6	8.9	10.04	10.29	10.47	10.23	2.80	2.3	5.7
Zimbabwe ZW Arrivals	1.83	1.9	2.1	2.17	2.42	2.57	2.29	.639	.261	.693

Source: WTO highlights (2013-2022)

2.4.1 Emerging destinations' tourism competitiveness

Emerging destinations according to the World Bank are characterised by their strides in scaling tourism development (Christie *et al.*, 2014). The World Bank (in Christie *et al.*, 2014) identifies 10 emerging destinations in SSA; South Africa and Zimbabwe are included, though South Africa is said to be an emerging upper middle-income economy (World Bank, 2023c). United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) anticipates global tourist arrivals to increase by 66% in 2030 at an annual rate of 3.3% from 2010 (WTO, 2017). Furthermore, WTO (2017) projects an increase of arrivals by 4.4% in emerging destinations by 2030 being double the projected arrivals for advanced economies, forecasted at 2.2% a year. WEF composite indices and TTCI, provide a comparative competitiveness of the South African and Zimbabwean tourism sectors relative to that of the globe and SSA.

The WEF developed and categorised measures of competitiveness performance in travel and tourism sectors across the world, assessing country performance on various factors (WEF, 2019). Despite the apparent importance of the tourism sector to global economies, it appears that Zimbabwe's competitiveness is weak compared to that of South Africa (refer to Table 2.3). If UNWTO global projections are to be met, a radical approach needs to be taken to address destination competitiveness in SSA's emerging destinations. Additionally, WEF and TTCI position South Africa and Zimbabwe against several composite factors, without constricting destination-specific factors likely to influence competitiveness of each country. Likewise, it is maintained that competitiveness is destination specific (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim 2003; Dwyer, Mellor, Livaic, Edwards & Kim, 2004; Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005), thus WEF measures cannot be all-encompassing.

Holistically, the TTCI may not necessarily be used by destination managers to improve the competitiveness of their specific destinations. The TTCI model by virtue of its derivation from the GCI has, however, been shown to be an inadequate measure of competitiveness with serious theoretical and empirical deficiencies (Lall, 2001). Nonetheless, it is apparent that

some of the factors captured in the TTCl model (e.g., technological readiness) are useful in determining destination competitiveness. In the construction of Table 2.3, competitiveness scores of the top five countries (i.e., Japan, United States, Spain, France and Germany) in the world and the SSA region are used as benchmark scores (WEF, 2019). The higher the score the more competitive a country is (WEF, 2019). The competitiveness score gives a rough indication of the competitiveness of South Africa and Zimbabwe as competing destinations.

Table 2.3: Travel and tourism global competitiveness (2011-2021)

	2011	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TTDI*** 2021
World Benchmark (WBM)	5.47	5.44	5.20	5.62	5.75	6.27	5.38	5.16
Regional Benchmark (RBM)	3.962	4.11	3.85	4.26	3.94	4.54	3.12	3.25
South Africa (SA)	4.11	4.13	4.08	4.39	4.32	4.22	4.0	3.8
Zimbabwe (ZW)	3.31	3.33	3.09	3.45	3.32	3.92	3.2	—

TTDI: Travel & Tourism Development Index

Source: WEF (2011-2022)

Table 2.3 illustrates that from 2011 to 2019, the Regional Benchmark (RBM) travel and tourism sector's competitiveness score was lower than the World Benchmark (WBM). However, South Africa and Zimbabwe scored high in 2019 due to a moderate increase in adoption of ICTs among other pillars of competitiveness (WEF, 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Economic Forum could not publish their global competitiveness report due to disturbances in travel. In 2022 the Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) was introduced to replace WEF's TTCl global competitiveness report to capture sustainability and resilience in tourism growth, considering the impact of the pandemic (see WEF, 2022). South Africa was the only SSA country recorded in the publication, and it had an economic transformation readiness score of 50.4% (WEF, 2020). Notably, South Africa seems to be performing well against the SSA regional score shown in Table 2.3. No data was available for Zimbabwe. With this in mind, it is imperative to reposition the two SSA emerging destinations for tourism resilience and competitiveness to cater for changes in both the sector and its customers which seem to have changed permanently because of the COVID-19 pandemic (WEF, 2022). This means that destination marketers may need to invest in promotion and marketing campaigns (WEF, 2022) as well as ICT (WEF, 2019), reflecting the importance of building destination competitiveness through image by investing in ICT-enabled destination promotion (e.g., Griffin *et al.*, 2017; González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández & Pino-Mejías, 2020; Dubois *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, it is pronounced that ICT adoption in tourism marketing has great potential to influence competitiveness of destinations (Rainoldi, Driescher, Lisnevskaya, Zvereva, Stavinska, Relota & Egger, 2018; Cillo *et al.*, 2021; Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). In the same vein, it should be observed that ICT adoption and technology readiness are imperative for competitiveness as suggested by WEF (2020). A clarion call is recognised to determine whether leisure tourists' preferences and use of different forms of digital media, will enhance a destination's competitiveness through its image.

2.5 DESTINATION IMAGE

Initiated by Gunn (1972) and further developed into distinct factors, brand image theory aims to identify those attractors unique to specific destinations (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). Destination image is thus a marketing tool which aids travel decision making. According to the brand image theory, a destination's key attractions are what make the brand unique (see Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Ragb *et al.*, 2020; Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019). Destination image has been conceptualised in different ways. To encapsulate the variances in destination image, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) conceptualised destination image as attribute-based and holistic, comprising cognitive, affective, and overall image. Echtner and Ritchie (2003:43) define destination image as "not only the perceptions of individual destination attributes but also the holistic impression made by the destination".

Considering the above, destination image has been comprehensively defined as "a construct consisting of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time gathered from a variety of information sources and shaped through an individual's socio-demographic and psychological characteristics" (Iordanova, 2015:49). Cognitive image is emphasised as a dominant measure of destination image (Baloglu, Henthorne & Sahin, 2014; Marques *et al.*, 2021), with some seminal studies suggesting that affective image is reliant on cognition (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Nonetheless, travel behaviour is determined by affective influences of a destination (Gartner, 1994; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

¹ The term 'destination image' is used interchangeably with 'destination brand image'.

² The Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021 is the latest WEF report published in 2022 as a replacement of the TTCI global competitiveness report.

Similarly, conative destination image has its fair share of influencing travel behaviour (see Pike & Ryan, 2004; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). It is argued that destination image predominantly comes in the form of cognitive or affective evaluation (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Tapia, Mercade Mele & Almeida-García, 2019), which, when combined, form an overall image about destination (Tapia *et al.*, 2019). Cognitive evaluations are a culmination of one's beliefs and perceptions of a destination, while affective image is the individual's feelings about a destination (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Tapia *et al.*, 2019).

A considerable amount of research on destination image has been conducted over the years to empirically and conceptually find new and emerging dimensions of this concept (see Martín-Santana, Beerli-Palacio & Nazzareno, 2017; Kuhzady *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, emerging studies have resorted to meta-analyses to summarise the varying definitions of destination image and its measurement (e.g., Zhang, Fu, Cai & Lu, 2014; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Notably, a reasonable number of destination competitiveness studies have focused their attention on destination image (Miličević, Mihalič & Sever, 2017; Reisinger, Michael & Hayes, 2019; Luštický & Štumpf, 2021).

It is quite noticeable that cognitive and affective images have emerged as the most researched dimensions of destination image, giving birth to a new dimension of destination image referred to as the overall image (Kuhzady *et al.*, 2020). Overall image is an amalgam of both cognitive and affective images. Han, Hsu and Lee (2009:520) defines it as "the total perceptions of a product (or a firm) shaped by processing information from diverse sources". In this study attention is given to the overall image (cognitive and affective), which is an expected outcome of digital media use (see Marasco *et al.*, 2018; Dubois *et al.*, 2020).

Destination image is often embraced by competitive destinations to attract visitors and strengthen their tourism brand (see Reisinger *et al.*, 2019; Isaac, 2021). This is evident in some studies that tend to focus attention on destination image as an indicator of destination competitiveness (Nadalipour *et al.*, 2019; Reisinger *et al.*, 2019; Mior Shariffuddin *et al.*, 2023). Similarly, in the context of tourism destinations in Africa, studies have identified destination image as a critical element in destination competitiveness (Ayikoru, 2015; Tegegne, Moyle & Becken, 2018; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023). Furthermore, Nadalipour *et al.* (2019) assert that images perceived about a destination are the starting point of tourism competitiveness.

Thus, for Africa and the world at large, the establishment of a solid destination image is key in destination branding, and this results in a more realistic perception of destination

competitiveness (see Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019; Cronjéa & du Plessis, 2021). For example, studies on destination image show a significant decrease in the number of tourists in Africa after the Ebola outbreak (e.g., Cahyanto *et al.*, 2016; Mensah, Dube & Chapungu, 2023), Spanish Flu, SARS and H1N1 Swine Flu (Mensah *et al.*, 2023). Globally, public fear during the COVID-19 pandemic, and travel being a high-risk activity, have led to significant reduction in travel demand (Zheng *et al.*, 2021). Similarly in Africa, a number of reports have been made over concerns on the preparedness of the continent's health systems and other basic amenities in the wake of COVID-19 (see Balogun, Dada, Oladimeji, Gwacham-Anisiobi, Sekoni & Banke-Thomas, 2022), and this has also reduced demand for African tourism (Mensah *et al.*, 2023).

Compared to other pandemics, COVID-19 had a more daunting impact on Africa's image, as demand for tourism products and services took a downturn (Kimunio & Maingi, 2023). This was particularly due to the pre-conceived perception of Africa's destination image as a continent bedevilled by a myriad of health, security, safety and political upheavals (Muragu, Nyadera & Mbugua, 2023). Undeniably for the continent, destination branding can be a source of the tourism sector's recovery as well as its competitiveness (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024). Empirical evidence shows that African destinations such as Egypt and Morocco effectively promote the uniqueness of their destination images utilising social media sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) as platforms for their destination branding strategy (e.g., Marzouk, 2022; Ukpabi, Quarshie & Karjaluoto, 2023). Egypt is known for its unique archaeological attractions, tourism facilities, culture, and nature (Marzouk, 2022), while Morocco prides itself in arts, culture and well-being (Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023).

Notably, competition among SSA destinations has led to the inevitable intensification of marketing initiatives by destinations in order to effectively manage their brand images (Mhlongo & Ezeuduji, 2021). Some SSA destinations such as South Africa and Zimbabwe remain exposed to stereotype from the international media, being constantly associated with past crises (see Matiza & Slabbert, 2024; Kanokanga, Tukuta & Chikuta, 2020). Arguably, most scholarly inquiry on destination image is predominantly inclined toward developed nations (see Matiza & Slabbert, 2024), however, a few notable destination image studies made scientific inquiring on SSA. For example, an empirical investigation was done to determine international (Haarhoff & De Klerk, 2019; Botha, 2021) and local tourists' brand perceptions of South Africa (Govender, Chuchu, Maziriri & Nascimento Cunha, 2020).

South Africa has positioned itself as a destination rich in culture and strong competitiveness (Matiza, 2022). Moreover, South Africa is known for exhibiting and promoting both cognitive

and affective images largely through social media sites such as Twitter and YouTube (see Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023; Ketter & Avraham, 2021). Similarly, Mauritius communicates its cognitive and affective images through Twitter, the same applies for Kenya (Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023). Mauritius positioned itself as a destination associated with gastronomy, experience with nature and sensuality, while Kenya associates itself with wildlife and adventure with nature (Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023). Similarly, Zimbabwe has positioned itself (through special events and the ZimBho campaign) on various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and so on, as a way of enhancing the destination's cognitive and affective brand perceptions (see Kanokanga *et al.*, 2020; Musavengane, Woyo & Ndlovu, 2022). The above destination branding strategies have been instrumental in shaping the SSA destinations' images post COVID-19 (Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023).

The increase in global internet and mobile penetration rates has opened avenues for Africa to brand itself through digital media (Mkwizu, 2019). Reasonably, the image of Africa as a destination can be effectively managed by building and promoting a positive image of its natural and cultural endowments (Matiza & Oni, 2014; Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023) through an amalgam of digital marketing strategies (Hinson, Osabutey & Kosiba, 2020). Consequently, the above sets the current study in motion as it seeks to assess whether traveller risk perceptions influence destination image and revisit intentions for leisure tourists visiting emerging destinations.

2.6 TOURISTS' TRAVEL RISK PERCEPTIONS

Risk perception can be conceptualised as the subjective evaluation of a potential loss in threatening situations arising beyond acceptable levels of tolerance (Carballo, Leon & Carballo, 2021; Meng, Khan, Bibi, Wu, Lee & Chen, 2021; Brida, Mogni, Scaglione & Seijas, 2022). Perceived risk influences consumer behaviour in a negative way (Chang & Chen, 2014) because cognition and affect are key elements in the formation of destination image, as well as tourists' travel risk perception and behavioural intentions (Perpiña *et al.*, 2021).

Travel risk perceptions are usually associated with uncertainties, vulnerability, and likelihood of misfortunes that a tourist might encounter during travel (Perpiña *et al.*, 2021). Literature shows that anxiety is normally a precursor to travel risk perceptions, which hinders behavioural intentions to visit (Li, Nguyen & Coca-Stefaniak, 2021; Meng *et al.*, 2021), while feelings of pleasure result in visit intentions (see Perpiña *et al.*, 2021). Shahabi Sorman Abadi *et al.* (2021) defined and analysed travel risk perceptions in the context of COVID-19. They defined travel risk perceptions based on the extent to which travellers evaluate the role of the tourism sector in alleviating the impact of COVID-19.

Shahabi *et al.* (2021) concluded that travel risk perceptions can be formed before, during and after a trip. Therefore, tourists' evaluation of destination alternatives will result in travel preferences with the least risk (León, Giannakis, Zittis, Serghides, Lam-González & García, 2021; Park, Kim, Kim, Lee & Giroux, 2021).

During 2020, compulsory testing and reduced traveller confidence, among other issues, curbed international tourist arrivals (WTO, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic also saw a decrease of 83% in travel arrivals globally during the first quarter of 2021. The pandemic has negatively impacted the tourism sector severely as travel is now regarded as a high-risk activity (Zheng *et al.*, 2021).

According to the World Bank (2023b), both South Africa and Zimbabwe have experienced a significant drop in the number of tourist arrivals in 2020 (approximately 3 886 600 for SA and 639 000 for Zimbabwe) as compared to recorded figures for the same indicator in 2019 (approximately 1479700 for SA and 2294000 for Zimbabwe). This means that if the tourism sector was to recover, it would be contingent on an array of factors (see Sigala, 2020; WTO, 2022) and restoration of traveller confidence is key (Zhang, Hou & Li, 2020; Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2021).

Travellers' perceived risk and fearful reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic have been documented in extant literature (e.g., Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2021; Bae & Chang, 2021) including protective behaviour by travellers (e.g., Miao *et al.*, 2021). However, in some instances, there are crisis-resistant travellers who are not deterred by a crisis (Hajibaba, Gretzel, Leisch & Dolnicar, 2015). Understanding an individual's fears associated with travel during the pandemic, will help resuscitate the industry post-COVID-19 (Zheng *et al.*, 2021). The onus rests on tourism service providers to curb the risks associated with each stage of travel (Miao *et al.*, 2021). Studies show that different countries are pursuing different measures to attenuate the impact of COVID-19 on perceived risk of travelling to a particular destination (e.g., WTO, 2020; Alderman & Ewing, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2021). Understanding behaviour during a pandemic such as COVID-19 helps destination managers ascertain travellers' perceptions of a destination's brand image (Cardenas & Manning, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2021).

In a broader context, consumers' perceived risk is influenced by how much they are aware of a particular brand (Aaker, 1996). One can, therefore, expect that travel behaviours are contingent on perceived risk in a specific country, given a tourist's familiarity with the brand (Hajibaba *et al.*, 2015; Miao *et al.*, 2021).

Past studies have attempted to ascertain the antecedents to pandemic and post-pandemic travel intentions and risk perceptions (e.g., Li, Nguyen & Coca-Stefaniak, 2021; Neuburger & Egger, 2021), and fear of travel and anxiety (e.g., Bhati, Mohammadi, Agarwal, Kamble & Donough-Tan, 2020; Rastegar *et al.*, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2022). These studies are, however, inclined towards risk perceptions of travellers to developed destinations. Little is known about travellers' risk perceptions and destination image amidst COVID-19 in the Sub-Saharan African context.

Africa as a brand has always been associated with poverty, underdevelopment, danger, and pestilence, among other woes (Avraham & Ketter, 2017; Muhwezi *et al.*, 2016; Osei & Gbadamosi, 2011). Such negative publicity has overshadowed Africa's pride in its prevalent culture, art, and poetry, among other features (Avraham & Ketter, 2017). An added challenge is the closing down of international borders that has crippled Sub-Saharan Africa's tourism (Makoni & Tichaawa, 2021).

In this study attention is given to the application of travel risk perceptions and destination image theories in the context of emerging competing destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa. The objective is to examine the relationships between cognitive as well as affective brand images and future revisit intentions of past visitors, taking into consideration travel risk perceptions. Destination South Africa and Zimbabwe are used as the case study since they compete for similar markets but are at different levels of economic development – South Africa as upper middle-income versus Zimbabwe as lower middle-income (World Bank, 2023c).

2.7 TRAVEL RISK PERCEPTIONS THEORY

According to the framing theory, individuals assign meaning and interpretations of their lives through interpretive frameworks (Jahari, Yang, French & Ahmed, 2021). Guided by this theory, risk perception is fluid in nature, meaning that it can be calibrated and reconfigured according to different narratives to which tourists are exposed (Karl & Schmude, 2017; Jahari *et al.*, 2021). External sources such as media and peer influence, among others, can frame the way in which a tourist can interpret perceived risk (Jahari *et al.*, 2021). The media has proven to be a force to be reckoned with when it comes to one's decision-making (Brown, 2015). There is evidence of literature on risk perceptions in tourism in general (Wong & Yeh, 2009; Pahlevan Sharif & Mura, 2019; San-Martin, Jimenez & Liebana-Cabanillas, 2020), while some scholars are more specific to certain risk dimensions such as health and disease (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009; Chien, Sharifpour, Ritchie & Watson, 2017; Neuburger & Egger, 2021; Ruan, Kang & Song, 2020).

Literature covering the risks faced by leisure tourists is scant (e.g., Cheron & Ritchie, 1982; de Rooij *et al.*, 2022). It is important to understand the nature of risk perceptions according to the type of travel and/or related activities (de Rooij *et al.*, 2022) because tourists are most likely to adjust their travel plans, substitute with a less risky destination (Decrop, 2010; Perpiña *et al.*, 2021) or engage in ways that reduce the risk associated with travel (Isaac, 2021). Recovery of a destination's image recovery is a key priority for destinations post-COVID-19 (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021). In turn, a positive image influences behavioural intentions (Yang *et al.*, 2022).

2.7.1 Types of risk perceptions

Risk perceptions are predominantly popular among international travellers and vary between destinations (see Decrop, 2010; de Rooij *et al.*, 2022). There are various risks that influence travel risk perceptions among tourists (Neuburger & Egger, 2021). They can be categorised as time, psychological, financial and satisfaction risks (see Neuburger & Egger, 2021), health and hygiene, accidents, crime and natural disaster risks (e.g., Maser & Weiermair, 1998) and physical, functional, equipment, social and communication risks (Zhan, Zeng, Morrison, Liang & Coca-Stefaniak, 2022). It can be observed from tourism literature that studies on risk perceptions mainly covered international tourists' perceptions of health, time, financial and physical and social risks (see Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Zhan *et al.*, 2022).

Tourism is often regarded as a super-spreader of communicable diseases such as HIV, SARS, COVID-19 (e.g., Jonas, Mansfeld, Paz & Potasman, 2011; Godovykh, Pizam & Bahja, 2021). As a result, study findings report that health risk perceptions influence attitude and behavioural intention to visit (Wen *et al.*, 2020; Nazneen *et al.*, 2020). Literature on traveller perceptions of health risk is scant in tourism studies (Godovykh *et al.*, 2021). Due to its derivation from travel risk perceptions of COVID-19, this study focuses on health and safety risk perceptions of leisure tourists visiting emerging destinations in SSA.

2.7.2 Determinants of tourist risk perceptions

Risk perceptions vary according to discipline (i.e., the determinants and measurements differ between economics, psychology, and tourism research) (Godovykh *et al.*, 2021). For tourism studies, common determinants of risk perceptions include anxiety, nervousness, and fear (Wolff, Larsen & Øgaard, 2019). Furthermore, susceptibility, culture, destination image and negative publicity can be considered as determinants of travel risk perceptions (see Godovykh *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, risk perceptions are also influenced by personal experience, gender, values, education, and culture (Dryhurst, Schneider, Kerr, Freeman, Recchia, Van Der Bles, Spiegelhalter & Van Der Linden, 2020), past travel experience, travel motivations and personality (Le & Arcodia, 2018).

At the peak of COVID-19, trust emerged as the main determinant of travel risk perceptions because tourists were dependent on DMOs and concerned governments to issue statements of safety assurance for those wishing to travel during the pandemic (see Cori, Bianchi, Cadum & Anthonj, 2020; Godovykh *et al.*, 2021). Table 2.4 summarises the determinants of tourists' travel risk perceptions identified in previous studies and clustered by Godovykh *et al.* (2021).

Table 2.4: Antecedents of risk perceptions

Antecedents of risk perceptions	
Authors	Factors
Block and Keller (1995)	Positive and negative affect.
Carter (1998)	Destination image.
Slovic (2000)	Perceived lack of control, dread, catastrophic potential, fatal consequences, unknown hazards.
Lepp and Gibson (2003)	Health, political instability, strange food, novelty preference.
Kozak <i>et al.</i> (2007)	Power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance.
McCarthy <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Amount of media coverage, frames used for presenting risks, valence and tone of media coverage, trustworthiness of risk information sources.
Ropeik (2011)	Trust, origin, control, nature, scope, awareness, imagination, dread, uncertainty, familiarity, specificity, personal impact, fun factor.
Sharot (2011)	Optimism bias.
Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Age, education, profession, risk experiences, knowledge.
Brown (2015)	Negative media coverage.
van der Linden (2015)	Cognitive, experiential, socio-cultural, demographic.
Henrich <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Framing of risks.
Cahyanto <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Perceived susceptibility, severity, self-efficacy, subjective knowledge, socio-demographics.
van Hoorn <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Social desirability.
Becken <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Destination image.
Paek and Hove (2017)	Voluntariness, controllability, familiarity, equity, benefits, understanding, uncertainty, dread, trust in institutions, reversibility.
Murdock and Rajagopal (2017)	Framing of risks.
Xie <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Affect, descriptive norms, mitigation response inefficacy.
Dryhurst <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Knowledge, experience, prosociality, trust, efficacy.
Bogacheva <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Travel experience.
Cori <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Voluntariness, knowledge, visibility, trust.

Source: Adopted from Godovykh *et al.* (2021)

2.7.3 Destination image amidst a crisis

In post crisis recovery, brand image can be restored through government policies, effective positive communication, and new tourism products (after Avraham, 2015). Tourists' perceptions of risk and fear of travel has the potential to highly impact one's choice of destination including their travel behaviour (Kozak *et al.*, 2007). These perceptions are usually shaped by negative information shared on social media about the pandemic (Zenker, Braun & Gyimóthy, 2021), including any other broadcasting media sharing varied reactions and uncertainties (Zheng *et al.*, 2021). It is possible that false information and imagery might deter those who are yet to visit a destination (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Zenker, von Wallpach, Braun & Vallaster, 2019). Resultantly, tourists who are not familiar with a destination are more reliant on external than internal sources of information (Kozak *et al.*, 2007).

Tourists find it risky to travel in an unfamiliar environment, however, they have a sense of security in a familiar environment (Lepp & Gibson, 2003) and are likely to have positive travel intentions (Chi, Huang & Nguyen, 2020). Perceived risk, in whatever form, has a negative influence on destination image (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021). The media spectrum plays a fundamental role in influencing travellers' opinions due to the quality of information broadcasted (Zarezadeh, Rastegar & Gretzel, 2018; Marine-Roig & Huertas, 2020). Past experiences with a destination influence choice, especially where safety is concerned (Chen & Lin, 2012; Karl, Muskat & Ritchie, 2020), and may significantly shape travellers' destination images (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021; Casali, Liu, Presenza & Moyle, 2021).

2.8 OVERVIEW OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY: BRANDS SOUTH AFRICA AND ZIMBABWE

This section provides an overview of brand perceptions of destinations South Africa and Zimbabwe's tourism industries.

2.8.1 South African context

The growth of the tourism sector in South Africa has contributed immensely toward the growth of the service sector (Booyens & Rogerson, 2017). However, owing to the stringent visa requirements, social unrest and political instability, South Africa's market share took a nose-dive due to a decline in arrivals (van der Schyff, Meyer & Ferreira, 2019), negatively impacting South Africa's competitiveness (see Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2018; Cronjéa & du Plessis, 2021). Furthermore, pre-COVID-19, South Africa was characterised by various events that attenuated its image, for example, the 2016 student protests (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020) and xenophobic attacks (Tarisayi & Manik, 2020). In addition, South Africa was not spared from the obfuscating implications of COVID-19 on its tourism sector (Rogerson & Rogerson,

2021). There is hope in image recovery as scholars prescribe marketing and promotion of a destination's tourism in an effort to stimulate future behavioural intentions (see Fourie, 2016; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021).

Over the years, South Africa has been an SSA powerhouse when it comes to the hosting of international events in Africa, mostly sport (Hemmonsby & Tichaawa, 2018). Notably, for sporting events such as soccer, South Africa hosted the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in 1996, FIFA World Cup in 2010 and another AFCON in 2013. These events spearheaded the growth of brand South Africa (Knott, Fyall & Jones, 2013). According to Musavengane, Siakwah and Leonard (2020), South Africa's National Tourism Sector Strategy (2016–2026) has a mandate to position South Africa as a global tourism brand. The growth of the South African tourism sector is anticipated to reduce levels of unemployment in supporting industries by 2030 (Musavengane *et al.*, 2020).

South Africa is ranked 68 out of 117 according to the WEF's (2022) TTDI, showing that the destination is reasonably ready to build a resilient and sustainable future WEF (2022) compared to Zimbabwe, whose absence is conspicuous on WEF's TTDI. In the last TTCL published in 2019, South Africa ranked 61 out of 140 in terms of competitiveness, while Zimbabwe sat at 114. WEF (2023) reports that South Africa is experiencing five main risks that may attenuate its competitiveness, namely, state collapse, debt crises, collapse of services and public infrastructure, cost-of-living crisis and employment, as well as livelihood crises. This alone is a rough indication of how competitive South Africa is in SSA.

As the government of South Africa is working on a tourism recovery plan, promotion of domestic tourism remains the core (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). There are three main tourism destinations in South Africa, namely, Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg (De Klerk & Haarhoff, 2019). The Cape Town water crisis in 2018 left the destination on 'its knees' as tourists shunned the prestigious destination (Rosselló, Becken & Santana-Gallego, 2020). As a result, visitors perceived the destination to be a risky option (Wendell, 2018; Rosselló *et al.*, 2020).

A study by Friedrich, Stahl, Fitchett and Hoogendoorn (2020) revealed that security threats, crime and diseases are some of the reasons why tourists cancel their trips to South Africa. The xenophobic attacks and racial tensions in South Africa have been an impediment to the growth of the tourism sector. Musavengane *et al.* (2022) shared excerpts of twitter hashtags containing racial and xenophobic connotations, making the destination a risky choice. Hence

the onus is on the South African government to promote the spirit of 'Ubuntu' to ensure that the locals co-exist with visitors (Musavengane *et al.*, 2022).

South Africa's overall brand image is determined by the tourism performance of its main destinations (i.e., Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg) (De Klerk & Haarhoff, 2019). Chuchu, Chiliya and Chinomona (2019) investigated how the experiences at an international airport influenced travellers' image of South Africa. Findings revealed that the overall destination image positively influenced future behavioural intentions. South Africa presents a plethora of tourism product offerings, diverse in nature (Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2018). However, crime and safety concerns have always been the main drivers behind South Africa's negative destination image (Martín, Saayman & du Plessis, 2019). Tarisayi and Manik (2020) concluded the reputation of the South African brand was damaged by the hostility shown to foreigners.

COVID-19 is arguably the world's first pandemic to reconfigure the nature of demand and supply in tourism (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; WTO, 2022). According to the World Bank (2023b), South Africa experienced a significant drop in the number of tourist arrivals in 2020 due to the COVID-19 impact on travel. For South Africa, just like the rest of the world, it would mean the redesign of tourism policy to enable sustainable recovery (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021), despite the gradual increase of international arrivals post-COVID-19 (WTO, 2023).

2.8.2 Zimbabwean context

Zimbabwe is endowed with a variety of beautiful exotic scenery and natural heritages (Muzapu & Sibanda, 2016) of which the Victoria Falls are the only natural wonder of the world found in Africa (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2015). Zimbabweans are generally friendly and hospitable over and above lucrative tourist attractions (Zibanai, 2018). The tourism product is comprised of an array of low-hanging natural resources, friendly people, a rich history and culture and a lot of excursion facilities (Makuvaza & Makuvaza, 2014). Despite such an attractive endowment, Zimbabwe remains uncompetitive both at international and regional levels (Tsokota, von Solms & van Greunen, 2019). The tourism sector is one of Zimbabwe's four main pillars of economic growth (Woyo & Slabbert, 2023), with an anticipated GDP growth from 1.1% in 2020 to 5% by 2025 (National Development Strategy 1, 2020).

Zimbabwe's ranking on the WEF 2019 index is 114 out of 140, an indication that the country is not as competitive as South Africa, which is at 61. In terms of the TTDI, Zimbabwe, along with other SSA countries, was not listed among those ready for a sustainable future under certain developmental conditions set by the WEF (2022). The developmental conditions

include, enabling environment, travel and tourism policy and enabling conditions, infrastructure, travel and tourism demand drivers, and travel and tourism sustainability. Again WEF (2023) reports that Zimbabwe is experiencing five main risks that have exacerbated its competitiveness. These are rapid and/or sustained inflation, cost-of-living crisis, geoeconomic confrontation, collapse of services and public infrastructure and severe commodity supply crises. The Zimbabwean government, however, believes that the tourism sector can help save the ailing economy (National Development Strategy 1, 2020).

Negative publicity has been the order of day for Zimbabwe as a tourism destination, resulting in an undesirable brand image (Kanokanga, Tukuta, Chikuta & Ndoda, 2019; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023), which has had a negative impact on the number of international tourist arrivals (Chigora & Ndlovu, 2018; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023). Zimbabwe is classified as a distressed destination due to issues such as political upheavals, low income per capita, and partisan politics, among others (Woyo & Slabbert, 2023). In turn, this has affected the destination's competitiveness and ability to attract international tourists (Woyo, 2022).

It is, therefore, undisputed that inbound tourists' travel decisions are mostly determined by destination image (Kanokanga *et al.*, 2019; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021). The socio-economic and political turmoil in Zimbabwe contributed to the 'fall' of the destination's brand image (Chigora & Ndlovu, 2018; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023). Furthermore, the Zimbabwe government's land reform programme and political insurgencies have crippled the tourism sector (Woyo & Slabbert, 2020). The situation was further exacerbated by the toppling of the president of the First Republic in 2017 (Woyo & Slabbert, 2019; Woyo & Slabbert, 2020).

Travel warnings against Zimbabwe were issued by the West to guard their citizens against a destination that had lost its appeal (Woyo, 2018). Masango and Naidoo (2018) made an analysis of Zimbabwe's brand attractiveness. Their findings show that the brand was hostile to the international community, both business and leisure-wise. General sentiments shared by foreigners were that Zimbabwe was a very risky and distressed destination on both economic and political dimensions (Masango & Naidoo, 2018). However, not all visitors had negative perceptions about the Zimbabwean brand, according to Masango and Naidoo's (2018) study. Some travellers stated that they changed their mind-set after visiting Zimbabwe.

The image of Zimbabwe as a tourism brand image has been tainted for a very long time (Chigora & Katsande, 2021), resulting in the waning of the destination's attractiveness (Masango & Naidoo, 2018). Zimbabwe's destination image was further marred by the 2017 coup (Musavengane & Zhou, 2021), as evidenced by the West's travel warnings to Zimbabwe

(Woyo, 2018). All this is despite the general warm and accommodative nature of locals who are happy to interact and serve all tourists regardless of nationality (Chigora, Ndlovu, Mutambara & Muzurura, 2019). Masango and Naidoo (2018) supported this and found that, despite the negative perceptions, there were some international tourists who held positive perceptions about Zimbabwe's destination brand. Zimbabwe co-hosted the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013 and during the same year held its first carnival in Harare. All this was done to try to restore the damaged brand (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021).

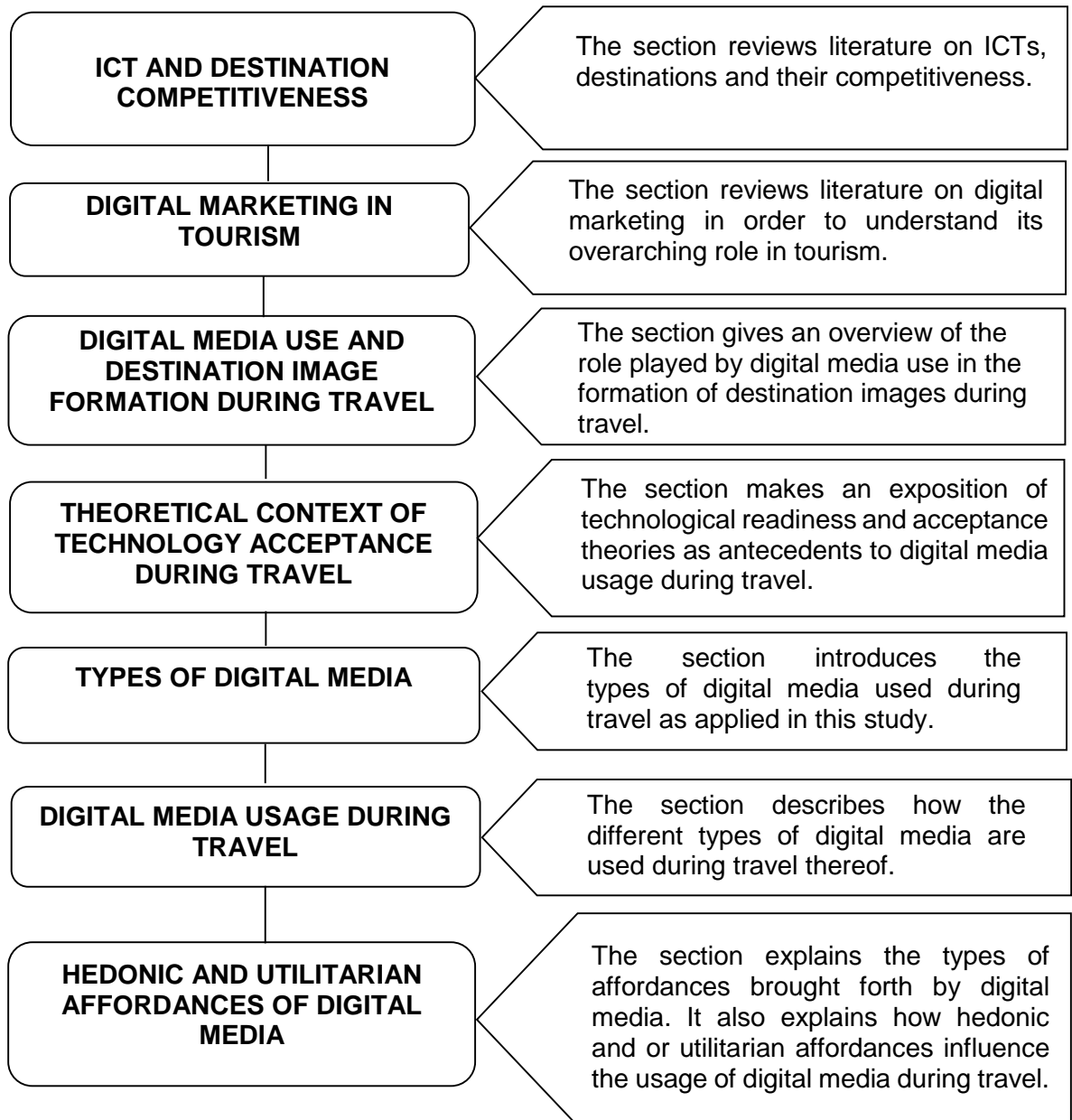
According to the World Bank (2023b) Zimbabwe encountered a substantial decline in tourist arrivals in 2020 due to travel restrictions necessitated by COVID-19. However, despite the sluggish growth in international arrivals post-COVID-19, Zimbabwe is still below its 2019 record (WTO, 2023). To curb the above challenges, the government of Zimbabwe has invested in the Brand Zimbabwe Campaign in an attempt to restore the destination's image and trigger revisit intentions among international tourists (Madzimore & Tazira, 2022).

2.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter gave a background on the concept of destination competitiveness among emerging SSA destinations, more specifically South Africa and Zimbabwe. Seminal and current literature on global tourism trends was reviewed in light of how COVID-19 affected tourism world over. The chapter also gives an overview of the tourism growth trends in SSA over a 10-year period so as to track the trajectory and momentum of SSA tourist arrivals, followed by a discussion on emerging destinations' competitiveness. The concept of destination image was introduced thereafter, and the types of images were identified and discussed. Travel risk is an important component of decision-making for travellers, especially in the wake of COVID-19. Therefore, travel risk theory was put into perspective as well as risk perceptions tourists encounter during travels. This was followed by determinants of risk perceptions as well as destination image amidst a crisis. Lastly, a destination-specific background was given for both South Africa and Zimbabwe supported by contextual information of how each destination was performing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It was revealed that travellers to both destinations have different perceptions driven by various factors (e.g., political instability, crime, and xenophobia). It is clear from the destination overview that there are mixed opinions about the two destinations' images. Some perceive them as hostile and unsafe, while others view them as warm and friendly. This ushers in the discussion to Chapter 3 which gives an in-depth discussion on ICT readiness and digital media marketing for destination competitiveness.

CHAPTER 3

ICT READINESS AND DIGITAL MEDIA MARKETING



3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three reviews literature on ICTs, destinations, and their competitiveness. It reveals the extent of ICT adoption in emerging destinations as well as ICT readiness and destination images of those destinations. Specifically, South Africa and Zimbabwe's ICT readiness is analysed. Furthermore, the chapter reviews literature on digital marketing in tourism and that of digital marketing and destination competitiveness. This is followed by a review of literature on destination image including that of digital media usage. The chapter also explicates the types of digital media used during travel. Motivators and inhibitors of technology acceptance influencing leisure tourists' readiness to accept different forms of digital media, will be identified. Furthermore, the hedonic/utilitarian affordances guiding tourists' choice of digital media are identified and explained against each type of digital media. These will be put into perspective with tourists' technology readiness and acceptance. Lastly, a theoretical context on technology adoption is given by making an exposition of technological readiness and acceptance theories as antecedents to tourists' digital media usage when travelling. To make a meaningful academic contribution, the chapter constricts the Technology Readiness Index (TRI) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to form the Technology Readiness and Acceptance Model (TRAM).

3.2 ICT AND DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

The emergence of new communication networks has been ignited by the digital revolution in conjunction with ICT, thus creating an opportunity for destination competitiveness (Buhalis, 2020), which is reliant on ICT infrastructure's ability to support knowledge-creation and information sharing (see Gretzel & Scarpino-Johns, 2018; Halim, 2022; Woyo & Ukpabi, 2022). In light of this, technology transforms the tourism sector through strategy determination and destination competitiveness (Buhalis, 2020). It is, however, worrisome that despite the influence of ICT on destination competitiveness (WEF, 2020), special attention has not been given to how integration of different forms of ICTs impact competitiveness (Milićević *et al.*, 2020).

Despite the abundance of destination competitiveness research, type of destination and the attributes of competitiveness unique to a destination (e.g., Crouch, 2011; Petrović, Milićević & Djeri, 2017; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023), as well as types of ICT (e.g., Boes *et al.*, 2016; Milićević *et al.*, 2020), have not been covered in great scope. Nonetheless, authors note the significance of ICTs in enhancing competitiveness for emerging destinations (Chirisa *et al.*, 2020). Developments in ICT are inextricably linked to the growth and competitiveness of tourism destinations (Liberato, Liberato, Abreu, Alén-González & Rocha, 2018a; Ivars-Baidal, Celdrán-Bernabeu, Mazón & Perles-Ivars, 2019; Buhalis, 2020). Literature motions the idea

that ICT readiness is a determinant of competitiveness at the macro level (Ritchie & Crouch 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003, WEF, 2020). Ritchie and Crouch (2003) mention science and technology capacity as a factor of competitiveness between national economies. The above are all very important factors which drive destination competitiveness.

Additionally, according to WEF (2019), the TTCI identifies ICT readiness as a pillar of competitiveness in travel and tourism. The number of internet and mobile communication data subscribers and availability of latest technology are some examples used as a proxy to give insight into how ICT will enhance destination competitiveness (WEF, 2019). Ritchie and Crouch (2003) also buttress the idea of ICT readiness being a determinant of competitiveness at the macro level. Notably, ICT has attenuated the geographic distance between tourism suppliers and their source market (Liberato, Liberato, Abreu, Alén-González & Rocha, 2018b; Adeola & Evans, 2019b). ICT, in this regard, enables personalisation of tourism demand and supply, ultimately increasing demand for tourism products and services (Hailey Shin *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, information availability through ICT perpetuates awareness of available attractions (Pawłowska, Matoga & Stach, 2015; Kang *et al.*, 2020), ultimately building a competitive destination (Buhalis, 2020). Clearly, literature on the influence of ICT and destination competitiveness seems to provide a general appreciation of the relationship, dismissing the destination specific measurement and specificity of competitiveness. This is because definition of destination competitiveness itself is equivocal (see Dodds & Holmes 2020).

3.2.1 ICT adoption in emerging destinations

Emerging destinations in SSA were identified by the World Bank as The Gambia, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda, Senegal, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and The Seychelles (Christie *et al.*, 2014). These destinations are said to be characterised by their prioritisation of tourism, quality and competitiveness, supported by requisite institutions (Christie *et al.*, 2014). However, emerging destinations do have their impediments such as weak fiscal positions (World Bank, 2023d). Emerging destinations, Africa in particular, are of special interest in this study as they have potential to tap into the technologically driven tourism environment. Furthermore, emerging destinations have a promising phenomenal potential of growth in the tourism sector, evidenced by the recovery of international arrivals (WTO, 2023). Notably, emerging destinations have the potential to attract tourists from international source markets (Adeola & Evans, 2019a) such as the Americas, Europe, Asia and so on, thereby attracting foreign direct investment for economic development (El Menyari, 2021).

In turn, the tourism industry will aid destinations to gird against poverty (see Ayikoru, 2015; WTTC, 2022). With a considerable number of African countries having embarked on an ICT infrastructure development drive, diffusion is still minimal (Mapeshoane & Pather, 2016; Chirisa *et al.*, 2020). The diffusion of ICT in Africa is said to have taken place in an uneven manner, consequently exacerbating the global digital divide (Rath, 2016; Arakpogun, Elsahn, Nyuur & Olan, 2020; Cariolle, 2021). Despite this irregularity, investment in ICT has been statistically proven to have a significant relationship with tourism development in Africa (Adeola & Evans, 2020).

Notably, the relationship seems to resemble that of a nomological network; the more the investment in ICT and related infrastructure, the more the tourist arrivals (Adeola & Evans, 2019a). The absence of ICT *inter alia* may affect the perceived image of a destination due to inaccessibility of dependable and precise information (see Buhalis & Law, 2008). The internet is at the core of the digital revolution, whose adoption is contingent on individual norms and attitudes, as well as ICT adoption in neighbouring countries (Dohse & Lim, 2018). Moreover, the major constraints in the adoption of ICT in Africa are perpetuated by lack of requisite infrastructural development, training of youth (ICT skills) as well as government policy (Etoundi Onana, Eteme & Ndjodo, 2016; Ng & Tan, 2018; Goncalves *et al.*, 2018). Thus, it is not surprising that developed countries with liberal policies on political freedom and human rights protection are more likely to have a higher degree of internet adoption than developing countries whose internet service providers are austere regulated (Dohse & Lim, 2018).

3.2.2 ICT readiness and destination image of emerging destinations

The evolution of ICT has brought forth the advent of the internet as a marketing channel and has, without doubt, resulted in ubiquitous travel information (e.g., Vieira *et al.*, 2019; Dubois *et al.*, 2020). ICT is a major determinant of nations' GDP across the world; both developing and developed (Ewing, Chevrollier, Quigless, Verghese & Leenderste, 2014; Myovella, Karacuka & Haucap, 2020). Subsequently, ICT is a key economic driver in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ewing *et al.*, 2014; Myovella *et al.*, 2020; Awad & Albaity, 2022). Destinations need to take advantage of ICTs as a means to build a positive image (Tsokota, 2017). An example is Rwanda, whose tainted destination image was restored through social media (Holmes & Buscaglia, 2019).

Another example is South Africa, whose image was boosted through a virtual exposition of the World Cup in 2010 (Knott, Allen & Swart, 2012). Furthermore, empirical evidence from a study in Kenya revealed that digital media representation had a significant relationship with Kenya's image (Muhoho-Minni & Lubbe, 2017). Ghana is yet another example, whose online

image was enhanced through the destination's website ability to provide information about marketing and tourism products and services (Kotoua, & Ilkan, 2017b). Eventually, a virtual image enhances destination visibility through its online presence (Govers & Go, 2009; Myat, Sharkasi & Rajasekera, 2019).

It is the responsibility of DMOs to portray a consistent and positive image through ICT (Ndlovu, 2009; Peralta, 2019). The internet has compelled DMOs to invest in websites for value co-creation and communication with various tourism stakeholders (Minde & Jani, 2016; Lam, Ismail & Lee, 2020). Accordingly, DMOs need to be more innovative by investing in digital media to cultivate a positive destination image (Dubois *et al.*, 2020). Tourists' perceptions of and intention to visit are dependent on the extent to which social media effectively positions a destination (Rahman, Sharmin & Akhter, 2020). Likewise, DMOs are expected to take advantage of information shared by tourists via social media platforms to position their destinations; forming a distinctive destination image (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018).

ICT evolutions such as social media, the internet, and mobile apps, have not only revolutionised the tourism industry (Kim, Lee & Law, 2008; Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Buhalis, 2020) but have also impacted destination image positively (Govers, Go & Kumar, 2007; Pawłowska *et al.*, 2015; Caridà *et al.*, 2021). Social media is unprecedentedly one of the major digital media which DMOs have taken advantage of to promote destinations (Senić, 2018; Dedeoğlu, Taheri, Okumus & Gannon, 2020; Molina, Gómez, Lyon, Aranda & Loibl, 2020). The current study adds to the body of knowledge by examining whether perceived ICT readiness of competing, emerging destinations has a bearing on destination image, competitiveness, and resultant behavioural intentions.

3.2.3 South Africa's technology readiness

In 2010, South Africa experienced world-wide social media-enhanced visibility of the FIFA World Cup (Knott *et al.*, 2013). South Africa's use of social media during its major events has had the positive impact of global awareness of the destination (Hemmonsby & Tichaawa, 2018). Over the years, digital marketing has been gaining momentum in South Africa, having gained a significant number of internet and social media users (Mkwizu, 2019). Digital media, such as 360 degree and 4D VRs, are some significant strides made by South African Tourism in a bid to market the destination to the international market (Neuburger, Beck & Egger, 2018).

Despite having a well-developed ICT sector (African Development Bank, 2018), inadequate internet and mobile technologies have hampered the success of South Africa's tourism sector, particularly the airline industry (Smit, Roberts-Lombard & Mpinganjira, 2018; Aigbavboa,

Ebekozien & Mkhize, 2023). In 2013, South Africa introduced a national broadband policy that will see the attainment of universal internet by 2030 (Mwapwele, Marais, Dlamini & Van Biljon, 2019). Mwapwele *et al.* (2019) posit that this development will have a positive bearing on the development of digital skills in South Africa. The development of ICT infrastructure in South Africa has led to the adoption of digital technologies that have brought convenience in many facets (Veerasingam, Mashiane & Pillay, 2019). South Africa's level of technological advancement has also put it on the grid as far as smart tourism is concerned (Roopchand, 2020).

3.2.4 Zimbabwe's technology readiness

Unlike South Africa, Zimbabwe seems to lack the right solid plan for the adoption of technology, more specifically smart tourism (Mahakata, Tsokota, Mupfiga & Chikuta, 2017; Gwavava, Fadaraliki & Kadebu, 2022). Mahakata *et al.* (2017) further state that the lack of political will has hindered the enactment of a solid ICT policy or plan to promote its use, resulting in a myriad of problems, especially for the tourism sector. Zimbabwe launched its first ICT policy in 2007, which was followed by another in 2015 (Shoniwa, 2021). The 2015 policy was only launched officially three years later when the existing ICT strategies in the policy had been overtaken by events (Kairiza, 2018). This policy was meant to drive the initiative, smart sustainable cities, in an effort to attract investment and bring convenience to business operations (Kairiza, 2018). It is worth noting that e-commerce in tourism can aid in economic development (Chivandi & Sibanda, 2018; Tsaurai & Chimbo, 2019). However, it seems as if the gaps in technology infrastructure are impeding the operationalisation of the ICT policy (Kairiza, 2018; Shoniwa, 2021).

On the same note, the Zimbabwe hospitality sector is failing to cope with the sector's ICT demands due to high costs of technology infrastructure; a critical element for the sector's competitiveness (Moyo & Takavarasha, 2020). The implementation of ICT policy by the Zimbabwean government has been impeded by uncoordinated efforts by responsible ministries (i.e., the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development and the Ministry of Information Communication Technology and Courier Services) (Chirisa *et al.*, 2020). The two ministries are responsible for building supporting network infrastructure (Chirisa *et al.*, 2020). The destination's tourism authority, ZTA, is active on just five digital media platforms, (i.e., its official website, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) to promote destination Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2022).

3.3 DIGITAL MARKETING IN TOURISM

Tourism transactions and processes have become digitalised as travellers use social media and various digital platforms during their travel planning (Jorge, Teixeira, Correia, Gonçalves, Martins & Bessa, 2018; Liberato *et al.*, 2018b; Vassakis, Petrakis, Kopanakis, Makridis & Mastorakis, 2019; Goo *et al.*, 2022). Digital marketing has taken the marketing landscape by storm, outweighing its predecessors such as ‘internet marketing’ or ‘electronic marketing’ (see Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Digital marketing is an overarching strategy which takes advantage of online and offline digital platforms to reach target customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

Digital marketing can be understood as the use of digital technologies for customer acquisition, promoting brands and retaining customers, whilst advancing sales (Kannan & Li, 2017). More specifically, it has been defined as; “the application of the internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives”. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016:11). ICTs have brought forth opportunities for DMOs to tap into the digital world (Marasco *et al.*, 2018).

Taking advantage of digital media such as mobile technologies and social media, among others, DMOs can influence visit intentions of tourists to a destination through co-creation (e.g., Chen, Kerr, Chou & Ang, 2017; Marasco *et al.*, 2018; Egger, Gumus, Kaiumova, Mükisch & Surkic, 2022). Such channels enable potential tourists to have a virtual encounter with the destination before visiting physically (Marasco *et al.*, 2018; Verkerk, 2022). Furthermore, through online marketing, tourist perceptions and intention to visit are stimulated by destination image, which is fuelled by the internet and various digital communication channels (Kotoua, & Ilkan, 2017a). In a similar vein, Vassakis *et al.* (2019) add that influencer marketing is another form of digital marketing which impacts destination attractiveness through its electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) capabilities via digital platforms.

Moreover, scholars (Liberato *et al.*, 2018b) add that to stay competitive, tourism marketing needs to consolidate digital and relational marketing by fostering innovation and establishing relationships. This consolidation must be in tandem with changes in tourists’ tastes and preferences (Liberato *et al.*, 2018b). Although scholars (e.g., Cillo *et al.*, 2021) argue that digital marketing results in destination competitiveness, they do not specify the aspect of competitiveness influenced. An exception is a study by Dorcic and Komsic (2017) who measure the influence of online reputation on destination competitiveness enabled by demand conditions. Demand conditions underpin the travel decision-making process and thus play an integral role in destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Dorcic, & Komsic, 2017).

The demand conditions in Dorcic and Komsic's (2017) study represent antecedents and not the actual outcome of destination competitiveness, in this regard, image (e.g., Qu *et al.*, 2011; Angelkova, Koteski, Jakovlev & Mitrevska, 2012; Abreu-Novais, Ruhanen & Arcodia, 2016; Miličević *et al.*, 2017). Competitiveness is destination specific (e.g., Dwyer *et al.*, 2004; Hudson *et al.*, 2004; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005) and so is the adoption of digital marketing contingent on the destination's level of ICT adoption (Myat *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, adoption of digital marketing is subject to circumstances and the territory in which tourism companies operate (Abyre, Al Haderi & El Kandili, 2018). Moreover, digital marketing and competitiveness have been analysed at individual company level (El-Gohary & Eid, 2012; Myat *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, this obfuscation and fragmentation of literature has consequently prompted the current research.

Of concern to this study are forms of digital media, namely, virtual and augmented reality, social media, official tourism websites and context-aware recommender media. Digital media are platforms that enable communication through content creation and interactivity (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Digital media range from mobile phones, and social media to websites, among others (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Additionally, Dorcic *et al.* (2019) identify digital media to be technologies such as virtual and augmented reality technologies, smartphones and games. Gartner (2017) projects virtual reality to be at the peak of its adoption by 2022 and augmented reality by 2027. This means users are adopting such technologies at different paces. As such, there could be underlying factors influencing adoption of such digital media by leisure tourists.

3.3.1 Digital marketing and destination competitiveness

Digital marketing is a relatively new concept, specifically in developing economies where resource scarcity, inadequate infrastructure and intense competition are the order of the day (Shrestha, 2019). This is despite the rapid evolution of digital marketing and mobile technologies across the globe, which have transformed travel planning and holiday experience (Magano & Cunha, 2020). Access to destination information has been made easy through the emergence of various digital communication platforms (Gretzel, Koo, Sigala & Xiang, 2015) as well as channels of distribution (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2013; Buhalis, 2020) to facilitate trip planning (Del Chiappa & Baggio, 2015; Jaya & Prianthara, 2020). Authors (e.g., Buhalis, Harwood, Bogicevic, Viglia, Beldona & Hofacker, 2019) identified augmented reality, virtual reality, and location-based, among others, as digital media causing disruption and transformation in the tourism sector.

Accordingly, it would help knowing which type of digital media to invest in on a low budget (Királ'ová & Pavlíčeka, 2015). This investment is important because digital media act as an advertising stimulus for the participation of tourists in information sharing (Yoga, Korry & Yulianti, 2019). Mkwizu (2019) revealed that emerging digital media brought forth opportunities to Africa for the promotion of tourist attractions. Africa has witnessed a surge in mobile penetration and internet usage rates, presenting an opportunity to boost the continent's tourism competitiveness (Adeola & Evans, 2019b; WEF, 2020).

Various technologies are at tourists' disposal, and they enable comparison and selection of destinations based on destination attributes (Çetinkaya, 2009; BR, 2022). Additionally, investing in digital media results in increased competitiveness (Buhalis, 2020; Cranmer, tom Dieck & Fountoulaki, 2020). For example, augmented reality is one such digital media likely to enhance destination competitiveness onsite (Tscheu & Buhalis, 2016; Tyagi *et al.*, 2022). Tourism competitiveness is, therefore, contingent on innovativeness for cost containment and quality output through ICTs (Yfantidou, Spyridopoulou, Chatzigeorgiou & Malliou, 2019). Furthermore, de Souza, Mendes-Filho and Buhalis (2020) explore opportunities brought forth by digital media marketing technologies in improving destination competitiveness in the form of a positive destination image.

Ultimately, the competitiveness of a destination is reliant on the integration of physical and virtual experiences (Shoval & Birenboim, 2019) that result in a favourable destination image (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018; de Souza *et al.*, 2020). It can be said that digital marketing is key in determining competitiveness of a destination by augmenting its image (Zhang *et al.*, 2018; Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019; de Souza *et al.*, 2020). In the wake of COVID-19, virtual technologies have presented opportunities for tourism destinations to utilise immersive technologies to adapt to the demands of the global pandemic (Lu & Xu, 2021). As such, implementing these digital marketing technologies have emerged as a resilience strategy for destinations to remain competitive post-COVID-19 (Lekgau *et al.*, 2021).

3.3.2 Digital marketing and destination image

Facebook is the world's leading social networking site and is a very important communication channel for image formation and restoration (Ketter, 2016; Taecharungroj & Avraham, 2022; Baalbaki & Zizka, 2023). It is noteworthy that social media has transformed tourists' travel planning and consumption of tourism products (Jaya & Prianthara, 2020). Likewise, social media virtual communities have become the new 'middlemen' acting as resourceful marketing tools for destination promotion and image formation (Clarke & Hassanien, 2020). Bearing this

in mind, content posted by DMOs on digital media platforms become an indispensable determinant of a destination's image (Andronikidis, Bellou, Stylos & Vassiliadis, 2020).

The above submission is, however, based on developed countries. Little attention has been given to developing countries on the influence of digital media marketing platforms on destination image (see Griffin *et al.*, 2017; Kotoua & Ilkan, 2017a; Griffin, Guttentag, Lee, Giberson & Dimanche, 2023). Social media is a cost-effective medium of communicating a destination's brand (see Melović *et al.*, 2020), thus becoming a lucrative option for developing countries that have limited digital media access (see Avraham & Ketter, 2016; Chipeta & Ngoyi, 2018; Chirisa *et al.*, 2020).

As applied to this study, it is anticipated that leisure tourists' digital media usage will influence a positive destination image as asserted by various scholars (e.g., Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Holmes & Buscaglia, 2019; Peralta, 2019; Dubois *et al.*, 2020). It is acknowledged in this study that various digital media exist. Authors single out social media (Hays *et al.*, 2013), gaming (Dubois *et al.*, 2020), virtual reality (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019), augmented reality (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019), context-aware/recommender media (Choi *et al.*, 2021) and official tourism websites (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018) as some examples of digital media.

Taking note of the demands of the current study, virtual reality, augmented reality, and context-aware recommender media, appear to be trending digital media (e.g., Li & Chen, 2019; Dorcic *et al.*, 2019; Shen, Xu, Sotiriadis & Wang, 2022; McLean, AlYahya, Barhorst & Osei-Frimpong, 2023; Casillo, Colace, Conte, Lombardi, Santaniello & Valentino, 2023). As such, they will be at the centre of this study. To be able to draw comparisons, other traditional digital media such as social media and official tourism websites, which are more well-used and popular among tourists and DMOs, shall also be part of this study (e.g., Hays *et al.*, 2013; Molinillo *et al.*, 2018; Bassano, Barile, Piciocchi, Spohrer, Iandolo & Fisk, 2019; Taecharungroj & Avraham, 2022; Syafganti, Ramadanty & Walrave, 2023).

3.4 DIGITAL MEDIA USAGE AND DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION DURING TRAVEL

Virtual reality technologies positively influence both cognitive and affective destination images, which in turn lead to visit intention (Marasco *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, aesthetically pleasing imagery is a key component in tourists' construction of a positive destination image (Hauser Leopold, Egger, Ganewita & Herrgessell, 2022; Xiao, Fang, Lin & Chen, 2022). Wu and Lai (2021) posit that, among other benefits, tourists' experience with virtual reality increases their destination knowledge and cognitive image. The interactive nature of virtual reality thus ignites a positive image on the visitor (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013; Griffin *et al.*, 2017; Kim *et*

al., 2021). It is also possible that virtual reality might provide information about a destination but fail to stimulate emotions strong enough to influence visit intention (Wu & Lai, 2021). Today's traveller is more reliant on different smartphone applications for promotional information, and this creates a positive image of a destination (Moon & An, 2022).

Similarly, augmented reality has been extensively investigated in consumer marketing (e.g., Wedel, Bigné & Zhang, 2020) and tourism (e.g., Nhan, Dung & Vu, 2022). In tourism, immersive technologies such as augmented reality are shown to have capabilities of enhancing destination image at the pre-visit stage (Hudson, Matson-Barkat, Pallamin & Jegou 2019; Bogicevic, Liu, Seo, Kandampully & Rudd, 2021; Nhan *et al.*, 2022) or onsite (Wei, 2019). In terms of travel-based information, TripAdvisor is regarded as the most popular and largest social media platform (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Akdim, Casaló & Flavián, 2022), while Facebook is the leading platform in terms of image-building (Ketter, 2016; Baalbaki & Zizka, 2023). For example, in crisis management, Facebook was actively used for the restoration of Nepal's destination image after the Gorkha earthquake in 2015 (Ketter, 2016). Similarly, TripAdvisor gives travellers a platform to share their experiences, ultimately giving insight on the overall destination image (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2019).

3.5 THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE DURING TRAVEL

The field of consumer behaviour is endowed with established models such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980), TAM (Davis, 1989), and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). The progressive evolution of neuroscience, social psychology and sociology has ultimately revolutionised consumer decision-making over the past decades (see Zaltman, 2000). This has culminated to an amalgamation of various disciplines within consumer psychology and marketing research (e.g., Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Hubert, 2010). This study is theoretically informed by the TRI (Parasuraman, 2000) and TAM (Davis, 1989) as adoption theories combined to form TRAM (Lin *et al.*, 2007). The TRAM provides a clear interpretation of what scholars perceive as appropriate personality traits, indicators, and predictors of digital media usage by leisure tourists when travelling.

3.5.1 Technology adoption theories

A number of theories have been examined in the context of adoption. Table 3.1 summarises the different adoption theories.

Table 3.1: Summary of adoption theories

Name of Theory and Authors	Main Arguments/Key Relationships	Main Concepts/Variables used in the Theory	Past Studies	Findings	Observations
Innovation Adoption Theories					
TAM (Davis, 1989).	-Developed to predict user acceptance and use of technology. -Centred on the organisation.	Perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), attitude towards using (ATU), behavioural intention to use (BI), actual system use (U).	Davis (1989); Subramanian (1994); Keil, Beranek and Konsynski (1995); Hu, Chau, Sheng and Tam (1999); Kim <i>et al.</i> (2008); Oh, Jeong and Baloglu (2013).	-PU has a positive direct influence on BI, while PEOU has either an indirect influence through PU or no influence at all.	-Proved to yield statistically proven results.
Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) (Rogers, 1995).	-Explains processes and conditions of how an innovation is diffused among members of a social system over time. -Distinguishes adoption on the basis of members who adopt over a given time. -Members are classified as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. -Centred on the organisation.	Relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, triability and observability.	Tourism specific Bell and Ruhanen (2016). Over 6000 studies tested the model (Robinson, 2009).	-Opinion leaders and change agents had no influence on the adoption of an innovation, contrary to the assumptions of the theory. Instead, individuals' own search of information led to adoption. -Knowledge and persuasion to adopt is dependent on individuals' internal drivers and environmental ethics. -Adoption of innovation is dependent on identified external drivers (e.g., customer demand or regulations).	-Tested in over 6000 studies, therefore, is reliable. However, thrust of the theory is on innovation diffusion by opinion leader and change experts only, not taking into consideration that customer demand plays a role in innovation adoption. The current study focuses on both change agents and customers to fully understand the factors affecting innovation adoption. Falls short of some theoretical constructs specific to different technologies and how they diffuse. -Model could be useful, however, bearing in mind that most of these studies ended up adding other factors or combining it with TAM (El-Gohary, 2012).

			<p>E-marketing Vijayasathy (2004); Kocas (2002); Wu and Wang (2005).</p> <p>Internet and Consumer Cheung, Chan and Limayem (2005); Park and Yoon (2005); Forman (2005).</p> <p>EI-Gohary and Eid (2012) TAM+IDT.</p>	<p>-IDT factors influence adoption.</p> <p>-Compatibility, ease of use and other internal and external factors have an influence on e-Marketing adoption.</p>	<p>-IDT also seems to be a replica of TAM given the relative advantage and complexity variables.</p> <p>-Previous studies have also shown that these factors influence diffusion (Riemenschneider, Harrison & Mykytyn, 2003; Stockdale & Standing, 2006). A choice may need to be made between TAM and IDT.</p>
TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980).	Explains rational human behaviour which is predicted by an individual's behavioural intention. Information gathering is systematic.	Attitudes and subjective norms, behavioural intention.	<p>Meta-analysis study by Sheppard, Hartwick and Warshaw (1988).</p> <p>Kim, Kim and Goh (2011).</p>	<p>-Results revealed that less than 20% of the studies done used the original TRA model.</p> <p>-Modified to include perceived value and satisfaction. Results show that revisit intention is predicted by perceived value and satisfaction.</p>	<p>-Too many modifications leading to the development of the TRA (Hsu & Huang, 2012). Nonetheless, tourism studies were based on TPB which declare that behavioural intention is a result of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009).</p> <p>-Could be considered for use together with TAM as perceived behavioural control (in TPB) measures the complexity of using technology.</p>

			Lepp (2007).	-Positive attitude predicts in behavioural intention.	
TPB (Ajzen, 1991).	Explains rational human behaviour which is predicted by an individual's perceived behavioural control which results in behavioural intention.	Attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, behavioural intention.	Hansen, Jensen and Solgaard (2004). Ajzen (1991).	-Attitudes result in behavioural intentions. -16 studies revealed that perceived behavioural control predicted behavioural intentions.	-Despite having added the perceived behavioural control variable, TPB still focuses on predictions rather than actual outcome of behaviour (Yousafzai, Foxall & Pallister, 2010).
TRI (Parasuraman, 2000).	-Measures individual's readiness to use new technology. -Personality traits are driven by motivators of new technology use and inhibitors. -Used for segmentation purposes.	Optimism and innovativeness (motivators), discomfort and insecurity (inhibitors).	Walczuch <i>et al.</i> (2007) combined TRI and TAM. Wang <i>et al.</i> (2017). Victorino <i>et al.</i> (2009).	-Personality traits impacted user perceptions, however, innovation had no relationship with usefulness. -Technology readiness dimensions such as optimism and innovativeness as well as country of residence have a strong moderating effect on the relationship between perceived quality of technology enabled services and satisfaction.	-Model looks at both motivators and inhibitors at an individual level. This is one of the objectives of the current study to determine factors affecting adoption, whether positive or negative. -Given that the current study takes into consideration tourists' opinions apart from those of tourism operators, it may be a useful theory to use. -ICT adoption is still at infancy in developing nations (El-Gohary & El-Gohary, 2016; Kotoua & Ilkan, 2017a; Tsokota <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Chipeta & Ngoyi, 2018; Cheuk, Atang, Lo & Ramayah, 2019), therefore, considering readiness to use is considered pertinent in the current study. -Segmentation being one of the core functions of

				<p>TRI is an effective tool for segmenting customer segments.</p> <p>TR has a positive effect on attitude and intention to use.</p>	<p>marketing, this model is relevant as it may enable managers to co-create value with customers based on individual attitudes towards technology.</p>
			Lee <i>et al.</i> (2012).		
<p>Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis 2003).</p>	<p>-Takes into account alternative views of users and their acceptance of innovation.</p> <p>-model determines the moderating effects of gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use on information technology acceptance.</p>	<p>Performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions.</p>	<p>Williams, Rana and Dwivedi (2015).</p>	<p>-Examined 174 articles General purpose systems and specialised business systems were examined in the majority of research papers.</p> <p>-Performance expectancy and behavioural intention emerged as the best predictors of technology acceptance.</p>	<p>-Useful in studies of mobile technology (Park, Lee & Han, 2007; Song & Han, 2009; Williams <i>et al.</i>, 2015), mobile internet application (Kourouthanassis, Georgiadis, Zamani and Giaglis (2010), and 3G mobile communication (Wu, Tao & Yang, 2007; Wu, Tao & Yang, 2008).</p>
			Escobar-Rodríguez & Carvajal-Trujillo 2014).	<p>-Trust, habit, cost saving, ease of use, performance and expended effort, hedonic motivation and social factors influence purchase intent.</p>	<p>-Determinants of use are not universal hence, the development or updating of the model. Different studies came up with their own determinants (Escobar-Rodríguez & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; Slade <i>et al.</i>, 2015; Baptista & Oliveira, 2015; Dwivedi, Rana, Jeyaraj, Clement & Williams,</p>
			Slade, Dwivedi, Piercy and Williams (2015);	<p>-Performance expectancy, social influence,</p>	

			<p>Martins, Oliveira and Popovič (2014) (except innovativeness).</p> <p>San Martín and Herrero (2012)</p>	<p>innovativeness, and perceived risk had a significant influence on intentions to adopt, unlike effort expectancy which did not.</p> <p>-Levels of performance and effort expected influence purchase intention whereas the users' level of innovativeness has a moderating effect on the relationship between performance expectancy and online purchase intention.</p>	<p>2019; Gupta, Dogra & George, 2018).</p>
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Considering the summary in Table 3.1, this study is theoretically informed by the TRI and TAM as adoption theories combined to form TRAM (e.g., Lin *et al.*, 2007). The TRAM provides a clear interpretation of what scholars perceive as appropriate personality traits, indicators and predictors of digital media usage by leisure tourists.

Technology Readiness Index (TRI)

The TRI developed by Parasuraman (2000) provides psychometric properties which organisations can use to understand technology readiness of their customers. TRI is guided by users' readiness to use new technology, where personality traits are driven by motivators and inhibitors of new technology use, also regarded as antecedents to technology acceptance (Walczuch *et al.*, 2007). Since the TRI model looks at both motivators and inhibitors at an individual level, it proves to be of significance as one of the objectives in the current study is to determine leisure tourists' technology readiness and technology acceptance of digital media.

As applied to this study, the TRI theory holds that one would expect both motivators and inhibitors to influence digital media usage while travelling because despite opportunities brought about by technology, challenges and frustrations are equally prevalent (Parasuraman, 2000). Therefore, knowledge of such is important for the determination of managerial and marketing implications. TRI theory is important to the current study as the focus is primarily on the customer (in this case leisure tourist) and enables segmentation according to an individual's technology readiness.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The TAM was introduced by Davis in 1989. The model was used to predict user acceptance and use of technology. The theory argues that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are precursors to attitude and behavioural intention to use technology, which lead to actual system use (Davis, 1989). In this study, TAM predicts that one would anticipate perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness to influence actual use of digital media. Despite its popularity, TAM is centred on the organisation and system use.

Due to diversity in technology, various instruments in different settings were developed and tested to measure technology acceptance (e.g., Davis, 1989; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Oh, Jeong & Baloglu, 2013). In these research settings, perceived usefulness had a positive direct influence on behavioural intention, while perceived ease of use had either an indirect influence through perceived usefulness or no influence at all. In this regard, the model has proven to yield statistically proven results (Wöber & Gretzel, 2000).

Furthermore, TAM is useful in the current study given that it captures cognitive and behavioural responses as indicated in the original model, which explicates new technology use. Due to its consistency in measurement, TAM has been dovetailed with TRI to form TRAM with the intention of providing more useful insights on technology readiness and acceptance. TRAM, in this study, thus assumes that customer’s readiness to adopt, eventually influences organisations to make strides towards adoption of relevant technologies (Lin *et al.*, 2007; Parasuraman & Colby 2015). The TAM is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

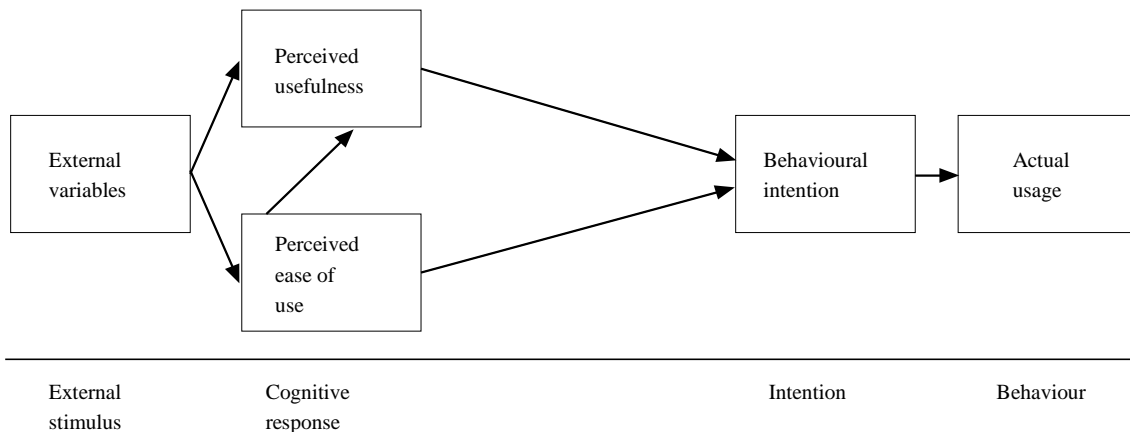


Figure 3.1: Technology Acceptance Model

Source: Adapted from Davis and Venkatesh (1996)

Technology Readiness and Acceptance Model (TRAM)

The TRAM model in Figure 3.2 below is the guiding framework for this study in terms of antecedents to digital media adoption. The constructs of the model are explained below and justification of their applicability to the current study is made.

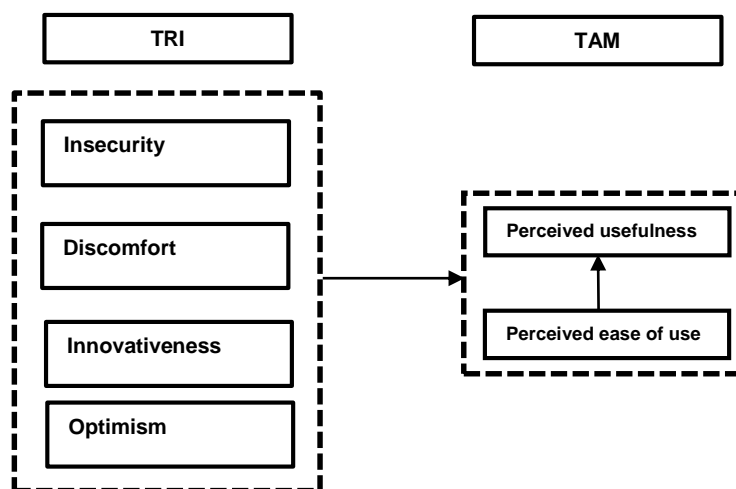


Figure 3.2: Technology Readiness and Acceptance Model

Source: Adapted from Walczuch *et al.* (2007)

The TRAM is an amalgam of the TRI and TAM frameworks. Seong and Hong (2022) assert that the acceleration and growth of information technology influences one's attitude, beliefs and usage of new technologies based on their past experience. TRAM had its inaugural debut in the early 2000s when researchers tested it on consumer adoption of e-services (Lin *et al.*, 2007) and financial services employees (Walczuch *et al.*, 2007). More recently, the model has been empirically tested on retail consumers (Roy, Balaji, Quazi & Quaddus, 2018) and virtual reality sports games (Seong & Hong, 2022). TRI makes an evaluation of both positive and negative beliefs about technology, while TAM helps provide an understanding of travellers' intentions to use information technology when making travel decisions (Yang *et al.*, 2022).

When used in isolation, the TRI is limited in its discussion of technology adoption as it focuses on a limited number of psychological traits (Seong & Hong, 2022). Similarly, TAM only focuses on systematic attributes of new digital media technology (Seong & Hong, 2022). According to Williams, Dwivedi, Lal and Schwarz (2009) using TAM alone to empirically test technology adoption will not produce absolute results, hence the need to include other measurement elements (Dube, Van Eck & Zuva, 2020). Arguably, TAM alone, when used in a marketing setting, may not provide an elaborate account of consumer adoption behaviours (e.g., Lin *et al.*, 2007; Ferreira, da Rocha & da Silva, 2014; Chung, Han & Joun, 2015; Wibowo, Nurdany & Aji, 2023). These shortcomings are what birthed the TRAM, with scholars arguing in favour of the integrated model (Kuo, Liu & Ma, 2013).

The TRAM is potent, in that it explains technology acceptance at individual level (Lin *et al.*, 2007; Parasuraman, 2000), recognises adoption of system-specific technologies (Seong & Hong, 2022) and caters for personality traits that motivate the usage of technology (Agarwal & Prasad, 1999; Parasuraman, 2000). In virtual communities, optimism and innovativeness are positively associated with technology acceptance (Hung & Cheng, 2013). Motivators and inhibitors of the TRI have been widely tested against the TAM variables (Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Jin, 2013) to confirm the influence on usage intention (Lin *et al.*, 2007). Interestingly, while others were using the TRI as a moderator (Chang & Chen, 2021), Seong and Hong (2022) found positive technology readiness relationships with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use and is an interesting observation as past studies have primarily focused on all TRAM variables, without contextualising to fit the demands of their studies.

Wang *et al.* (2017), in their study, deleted several items from the TRI. Wang *et al.* (2017) also discovered that discomfort and insecurity may be less relevant to hospitality technology-enabled services when compared to other technologies. In relation to employee adoption of new technology, Walczuch *et al.* (2007) confirmed a positive significant association between

perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use; innovativeness and perceived ease of use and optimism and perceived usefulness. However, discomfort yielded a negative relationship with both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. More recently, Hailey Shin *et al.* (2021) conducted a series of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability to evaluate the measurement model, and discomfort was eliminated due to low factor loadings. The rest of the TRAM constructs were retained. It can, therefore, be noted that studies were discarding only those variables that were not supported. Chung *et al.* (2015) acknowledges that technology readiness is an important factor affecting visitors' beliefs, attitudes, usage intention for augmented reality and destination visit intention.

Furthermore, Goebert and Greenhalgh (2020) took a more parsimonious approach and focused only on two TRAM factors of optimism and innovativeness. This is because of the past confirmed studies that these second order dimensions were more important. This study tested all the TRAM dimensions in an effort to prove or disconfirm findings from past similar studies because of the considerably large number of digital media options being explored in this study. Considering that the current study focused on leisure tourists, it was anticipated that if one experiences discomfort, they will not use digital media, while leisure-seeking travellers are optimistic by nature. This assertion is backed by similar studies in the past (e.g., Chung *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2017; Goebert & Greenhalgh, 2020).

3.6 TYPES OF DIGITAL MEDIA

The types of digital media used during travel as applied in this study are explained below.

3.6.1 Virtual reality

Virtual reality has emerged as an agile digital marketing strategy with great potential to benefit the tourism industry (Rainoldi *et al.*, 2018). Studies on the adoption of virtual reality and its acceptance in the marketing of destinations are more conceptual than empirical (Disztinger, Schlögl & Groth, 2017; Rainoldi *et al.*, 2018; Tussyadiah, Wang, Jung & tom Dieck, 2018). An empirical approach to establish the implications of virtual reality in destination marketing is more apt (Tussyadiah, Wang & Jia, 2016; Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2018) given its potential as a marketing tool (Huang, Backman, Backman & Chang, 2016; Van Kerrebroeck, Brengman & Willems, 2017; Willems *et al.*, 2019). Despite its potential in destination marketing, consumer adoption of virtual reality is somewhat lethargic (Fink, 2017; Schiopu *et al.*, 2022; Huang, 2023). The most compelling feature of virtual reality is that it immerses potential tourists through imagery, giving them an opportunity to virtually 'taste' the service prior to actual consumption (Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2018; Buhalis, Lin & Leung, 2022; McLean & Barhorst, 2022).

Hence, mental images are established, giving potential tourists a more realistic picture of the destination (Guttentag, 2010; Rainoldi *et al.*, 2018; McLean & Barhorst, 2022).

A study by González-Rodríguez *et al.* (2020) revealed that virtual reality technologies have an indirect influence on destination image. Destination marketers must be aware of opportunities that await them in using virtual reality technologies for potential visitors to explore a destination (Huang *et al.*, 2016).

As noted by Yung and Khoo-Lattimore (2019), usability, consumer awareness and acceptance of virtual reality are challenges posing practical implications to the tourism industry. Yang *et al.* (2022) found that the sensory effect of virtual reality technology influenced tourists' immediate pre-travel decisions, especially in the wake of a crisis such as COVID-19. Such immersive technology positively influences travel behaviour by facilitating a 'presence', which results in positive attitudes and visit intentions (Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2018; Huang, 2023).

3.6.2 Augmented Reality

Augmented reality is a type of virtual reality that uses a device to aid the projection of a real-world environment using computer-generated images (Guttentag, 2010). AR applications enable visualisation and the telling of stories about a given location in situ (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019). Augmented reality is regarded as the new wave technology tourism (Chung *et al.*, 2015; Chung, Lee, Kim & Koo, 2018; Lacka, 2020) due to its capability to augment the real environment through virtual objects and information (Chung *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, augmented reality has the potential to transform the tourism sector by allowing travellers an opportunity to experience the real environment superimposed by virtual objects and information (Chung *et al.*, 2018; Schiopu *et al.*, 2022).

In turn, this experience enriches tourists with an appreciation, knowledge and understanding of a particular destination (Jung, Chung, & Leue, 2015; Chung *et al.*, 2018). Augmented reality has emerged as a type of technology that transforms how tourists interact with the environment as well as provision of travel experiences through internet connectivity, cameras and GPS (Jung *et al.*, 2015; Chung *et al.*, 2018). However, contrary to its potential, augmented reality has not been readily adopted in tourism across the globe as anticipated (Chung *et al.*, 2015; Chung *et al.*, 2018; Jung *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, research on augmented reality adoption in tourism is still scant (Chung *et al.*, 2018; Lacka, 2020). This is despite augmented reality being rated by technology-ready tourists as a key driver of tourism consumption (Chung, Jia, Xiaorui & Koo, 2019). Notably, scholars have developed models to measure the influence of one's adoption of augmented reality on visit intention (Chung *et al.*, 2018; Lacka,

2020). It is suggested that research on factors influencing augmented reality adoption in tourism be explored empirically (Guttentag, 2010; Jung *et al.*, 2015; Lacka, 2020).

3.6.3 Context-aware recommender media

Context-aware recommender systems are a valuable asset in the digital era (Colombo-Mendoza, Valencia-García, Rodríguez-González, Colomo-Palacios & Alor-Hernández, 2018). As such, context-aware recommender systems provide accurate information and satisfy customers by way of integrating contextual information with recommendations (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Mohammad, Rahman & Mayor-Vitoria, 2022; Kalloori, Chalumattu, Yang, Klingler & Gross, 2023). Such systems entail integrating context-awareness and recommender systems (Van Setten, Pokraev & Koolwaaij, 2004; Kalloori *et al.*, 2023) to provide a better experience through personalisation (Liu, Tong, Liu, Yuan & Ju, 2016; Kalloori *et al.*, 2023). A recommender system is said to be context-aware if it can recognise and take advantage of users' context to provide relevant real-time information and services (Colombo-Mendoza *et al.*, 2018). In this regard, users' preferences are analysed through machine-learning algorithms. Thereafter the product or service is determined by another set of algorithms which then make recommendations (Colombo-Mendoza *et al.*, 2018).

According to Van Setten *et al.* (2004) context-aware recommendation makes use of mobile technologies such as mobile devices, General Packet Radio Services (GPRS) and Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS) to generate mobile data and Global Positioning Systems (GPS). These technologies are used to acquire contextual information in real time (Liu, *et al.*, 2016). Buhalis and Foerste (2015) add that such context-aware technologies enhance marketing strategies through context-based marketing applications such as Foursquare, Google Latitude, Yelp, and Brightkite, and so on. In addition, Liu, *et al.* (2016) assert that context-aware services (e.g., GPS and Location Based Services (LBS)) are the most profitable and promising form of an intelligent tourist guide. Such technologies according to Liu, *et al.* (2016) are arguably much more flexible and inexpensive than the use of a tour guide.

Foursquare in 2018 alone is said to have exceeded 50 billion users, averaging 12 million check-ins per month. Yelp was trailing with 155 million user reviews during the same period (Frith & Wilken, 2019). This is an indication that context-aware marketing technologies are trending and have taken the consumer market by storm as positive reviews yield an increase in demand and revenue (Frith & Wilken, 2019). In tourism, such applications provide tourists with contextual information such as weather, latitude, social environment, and nearby attractions, among others (Van Setten *et al.*, 2004). The ultimate goal of such context-aware

marketing applications is to personalise tourists' experiences by meeting their situational and personal needs (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2015). Furthermore, such technologies are of paramount importance to tourism given cutthroat competition in the sector (Missaoui, Kassem, Viviani, Agostini, Faiz & Pasi, 2019). It is, therefore, prudent for organisations to explore the potential of context-aware recommender media to augment extant processes toward the creation of personalised services and experiences (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2015; Behera, Gunasekaran, Gupta, Kamboj & Bala, 2020).

3.6.4 Social media

Chung and Koo (2015:219) conceptualise social media as “a group of internet-based applications that exist on the Web 2.0 platform and enable internet users from all over the world to share ideas, thoughts, experiences, perspectives, information, and forge relationships”. Consumers have been empowered significantly by social media to such an extent that their behaviour is more influential than before (Khan, Sahadev, Rashid & Banerjee, 2022; Seyfi, Hall, Vo-Thanh & Zaman, 2022). Social media exist in a variety of forms and serve numerous purposes. For example, social media platforms such as Facebook, Trip Advisor, Twitter and Instagram, facilitate peer-to-peer communication between travellers (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015).

Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are amongst the most effective and fast evolving digital marketing channels (see Taecharungroj & Avraham, 2022). TripAdvisor is equally one of the largest and most trusted social media sites for tourism-related information (Lee, Verma & Roth, 2015; Lee, Benjamin & Childs, 2022) and choice of tourist destinations through online reviews (Rodríguez-Díaz, Rodríguez-Díaz, Rodríguez-Voltes & Rodríguez-Voltes, 2018). This study pays special attention to TripAdvisor, Facebook, YouTube, which have been recognised as some of the most 'popular' social media networking sites carrying large volumes of travel-related information (e.g., Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Madureira & Alturas, 2022; Nilashi, Abumalloh, Alrizq, Alghamdi, Samad, Almulihi, Althobaiti, Ismail & Mohd, 2022).

Such social media sites allow tourists to share experiences and stories about a particular destination (Bassano *et al.*, 2019). Despite being popular among tourists, Facebook and YouTube platforms permit the sharing of content of all kinds, including large videos, when compared to other social media platforms (Pantano, Priporas & Stylos, 2017). In addition, social media has been qualified as a low-cost ubiquitous digital marketing tool (Uşaklı, Koç & Sönmez, 2017). In hospitality, social media such as Facebook and TripAdvisor, are used for interacting and sharing information with customers (Nilashi, Ibrahim, Yadegaridehkordi, Samad, Akbari & Alizadeh, 2018). Moreover, more than half of American travellers use search

engines when planning their travels (Nilashi *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, hotels recommended on social media become travellers' first choice (Nilashi *et al.*, 2018). In essence, social media plays an active role in influencing decision-making at all stages of travel (Hudson & Thal, 2013; Nazir *et al.*, 2022). Having said that, TripAdvisor emerges as the world's largest travel site that affords travellers an opportunity to socialise and share their opinions on hospitality (Liu, Mehraliyev, Liu & Schuckert, 2020).

Initially a social media tool, YouTube has fast evolved to become a marketing tool favoured by both DMOs and tourists (Trinh & Nguyen, 2019). YouTube is a social networking site that enables creation, sharing, commenting, and sending of custom-made videos and channels (Adeyinka, Okemute & Tella, 2018; Ladhari, Massa & Skandrani, 2020). Notably, TripAdvisor, Facebook and YouTube are online social network platforms that facilitate the promotion of tourism products and services as well as tourists' purchase of the same (Hew *et al.*, 2018). The tourism industry has particularly benefited from the role of social media in the distribution and communication of tourism-related products (Lianto, 2014; Kim, Lee, Shin & Yang, 2017). Resultantly, DMOs marketing strategies thrive on the effectiveness of social media (Hays *et al.*, 2013; Baalbaki & Zizka, 2023). DMOs can ultimately effectually take advantage of comments posted on social media to comprehend customers' preferences (Leung, Law, Van Hoof & Buhalis, 2013; Elliot & Lever, 2022; He, Deng, Li & Gu, 2022).

3.6.5 Official tourism websites

DMO websites perform various functions, such as expediting travel itineraries and online bookings (Chen, Jong, Hsu, Lin, 2023). The responsibility to provide reliable up-to-date information about the destination, to attract potential tourists (Gupta, 2019) lies with the DMO. A DMO website's primary responsibility is to furnish tourists with up-to-date information supported by the promotion and marketing function (Lian & Yu, 2019). A DMO website should act as an information hub, directing visitors to different attractions and amenities available on the destination (Beldona & Cai, 2006; Matusse & Joaquim, 2022; Juanna, Kusuma, Ningrum & Lapalanti, 2022). In this sense, tourism websites serve as the portal for advertising and marketing (Wu, 2018; Matusse & Joaquim, 2022).

To make a website more effective, DMOs need to optimise their website for use via mobile phones (Groth & Haslwanter, 2015). By so doing, DMOs have access to a larger mobile tourism customer base (Leung & Dickinger, 2019). However, if a website's viewing and navigation is not compatible with different devices, users are most likely to switch (Cyr, Head & Ivanov, 2006; Leung & Dickinger, 2019). Websites are used as a source of differentiation by those destinations that seek to promote themselves through sophisticated communication

and interactive technologies (Jimenez-Barreto, Sthapit, Rubio & Campo, 2019). It is online destination platforms such as websites that enable tourists to 'try' the tourism product during the pre-visit phase (Zhang *et al.*, 2018; Jimenez-Barreto *et al.*, 2019).

Tourists' decision-making has been greatly influenced by travel websites because of the immersion of ICTs into modern life (Qian, Law & Wei, 2019). Travel websites thus facilitate efficient online marketing and customer engagement (Qian *et al.*, 2019). It is undeniable that websites remain pivotal to tourism marketing (Van Huy & Thai Think, 2022). In turn, intention to visit a destination is dependent on the strength of destination websites (Özcan, 2019).

As such, a destination website needs to be designed in accordance with tourists' preferences (Aryanto, Chang & Widiyanto, 2019). For example, websites must be informative and interactive to effectively promote and represent a destination (see Morrison, 2013; Chopra, Lim, & Jain, 2022). Satghare and Sawant (2019) add that websites are an indispensable channel of distribution which facilitates destination branding, interactivity, and research. Website effectiveness is based on information quality, performance and usability (see Park & Gretzel, 2007; Matusse & Joaquim, 2022). Potential tourists thus rely on a destination's website for information related to the destination's offering (Vinyals-Mirabent, Kavaratzis & Fernández-Cavia, 2019). It is important to evaluate website effectiveness from the user's perspective to draw insights on consumer behaviour (Satghare & Sawant, 2019).

3.7 DIGITAL MEDIA USAGE DURING TRAVEL

3.7.1 Using virtual reality during travel

According to Li and Chen (2019:15) "Virtual reality (VR) is a computer-simulated 3D environment in which participants' sight, hearing, and even their touch, smell, and taste are stimulated by the virtual environment". Imaginative hedonism is a new trend among those seeking virtual tourism experiences (Yoon & Santos, 2021). Accordingly, the immersive nature of virtual reality enables it to project psychological images of actual destinations (Bogicevic, Seo, Kandampully, Liu & Rudd, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2021). In order for tourists to be more inclined towards virtual reality adoption, Woyo and Nyamandi (2022) recommend tourism managers to invest more in learning about tourists' behavioural intentions.

In the context of consumer products, Mishra, Shukla, Rana and Dwivedi (2021) claim that customers prefer hedonic virtual reality experiences especially if the service is visually appealing. A learning point for tourism managers is to consider hedonic/utilitarian affordances of virtual reality during travel.

After the tourism sector was hit hard by COVID-19, destination managers found themselves investing in temporary tourism gratification through virtual reality technologies (Kim *et al.*, 2021). This was due to the travel risk perceptions among tourists (Sigala, 2020). Virtual reality is one of the most popular immersive destination marketing tools in the new age (An *et al.*, 2021), more specifically the COVID-19 era (Kim *et al.*, 2021). In their study, An *et al.* (2021) found that a visitor who is satisfied with virtual reality experience is most likely to visit the destination. This is because the virtual tour reduces uncertainty by projecting vivid images of the destination (An *et al.*, 2021).

3.7.2 Using augmented reality during travel

Research shows that augmented reality-enabled mobile applications present consumers with benefits such as ease of use and hedonic affordances (e.g., Oyman, Bal & Ozer, 2022). Remarkably, augmented reality's perceived usefulness is said to have positive effects on behavioural intentions to use while perceived ease of use does not have any effect on the same (Hur, Lee & Choo, 2017; Oyman *et al.*, 2022). Generally, using augmented reality for shopping purposes is categorised as hedonic (pleasure) and utilitarian value-seeking, that is, the practicality and rationality of using the immersive technology for shopping experiences (Vieira, Rafael & Agnihotri, 2022). Vieira *et al.* (2022) found that augmented reality is positively associated with hedonic and utilitarian usage resulting in behavioural intentions to use the technology. In addition, research shows that innovativeness and hedonic usages greatly influence behavioural intentions (Suh & Prophet, 2018; Lee *et al.*, 2022).

3.7.3 Using context-aware recommender media during travel

Advances in technology have brought more convenience for travellers through personalised systems. Literature on context-aware recommender systems shows that the success of these systems is dependent on accurate user information (e.g., Majid, Chen, Chen, Mirza, Hussain & Woodward, 2013; Ishanka & Yukawa, 2018; Renjith, Sreekumar & Jathavedan, 2020). Context-aware recommender systems are continually evolving together with ICTs and have over the years established a stake in the tourism sector (Renjith *et al.*, 2020). Renjith *et al.* (2020) further state that with social media in the picture, data mining and analytics have been made easy for the development of context-aware recommender systems.

Majid *et al.* (2013) proposed a context-aware recommendation system which takes into account traveller preferences drawn from their experiences. Context-aware recommendation systems are particularly important because travellers have different personalities and preferences when it comes to travel itinerary (Kolahkaj, Harounabadi, Nikravanshalmani & Chinipardaz, 2020).

Furthermore, Ishanka and Yukawa (2018) propose a context-aware recommender system that incorporates traveller personality traits and emotions. Moreover, travellers often find it difficult to plan their itinerary given different points of interest, preferences and context (Fogli & Sansonetti, 2019).

To avert this challenge, Fogli and Sansonetti (2019) recommend a context-aware recommender system based on Foursquare which personalises itineraries with related context-aware multimedia content. Geotagged photos usually reflect one's travel experiences and are often used to make location-based recommendations for travellers (Mou, Jiang, Zhang, Niu, Zheng, Wang & Yang, 2022; Wan, Wang, Hong, Li, Chen & Huang, 2022). This means that tourist location recommendations will be accurately predicted and personalised based on the user's context.

Huang (2016) suggests that personalising recommendations and taking travel preferences and context into account, positively influences travel behaviour. In support of this notion, Bahramian, Ali Abbaspour and Claramunt (2017) developed a hybrid interactive context-aware tourism recommender system. A context-aware tourism recommender system is thus 'aware' of the traveller's feedback and contextual data. Therefore, it personalises the travel itinerary based on user preferences (Shekari, Sabet, Guan, Rossi, Schreiber & Tanca, 2022).

3.7.4 Using social media during travel

The use of social media for destination marketing is characterised by a combination of challenges and opportunities (Sotiriadis, 2017). This is shown by the extent to which it provides potentially damaging information on destination image (Nazir *et al.*, 2022), at the same time presenting vast opportunities to the tourism sector (Sotiriadis, 2017). Consequently, social media is predisposed toward information dissemination before, during and after visit (Rathore, Joshi & Ilavarasan, 2017; Jansson, 2018).

Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier (2015) affirm that social media provides useful travel planning information, thus reducing destination image uncertainties (Rathore *et al.*, 2017). As a result, social media platforms are a rich source of travel information for those who are uncertain about travel choices during their planning (Kuo, 2022). Moreover, social media posts by family, friends and acquaintances help reduce uncertainties about a destination (Kuo, 2022). Facebook is one such social media platform that provides useful marketing information that may result in destination competitiveness and an increase in tourist arrivals (Mkwizu, 2019).

Marketing and selling of tourism services usually commences at the pre-visit stage because travellers usually want to make evaluations prior to consumption (Lund, Cohen & Scarles, 2018). Worth noting is that tourists' purchase decisions are mainly influenced by eWOM on social media sites such as Facebook and TripAdvisor (Lund *et al.*, 2018; Lam *et al.*, 2020). Evidence suggests that reviews on TripAdvisor involve a lot of interaction that results in the construction of a positive destination image (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2022). It is interesting to note, however, that the younger generation prefers to share their emotional brand values on other social media platforms besides Facebook (Lalicic, Huertas, Moreno & Jabreel, 2020). This is because they prefer to interact on platforms that enable them to share videos and pictures.

Notably, YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook are among the popular social media sites used by DMOs to communicate their tourism products to customers (Molina *et al.*, 2020; Madureira & Alturas, 2022; Nilashi *et al.*, 2022). Their popularity is based on their media and information-sharing capabilities that enable trip organisation among tourists (Molina *et al.*, 2020). Continuance of using Facebook is, therefore, based on its usefulness to the user (Ashraf, Hou & Ahmad, 2019). However, in as much as TripAdvisor is a platform for social networking, it is also a goal-oriented platform that enables the collection and distribution of User Generated Content (UGC), thus reducing costs for the traveller (Akdin *et al.*, 2022). This characteristic makes the platform utilitarian-based on its ability to allow users to text, search for information, and share experiences through videos and pictures (Akdin *et al.*, 2022).

3.7.5 Using official tourism websites during travel

Official tourism websites bear the responsibility of portraying the image of a destination (Lian & Yu, 2019). This is facilitated by promoting a destination through sharing destination information and images (Putra, Saepudin, Adriansyah & Wahyu Adrian, 2018). Over the years, DMO websites have gained popularity as advertising mediums with an impact on visit intentions (Morosan, 2008; Lian & Yu, 2019). In addition, an official tourism website has implications on the image created about the destination (Kanazawa, Lourenção, Oliveira & Giraldi, 2021), thus predicting a traveller's future behavioural intentions (Foroudi, Akarsu, Ageeva, Foroudi, Dennis & Melewar, 2018; Rowley & Hanna, 2020). This is confirmed by Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio, Campo and Molinillo (2020) who assert that linking an official tourism website to social media, makes it a credible information source. Emphasis by DMOs must, therefore, be placed on finding ways to ensure a worthy browsing experience for visitors (Kanazawa *et al.*, 2021). Accordingly, an official tourism website should be user-friendly, easy to use, attractive, and interactive (Kanazawa *et al.*, 2021). In consonance, Warren and Dinnie (2018) add that official tourism websites must be interactive and updated with current

information relevant to travel and must be linked to travel review sites such as TripAdvisor (see De Rosa, Bocci & Dryjanska, 2019).

3.8 HEDONIC AND UTILITARIAN AFFORDANCES OF DIGITAL MEDIA

An exploratory study by tom Dieck, tom Dieck, Jung and Moorhouse (2018) shows that the use of virtual reality is influenced by factors such as usability, hedonism and perceived usefulness, among others. Furthermore, studies recognise perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as hedonic motivations that influence the adoption of virtual reality among travellers (see Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019; Kim & Hall, 2019). Vishwakarma, Mukherjee and Datta (2020) conclude that travellers' virtual reality experiences are hedonic, based on the assumption that the choice of technology used is based on benefits it presents. It is undeniable that virtual reality presents hedonic and utilitarian benefits when used in tourism experiences (Flavián *et al.*, 2022). This ultimately presents implications for tourism managers to carefully study tourism product features before designing virtual reality pre-experiences cultivated from hedonic and utilitarian benefits (Flavián *et al.*, 2022).

Mishra *et al.* (2021) found that users find augmented reality easy to use due to its responsiveness when consuming hedonic products. Users are, however, most likely to purchase and recommend augmented reality based on its utilitarian rather than on its hedonic benefits (McLean, Osei-Frimpong, Al-Nabhani & Marriott, 2020; Mishra *et al.*, 2021). Regrettably, technology anxiety is an impediment to the adoption of immersive technologies due to the risk-averse nature of an individual (Li & Xu, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2022). Ibili, Resnyansky and Billingham (2019:2658) define technology anxiety as "the tendency of an individual to be restless, anxious or frightened about the current or future use of technology in general". This term is, however, referred to as insecurity in this current study (see Parasuraman, 2000).

Intention to use context-aware recommender application is generally associated with benefits sought (e.g., Xu, Peak & Prybutok, 2015; Logesh, Subramaniaswamy, Vijayakumar, 2019). In addition, literature on hedonic benefits has always been associated with user satisfaction (Mano & Oliver, 1993) and intention to use context-aware recommender systems (Xu *et al.*, 2015; Akel & Armağan, 2021). Akel and Armağan (2021) examined user behaviour of Foursquare and Swarm context-aware recommender applications. Their findings show that both hedonic and utilitarian benefits result in continuance intention to use context-aware recommender applications.

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggest that products with utilitarian benefits have both material and objective characteristics (e.g., tangible attributes), while hedonic benefits (e.g., application of senses, fantasies and emotional arousal) are based on pleasure-seeking behaviours (e.g., Akel & Armağan, 2021). Akel and Armağan (2021) evaluate hedonic motivations based on an application's aesthetics and perceived enjoyment, and the utilitarian motivations based on the application's utility and quality. This means that fun-seeking, efficiency, location and convenience are some of the benefits sought by visitors using applications such as Foursquare (Akel & Armağan, 2021).

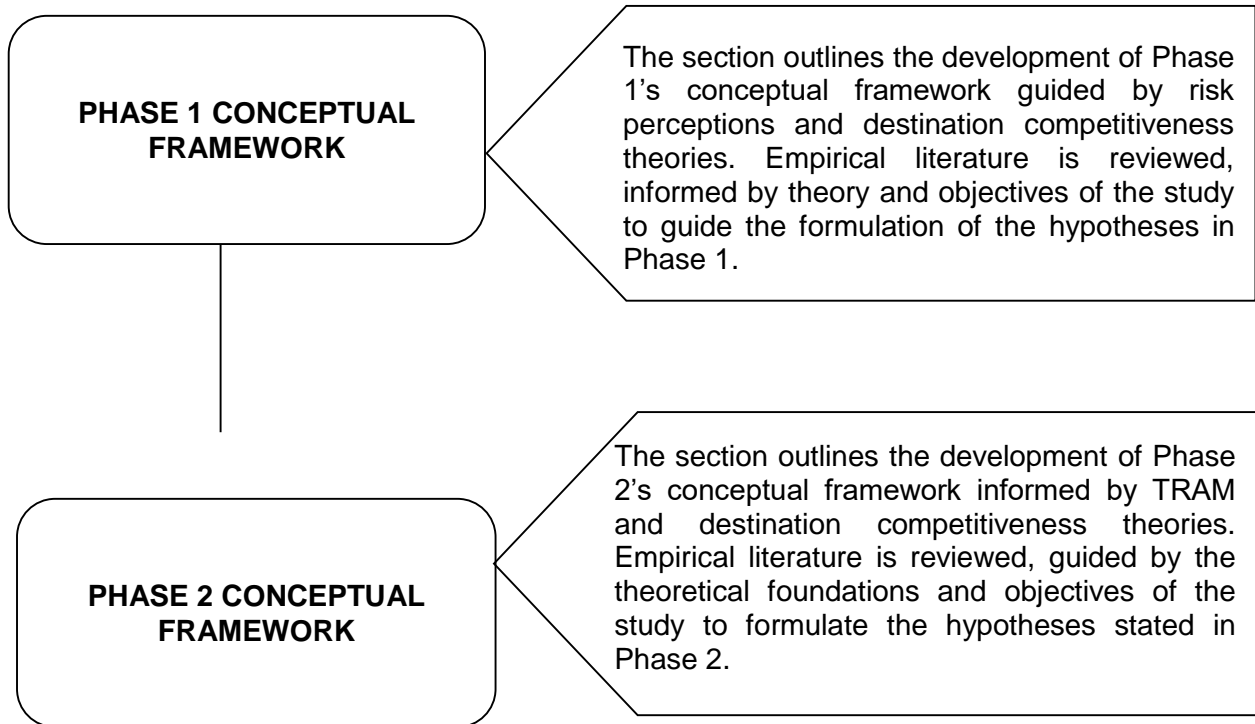
Akdim *et al.* (2022) sought to understand the antecedents of continuance intention to use TripAdvisor and Instagram. Their findings revealed that hedonic and utilitarian variables influenced the continued use of TripAdvisor and Instagram. These were perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use respectively. Likewise, the quality of an official tourism website positively influences hedonic/utilitarian values, which result in positive behavioural intentions to travel (Kuo, 2022). Wang and Li (2019) identify hedonic/utilitarian perceptions as antecedents to the perceived usefulness of official tourism websites.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed literature on ICTs, destinations and their competitiveness. It revealed the extent of ICT adoption in emerging destinations as well as ICT readiness and destination images of those destinations. Specifically, South Africa and Zimbabwe's ICT readiness is analysed. Furthermore, the chapter reviewed literature on digital marketing in tourism and that of digital marketing and destination competitiveness. Lastly, a theoretical context on technology adoption is provided to give context to the tourists' technology readiness to adopt different types of digital media during travel. The next chapter provides a detailed description of the development of this study's conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT



4.1 INTRODUCTION

Destination image is a marketing component which qualifies and amplifies destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. The study was structured around two phases, therefore the two demand conditions were investigated as follows: Phase 1: travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis and Phase 2: digital media usage (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences). The study first sought to determine whether leisure tourists' risk perceptions have an influence on the relationship between destination image perceptions and intentions to revisit emerging destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Phase 1, the risk perceptions and destination competitiveness theories were included in the development of the first conceptual framework in Figure 4.1.

Leisure tourists exude self-determining selection behaviour and are highly involved in the development and delivery of electronic services (Lin *et al.*, 2007). As a result, Lin *et al.* (2007) conclude that the TRAM is useful in explaining the influence of personality traits on technology adoption at consumer level. In Phase 2, the study then sought to determine the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel.

The study also sought to establish whether the use of different forms of digital media could result in a resilient tourism sector, which could lead to a competitive, emerging destination. The case studies of South Africa and Zimbabwe were used as two competing tourism destinations within SSA. A conceptual model (as shown in Figure 4.2) was developed based on the TRI and TAM (TRAM), as well as the destination competitiveness theory, which addresses destination image and demand conditions.

4.2 PHASE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESES

The conceptual model in Phase 1 (refer to Figure 4.1) sought to establish leisure travel risk perceptions of tourists visiting emerging destinations amidst COVID-19, a necessary procedure in this study to determine the importance of destination image in building a competitive destination. Furthermore, testing the relationships in the conceptual framework helped ascertain how travel risk perceptions affect both destination image and competitiveness. Generally, behavioural intentions to revisit are an indicator of destination competitiveness (see Zeng, Li & Huang, 2021; Mior Shariffuddin *et al.*, 2023).

Therefore, a conceptual framework, considering the implications of risk perceptions on destination image and future behavioural intentions, was ideal for this study (see Bae & Chang, 2021), which took off at the peak of COVID-19.

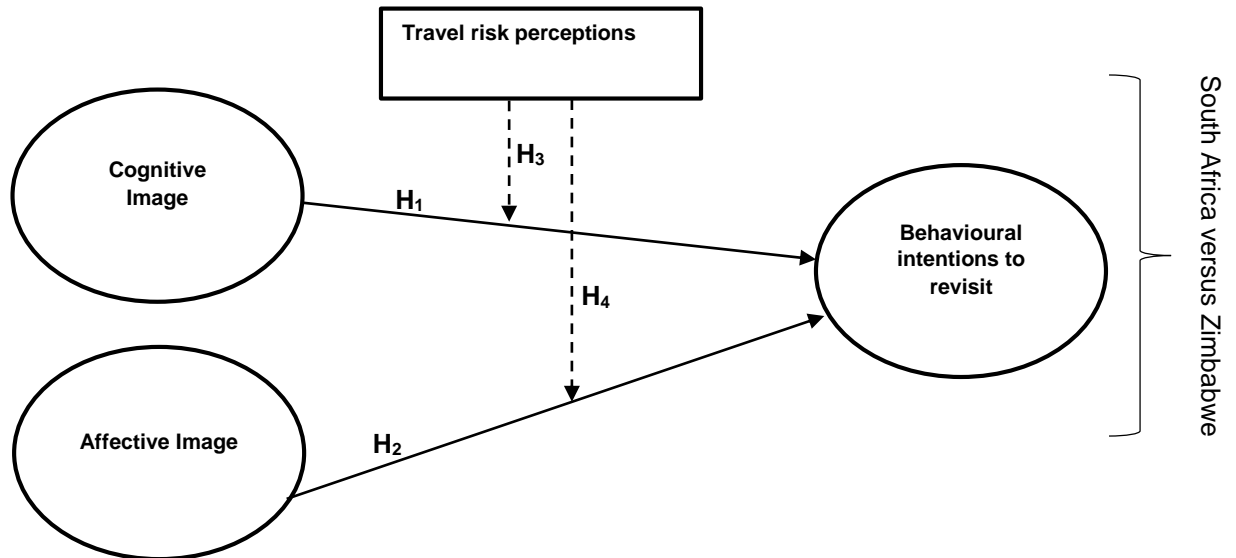


Figure 4.1: Proposed conceptual model for Phase 1 of the study

Source: Adapted from Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020); Agyeiwaah *et al.* (2021)

4.2.1 Constructs of the proposed conceptual model

Destination image

Various studies have considered destination image as an output variable with varied independent variables (e.g., Dubois *et al.*, 2020; Guo & Pesonen, 2022; Stylidis, Woosnam & Tasci, 2022; Baalbaki & Zizka, 2023). Destination image has also been investigated as an antecedent to and a measure of destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010; Reisinger *et al.*, 2019; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023). As a means to attract visitors, competitive destinations need to strengthen their tourism brand through destination image (Qu *et al.*, 2011; Ragb *et al.*, 2020). Also, destination marketing has the potential to enhance destination image, whilst destination management strengthens destination competitiveness (Luštický & Štumpf, 2021). Resultantly, destination competitiveness is dependent on unified marketing and management strategies (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Altinay & Kozak, 2021; Luštický & Štumpf, 2021).

Destination image is a complex concept, elusive and subjective in nature. Simply put, destination image components are characterised as; cognitive, affective, and conative (Gartner, 1994). In addition, Zhang *et al.* (2014) through an assessment of previous studies,

clustered destination image into cognitive, affective, cognitive–affective and joint image, and self-congruity.

There is, however, a general agreement among scholars that there are two distinct components of destination image, that is cognitive and affective image (e.g., Stylidis *et al.*, 2022; Najar & Rather, 2023), while others conceptualise it as an integration of affective, cognitive, and conative images (e.g., Kim, Lehto & Kandampully, 2019; Das, Mandal, Dixit, Patra & Chandran, 2023). These studies clearly expose the complexity of the destination image construct. Apart from this complexity, literature affirms that the success of a destination's performance is determined by cognitive and affective images (e.g., Jose, Rejikumar, Asokan Ajitha, Mathew & Chakraborty, 2022; Stylidis *et al.*, 2022) and consequently, both cognitive and affective images are antecedents to a destination's overall image (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020; Stylidis *et al.*, 2022). Cognitive evaluations are a result of one's beliefs and perceptions of a destination, while affective image is the individual's feelings about a destination (Tapia *et al.*, 2019).

Despite the extensive literature developed on conceptualising and measuring destination image, there are discrepancies in terms of what components constitute the destination image construct (Das *et al.*, 2023). However, since literature recognises conative image as a behavioural intentions construct (see Jose *et al.*, 2022; Das *et al.*, 2023), this study will only consider the cognitive and affective image components, as behavioural intentions to revisit are already an anticipated outcome of this study. The above arguments set this study in motion, as it seeks to assess the relationship between destination image and future behavioural intentions moderated by travel risk perceptions.

Travel risk perceptions

Pandemics have become the order of the day over the past 20 years, having gone through SARS in 2003, the avian flu in 2015 and most recently COVID-19 (Senbeto & Hon, 2020; Nazneen, Hong, & Ud Din, 2020; Neuburger & Egger, 2021). Government policies, positive communication, and new tourism products can thus be introduced as effective ways of recovering destination image post-crisis (after Avraham, 2015). Notably, travel risk perceptions have a significant impact on tourists' destination choices and travel behaviours (Seyfi, Rastegar, Rasoolimanesh & Hall, 2023). Hence, misleading media coverage can negatively influence perceptions of potential visitors (Zenker *et al.*, 2019; Yang *et al.*, 2022) because tourists who are unfamiliar with a destination are more reliant on external information sources than those with destination familiarity (Roy & Attri, 2022). Furthermore, when tourists are exposed to an unfamiliar environment, they tend to be insecure compared to familiar

destinations where they are more likely to have positive travel intentions (see Chi, Huang & Nguyen, 2020).

Behavioural Intentions

Behavioural intentions are tourists' future intentions to revisit and recommend (Nazir *et al.*, 2022). Literature shows that there is a relationship between destination image and tourists' behavioural intentions (see Najjar, Bhat & Najjar, 2022). Tourists' perceptions of a destination significantly influence their satisfaction, in turn, positively impacting intention to revisit and recommend the destination (Widjaja, Jokom, Kristanti & Wijaya, 2020; Akgün, Senturk, Keskin & Onal, 2020). Literature notes that the more satisfied a tourist is, the more likely they are to revisit and recommend a destination to friends and family (Nguyen, Nguyen & Le, 2020). It can also be concluded that a destination's overall image has an impact on behavioural intentions (Qu *et al.*, 2011; Najjar *et al.*, 2022).

4.2.2 The relationship between destination image and leisure tourists' behavioural intention to revisit

Tourists' perceptions of a destination significantly influence their satisfaction, resulting in a positive impact on their intention to revisit and recommend the destination (see Widjaja *et al.*, 2020; Akgün *et al.*, 2020). Notably, destination image is often reliant on marketing information collected during travel planning or based on past travel experiences (see Su, Nguyen, Nguyen & Tran, 2020). Cognitive and affective images are antecedents to the overall image, which impacts positively on behavioural intentions (see Styliadis *et al.*, 2022; Carreira, González-Rodríguez & Díaz-Fernández, 2022). Behavioural intentions such as revisit intention, are the most commonly used measures of tourists' satisfaction (Foroudi *et al.*, 2018; Widjaja *et al.*, 2020; Jiménez-Barreto *et al.*, 2020). Several studies further show that destination image has a more compelling influence on tourists' intention to revisit (Li, Wen, & Ying, 2018; Cham *et al.*, 2021; Nazir *et al.*, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2022).

When tested individually, cognitive image significantly encourages behavioural intentions (e.g., Ren, Su, Zhou, Hou & Wen, 2022; Joo, Cho & Woosnam, 2023) and is drawn from the assumption that cognitive evaluations are a precursor to tourists' affective images of a destination since they usually take place prior to the actual visit (Woosnam, Styliadis & Ivkov, 2020). However, some studies show that the affective component of destination image positively influences behavioural intentions since it is formed during and post-visit (e.g., Herrero-Crespo, San Martín-Gutiérrez, Collado-Agudo & García-de-los-Salmones-Sánchez, 2022). Where both cognitive and affective components of the destination image are examined simultaneously, research seems to consistently highlight their influential role on behavioural

intentions (e.g., Li *et al.*, 2018; Abdillah, Afiff, Hati & Furinto, 2022; Carreira, González-Rodríguez & Díaz-Fernández, 2022; Najjar *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, it can be deduced that the overall image (cognitive & affective) of a destination, results in a positive inclination to revisit (Akgün *et al.*, 2020).

The above literature review forms the basis of formulating the following hypotheses:

H₁: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

H₂: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

4.2.3 The moderating role of travel risk on the relationship between destination image and leisure tourists' behavioural intention to revisit

The concept of travel risk perceptions has been under scrutiny dating as far back as the 2000s (Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013; Shahabi Sorman Abadi *et al.*, 2021), yet little is known about the moderating effect of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image and future behavioural intentions in the wake of COVID-19 among emerging competing destinations. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, literature is scant concerning the influence of travel risk perceptions on the relationship of either cognitive or affective images (tested separately) with destination image. Rather, scholars test the moderating role of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between overall destination image and behavioural intentions (e.g., Farrukh, Shahzad, Sajid, Sheikh & Alam, 2022).

More recent studies show that travel risk perceptions negatively influence the relationship between travel motivations and behavioural intentions (Caber, González-Rodríguez, Albayrak & Simonetti, 2020). Nonetheless, earlier studies (Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013) found that travel risk perceptions had a moderating effect on the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Regardless, research has shown that during the COVID-19 pandemic, tourists exhibited high risk perceptions against travel (Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, the higher the risk, the higher the risk reduction strategies by tourists when choosing a destination (see Jahari *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, Farrukh *et al.* (2022) found that the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions was high when the level of perceived risk was low. This study seeks to establish the moderating effect of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image (cognitive and affective) and future behavioural intentions to visit amidst a crisis.

The above literature review forms the basis of formulating the following hypotheses:

H₃: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

H₄: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

4.3 PHASE 2: CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESES

The development of the conceptual model in Figure 4.2 was guided by the TRAM and destination competitiveness theories. This study sought to gain an understanding of the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel. Further, the study sought to determine whether there is a relationship between technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. The study anticipates that digital media usage results in a positive image leading to a competitive destination. This prompted an examination of the relationship between technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences and digital media usage versus destination image and behavioural intentions.

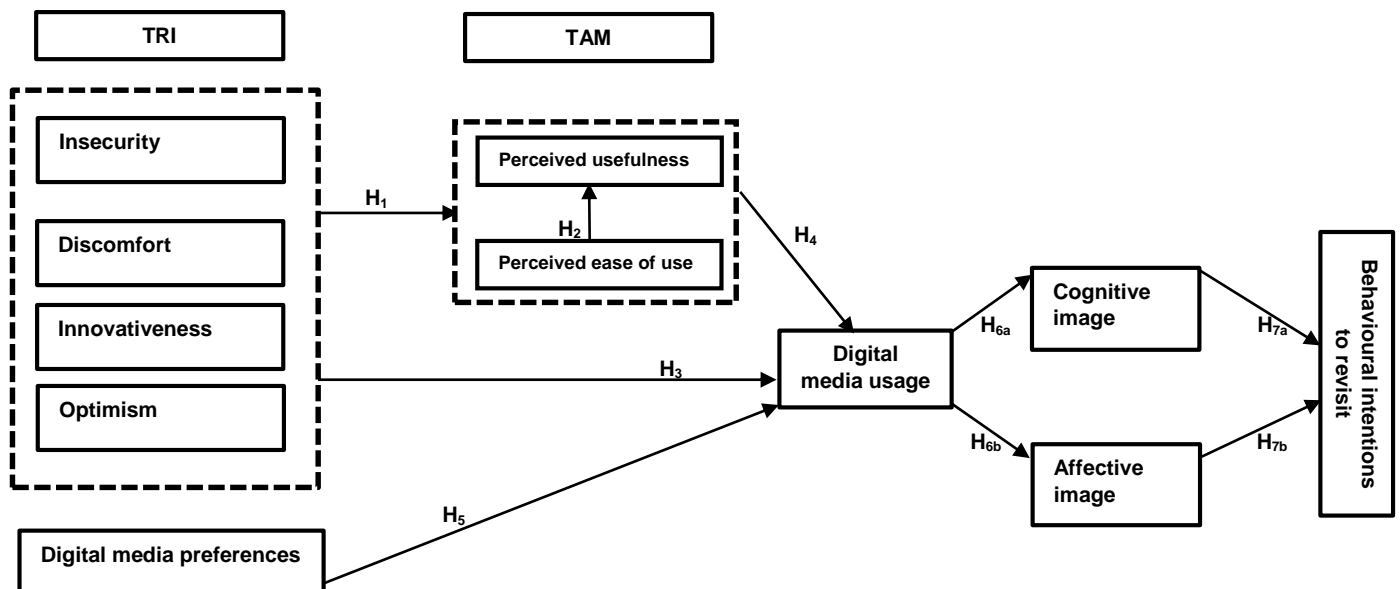


Figure 4.2: Proposed conceptual model for Phase 2 of the study

Source: Adapted from Lin *et al.* (2007); Dubois *et al.* (2020); Ritchie and Crouch (2010); Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020)

4.3.1 Constructs of the proposed conceptual model

The constructs illustrated in the proposed conceptual framework (refer to Figure 4.2), providing the theoretical context for the current study, are explained next. An explication of each of the constructs is essential in gaining an understanding of these within their context for the current study.

Optimism

Optimism is described by Parasuraman (2000) as having high regard for technology, believing that one can have control, be flexible and efficient. Optimists are positive about the outcomes of life, tending to focus less on negative energy and with an openness towards technology (Walczuch *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, Yang, Yan, Wang and Xue (2022) assert that optimism is when individuals believe that technology is flexible and convenient to use. In the case of virtual tourism, tourists' optimism has a significant impact on their acceptance of virtual tourism technology (Yang *et al.*, 2022; Senalasari, Setiawati & Wibisono, 2022). In other words, optimistic individuals are those that exude keenness and openness to adopt new mobile tourism technologies (Sia, Saidin & Iskandar, 2023).

Innovativeness

Innovativeness refers to thought leadership and pioneering in technology-related issues (Parasuraman, 2000). Accordingly, Walczuch *et al.* (2007) conceptualise innovativeness as a trait that drives an individual to adopt any form of new information technology. Such individuals positively view technology as useful (Walczuch *et al.*, 2007). Regarding the use of mobile applications for travel purposes, innovativeness is proven to have a significant impact on technology acceptance (Jarrar *et al.*, 2020). Innovativeness has also emerged as a personality trait that influences both technology acceptance and visit intentions (Yang *et al.*, 2022). In addition, innovativeness helps tourists to overcome any reservations or suspicions they may have with new technologies in tourism (Ciftci, Berezina & Kang, 2021).

Insecurity

Parasuraman (2000:311) defines insecurity as “distrust of technology and skepticism about its ability to work properly”. Consumers with high levels of insecurity tend to distrust technology (Lu, Wang & Hayes, 2012) and are pessimistic about its ability to function as expected (Huy, Nguyen, Pham & Berry, 2019). Generally, insecure people do not believe in technology because they believe that it is potentially harmful (Hradecky, Kennell, Cai & Davidson, 2022). Such people are also sceptical about the ability of technology to function properly (Parasuraman & Colby 2015). In the case of the technology acceptance of mobile applications, for instance, insecurity negatively impacts technology acceptance (Humbani & Wiese, 2019).

However, in some tourism empirical studies, insecurity is shown to have a positive impact on technology acceptance (see Wibisono, Rafdinal, Setiawati & Senalasar, 2023). This discrepancy could be because insecurity may depend on the type of digital media used when travelling, the period it has been used, and individual characteristics (Wibisono *et al.*, 2023).

Discomfort

Discomfort can be defined as a state of fearing loss of control of, and being subjugated by, technology (Hao, Qiu, Park & Chon, 2022). Discomfort occurs when an individual has no perception of, and senses pressure from, adopting technology, because they feel that it is complex by nature (Yang *et al.*, 2022). Senalasar *et al.* (2022) assert that when one senses discomfort in virtual technology, they will perceive it as useless and difficult to use for travel purposes. Notably, discomfort does not have a significant influence on the acceptance of virtual tourism technology (Yang *et al.*, 2022; Senalasar *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, if virtual tourism technology is relatively new to most of the targeted users, discomfort may occur (Senalasar *et al.*, 2022), which is mostly the case with emerging destinations where the use of virtual reality in tourism is still relatively nascent. Hence, it can cause discomfort among users (Wibisono *et al.*, 2023).

Perceived ease of use

Perceived ease of use is defined as the extent to which one believes that technology use is effortless (Davis, 1989). Furthermore, perceived ease of use is conceptualised as one's perception of whether technology use requires mental effort (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Rouibah, Abbas, & Rouibah, 2011). If technology is difficult to use, its benefits will be difficult to comprehend, therefore, customers will be unable and unwilling to use it (Blut & Wang, 2020). Perceived ease of use indicates the ability of tourists to use digital media with ease during travel (Fan, Jiang & Deng, 2022), meaning that perceived ease of use has a positive impact on the adoption of virtual tourism technology (Senalasar *et al.*, 2022), based on its convenience and accessibility (Yang *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, if travel applications are perceived as easy to use, the utilitarian motivation to use them will be enhanced (Zhou, Song & Zhou, 2022). Ultimately, trust in a travel application is built, based on its perceived ease of use (Choi, Wang, Sparks & Choi, 2023).

Perceived usefulness

Perceived usefulness is the extent to which one trusts that technology use will enhance their task performance (Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989). It should also be noted that perceived usefulness is the extent to which individuals believe that the use of information technology creates substantial value (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived usefulness is regarded as an antecedent

of actual technology use (Tariyal, Bisht, Rana, Roy & Pratap, 2022). With regards to virtual tourism technology, perceived usefulness was found to have a positive impact on its adoption (Senalasarari *et al.*, 2022).

Perceived usefulness of travel applications is undeniably one of the motivations of continued usage intention (Zhou, Song & Zhou, 2022). Ultimately, trust is built, depending on the perceived usefulness of travel applications (Choi *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, perceived usefulness of digital media positively influences attitude and behavioural intentions to travel (Kim, Lee, & Preis, 2020; Fan *et al.*, 2022).

Digital media preferences

Notably, travel planning digital media have become a popular feat among travellers over the years (Ho *et al.*, 2021) because of their ability to consolidate and provide travel-related information and activities for decision-making (Xiang *et al.*, 2015; Yuan, Chan, Eichelberger, Ma & Pikkemaat, 2022). Generally, customers prefer digital media touchpoints, such as email, websites, and search engines, when transacting online (Hallikainen, Alamäki & Laukkanen, 2019). Empirically, it has been shown that travellers prefer easy to use digital media, such as websites, when searching for information (Wong, Leung & Law, 2020).

Travellers also prefer to use smart devices that allow them to explore a destination through digital media (e.g., Pradhan, Oh & Lee, 2018), being an indication that consumer preferences need to be determined first before investing in digital media (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019). Empirical evidence shows that such digital media features, both hedonic and utilitarian, make it easy for tourists to travel and enjoy their experiences in a destination (Ho *et al.*, 2021). As a result, smart itineraries have become a necessity, because they provide critical travel-related personalised information to tourists (Xiang *et al.*, 2015; Ho *et al.*, 2021).

Digital media usage

According to Davis (1989), two important and distinct determinants of acceptance or rejection of information technology exist, namely, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Particularly, factors influencing technology acceptance are also dependent on the type of new technology, target users, and context (Moon & Kim, 2001). Decisively, Davis (1989) notes that user perceptions of technology influence acceptance to use it. Moreover, technology used for travel purposes exists in the form of different digital media and communication channels, for example, virtual reality (Li & Chen, 2019), augmented reality (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019), social media (Kim *et al.*, 2017), official tourism websites (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018) and context-aware recommender media (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Choi *et al.*, 2021).

4.3.2 Leisure tourists' technology readiness and acceptance to use digital media

Ideally, when consumers' level of technology readiness is high, they perceive virtual reality to be useful (Chang & Chen, 2021). Technology readiness in the form of innovativeness and optimism is said to be an antecedent to consumer perceived usefulness when it comes to one's intention to use virtual and augmented reality for travel purposes (see Ahmad, Butt & Muzaffar, 2023; Wibisono *et al.*, 2023). In addition, findings from a study by Yang *et al.* (2022) show that only optimism had a positive and significant impact on perceived usefulness of virtual reality.

Jarrar *et al.* (2020) concluded that innovativeness positively influenced perceived usefulness of mobile tourism applications, indicating that technology readiness of the tourist is important in determining their acceptance or rejection of technology, especially in the wake of COVID-19 (Iskender *et al.*, 2022). Technology readiness is generally an antecedent to both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Lin *et al.*, 2007). Notably, if travellers are insecure about a mobile tourism application, they will have discomfort in using it, hence they may not perceive its usefulness (Jarrar *et al.*, 2020).

The more one is technology ready, the more likely it is to be perceived as useful (Chung *et al.*, 2015; Bulchand-Gidumal & William, 2020). Lin *et al.* (2007) theorised technology readiness to be a precursor to perceived ease of use. Some scholars found it to have both positive and negative impacts on perceived ease of use (see Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Oh, Yoon & Chung, 2014). Nonetheless, studies show that in general, optimism and innovativeness positively influence perceived ease of use (Huy *et al.*, 2019; Kim, Chiu & Chow, 2019; Sun, Lee, Law & Hyun, 2020).

In the context of tourism, the same technology readiness traits (optimism and innovativeness) were found to have a significant effect on perceived ease of use of virtual tourism technology (Kim & Han, 2022; Wibisono *et al.*, 2023). When one's technology readiness level is high, there is a tendency to perceive digital media as easy to use (Chang & Chen, 2021). Discomfort has no effect on perceived ease of use of virtual tourism technology, while insecurity has a positive effect (Wibisono *et al.*, 2023). This could be because leisure tourists are generally optimistic by nature, hence will not use digital media if they have insecurity and discomfort traits. This assertion is supported by previous tourism-related studies (e.g., Chung *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2017; Goebert & Greenhalgh, 2020).

Having reviewed the literature above, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₁: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' technology readiness and technology acceptance to use digital media.*

4.3.3 Leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital media

Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the most dominant TAM dimensions used to measure technology acceptance in tourism literature (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023; Ozekici, 2022; Liu, Henseler & Liu, 2022). Empirical findings show that perceived ease of use significantly influences the usefulness of virtual tourism (e.g., Li, Liang, Huang, Yang, Li & Bai, 2022). In addition, tom Dieck and Jung (2018) posit that perceived ease of use influences perceived usefulness of virtual and augmented reality in tourism. It can, therefore, be ascertained that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness have a direct, positive relationship which results in consumer intention to adopt augmented reality for travel purposes (Jung, Lee, Chung & tom Dieck, 2018; Fan *et al.*, 2022).

Research has found a significant positive relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital media such as social media (e.g., Camilleri, 2018). In the case of official tourism websites, usability is regarded as a key determinant of the website's success (Chung *et al.*, 2015; Huang, 2020), implying that usefulness of website information enables dialogue with visitors if the website is easy to use (Hinson, Osabutey & Kosiba, 2020). In essence, perceived usefulness positively influences website bookings (Abdullah, Kamal, Azmi, Lahap, Bahari, Din & Pinang, 2019). Conclusively, perceived ease of use is an antecedent to perceived usefulness of digital media when searching for tourist destinations (Tariyal *et al.*, 2022).

Having reviewed the literature above, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₂: *There is a relationship between leisure tourist's perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital media.*

4.3.4 Influence of technology readiness and technology acceptance on the type of digital media used during travel

Individuals with insecurity and discomfort fear that they may unintentionally divulge their personal information, thus online platforms may not be safe for them to conduct business (see Oh *et al.*, 2014; Sia *et al.*, 2023; Romanillos & Moya-Gómez, 2023). In the end such individuals are suspicious of any new technology functions, and are unwilling to use it (Huy *et al.*, 2019).

Literature shows a positive relationship between innovativeness and actual usage of internet and mobile shopping technology (Palash, Talukder, Islam & Bao, 2022; Jain, Kaul & Sanyal, 2022). In the context of tourism, optimism and innovativeness have emerged as key determinants of a traveller's use of digital media (see Jarrar *et al.*, 2020). Notably, the tourism sector has been heavily scarred by COVID-19, altering the way of 'doing things', as well as tourists' attitudes and travel behaviour (Schiopu *et al.*, 2022).

The travel constraints brought about by the pandemic forced DMOs and tourists alike to explore new travel options. Such options include the use of immersive technologies such as virtual reality. However, these options are dependent on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, and such is the case with virtual reality (Schiopu *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, perceived usefulness of virtual reality was confirmed in a study by Zeng, Cao, Lin and Xiao (2020). Likewise, data collected by Schiopu *et al.* (2021) revealed that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, were among the preconditions of virtual reality use in tourism.

Ahmad *et al.* (2023) applied the TRAM in view of the adoption of augmented reality applications in a tourism context. In the case of social media, TAM variables (i.e., perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness) have a positive and significant indirect effect on tourists' intentions to utilise it for their travels (Cheunkamon, Jomnonkwao & Ratanavaraha, 2020). The TAM was also used by Singh and Srivastava (2019) to explain the acceptance and usage of social media by leisure tourists. The findings revealed that the use of social media was determined by its perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

When it comes to official tourism websites, attitude toward participating in online travel communities, is influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (e.g., Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Chen *et al.*, 2023). Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of consumer-generated media are some of the main reasons why tourists use social media platforms such as TripAdvisor, YouTube, and Facebook (see Hew *et al.*, 2018; Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2018). This is supported by Assaker (2020) who, despite gender differences, found that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use resulted in travellers' usage of User Generated Content (UGC) platforms. In addition, Yang and Shih (2020) found out that digital natives perceived new technology to be useful.

As a result, perceived usefulness of digital media, such as recommendation systems, also significantly influenced their adoption (Mican, Sitar-Tăut & Moisesescu, 2020). By and large, perceived ease of use is shown to have a positive effect on intention to use technology (Mohammadi, 2015; Sadiq & Adil, 2020).

The same can be deduced in tourism where authors (Tandon *et al.*, 2020; Schiopu *et al.*, 2022) found out that tourists' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness positively influence digital media adoption.

The above discussion indicates that perceived usefulness of technology results in technology use (Singh & Srivastava, 2019; Sadiq & Adil, 2020). Contrastingly, the presence of discomfort and insecurity inhibits the adoption of mobile tourism applications (Geng, Li & Xue, 2022).

Having reviewed the literature above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H₃: *There is a relationship between leisure tourist's technology readiness and the type of digital media used during travel.*

H₄: *There is a relationship between leisure tourist's technology acceptance and the type of digital media used during travel.*

4.3.5 Digital media preferences and the type of digital media used during travel

Preferences entail attributes that influence a tourist's inclination for digital media applications (Rivera, Croes & Zhong, 2016). As a result, consumer preferences must be considered before investing in digital media (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019). Rivera *et al.* (2016) examine attributes that influence tourist preference for digital media content. The authors identify the device, location awareness, coupons, content information, personalisation, and mapping options, as customer preferences for the use of mobile applications. Goh, Lee, Ang and Lee (2010) break down specific preferences that trigger use of mobile applications into; travel basics, e-services, sight-seeing, trip planning and medical services.

Past studies show that consumers prefer to use digital media that provide relevant real-time and location-based information (Cepeda-Pacheco & Domingo, 2022; Weismayer, Pezenka & Ladurner, 2023). Such real-time information, using mobile applications, is necessary to facilitate bookings and online check-ins, among other things (Hadjielias, Christofi, Christou & Drotarova, 2022). It is also important to note that tourists' preferences of ICT vary (Stankov & Filimonau, 2019), and that this variability can influence the type of digital media used (Brusch, 2022).

Tourists' preferences vary depending on the attributes they are looking for in digital media (Rivera *et al.*, 2016). At the same time, tourists' technology preferences vary due to emerging consumer trends (Stankov & Filimonau, 2019). Digital media can generally be used at different stages of travel depending on the tourist's intention and the purpose served by that media.

For instance, augmented reality is used on site (Chung *et al.*, 2018), while virtual reality is predominantly used prior to travelling, to give travellers an initial sense of destination (Bulchand-Gidumal & William, 2020; Hopf, Scholl, Neuhofer & Egger, 2020).

Generally, tourists prefer social media sites that are user-friendly and functioning with minimum effort (Sia *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, Tandon *et al.* (2020) assert that travellers prefer an easy-to-use social media site when searching for destination information, which to a greater extent, will help travellers to reach their travel goals easily (Mendes-Filho, Mills, Tan & Milne, 2018). Additionally, tourists often visit official tourism websites when planning their travel to access information and make necessary bookings (Ismail, Suid, Rashid & Boon, 2022). Empirical evidence shows that if a DMO website is easy to use, it becomes the most preferred among users (Wong *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, context-aware recommender systems normally give contextual information while tourists interact with the environment onsite (Missaoui, Kassem, Viviani, Agostini, Faiz & Pasi, 2019). For this reason, individuals prefer context-aware recommender systems that personalise their travel itinerary based on their travel preferences (Choudhary & Tulasi, 2019). Tourists ultimately prefer digital media with hedonic/utilitarian affordances because they make it easy to travel and enjoy experiences while visiting a destination (Ho *et al.*, 2021).

The above literature review forms the basis of formulating the following hypothesis:

H₅: There is a relationship between leisure tourists' digital media preferences and the type of digital media used during travel.

4.3.6 Influence of type of digital media used on destination image

Given rapid developments in the technological field, studies increasingly investigate the relationship between destination image and the provision of information through visual media (Terzidou, Stylidis & Terzidis, 2018; Dubois *et al.*, 2020; Griffin, Guttentag, Lee, Giberson & Dimanche, 2023). Labanauskaitė, Fiore and Stašys (2020) posit that a destination's image can be enhanced through digital marketing tools. Resultantly, success of technology-induced marketing is contingent on the fit between marketing and the technology used (Lin, Han, Lyu, Ho, Xu, Hsieh, Zhu & Zhang, 2020).

Scholars argue that influencer-marketing is a form of digital marketing which impacts destination attractiveness through its electronic word of mouth (eWOM) capabilities on digital platforms (Vassakis *et al.*, 2019). Digital media are not new to destination marketers.

They are a well-established means to establish, change, or reinforce a destination's image (see Avraham, 2015; Pan, Santos & Kim, 2017; Dubois *et al.*, 2020; Caridà *et al.*, 2021). Destination image formation takes place before, during and after a visit (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). As a result, destination image is dependent on the stage of digital media marketing exposure during travel (Liu *et al.*, 2020).

According to Rainoldi *et al.* (2018) virtual reality is a fast-paced technology which could potentially benefit the tourism industry. The advent of COVID-19 was an eye-opener for the tourism sector to earnestly consider virtual reality technologies as a means to cope with the crisis (Yang *et al.*, 2022). If incorporated in tourism marketing strategy, virtual reality has the potential to trigger a more detailed image of a destination in the consumer's mind (Rainoldi *et al.*, 2018). Yung and Khoo-Lattimore (2019) assert that the strength of virtual reality lies in its visualisation of spatial environments, thereby providing vital information to tourists at the travel planning stage.

Tussyadiah *et al.* (2016) add that, to improve the persuasive power of virtual reality, imagery and sites must be aesthetic enough to build a positive destination image in the mind of tourists. Further, Flavián *et al.* (2019) posit that virtual reality technologies potentially enhance destination image. Virtual reality technologies portray a favourable destination image in the mind of potential tourists (Marasco *et al.*, 2018; Godovykh, Baker & Fyall, 2022).

Studies also show how the interactive and advertising nature of virtual reality influence positive feelings toward a destination (Griffin *et al.*, 2017; Griffin *et al.*, 2023). The perceived visual appeal of virtual reality experiences, coupled with emotional engagement of users, reflect the potential influence of virtual reality technologies on destination image (Marasco *et al.*, 2018). In agreement, Tussyadiah *et al.* (2018) assert that virtual reality's ability to offer persuasive destination images to potential tourists, gives them an opportunity to "try before you buy". Accordingly, smart tourism applications enhance destination image by responding to tourists' needs, before, during and after travel (see Tavitiyaman, Zhang & Tsang, 2022).

It should be noted that destination image differs across social networking sites, given their ability to shape perceptions and decision-making (Song, Park, & Park, 2021; Wang, Li, Wu & Wang, 2021). Resultantly, images portrayed by actual tourists on social networking sites, such as TripAdvisor and Facebook might influence those of potential tourists (Liu *et al.*, 2020). In addition, TripAdvisor tends to project consistent impressions of destination images (Borges-Tiago, Arruda, Tiago & Rita, 2021).

Social networking sites are gaining popularity in destination image formation (Clarke & Hassanien, 2020). For example, Facebook vlogs play an important role in destination image formation (Peralta, 2019). Similarly, YouTube, by virtue of its travel vlogs, influences destination image (Trinh & Nguyen, 2019).

Videos of tourism destinations posted on YouTube have a strong influence on the image of a destination (Arora & Lata, 2020). As a result, DMOs can take advantage of YouTube to promote the destination's brand (Tiago, Moreira & Borges-Tiago, 2019). Findings from a study by Govindan *et al.* (2020) confirm that social media is directly linked to destination image and behavioural intentions. Tourists share information on social media at various stages of the trip, that is; pre-, during and post-trip stages (Wong, Lai & Tao, 2020). For example, decisions on where to dine are often made before and during the trip using various forms of social media (Liu *et al.*, 2020). Prior to travelling, tourists search social media sites for recommendations of hotels, excursions, and various services (Oliveira, Araujo & Tam, 2020).

Website design has a bearing on the image of a destination (Rowley & Hanna, 2020). For this reason, DMO-branded websites elicit behavioural intentions from the image projected (Rowley & Hanna, 2020). DMO websites are among some of the online platforms capable of enhancing a destination's image (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018). Official websites are the most trusted when it comes to provision of information about a specific destination (Vyas, 2019). Hence, website effectiveness and attractiveness enhance destination image and future behavioural intentions (Zhang, Cheung & Law, 2018). Governments also make strides toward promoting destination image by investing in tourism websites (Lian & Yu, 2019). Likewise, it is the responsibility of official DMO websites to promote cities, provinces, and countries (Martínez-Sala, Monserrat-Gauchi & Alemany-Martínez, 2020).

Official tourism destination websites need to be optimised to foster online relationships with both potential and actual visitors by enhancing online communication processes (Stokłosa, Marchiori & Cantoni, 2019). Unlike social media, official tourism websites are more influential in destination image formation (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018). Official websites should be a true reflection of a destination's attractions to strategically position a destination (Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019). It is undisputable that official tourism websites are at the tourist's disposal, acting as a first port of call in their interaction with a destination's tourism products (Huang, 2020).

Context-aware recommender media are an important component of destination marketing through personalisation of the needs of on-the-go travellers (Lamsfus *et al.*, 2015; Yoon & Choi, 2023).

Generally, context-aware recommendation systems make personalised suggestions based on user preference, thereby enhancing brand visibility (Kulkarni & Rodd, 2020). Accordingly, travel recommender systems shape tourists' brand perceptions through their ability to provide destination and travel-related contextual information (Chaudhari & Thakkar, 2020). Fazel and Rajendran (2015) assert that Foursquare is a context-aware recommender application that results in destination image formation and is supported by Shafiee, Tabaeian and Tavakoli (2016), who found that overall destination image is influenced by context-aware media such as Foursquare.

Arguably, destination image (i.e., cognitive, and affective responses) is influenced by digital media. For example, virtual reality was found to have a strong positive influence on both cognitive and affective images of a destination (Kim, Lee & Jung, 2020; Yung, Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag & Surovaya, 2021). Furthermore, Michael *et al.* (2019) argue that destination typography has a positive influence on cognitive image, while images and videos have an influence on affective image. When media type and the destination it is used in are evaluated separately, objective inferences on possible interactions can be obtained (Michael *et al.*, 2019). The above discussion facilitates an investigation on whether cognitive and affective images vary between competing emerging destinations given the type of digital media used during travel.

The above literature review forms the basis of formulating the following hypotheses:

- H_{6a}: *There is a relationship between the type of digital media used during travel and leisure tourists' cognitive image perceptions.*
- H_{6b}: *There is a relationship between the type of digital media used during travel and leisure tourists' affective image perceptions.*

4.3.7 Influence of digital media-enabled destination image on future behavioural intentions to revisit

COVID-19 has shifted the focus of tourism marketing towards the use of digital media as a less risky travel option (Schiopu *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, ICT technologies, such as social media and mobile technology, facilitate memorable tourist experiences, which, in turn, influence the relationship between perceived destination image and behavioural intentions (Zhang, Wu & Buhalis, 2018). Moreover, literature suggests that promoting a destination through digital media results in positive perceptions and visit intent (Guerrero-Rodríguez, Stepchenkova, & Kirilenko, 2020). Consequently, the quality of a destination's digital media may result in positive behavioural intentions (Lee, Lee, Jeong & Oh, 2020).

Destinations need to align their digital technologies with those used by tourists (Chai-Arayalert, 2020). Accordingly, destinations need to be resilient and strategic in their selection of digital channels if they are to successfully position themselves (see Lekgau *et al.*, 2021). Yang *et al.* (2022) proposed and tested a model measuring tourists' technical readiness and acceptance of virtual tourism. Their findings show that intentions to use virtual reality technologies influence immediate virtual travel. Digital media have since been applied to the tourism sector to build destination resilience by allowing tourists to navigate destinations in the comfort of their homes (Akhtar, Khan, Mahroof Khan, Ashraf, Hashmi, Khan & Hishan, 2021).

Sevim and Çalişkan (2021) conducted a thematic analysis which revealed that augmented reality improves tourist experiences as well as revisit intentions. In essence, tourists' technology readiness is an antecedent worth recognising when it comes to the adoption of augmented reality technologies and visit intentions (Chung *et al.*, 2015; Sevim & Çalişkan, 2021). Research shows that augmented reality has a positive impact on visit intention (tom Dieck *et al.*, 2018; Lacka, 2020). Furthermore, augmented reality has hedonic affordances on tourists, by allowing them to 'travel before they actually do' (Stangl, Ukpabi & Park, 2020; Ahmad *et al.*, 2023). It is anticipated that post-COVID-19, augmented reality will benefit DMOs and travellers by enabling them to make informed future travel decisions (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023). The positive impact of augmented reality on visit intentions cannot be overemphasised. Ultimately, destination image is believed to be one of the most prominent factors illuminating tourists' intentions to revisit (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Therefore, this, calls for an examination of the relationship between digital media-enabled destination image and tourists' revisit intentions.

The above literature review forms the basis of formulating the following hypotheses:

- H_{7a}: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' cognitive image perceptions and their behavioural intentions to revisit.*
- H_{7b}: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' affective image perceptions and their behavioural intentions to revisit.*

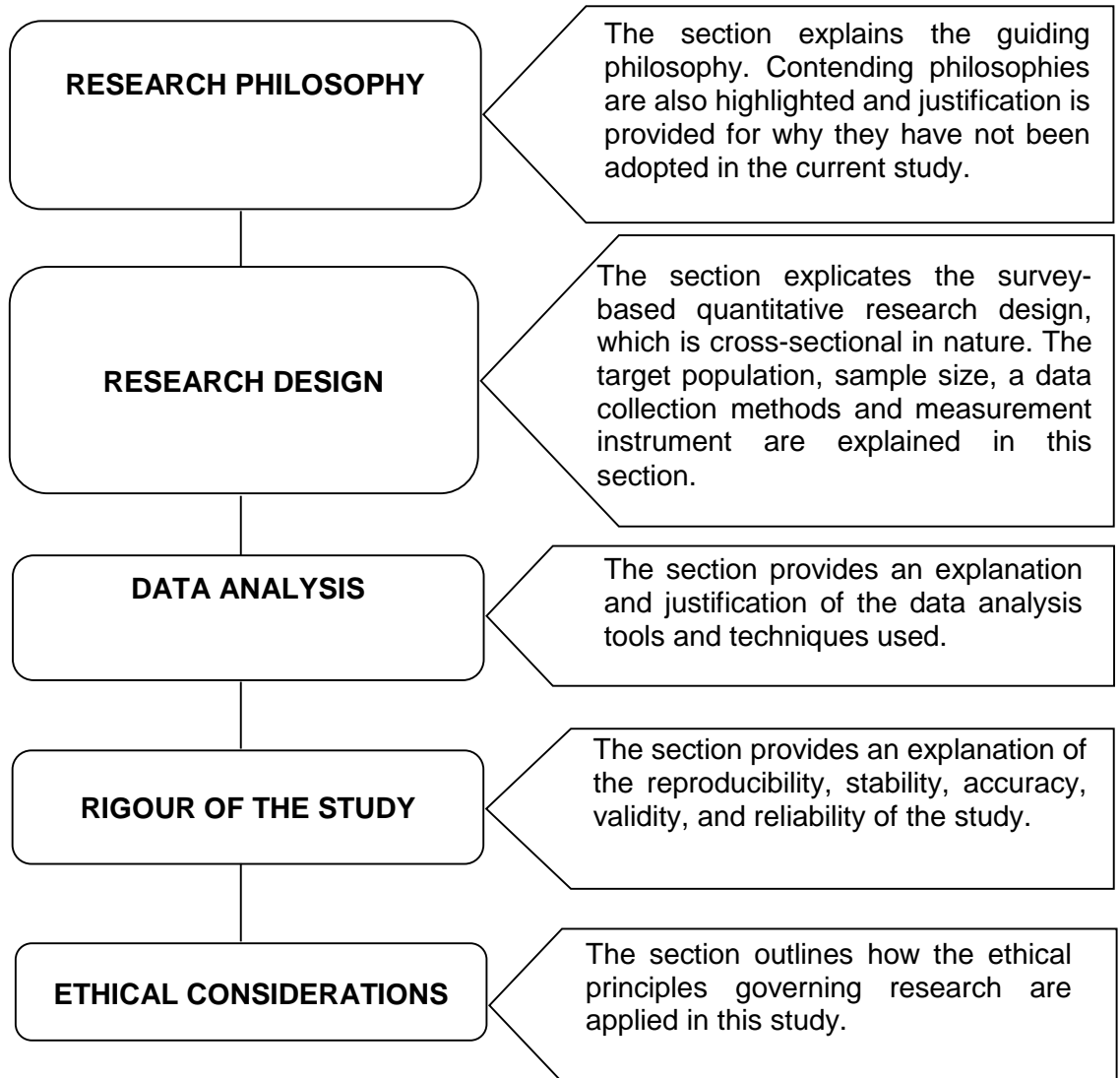
4.4 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to develop the conceptual frameworks for the study. The conceptual framework in Phase 1 presented the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions. Further, the influence of leisure tourists' risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions was examined. The risk perceptions and destination competitiveness theories informed the development of this phase's conceptual framework. The conceptual framework in Phase 2, presented the

antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences, digital media usage) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel. The relationship between leisure tourists' technology readiness, technology acceptance and the use of different types of digital media while travelling was shown. The conceptual framework presented the relationship between digital media preferences and the type of digital media (hedonic/utilitarian) used while travelling. The relationship between cognitive and affective destination images and future behavioural intentions to revisit the two emerging destinations was also depicted. In this phase, the conceptual framework was guided by the TRAM and destination competitiveness theories. The next chapter expounds the research methodology applied in this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research paradigm and approach used. A quantitative design was used to answer research hypotheses through descriptive techniques. A cross-sectional survey was employed, using a structured online questionnaire hosted on the Qualtrics platform and analysed through SPSS version 28. The sampling, data collection method and measurement instrument is also explained in this chapter. The study, being confirmatory in nature, entails validation of assumptions through hypothesis testing. A structured online questionnaire was distributed to international leisure tourists who have been to South Africa and Zimbabwe. The chapter describes the data analysis process conducted in both phases of the study. In Phase 1, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) determined dimensionality and validity of the destination image, travel risk perceptions and behavioural intentions to revisit scales. In Phase 2, Factor dimensionality and reliability was conducted via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to confirm Technology Readiness Index (TRI) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) factors. EFA was employed for digital media usage because individual scale items extracted from literature were used. During the EFA, digital media usage was split into utilitarian and hedonic use. Thereafter, the chapter explains the reproducibility, stability, accuracy, validity, and reliability of the study. Lastly, the ethical principles governing research are explained in terms of how they were observed in this study.

5.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

5.2.1 Post-positivism

According to Creswell (2003) in post-positivism research, theories need to be tested in order to understand the world. Accordingly, when one follows such a paradigm, they was able to bring out the explanatory power of the research, which is difficult to achieve through purely quantitative means (Creswell, 2003). Inquiry involves measurement and analysis of relationships (hypotheses testing) where the mode of investigation is deductive, based on testing prior theories (Al-Masroori, 2006). Philosophical or meta-theoretical underpinnings are the roots or principles guiding empirical studies. These underpinnings explain the foundation of the research. For example, research can be based on ontology (what is considered as real), and epistemology (modified dualism) ultimately making it post-positivist research (Azzopardi, 2011). Here the researcher believes that external knowledge exists, but it is imperfect, thus, a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures may bring out bring out more reliable insights on the subject matter (Al-Masroori, 2006). Furthermore, post-positivists are embrace neutrality, therefore instead of confirming hypothesis, they speak of results that support the hypotheses.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018) qualitative tourism studies are characterised by 'moments' that are informed by post-positivist studies. Post-positivism studies according to Denzin and Lincoln (2018) help construct knowledge, are scientifically rational and objective in nature hence allowing replication, validity and generalisability of results. This means that values in research are not about being either subjective or objective, nor do they prefer subjectivity over objectivity (Ryan, 2006). Additionally, Ryan asserts that post-positivism requires one to see the bigger picture and distance themselves from the object. Therefore one has to display passion for justice and the ability to scrutinise one's own assumptions.

Ryan (2006) adds that post-positivists strive to disturb the predictability that can occur during interviews by engaging in social construction of a narrative with participants. Social construction will facilitate triangulation which enables the researcher to accept or reject hypotheses. In this study, no interviews were needed because the demands of the study did not entail construction of new knowledge, because theories on technology acceptance and destination image have been developed and tested, and have been scientifically proven to be consistent. As a result, only open ended questions were added to the survey instrument in order to gain more insight on the subject matter of travel risk perceptions. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), post-positivism relies on multiple methods for capturing as much of reality as possible.

Sefotho (2015) asserts that post-positivism is somewhat confusing because it refutes the existence of laws (Tekin & Kotaman, 2013) at the same time demanding rationalism and empirical evidence (Ryan, 2006). According to Ryan a post-positivist researcher is distanced from the research, making the research value free as that of positivism. Consequently, the above argument qualifies post-positivism as the most suitable philosophy upon which this study is rooted. Other scholars view this paradigm as pragmatic in nature (Henderson, 2011). Traditionally structured research methods have been found to inadequately capture the dimensions of destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). According to Kislali, Kavaratzis and Saren (2016) most tourism researches rely mainly on a structured post-positivist philosophy. Some researches on destination image appear to be predominantly quantitative (e.g., Ateljevic, Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Tribe, 2008), while others have adopted a post-positivist paradigm (e.g. Kislali et al., 2016).

In their study on travel planning, Ayeh, Au and Law (2013) adopted a post-positivist paradigm as they sought to understand travellers' intentions to use consumer generated media for travel planning. It is worth noting that similar studies on destination competitiveness adopted post-positivism as the main research paradigm (Al-Masroori, 2006; Azzopardi, 2011). Jahari et al.

(2021) believe that risk perceptions are socially constructed when interfacing with the environment. Incorporating qualitative aspects to research will uncover contextual risk perception factors that shape the image of a destination (Jahari et al., 2021). In their research (though conceptual) on risk perceptions beyond COVID-19, Jahari et al. (2021) proposed a post-positivist approach in order to provide a more truthful picture of risk perceptions in a given destination. The main argument behind the suggestion of the post-positivist paradigm by Jahari et al. (2021) was that while the research was mainly quantitative, there was need to triangulate through subjectivity, while keeping in check the tenets of positivism that call for objectivity and value-free research. They posit that including qualitative measures in a survey instrument will help uncover destination specific nuances on the subject matter. The same paradigm was adopted in this study, where open ended questions were asked in order to have a more vivid picture of traveller risk perceptions of the two emerging destinations.

The reality (ontology) in this study is that technology already exists, and its adoption influences the way people and organisations operate in their day-to-day activities. TRI and TRAM theories have been developed, tested, and proved to be consistent under empirical investigations. The same applies for the destination competitiveness and travel risk perceptions theories. By this token, the researcher believes that objectivism (epistemology) through quantitative research (methodology) sufficed in providing sufficient knowledge on TRI, TRAM, destination competitiveness and travel risk perceptions using the tested theories, while a modified positivist approach brings out a deeper understanding of traveller risk perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic than absolute dependence on qualitative data only. Based on the above notion, this study examined whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions and digital media preferences were viable elements of destination marketing that could lead to emerging destination competitiveness. Consequently, it was expected in this study that both objective and subjective inquiry would provide a more accurate position on the role of demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations.

According to the demands of the current study, the above qualified the adoption of the post-positivism paradigm.

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative survey research design was adopted for this study and was cross-sectional in nature, because the study was deductive, seeking to confirm theory by hypothesis testing of proposed constructs. The design facilitated the determination of whether or whether not relationships exist between study variables. A survey research design entails data collection from a sample, measuring variables individually and use of quantitative methods to analyse

the data. A survey design is a system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour (Fink, 2003). The research design will make findings of this study comparable to findings in other studies (Crouch, 2007; Dwyer, Cvelbar, Edwards & Mihalic, 2012; Wang *et al.*, 2012; Pansiri, 2014; Lubbe, Douglas, Fairer-Wessels & Kruger, 2015). In this study, additional information was gathered by including several open-ended, qualitative questions in the survey instrument.

5.3.1 Quantitative study

The research was primarily quantitative, calling for a survey owing to the large sample size involved (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). A cross-sectional survey was done using a structured online questionnaire to fulfil the quantitative requirements of the study, thus expediting the data collection process (Zikmund, 2003; Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Robson, 2011). A similar conceptual study, though focusing on understanding travel risk perceptions during COVID-19, support the application of a mainly quantitative approach coupled with qualitative measures (see Jahari *et al.*, 2021). Adopting such a research design is beneficial to this study because it is mainly value-free, guided by facts collected objectively (Gray, 2013), giving the researcher more control, as knowledge already exists in the form of established theory.

5.3.2 Cross-sectional research

Cross sectional studies are time bound and cannot be generalised over time (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Gray, 2013). This emanates from the dynamic nature of consumer behaviour (Malhotra & Birks, 2007) as well as the evolving nature of digital media marketing in tourism (see Dubois *et al.*, 2020). Qualitative data collected by studying social behaviour cannot be generalised due to varying perceptions among individuals (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023). However, generalisations can be made if a theory or concept is tested first, followed by some qualitative measures (Creswell, 2003). An almost similar study (though conceptual) on understanding travel risk perceptions during COVID-19 by Jahari *et al.* (2021) followed the same procedure suggested by Creswell (2003) where they support the conjoining of qualitative data with quantitative data to support the generalization of results. However, for this study, the generalisation of results cannot be made over time due to the meteoric changes in tourist behaviour and digital media used for travel purposes.

For that reason, such dynamics have resulted in time horizon becoming an important aspect in this study. The researcher is keen to understand the current state of affairs (see Malhotra & Birks, 2007) as far as leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions, use and preferences of different digital media when travelling, destination image and future behavioural intentions are concerned. The downside is that cross-sectional surveys may give misleading data about

changes over time (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Nonetheless, findings from the current study will aid future decision-making on the types of digital media to be invested in by policy makers and DMOs to build a positive image for destination competitiveness. This can be achieved by segmenting tourists according to their travel risk perceptions, technology readiness and digital media preferences.

5.3.3 Deductive research approach

The principle of quantitative research lies in the application of theory to formulate the research problem. Hypotheses play a pivotal role of expressing theoretical assumptions that were confirmed or denied by empirical results (see Jonker & Pennink, 2010). After clearly defining the research problem, an empirical deductive cycle guided the quantitative research process leaning on the conceptual frameworks developed for the study (see Jonker & Pennink, 2010). The empirical deductive cycle is shown in Figure 5.1 below:

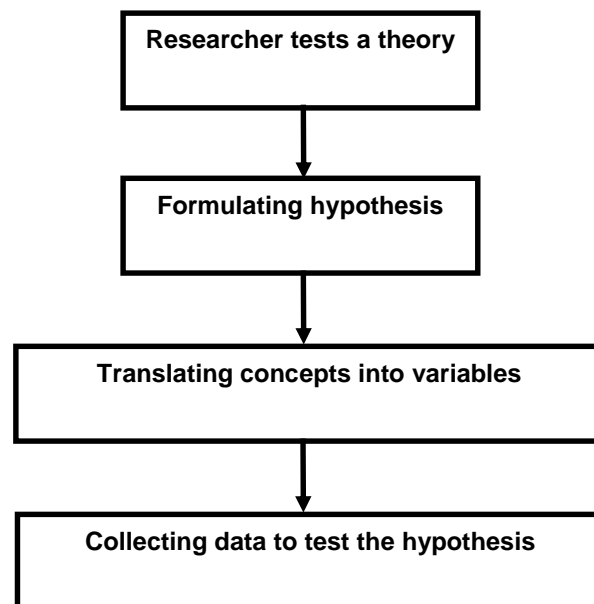


Figure 5.1: Empirical deductive cycle

Source: Jonker and Pennink (2010)

The deductive approach, which was guided by theory, informed hypotheses development, variables (i.e., TRAM, destination competitiveness and travel risk perceptions) used and subsequent measures (see Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Srivastava & Kaul, 2016). Past tourism studies found the deductive approach more befitting, given its application of well-established theory (Topolansky Barbe, Gonzalez Triay & Häufe, 2016; Roy *et al.*, 2018; Van Compernelle, Buyle, Mannens, Vanlishout, Vlassenroot & Mechant, 2018). However, the deductive approach may shun potential areas of research which are possible through

induction (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). New knowledge in this study was generated deductively by testing constructs derived from theory (see Wong, Musa & Wong, 2011), which facilitated hypothesis testing of relationships between variables, and thereafter confirming, refuting, or modifying the theory (see Gray, 2013). In this case, the theories in question are the TRAM, destination competitiveness and travel risk perception theories.

5.3.4 Confirmatory research

A confirmatory research method entails confirming theoretical assumptions by collecting empirical evidence and validating it through hypothesis testing (Benitez *et al.*, 2020). Several studies addressing the use of digital media in tourism are causal in nature (e.g., Liu *et al.*, 2016; Rainoldi *et al.*, 2018; Chung *et al.*, 2018; Dubois *et al.*, 2020; Lacka, 2020). Malhotra and Birks (2007) assert that one can only infer causal relationships, therefore, causality can never be proven. The current study considers the confirmation of relationships (based on existing theory) between various variables through multiple regression and hierarchical regression analyses; thus, causation was not at play.

The primary purpose of the current study was to obtain evidence about relationships stated by theory. Hence, hypothesised relationships, where the method of enquiry was deductive in nature through testing of theory (Al-Masroori, 2006), were measured and analysed in this study. It is sufficient, therefore, to mention that this study was confirmatory in nature, because emphasis was on discovering correlation between TRAM, destination competitiveness and risk perceptions variables. The purpose of regression analysis was to show the correlational association between the above-mentioned variables (see Grosz, Rohrer & Thoemmes, 2020; Janse, Hoekstra, Jager, Zoccali, Tripepi, Dekker & van Diepen, 2021).

5.3.5 Sample size

Using sample size determination at 95% confidence level and $\pm 5\%$ precision, Yamane (1967) suggests the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n =sample size, N =population size, and e =level of precision. In this case international tourist arrivals for SSA in the 1st quarter of 2023 stands at 27.5 million (WTO, 2023), suggesting that a sample size of 400 should be used. However, Malhotra and Dash (2011) argue that sample size in problem-solving research should be in the range of 200-500. In this study, a sample size of 251 was achieved, of which 124 had visited South Africa and 184 had been to Zimbabwe, while 58 respondents had visited both countries. A similar study conducted during the same COVID-19 period, concluded the research with a similar total sample size of

250 travellers (see Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2022). The sample size thus falls within the recommended range.

5.3.6 Sampling and data collection

The research setting for this study included leisure tourists that have been to South Africa and Zimbabwe. The choice of the two destinations enabled comparison of whether destination images vary based on travel risk perceptions, digital media preferences and type of digital media used by leisure tourists while travelling. Despite both being emerging destinations, economic development of the two destinations is different, according to the World Bank (Christie *et al.*, 2014). Zimbabwe is a lower middle-income economy while South Africa is an upper middle-income economy (World Bank, 2023c). In addition, the GDP of South Africa in 2022 stood at \$405.87 billion, while that of Zimbabwe stood at \$20.68 billion (World Bank, 2023a). South Africa's GDP has always been higher than that of Zimbabwe regardless of differences in the reporting period (World Bank, 2023a). The choice of the two emerging destinations was also prompted by the fact that the countries are competitors, given their aggregate number of arrivals (Zhou, 2016; Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), 2022; Stats, S.A., 2023) and similar product offering (UNESCO, 2023). The target population constituted those international leisure tourists who have been to either South Africa or Zimbabwe or both.

An informed consent letter was secured from the South African Tourism Authority (SAT) (refer to Appendix 5). Another letter of informed consent was secured from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) (refer to Appendix 6). The ZTA letter of informed consent facilitated further permission from Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZIMPARKS) (refer to Appendix 7) to use their databases to collect data on behalf of the researcher. These databases contained visitors that have been to South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Considering that the destinations are competing for the same market, the two databases were used as the sample frame. The databases had a list of names and email addresses that provided a platform through which to send the survey instrument. A generic survey instrument was developed and coded according to each destination's database, signifying that the same survey instrument was duplicated and sent to SAT and ZIMPARKS. The two organisations sent the survey link to tourists separately in their databases, so that during data analysis, and comparisons of variations in the destination images formed by leisure tourists while travelling, could be made to determine the competitiveness of each destination.

The survey instrument was also labelled as either destination South Africa or destination Zimbabwe before administration, in an endeavour to ensure that respondents were aware of

which destination they are evaluating. Participants did not include anyone below the age of 18, which is in accordance with national laws and self-regulatory codes where collecting data from a child is unethical (Baker, Milla, Callegaro, Courtright, Fine, Guilbert, Harding, Joe, Lorch, Paro & Ribeiro, 2015). The nature of this study required information to be obtained from adults; that is from 18 years and above (Baker *et al.*, 2015). The age limit was also highlighted in the survey instrument. The language of enquiry used was English. It is suggested that when conducting quantitative surveys, the appropriate language to use is English (Pienaar, 2010).

The online questionnaire was hosted on the Qualtrics platform from 23 November 2020 to 31 May 2021. Having encountered a slow response rate which reflected on the Qualtrics platform, the researcher resorted to sending the survey links separately (i.e., South Africa and Zimbabwe) to the LinkedIn platform on the 18th of April 2021 in an effort to generate more responses. In addition, an incentive (in monetary form through a lucky draw for participation) was offered as a way of encouraging a high response rate. Furthermore, convenient random sampling was used to select sample elements from the tourist population group, which was done in the form of a snowball sampling technique, to increase the response rate and allow for a sufficient sample size.

Snowball sampling entails having access to respondents through informants, thus creating a chain effect (Noy, 2008). The researcher shared the survey links with colleagues in the tourism and hospitality department at the Midlands State University's Faculty of Business Sciences and colleagues in the tourism and hospitality sector. They assisted by sharing the links in their circles, enabling the researcher to overcome the challenge of accessing tourists (see Mayo, 2013) beyond SAT and ZIMPARKS's reach, who may not have been recorded in their database. The reason for this is that the two organisations only record those visitors who partake in their leisure activities and/or stay at affiliated lodging facilities.

5.3.7 Measurement instrument

A structured questionnaire was used and coded per destination. The survey instrument was adapted from similar past studies that tested the same measurement variables as well as general literature. The five-point Likert scale and semantic differential scales were used. One of the benefits of utilising five-point Likert scales is that it is easier for respondents to comprehend the distinction between descriptors, unlike using a lengthier scale (Dawes, 2008). The survey instrument is attached (refer to Appendix 8). Questionnaires have the element of objectivity and therefore, are impartial.

As such, a few open-ended questions on risk perceptions and destination image were included, as a means of triangulation, by incorporating respondents' subjective input, (refer to the 'general literature' sources in Table 5.1). The instrument is divided into sections as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Measurement instrument

Construct	Question number	Measurement	Sources
PHASE 1: Leisure tourists' risk perceptions and behavioural intentions to revisit brands South Africa and Zimbabwe amidst COVID-19			
Travel risk perceptions	7, 8, 12	Open	General literature.
	9, 11	5-point Likert scale (strongly agree / disagree)	Li, Zhang, Liu, Kozak and Wen (2020).
Destination image	Cognitive image: 24	5-point Likert scale (excellent/poor)	Stylidis, Belhassen and Shani (2015).
	Affective image: 23	5-point semantic differential scale	Stylidis <i>et al.</i> (2015); Martín-Santana <i>et al.</i> (2017); Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008); Doosti, Jalilvand, Asadi, Khazaei Pool and Mehrani Adl (2016).
Behavioural intentions to revisit	26	5-point Likert scale (strongly agree / disagree)	Foroudi <i>et al.</i> (2018).
PHASE 2:			
Stage 1: TRAM and digital media preferences versus the digital media used during travels			
Frequency of travel	2,3,5,6	Open	None.
TRAM	18	5-point Likert scale (strongly agree / disagree)	Walczuch <i>et al.</i> (2007); Kim <i>et al.</i> (2008).
Digital media usage	17	5-point Likert scale (never/always)	General literature.
Stage of exposure to digital media	21	Likert scale (before/after)	General literature.
digital media preferences	19	5-point Likert scale (strongly agree / disagree)	Munar and Jacobsen (2013); Wang, Li, Zhen and Zhang (2016), General literature.
Stage 2: TRAM, digital media preferences, type of digital media used versus destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit			
TRAM	18	5-point Likert scale (strongly agree / disagree)	Walczuch <i>et al.</i> (2007); Kim <i>et al.</i> (2008).
Digital media usage	17	5-point Likert scale (never/always)	General literature.
Stage of exposure to digital media	21	Likert scale (before/after)	General literature.
digital media preferences	19	5-point Likert scale (strongly agree / disagree)	Munar and Jacobsen (2013); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2016), General literature.
Destination image	Cognitive image: 24	5-point Likert scale (excellent/poor)	Stylidis <i>et al.</i> (2015).
	Affective image: 23	5-point semantic differential scale	Stylidis <i>et al.</i> (2015); Martín-Santana <i>et al.</i> (2017); Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008); Doosti <i>et al.</i> (2016) General literature.
Behavioural intentions to revisit	26	5-point Likert scale (strongly agree / disagree)	Foroudi <i>et al.</i> (2018).

5.3.8 Hypotheses

Given the deductive nature of this study, the testing of theory was enabled through information collected and analysed statistically, and hypotheses testing (Creswell, 2003). A hypothesis “is an unproven statement or proposition about a factor or phenomenon that is of interest to a researcher” (Malhotra & Birks, 2007:54). It is thus a statement given tentatively about relationships drawn from a conceptual framework. In this study, two conceptual frameworks were developed for each phase of the study. As a result, a set of hypotheses were formulated for each phase, based on relationships illustrated in the conceptual frameworks. To empirically test hypotheses, a survey was conducted, since it is already a well-known quantitative design (see Eisend & Kuss, 2019) used in similar tourism research (e.g., Dubois *et al.*, 2020; Lacka, 2020).

The hypotheses below were developed for this study:

Phase 1

- H₁: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists’ cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit emerging destinations.*
- H₂: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists’ affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit emerging destinations.*
- H₃: *Leisure tourists’ travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit emerging destinations.*
- H₄: *Leisure tourists’ travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit emerging destinations.*

Phase 2

- H₁: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists’ technology readiness and technology acceptance to use digital media.*
- H₂: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists’ perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital media.*
- H₃: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists’ technology readiness and the type of digital media used during travel.*
- H₄: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists’ technology acceptance and the type of digital media used during travel.*
- H₅: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists’ digital media preferences and the type of digital media used during travel.*
- H_{6a}: *There is a relationship between the type of digital media used during travel and leisure tourists’ cognitive image perceptions.*

- H_{6b}: *There is a relationship between the type of digital media used during travel and leisure tourists' affective image perceptions.*
- H_{7a}: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' cognitive image perceptions and their behavioural intentions to revisit.*
- H_{7b}: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' affective image perceptions and their behavioural intentions to revisit.*

Table 5.2 shows the constructs against the questionnaire numbers and tested hypotheses.

Table 5.2: Questions used to test hypotheses

Constructs	Question number	Hypotheses
Phase 1		
Destination image	Cognitive image: 24; Affective image: 23	H ₁ , H ₂
Travel risk perceptions	7, 8, 9, 11, 12	H ₃ , H ₄
Behavioural intentions to revisit	26	H ₁ , H ₂
Phase 2		
TRAM	18	H ₁ , H ₂ , H ₃ , H ₄
Digital media preferences	19	H ₅
Digital media usage	17	H _{6a} , H _{6b}
Destination image	Cognitive image: 24; Affective image: 23	H _{7a} , H _{7b}
Behavioural intentions to revisit	26	H _{7a} , H _{7b}

The hypotheses test results are presented in Chapter 6.

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was cleaned using Microsoft Excel prior to being exported to SPSS 28, as it was anticipated that there would be a likelihood of missing data given the length of the survey instrument. During analysis, such missing data was identified in SPSS 28 after running a descriptive analysis (see Pallant, 2013). In both phases of the study, descriptive analysis was conducted to describe demographic data (i.e., gender, level of education, annual household income, travel history and patterns).

5.4.1 Phase 1 data analysis

Data analysis for Phase 1 was carried out in two stages as illustrated and explained below.

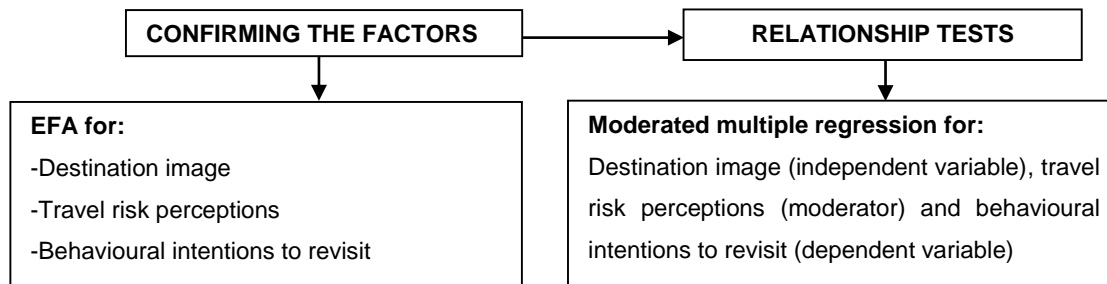


Figure 5.2: Phase 1 data analysis process

EFA was utilised to determine dimensionality and validity of the destination image, travel risk perceptions and behavioural intentions to revisit scales. Methods applied were Principal Components Analysis extraction and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation (Kline, 2011). Factors with Eigenvalues > 1 were retained. As a part of the EFA process, construct reliability was also tested using Composite Reliability (CR), with values of CR > 0.7 and above being acceptable. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) compares the amount of variance captured by a construct to the amount due to measurement error; values above 0.7 are considered excellent, while levels below 0.5 are considered acceptable (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). Moreover, factor reliability was also tested using the Cronbach's Alpha with values greater than 0.6 regarded as acceptable (Kline, 2011).

Reliability tests are important as they permit result consistency over time (McDaniel & Gates, 2013). Construct reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha to check for random measurement error (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). The range of reliability coefficients is between 0.00 and 1.00, depending on the number of scale items (Vaske, Beaman & Sponarski, 2017). Acceptable values for Cronbach alpha range are between 0.70 and 0.95 (DeVellis, 2003). Alpha values in the ranges of 0.8 to 0.95 indicate a very good measure of reliability, while 0.70 to 0.79 signify a good measure (Malhotra, Baalbaki & Nasr Bechwati, 2013). In this study the alpha values ranged from 0.7 to 0.89, signifying very good measures. Average measures of reliability, however, range from 0.6 to 0.79, anything less is negligible (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2010). A low Alpha value could, however, be the result of a few questions asked, poor interrelatedness between items or heterogeneous constructs (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011), but such was not the case for this study's measurement scale items.

A moderated multiple regression was used to determine whether the relationship between the independent variable (destination image) and dependent variable (behavioural intentions to revisit) is influenced by the moderator (travel risk perceptions). This technique is the most popular procedure for the identification of moderator effects (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The Process procedure for SPSS 28 was used to fit the regression model and generate evidence of moderation (interaction effects) as a necessary condition for testing the moderation hypothesis (see Hays, 2018).

The moderation hypothesis can only be supported if the interaction coefficient is statistically significant. However, one of the major concerns regarding the analysis of the interactive effects is the presence of multicollinearity, making it difficult to distinguish the direct effects of the independent variable, the moderating variable, and the interactive variable on the dependent variable.

To overcome the problem of multicollinearity, all independent variables that constitute the interactive variables were standardised (García García, Salmeron Gomez & García Pérez, 2022). In addition, thematic maps were produced using Atlas.ti 8 software to determine the emerging themes (constructs) on traveller risk perceptions of destination image amidst COVID-19. This is similar to the method used by Sharma *et al.* (2022) who created thematic maps to develop constructs under the "COVID-19 and Innovation" theme. The data analysis process is presented in Figure 5.2.

5.4.2 Phase 2 data analysis

Data analysis for Phase 2 was carried out in three stages as illustrated and explained below.

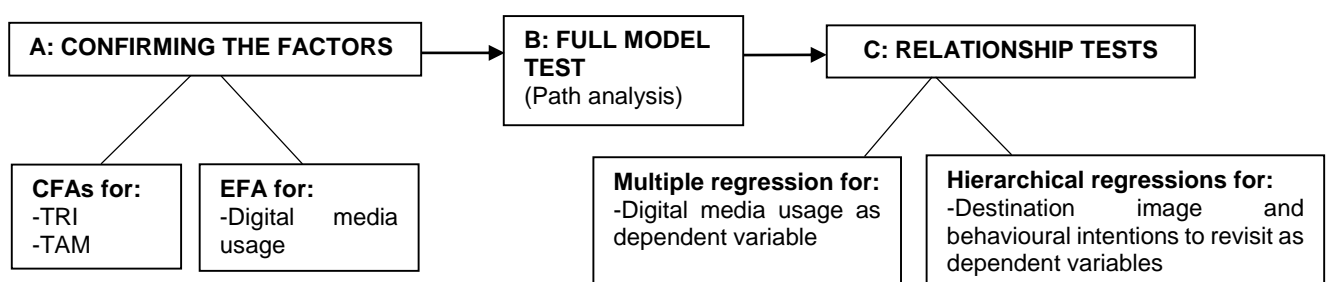


Figure 5.3: Phase 2 data analysis process

A: Confirming the factors (dimensionality and reliability)

First, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was utilised to test construct validity of the TRAM scale (see Alavi, Visentin, Thapa, Hunt, Watson & Cleary, 2020). TRI is indicated as the independent component and TAM as the dependent component in the TRAM, therefore,

separate CFA models were conducted. CFA was performed to confirm the factors of the **TRI** given that it is an established scale. The confirmed TRI factors were thus, innovativeness and optimism, and insecurity. CFA was also done to confirm the factors of the **TAM** seeing that it is an established scale. The confirmed TAM factors were perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The TRI items were based on the instrument of Walzuch *et al.* (2007), whereas the TAM model items were based on the work of Kim *et al.* (2008).

To have a more comprehensive assessment of goodness of fit, CFA methods applied for the TRI and TAM scales included the Chi-square test of model fit, RMSEA, CFI and IFI (Alavi *et al.*, 2020). All the standardised factor loadings that were statistically significant and above the threshold of 0.5 were retained. Validity analysis was done to test for scale integrity and reliability (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). Furthermore, HTMT analysis was conducted to check for discriminant validity before proceeding with the tested constructs separately (Voorhees, Brady, Calantone & Ramirez, 2016).

The aforementioned was followed by EFA methods (indicated in the description for digital media usage which split into utilitarian and hedonic for Phase 1) to ensure that identified factors represented a common underlying construct (see Howard & Henderson, 2023), which aided in the testing of the dimensionality for them to be used for further analysis. As EFA for cognitive and affective image, as well as behavioural intentions to revisit, was already conducted in Phase 1, it was not repeated in Phase 2. No EFA was performed for the digital media preferences scale because a few individual scale items extracted from literature were used.

B: Full model test

Ideally, structural equation modelling (SEM) was supposed to be in done to enable the predictive application of the theories under review (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, Danks, Ray, 2021). Therefore, the model testing started with SEM. The model contained constructs for which data were only available per country visited. These included cognitive and affective brand image as well as behavioural intention to visit South Africa and Zimbabwe. From a statistical standpoint, the total number of latent constructs, their corresponding indicators, and the structural paths suggested many free parameters that required estimation. As a result, the SEM model could not be tested for the total population because the sample of 251 was not equal across the two destinations, nor was it adequate enough for multigroup analysis (see Deng & Yuan, 2015; Assaker, Hallak & El-Haddad, 2020) Even if the sample sizes per country were considered adequate, the sample per country was not independent. The same questionnaire was distributed to both samples and only the countries' names were changed.

Respondent could indicate whether they had visited South Africa and Zimbabwe before (in the positive). Visitors that had visited both, were directed via skip logic to answer the questionnaire for both countries. Therefore, the analyses per country could not be compared as a respondent could be in both samples. Therefore, a full structural equation model using latent constructs and their associated indicators could also not be performed per country, for which the sample sizes were 124 for South Africa and 184 for Zimbabwe, while 57 had visited both.

Subsequently, covariance-based path analyses and PLS SEM were considered. It was decided to proceed with covariance-based path analysis, rather than PLS SEM as the study was considered confirmatory rather than exploratory (see Afthanorhan, Awang & Aimran, 2020). Path Analyses helps analyse complex models showing several independent variables predicting one dependent variable, and comparing these models against each another, to identify the one with the best fit (Streiner, 2005). Composite variables represented the constructs and the model fit statistics indicated a very poor fit. Valid model improvement options were considered, but failed to improve the model to an acceptable model fit. Since the path models failed to obtain reliable and valid results, hierarchical regression analysis was considered suitable to enable the testing of hypothesised relationships in a phased manner.

C: Relationship tests

Given that the full Path Analysis model could not be tested, two different techniques were used to test the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. These are multiple regression analysis and hierarchical regression. In the theoretical model there were three dependent variables, namely, digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

5.4.3 Multiple regression analysis

The main function of multiple regression is to develop the best model for predicting the dependent variable using various independent variables (Mizumoto, 2023). In addition, the analytical power of multiple regression analysis helps determine whether predictor variables were correlated with one another and their resultant effects on a dependent variable (Hoyt, Leierer & Millington, 2006).

In this study, multiple regression facilitated the grouping of all the variables at the same time. These were the individual factors of TRI (Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism), TAM (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use) and the respective digital media preferences on the two types of digital media usage (i.e., hedonic and utilitarian). Digital media usage was

the dependent variable, which enabled a comparison of the respective contributions of each independent variable to the dependent variable.

Each analysed model helped establish whether there was in fact a relationship between the dependant and independent variables and was followed by a comparison of which one of the variables had the greatest influence. In this study, the aforementioned was carried out to determine which of the technology readiness and technology acceptance drivers, as well as digital media preferences influence digital media usage.

The study sought to determine if all the variables in technology readiness and technology acceptance drivers and digital media preferences also influence destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit, separately. This, therefore, called for hierarchical regression analysis to be conducted.

5.4.4 Hierarchical regression analysis

Hierarchical regression analysis allows sequential entry of independent variables in two or more sets to determine whether they may add significantly to the prediction of an outcome variable (Hoyt *et al.*, 2006). Predictor variables were introduced to the study in stages, in a sequential process, by adding variables at each stage of analysis. It was useful in demonstrating if, after control for all other variables, the variables of interest (i.e., technology readiness and technology acceptance, digital media preferences, digital media usage destination image) accounted for a statistically significant portion of the variance in the study's dependent variable. Using this approach, several regression models were created by gradually adding new variables to an earlier model. Primarily, the main interest was to determine whether the newly added variables significantly increase R^2 .

In this case, where a Path Analysis could have tested the whole pathway from the first set of variables right through to the final outcome variable (behavioural intentions to revisit), hierarchical regression systematically 'worked toward' the final outcome as it added variable by variable to the analysis. Hierarchical regression puts the variables in 'blocks' and then compares the models in batches (see Hoyt *et al.*, 2006). For example, model one in this study is the first batch comparable to multiple regression analysis. Model two is the first batch plus second batch, whereas model three is the first two batches plus a third batch.

Hierarchical regression compares which model best predicts the dependent variable to determine whether the addition of the new added 'batch'/variable makes a difference. Relationships of each variable with the dependent (as per the multiple regression), will be

shown as two relationships (i.e., one for each 'model'). Some relationships, however, become more important or lose significance because the interactions change according to the combination of variables. Accordingly, results of the final model are always interpreted to see which relationships were significant. Apart from the individual relationships that change between the two models, there will also be an additional statistic that shows the statistical value of adding the additional 'batch'/variable.

Hierarchical regression was carried out utilising SPSS 28 in the following sequential process:

1. Multiple regression analysis was conducted as a build-up to hierarchical regressions.
2. Hierarchical regressions to determine whether digital media usage predicts destination image when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and digital media preferences. **Destination image as the dependent variable.**
3. Hierarchical regressions to determine whether digital media usage predicts behavioural intentions to revisit when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and digital media preferences. **Behavioural intentions to revisit as the dependent variable.**
4. A final hierarchical regression to determine whether destination image predicts behavioural intentions to revisit when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, preferences, and digital media usage. **Behavioural intentions to revisit as the dependent variable.**

5.5 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

5.5.1 Measurement scale reliability and validity

The survey instrument used in the study is adopted from studies that used similar measurement scales for the various constructs (Walczuck *et al.*, 2007; Lin *et al.*, 2007; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Styliadis *et al.*, 2015; Foroudi *et al.*, 2018). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was used to determine internal consistency reliability and validate the instrument (Dwyer *et al.*, 2012). Composite reliability tests were performed to provide a rigorous reliability test by complementing Cronbach alpha (Lopez-Odar, Alvarez-Risco, Vara-Horna, Chafloque-Céspedes & Sekar, 2019), where >0.7 signifies a good measure of reliability (Hair Jr, Howard & Nitzl, 2020).

EFA was used for the modified travel risk perceptions, destination image, digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit scales. EFA enables variable reduction by identifying unobserved constructs and the underlying variable factor structure (Suhr, 2006; Salkind,

2010). In this study, EFA enabled the selection of various factors for construct validation (see Schmitt, 2011).

Bartlett's test of sphericity (significant at 0.05 or smaller) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (exceeding 0.6) indicated data suitability (Pallant, 2013). The criteria for a satisfactory standardised factor-loading for individual items in each scale is generally within the range of 0.5 and 0.9, however, values between 0.3 and 0.5 are still considered acceptable (Chin, 1998, in Nusair & Hua, 2010).

In this study, the validity tests indicated data suitability for EFA, that is, results show KMO (0.821) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) for South Africa, and KMO (0.876) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) for Zimbabwe. The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values thus confirmed factor reliability and the AVE indicated discriminant validity at acceptable levels.

Additional validity of the scales was ensured through content validity. Content validity refers to the extent to which the conceptualised theoretical constructs were operationalised (Burton-Jones & Lee, 2017). To ensure content validity, all measurement scale items were based on indicators that fully measured the travel risk perceptions, technology readiness and technology acceptance, digital media preferences, digital media usage, and destination image constructs.

5.5.2 Reproducibility

Reproducibility is the ability of independent researchers to reach the same results using their own methods and data. Reproducibility is tantamount to reliability. Thus, assessment is done by checking the size of variations between duplicate measures (Cleophas & Zwinderman, 2016). Reproducibility and research integrity served as the study's guiding principles since the results show that previously established and documented work on TRAM and destination image has been verified, duplicated, and reproduced. For the conclusions of this study to be repeatable, the results of a statistical analysis of a data set must be obtained once more with a high degree of dependability. Similarly, the newly developed digital media preferences scale can be reproduced in similar studies conducted during a pandemic or crisis.

5.5.3 Stability

Stability evaluates a test's external consistency (Allen & Yen, 1979). It shows score variance due to measurement mistakes that take place from one testing session to another. The test's stability over time is assessed by correlating the results from different time periods. Coefficients that yield results above 0.7 are regarded as adequate, while those that yield results above 0.8 are regarded as very good (Sim & Wright, 2005; Madan & Kensinger, 2017).

These results indicate that there were no measurement errors in the research instrument. As this study was cross-sectional in nature, repeat tests are required over time to ensure external consistency because tourism behaviour and digital media usage are bound to change over time. That being so, results cannot be generalised over longer periods of time. When a test is repeatable over time and consistently produces the same results, it is said to be stable (i.e., within defined constraints).

5.5.4 Accuracy

The study made sure that the data collection techniques were reliable. If a tool or procedure accurately measures what is estimated or anticipated, it is said to be accurate (Cleophas & Zwinderman, 2016). This study used certain indicators which enabled the evaluation and inference considering the study's theoretical and empirical contribution (Marquart, 2017). These indicators included assessing objective scores through EFA. For the purpose of producing valuable and significant study results, researchers seek reliable or legitimate, tried, and tested study techniques (Harrell, 2017).

To ensure the caliber and integrity of the research findings, accuracy measurement was crucial in this study. By using the appropriate sample for the research, the study was able to achieve accuracy (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). Based on this assertion, this study's sample size and sample composition accurately represented the population under investigation. The researcher anticipated that the larger the sample size, the more accurate population representation and the more generally applicable the study would be. A convenient random sample was utilised since it is a more accurate method of drawing a sample from the population in order to obtain accuracy.

5.5.5 Trustworthiness and credibility

Trustworthiness is the extent to which one has confidence in the data, interpretation, and procedures undertaken to warrant the study's quality (Pilot & Beck, 2014 cited in Connelly, 2016). The researcher ensured the degree of objectivity in the research study's findings by outlining each step of data analysis that was performed to justify the choices made. This study ensured trustworthiness and credibility by applying the TRAM and destination competitiveness theories to gain a deeper understanding of leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions, technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. Since the theories used are already tried and tested, the research results in the current study are solid, rich, thorough, and well-developed. Consequently, theoretical triangulation was utilised to guide the

investigation, through application of different theoretical orientations in the field of technology readiness and destination competitiveness (destination image).

5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics approval

An ethics approval certificate (refer to Appendix 2) was acquired after going through the University of Pretoria's Ethics Work Centre process. A titled registration letter was issued after the revision of the initial research title (refer to Appendix 3). A fieldwork research letter (refer to Appendix 4) was written to the Midlands State University (the researcher's employer), by the researcher's study supervisor to request permission to collect data in a field setting. The same letter, together with the ethics approval certificate, was used to seek approval to conduct research from SAT, ZTA and ZIMPARKS. The researcher was granted permission to work with SAT and ZIMPARKS, however, the two organisations retained access to the database. Ownership and control of the databases remained with both SAT and ZIMPARKS. The researcher, therefore, sent a survey link to both SAT and ZIMPARKS who emailed the subjects themselves. The researcher acknowledges that the databases remain the property of SAT and ZIMPARKS.

Transparency: In the light of the study focusing on travellers' digital media use and risk perceptions: implications for emerging destinations' digital media marketing and competitiveness, the researcher was transparent about what they intended to achieve, namely, to investigate the role of demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. The researcher was clear that data collected was purely for academic purposes and was only shared with the University of Pretoria.

Privacy: The study was anonymous and confidential. Participants were allowed to withdraw at any stage of the study. A letter of introduction and informed consent, acquired from the University of Pretoria, was given to the study participants for signing (refer to Appendix 1). All respondents were assured that their identity would be protected at all costs. This is a declaration that the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and University privacy and ethics policy was adhered to regarding the protection and safeguarding of collected data. The data will be stored on the UP repository for a minimum period of 15 years after the study has been completed.

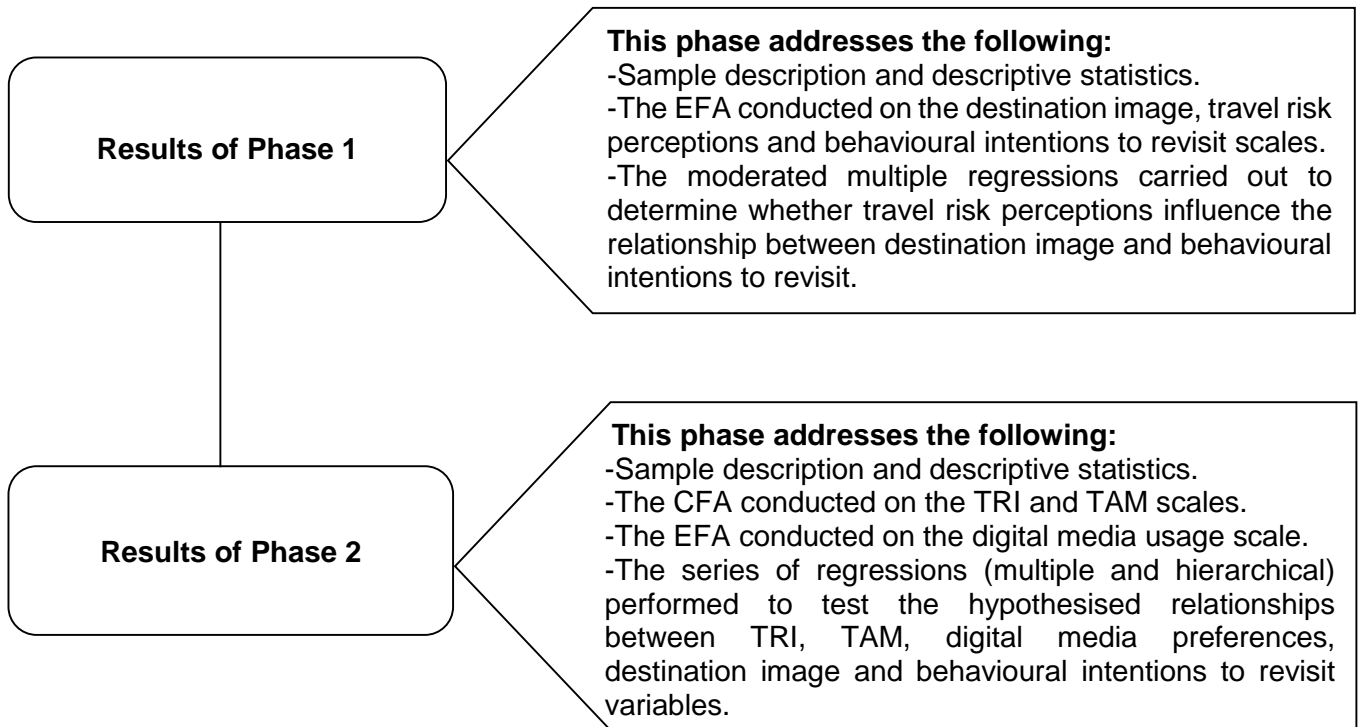
No harm: The respondents were not subjected to any form of physical, emotional, or financial harm through participation in this study.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter five described the research paradigm and approach used. The survey-based quantitative research design used in this study was discussed. The target population, sample size, data collection methods and measurement instrument were also explained in this chapter. An explanation and justification of the data analysis tools and techniques that were applied was addressed. EFA was conducted to determine dimensionality and validity of the travel risk perceptions, digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit scales. To confirm the factors of the TRAM, factor dimensionality and reliability was performed by means of CFA. Thereafter, the reproducibility, stability, accuracy, validity, and reliability of the study was explained. Lastly, the ethical principles governing research were explained in terms of how they were observed in this study. The next chapter analyses, presents and interprets the empirical data for this study.

CHAPTER 6

EMPIRICAL RESULTS



6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. The study was structured around two phases, therefore, the two demand conditions were investigated as follows: Phase 1: travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis and Phase 2: digital media usage (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences). As a result, the analysis and presentation of data was done in two phases in order to fully address the research problem. Phase 1 presents results on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit South Africa and Zimbabwe. Results are also presented to show whether leisure tourists' risk perceptions influence the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit South Africa and Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thereafter, Phase 2 presents results on the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel. The case studies of South Africa and Zimbabwe were used as two competing tourism destinations within Sub-Saharan Africa.

The results for each phase are discussed below.

6.2 RESULTS OF PHASE 1

The current section presents the empirical results of the study including travel during COVID-19 (including the thematic analysis), scale refinement through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and lastly, regression analyses to test the research hypotheses. South Africa's brand image is represented as follows: Cognitive image 1 (CogSA1), Cognitive image 2 (CogSA2), and Affective image (AFFSA). Zimbabwe's brand image is represented as follows: Cognitive image 1 (CogZIM1), Cognitive image 2 (CogZIM2), Affective image 1 (AFFZIM1), and Affective image 2 (AFFZIM2). Behavioural intentions to revisit for South Africa are indicated as (IntSA), and those of Zimbabwe (IntZim). Travel risk perceptions for South Africa are indicated as (RiskSA), and those of Zimbabwe (RiskZim).

6.2.1 Sample description

Respondents were asked to indicate their general demographic details. Table 6.1 provides a description of the socio-demographic profile of respondents who participated in this study.

Table 6.1: Description of the sample

Variables	Categories	Value
Average age (years)		41.16
Gender*	Male	63.3
	Female	36.7
Level of education* (n=207)	Primary school	-
	High school	4.8
	Diploma certificate	12.1
	Undergraduate degree	48.8
	Post-graduate degree	34.3
	No schooling	-
Annual household income* (n=202)	Less than 24 999	11.9
	25 000 to 39 999	7.9
	40 000 to 59 999	9.4
	60 000 to 79 999	23.3
	80 000 to 99 999	18.3
	Over 100 000	14.4
	Prefer not to say	14.9
<i>Note: Values as a %</i>		

Most of the respondents who participated in the study were males (63.3%), while the average age of respondents was 41 years. The sample consisted mostly of individuals with a qualification in tertiary education (48.8%). Considering annual income, the most significant portion of the respondents acknowledged that they earn an annual income ranging between US\$60000 to US\$80000 (23.3%).

6.2.2 Travel history and travel intentions amidst COVID-19

A total sample of 251 was achieved of which 124 had visited South Africa (SA), 184 Zimbabwe (Zim), and 57 had visited both countries. Respondents were asked a general question about the number of times they had visited destinations South Africa and Zimbabwe. Table 6.2 provides information on visitation per destination and the years visited.

Table 6.2: Visitation history per country

	Categories	South Africa	Zimbabwe
Average number of times visited		11.97	5.84
Years in which they have visited (n=197)	<2000	13	24
	2000-2005	13	14
	2006-2010	29	20
	2011-2015	16	40
	2016-current	108	72
<i>Note: Values as a %</i>			

The trends presented in Table 6.2 show the differences in travel behaviour of the study sample. Based on the results, people who were part of the Zimbabwe sample had higher visitation frequency than those in the South African sample; the average visits for the two destination countries were 11.97 times and 5.84 times respectively.

Respondents were asked to indicate the average number of times per year that they travel abroad for leisure purposes and their intentions to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were also asked if they would consider Africa to be a safe leisure travel option in the near future. Table 6.3 shows the responses per category.

Table 6.3: Travel patterns and travel during COVID-19 (overall sample)

Category		%
Number of people that travel internationally (n=251)		80
Number of overseas leisure trips per year*		3.2 times
Intention to travel during COVID-19 (n=174)	I have already started travelling	9.8
	Yes, soon	33.9
	Yes, in the distant future	31.6
	Not likely	14.4
	Definitely not	6.3
	Other	4.0
Consider Africa a safe leisure travel option in the near future (n=174)	Yes	55.5
	No	20.8
	Not sure	23.7
* Average		

It emerged that 80% of the respondents travelling abroad for leisure purposes averaged three trips per year. The results presented in Table 6.3 show that respondents intend to travel during COVID-19 (33.9%) since they consider Africa a safe leisure travel option (55.5%). Most of the respondents cited that Africa had the best natural tourism attractions, friendly citizens, and with precautions in place, Africa is safe for leisure in the near future. Respondents also stated that COVID-19 cases in Africa were not as rampant as it was in Europe and America. For example, a statement by one of the respondents that supports this finding is, "I am more worried about bringing SA and/or Zim residents the virus..." (refer to Figure 6.3).

While most respondents consider Africa a safe travel option, as mentioned above, a few of the respondents (6.3%) indicated that they would definitely not visit South Africa and Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that 20.8% of the respondents indicated that it was not safe to travel to Africa, while 23.7% were not sure whether it was safe to travel. However, those who were not so sure, indicated that they needed to first assess COVID-19 risk in Africa before committing themselves to travel.

6.2.3 Thematic analysis using a word cloud

Apart from the travel patterns, the respondents were also requested to comment on their expectations concerning COVID-19 protocol at tourism facilities within the two destinations. The qualitative responses (comments) were analysed using thematic and content analysis. Figure 6.1 illustrates the themes emerging from the analysis using a word cloud. The word cloud results show that some of the most frequently-mentioned words were COVID-19 protocols, measures, protective/protection, vaccination, risks, safety, and tourism. Eight (8) themes were drawn from the word cloud; adherence to COVID-19 protocols, vaccination roll-out, visitors tested before entering, visitor-friendly processes, COVID-19 risk overstated, friendly locals, risk of infection, and hampers tourism. Examples of quotations related to the respective thematic codes are indicated in Table 6.4.

The most frequently mentioned theme was adherence to COVID-19 protocol (39 quotations), followed by risk of infection during the COVID pandemic (10 quotations). Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show some visual expressions of quotations from the two frequently mentioned themes. Figure 6.2 summarises respondents' expectations regarding total adherence to COVID-19 protocols and sensible controls to strengthen protection against the pandemic in the two destinations. In the same vein, Figure 6.3 shows that the perceived risk of infection inhibited respondents' intentions to visit the two destinations. Some respondents were quoted saying, "it is not worth the risk to travel anywhere at the moment." Refer to Table B1 in Appendix 11 for respondents' full narrations to responses highlighted in Figures 6.2 and 6.3.

Table 6.4: Examples of perceived effort before Covid-19

Themes	Number of quotations	Description of what the theme is about	Sample statements
Adherence to COVID-19 protocols	39	Stringent enforcement of COVID-19 protocols at each tourist destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I expect strict measures and visits should be restricted to few people per day to avoid overcrowding.” “COVID-19 protocols should be strictly observed.” “Abiding by WHO guidelines is the solution”
Visitors tested before entering	10	Ensuring that inbound visitors are thoroughly tested for COVID-19 at border posts and airport before they visit tourist destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “People should be tested before getting to those places or before they leave their countries” “They should check COVID-19 and get the results within minutes of waiting everyone entering a country of destination.”
Risk of infection	10	Evaluation of the fears of contracting the COVID-19 virus during a visit or tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Concerns over being sick and isolated while traveling” “I personally have decided not to travel.”
Vaccination roll-out	7	Ensuring that people in the sampled destination countries are vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Vaccinations need to speed up” “No, I will wait till we are vaccinated and safe, after that no problem to travel South Africa or Zimbabwe.”
COVID-19 risk overstated	5	Exaggeration of the actual risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourist destination countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “At some point in time, COVID-19 will no longer be an issue. It is better to focus on the bigger picture and not just COVID-19.” “There are far more deadly diseases to worry about than COVID-19 (e.g., malaria, TB and hepatitis E), and there are no protocols for these diseases.”
Hampers tourism	5	Stumbling blocks affecting the smooth running of tourism activities the sampled tourist destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “With COVID-19, there is no hope for tourism.” “It hampers full and free enjoyment of the holiday.”
Visitor-friendly processes	4	Ensuring the provision of processes that are conducive for visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I would rather expect hotels, airports, restaurants, museums, and others in the tourism industry to provide visitor-friendly processes and systems during the COVID-19 pandemic” “User-friendly techniques”
Friendly locals	1	An assessment of the friendliness of local people in welcoming and mingling with visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Hopefully, the local residents will be more welcoming.”

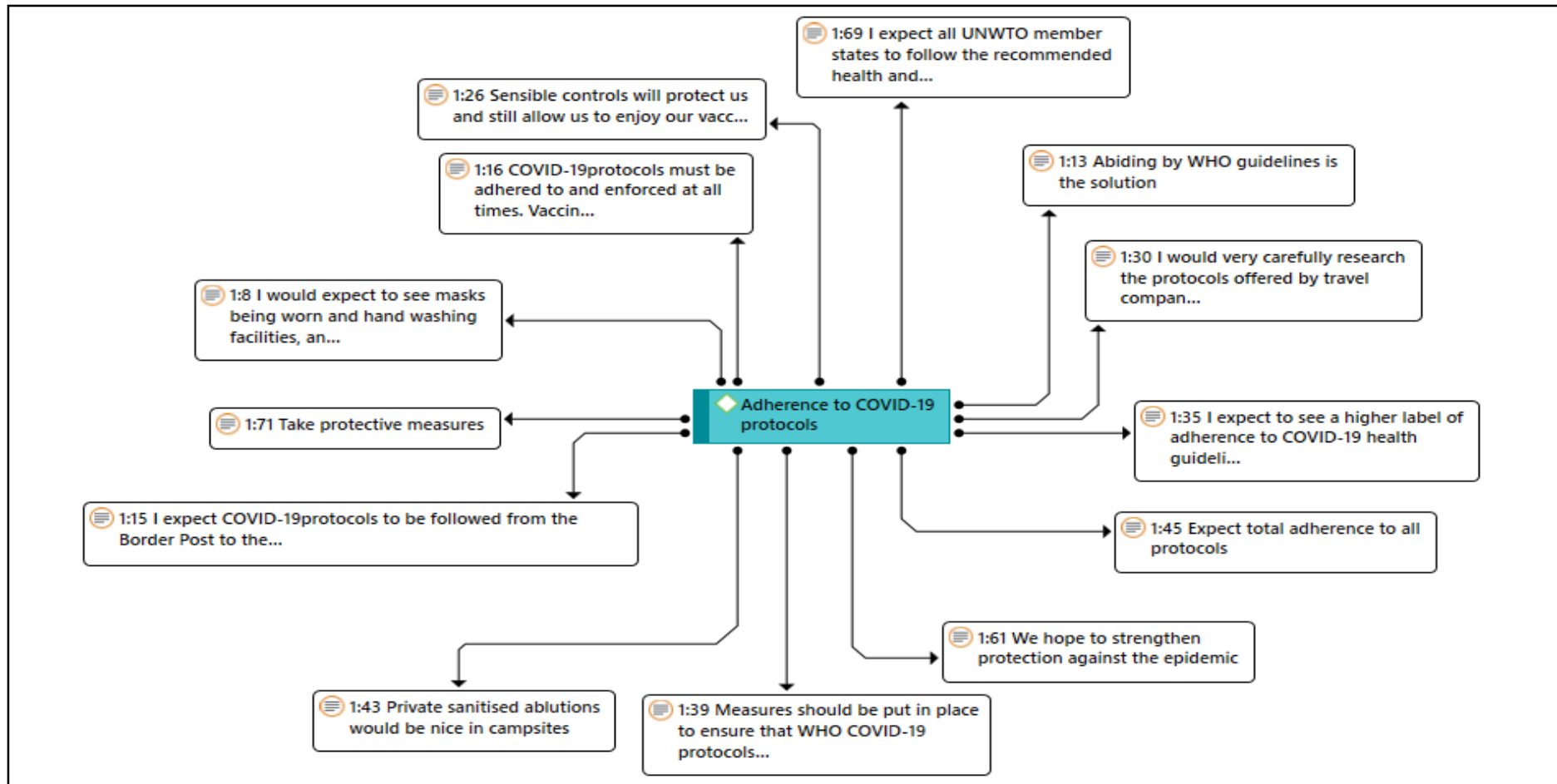


Figure 6.2: Adherence to COVID-19 protocols

Source: Computed by the researcher using Atlas.ti 8 software

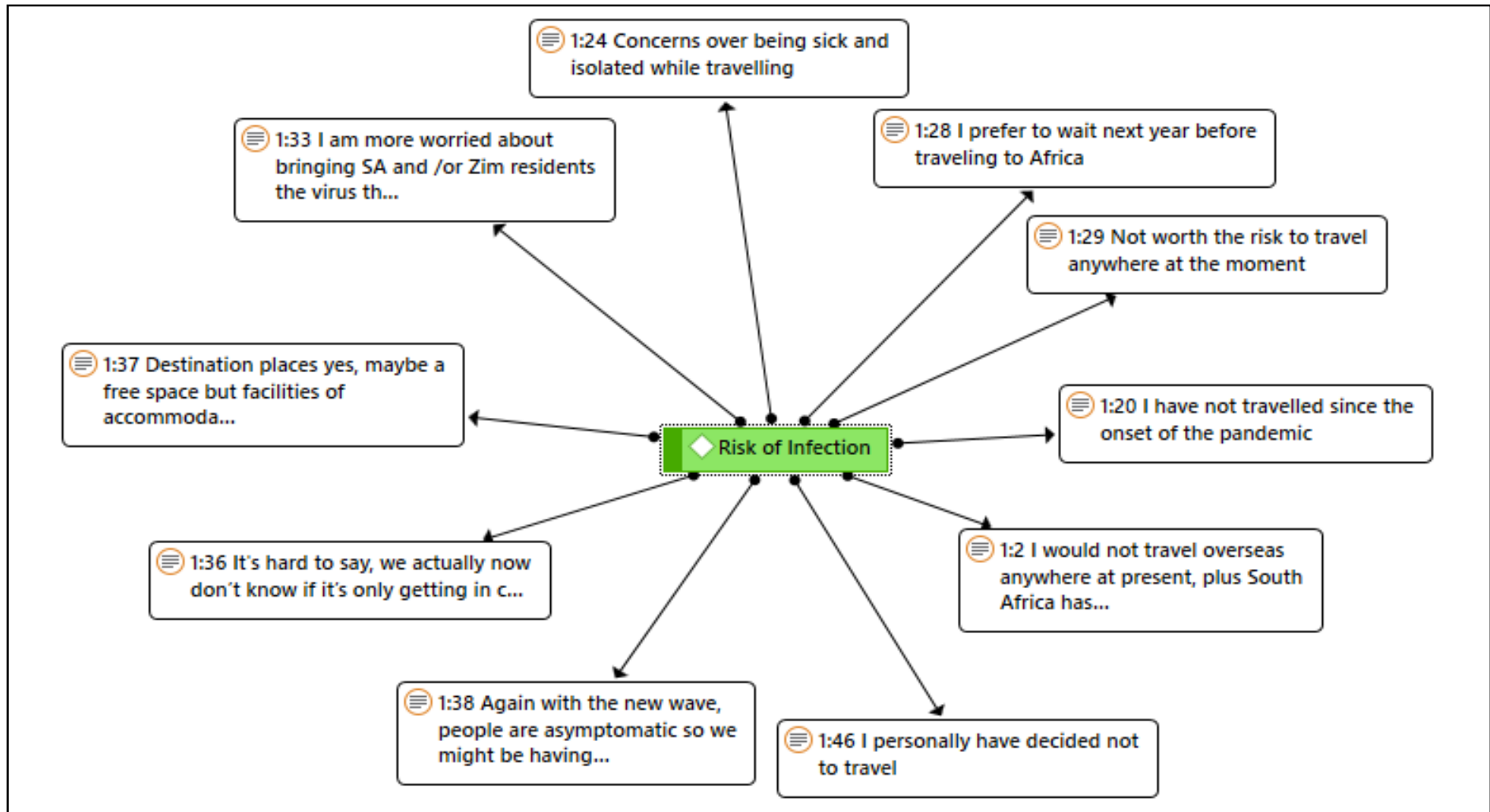


Figure 6.3: Risk of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic
Source: Computed by the researcher using Atlas.ti 8 software

Respondents also bemoan the fact that COVID-19 screening is lax in Africa. For example, the following remarks were made by one of the research participants:

“Most of the people travelling from outside my country are found to be positive as they enter at my country's borders, making me wonder if they are really checked before they leave their countries.”

The above section provided the findings related to the respondents' demographics, travel behaviour, perceptions of travelling during COVID-19 and revisit intentions. The subsequent sections present the results of the EFA and regression analyses.

6.2.4 Exploratory factor analyses

Travel risk perceptions scale of South Africa and Zimbabwe

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) on a list of items related to travel risk perceptions. Table 6.5 provides the EFA results for both the South African and Zimbabwean samples. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.821) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) indicated data suitability for EFA for the South African sample data. One factor emerged (Eigenvalues >1), explaining 45.15% of the variance. The Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values confirmed factor reliability and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicated discriminant validity at acceptable levels. For Zimbabwe's sample data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.876) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) also indicated data suitability for EFA. One factor emerged (Eigenvalues >1), explaining 45.55% of the variance.

The Cronbach Alpha value confirmed factor reliability, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicated discriminant validity at acceptable levels. The second construct (.855) loaded the highest with the risk factor, and none of the indicators loaded lower than 0.5. The Eigenvalue showed that only one factor emerged, thus, implying that risk perception formed one dimension, with every item being considered as part of the travel risk perceptions construct. According to Pallant (2013), the Bartlett's test should be significant at $p<0.05$ and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin should have 0.6 as the minimum value for data suitability. The AVE values were considered acceptable even though they were less than the desired level, as the values were very close to 0.5 regardless of them being below the threshold. It is against this background that the scale was deemed reliable.

Table 6.5: EFA: Travel risk perceptions of South Africa and Zimbabwe

	South Africa*			Zimbabwe**		
	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor
			RiskSA			RiskZim
I feel that coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic will frustrate my travel experience due to fear of contracting the virus	3.47	1.226	0.823	3.40	1.112	0.667
Given the challenges brought forth by COVID-19, I am concerned about the possibility of contracting the virus if I travel to South Africa/Zimbabwe	3.53	1.338	0.855	3.34	1.120	0.776
I fear losing approval and respect from family and friends if I decide to travel to South Africa/Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 outbreak	2.51	1.241	0.501	2.86	1.277	0.613
If I travel to my destination South Africa/Zimbabwe during COVID-19 pandemic, I am most likely to spend too much time observing COVID-19-related protocols and miss out on scheduled leisure activities	3.35	1.275	0.517	3.21	1.048	0.574
Given the media coverage of the destination South Africa/Zimbabwe, I feel that the destination is a health risk concerning COVID-19	3.28	1.278	0.737	3.23	1.111	0.802
I feel that destination South Africa's/Zimbabwe's tourist attractions are often crowded and therefore I risk contracting COVID-19 if I travel to the country	3.04	1.195	0.618	3.09	1.090	0.683
I doubt whether the quality of accommodation facilities in South Africa's/Zimbabwe's tourist attractions is in accordance with the World Health Organisation COVID-19 protocol	2.09	1.040	0.553	3.20	1.073	0.629
<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	0.842			0.855		
<i>Composite reliability</i>	0.847			0.857		
<i>Average variance extracted</i>	0.451			0.465		
<i>Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.^a a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations (SA) and 5 iterations (Zim)</i>						
*n=57 **n=165						

As indicated in Table 6.5, For South Africa, three risk perception items scored highest: “I am concerned about the possibility of contracting the virus if I travel to SA” (m=3.53), “coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic will frustrate my travel experience” (m=3.47), and “I am most likely to spend too much time observing COVID-19 related protocols and miss out on scheduled leisure activities” (m=3.35). The lowest score was for the cognitive image item: “I doubt whether the quality of accommodation facilities in South Africa’s tourist attractions is in accordance with the World Health Organisation COVID-19 protocol” (m=2.09).

In comparison, the study results indicated that two of the three risk perception items which scored highest in the Zimbabwean context, were comparable to those observed in the South African context. For Zimbabwe, they were recorded as follows: “I feel that coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic will frustrate my travel experience” (m=3.40) and “I am concerned about the possibility of contracting the virus if I travel to Zimbabwe” (m=3.34).

In sharp contrast to the findings obtained in the South African context, the notion that, “Given the media coverage of destination Zimbabwe, I feel that the destination is a health risk concerning COVID-19” ($m=3.23$), also constituted the three highest-scoring risk perception items. The lowest score was for the cognitive item: “I fear losing approval and respect from family and friends if I decide to travel to South Africa during the COVID-19 outbreak” ($m=2.86$).

Cognitive image scales for South Africa and Zimbabwe

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of South Africa’s tourism offering based on a five -point Likert scale (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good and 5 = Excellent). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.788) and Bartlett’s tests ($p=0.000$) indicated data suitability for EFA for the South African sample data. Two factors emerged (Eigenvalues >1), explaining 40.37% of the variance. Factor 1 was named Cognitive image 1 (CogSA1) and Factor 2, Cognitive image 2 (CogSA2). The Cronbach Alpha values for both Cognitive image 1 (0.72) and Cognitive image 2 (0.82) confirmed factor reliability (see Pallant, 2013). Similarly, the CR values for Cognitive image 1 (0.83) and Cognitive image 2 (0.75) and their respective AVE values 0.45 and 0.39 were also acceptable, confirming the reliability of the dimensions that mainly constituted the cognitive image construct in the South African context, such as scenery and landscape, natural attractions, and nightlife. Past studies confirm these cognitive image attributes (e.g., Woosnam *et al.*, 2020; Ren *et al.*, 2022). However, despite the low loadings of climate and man-made attractions, the items were retained given the higher levels of CR. Hair *et al.* (2019) put forth that AVE values above 0.7 are excellent, while those below 0.5 are acceptable.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.832) and Bartlett’s tests ($p=0.000$) indicated data suitability for EFA for the Zimbabwean sample data. The Eigenvalue showed that two factors emerged (Eigenvalues >1), namely, Cognitive image 1 (CogZIM1) and Cognitive image 2 (CogZIM2), explaining a cumulative 40.52% of the variance. The Cronbach Alpha values for Cognitive image 1 (0.77) and Cognitive image 2 (0.81) confirmed factor reliability (refer to Table 6.6). Moreover, the CR values for Cognitive image 1 (0.78) and Cognitive image 2 (0.83) were consistent with the acceptable threshold of 0.7 (see Pallant, 2013). Finally, the AVE values for both Cognitive image 1 (0.37) and Cognitive image 2 (0.5) also confirmed the reliability of the dimensions that mainly constituted the cognitive image construct in the Zimbabwean context, such as natural attractions, local infrastructure, and scenery. These findings corroborate with those of Ren *et al.* (2022) who found that such cognitive image dimensions were the main motivators of travel intention. For both South Africa and Zimbabwe, cognitive image factors, such as cuisine, accommodation and

personal safety did not load sufficiently on any of the two factors (refer to Table 6.6). These items were excluded from further analysis. Past studies, however, consider these cognitive image attributes to be among the prominent attributes of cognitive image (Stylidis *et al.*, 2015; Woosnam *et al.*, 2020). Notably, the same items loaded onto the same factors for both destinations as shown in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: EFA: Cognitive image of South Africa and Zimbabwe

	South Africa				Zimbabwe			
	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor 1	Factor 2	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor 1	Factor 2
			<i>Cognitive image 1 (CogSA1)</i>	<i>Cognitive image 2 (CogSA2)</i>			<i>Cognitive image 1 (CogZIM1)</i>	<i>Cognitive image 2 (CogZIM2)</i>
Scenery and landscape	4.67	0.609		0.785	4.01	0.941		0.756
Natural attractions (e.g., animals, parks, beaches)	4.62	0.655		0.760	3.89	0.974		0.826
Climate	4.36	0.563		0.419	3.78	0.929		0.714
Hospitality of the locals	4.11	0.818		0.514	3.74	1.016		0.553
Nightlife	3.49	0.861	0.743		3.14	0.908	0.538	
Cuisine	4.19	0.762			3.52	0.882		
Shopping facilities	4.17	0.709	0.704		3.20	0.930	0.562	
Accommodation facilities	4.28	0.595			3.48	0.843		
Personal safety	3.16	0.960			3.37	0.903		
Available tourist activities	4.29	0.698		0.550	3.65	0.993		0.656
General infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation)	3.84	0.915	0.729		3.12	1.039	0.765	
Transportation infrastructure	3.64	1.020	0.660		3.05	0.978	0.670	
Man-made attractions (e.g., museums)	3.97	0.750	0.491		3.33	0.940	0.602	
Services (e.g., banking, medical)	3.92	0.781	0.652		3.07	0.949	0.483	
<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>			0.720	0.816			0.773	0.812
<i>Composite reliability</i>			0.827	0.750			0.777	0.831
<i>Average variance extracted</i>			0.447	0.387			0.373	0.500
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization ^a . a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations (SA) and 3 iterations (Zim)								
*n=95 **n=149								

Affective image scales for South Africa and Zimbabwe

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) on a list of items related to travel risk perceptions. Table 6.7 shows EFA results for both South Africa and Zimbabwe's samples. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.87) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.00$) indicated data suitability for EFA for the South African sample

data. One factor emerged (Eigenvalues >1), explaining 49.90% of the variance. The Cronbach Alpha value (0.89) confirmed factor reliability. Both the CR (0.90) and AVE (0.50) values were also acceptable (see Pallant, 2013; Hair *et al.*, 2019).

For the Zimbabwean sample scale, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.88) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) indicated data suitability for EFA. Two factors emerged (Eigenvalues >1), namely, Affective image 1 (AFFZIM1) and Affective image 2 (AFFZIM2). For Affective image 1, the Cronbach Alpha values (0.84) confirmed factor reliability while both the CR (0.83) and AVE (0.50) values also confirmed the validity and reliability of the study constructs. Similarly, the Cronbach Alpha values (0.86) for Affective image 2 also confirmed factor reliability and both the CR (0.86) and AVE (0.60) values were also consistent with the acceptable thresholds for validity and reliability of the affective image dimensions (see Pallant, 2013; Hair *et al.*, 2019). The extracted factors were used to determine the impact of destination image (cognitive and affective) on behavioural intentions to revisit.

Mean scores show that most respondents perceived destination South Africa to be (top three) interesting ($m=8.08$), entertaining ($m=7.70$), and pleasant ($m=7.60$). Overall, the mean scores for Zimbabwe were a bit lower than those of South Africa. Much like South Africa, respondents also perceived destination Zimbabwe to be (top three) interesting ($m=6.70$), authentic ($m=6.54$) and entertaining ($m=6.46$). These attributes are also empirically validated in different studies (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008; Styliadis *et al.*, 2015; Doosti *et al.*, 2016; Martín-Santana *et al.*, 2017).

Table 6.7: EFA: Affective image of South Africa and Zimbabwe

	South Africa*			Zimbabwe**			New Factor 2 <i>Affective image 2 (AFFZIM2)</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor	Mean	Std. Dev	New Factor 1	
			<i>Affective image (AFFSA)</i>			<i>Affective image 1 (AFFZIM1)</i>	
Distressing – Relaxing	7.18	1.599	0.773	6.18	2.001	0.684	
Unpleasant – Pleasant	7.60	1.565	0.821	6.36	2.040		0.675
Boring – Entertaining	7.70	1.533	0.683	6.46	2.048		0.662
Reserved – Innovative	6.61	1.762	0.653	5.75	2.032	0.533	
Undeveloped – Progressive	6.73	1.657	0.674	5.47	2.065	0.874	
Unsafe – Safe	6.06	2.041	0.656	6.00	2.107	0.711	
Uninteresting – Interesting	8.08	1.350	0.743	6.70	1.840		0.972
Artificial – Authentic	7.24	1.865	0.564	6.54	2.002		0.754
Inaccessible – Accessible	7.28	1.692	0.756	6.00	1.902	0.700	
<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>		0.892				0.844	0.862
<i>Composite reliability</i>		0.899				0.831	0.855
<i>Average variance extracted</i>		0.499				0.502	0.602

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.^a a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations (SA) and 3 iterations (Zim)
*n=93 **n=142

Behavioural intentions to revisit South Africa and Zimbabwe

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of South Africa's tourism offering. Table 6.8 shows EFA results for both South Africa and Zimbabwe's samples. For the South African sample data, The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.765) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) indicated data suitability for EFA. One factor emerged (Eigenvalues >1), explaining 60.94% of the variance. The Cronbach Alpha value confirmed factor reliability. Both the CR and AVE values were also acceptable. For the Zimbabwean sample scale, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.800) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) indicated data suitability for EFA. One factor emerged (Eigenvalues >1), explaining 51.47% of the variance. The Cronbach Alpha value confirmed factor reliability.

Table 6.8: EFA: Behavioural intentions to revisit South Africa and Zimbabwe

Dimensions	South Africa			Zimbabwe		
	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor <i>Behavioural intentions to revisit</i>	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor <i>Behavioural intentions to revisit</i>
I have a strong intention to revisit South Africa on my next trip (1)	4.06	1.099	0.639	3.50	1.173	0.706
I have a strong intention to revisit South Africa in the distant future (2)	4.42	0.723	0.702	3.78	1.056	0.788
I would say positive things about South Africa to other people (3)	4.42	0.693	0.810	3.84	0.987	0.677
I would recommend that someone visits South Africa (4)	4.53	0.697	0.938	3.84	0.967	0.694
<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	0.827			0.806		
<i>Composite reliability</i>	0.859			0.809		
<i>Average variance extracted</i>	0.609			0.515		
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 10 iterations (SA) and 7 iterations (Zim) *n=95 **n=154						

6.2.5 Hypotheses tests

The relationships between brand image and behavioural intentions to revisit

As indicated in the conceptual model in Chapter 4, the following hypotheses were stated:

- H₁: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*
- H₂: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*
- H₃: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

H₄: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

Simple linear regression was firstly used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2, for both South Africa and Zimbabwe. As indicated in Table 6.9, all the tested relationships proved to be significant, therefore, H₁ and H₂ were supported. As previously shown in the EFAs, South Africa's destination image split into two factors for cognitive (Cognitive image 1 and Cognitive image 2) and one for affective image. Zimbabwe's destination image split into two factors for cognitive (Cognitive image 1 and Cognitive image 2) and two for affective image (Affective image 1 and Affective image 2).

These results are corroborated by literature, which suggests that when cognitive image is tested individually, it results in behavioural intentions (Ren *et al.*, 2022; Joo *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, literature affirms that affective image positively influences behavioural intentions (e.g., Herrero-Crespo *et al.*, 2022). Nonetheless, other studies put forth that, when tested simultaneously, both cognitive and affective image positively influence behavioural intentions (Abdillah *et al.*, 2022; Carreira *et al.*, 2022).

Table 6.9: Relationships between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit

Predictor	β	<i>p</i> for β
South Africa		
H _{1a} Cognitive image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit	0.257	<.05
H _{1b} Cognitive image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit	0.226	<.05
H ₂ Affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit	0.499	<.001
Zimbabwe		
H _{1a} Cognitive image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit	0.196	<.05
H _{1b} Cognitive image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit	0.492	<.001
H _{2a} Affective image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit	0.567	<.001
H _{2b} Affective image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit	0.620	<.001

For South Africa, the overall regression was statistically significant for Cognitive image 1 [$R^2 = 0.066$), $F(1.92) = 6.502$, $p < 0.05$]. Cognitive image 1 significantly predicted behavioural intentions to revisit ($\beta = 0.257$, $p < 0.05$). The overall regression for Cognitive image 2 was also statistically significant [$R^2 = 0.051$), $F(1.93) = 5.025$, $p < 0.05$]. In addition, Cognitive image 2 significantly predicted behavioural intentions to revisit ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.05$). Lastly, the overall regression was statistically significant for affective image [$R^2 = 0.249$), $F(1.86) = 28.514$, $p < 0.001$]. Affective image significantly predicted behavioural intentions to revisit ($\beta = 0.499$, $p < 0.001$).

For Zimbabwe, the overall regression for Cognitive image 1 was statistically significant [$R^2 = 0.038$), $F(1.150) = 5.968$, $p < 0.05$]. Similarly, Cognitive image 1 significantly predicted behavioural intentions to revisit ($\beta = 0.196$, $p < 0.05$). The overall regression was statistically significant for Cognitive image 2 [$R^2 = 0.242$), $F(1.150) = 47.804$, $p < 0.001$], while findings also show that Cognitive image 2 significantly predicted behavioural intentions to revisit ($\beta = 0.492$, $p < 0.001$).

For Zimbabwe the overall regression for Affective image 1, was statistically significant [$R^2 = 0.322$), $F(1.142) = 67.430$, $p < 0.001$]. Affective image 1 also significantly predicted behavioural intentions to revisit ($\beta = 0.567$, $p < 0.001$). The same was found for Affective image 2, where the overall regression was statistically significant [$R^2 = 0.384$), $F(1.144) = 89.826$, $p < 0.001$]. Affective image 2 also significantly predicted behavioural intentions to revisit Zimbabwe ($\beta = 0.620$, $p < 0.001$).

The moderating effect of risk on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit

Behavioural intentions to revisit South Africa

Table 6.10 provides the results of the subsequent three moderation tests for South Africa. As can be seen, only H_{3a} was supported as the interaction term was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Travel risk perceptions are known to positively impact tourists' choice of destination behavioural intentions (Seyfi *et al.*, 2023). However, past studies only tested risk perceptions as a moderator on the relationship between overall destination image and behavioural intentions (e.g., Farrukh *et al.*, 2022). Cognitive and affective image were not tested separately, as was done in this study.

Table 6.10: Moderation tests for South Africa

Predictor	β	p for β
H3a Travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Cognitive image 1 and behavioural intention		
Cognitive Image 1 (X)	0.4110	<.05
RiskSA (W)	-0.0183	0.8262
Cognitive Image 1 (X) x RiskSA (W)	-0.7298	<.001
H3b Travel risk perceptions moderates the relationship between Cognitive image 2 and behavioural intention		
Cognitive Image 2 (X)	0.2719	0.1725
RiskSA (W)	0.0006	0.9950
Cognitive Image 2 (X) x RiskSA (W)	-0.1715	0.4104
H4 Travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between affective image and behavioural intention		
Affective Image (X)	0.3839	<.001
RiskSA (W)	0.0391	0.6195
Affective image (X) x RiskSA (W)	-0.0689	0.2204

Cognitive image 1 and risk perception

For H_{3a}, the overall model was statistically significant [(R² =0.353), F (3, 40) =7.276, p<0.001]. The R² change was also statistically significant (R² change= 0.2499; p<0.001). From Table 6.10, Cognitive Image 1 was positively related to behavioural intentions to revisit, while RiskSA significantly moderated the effect of Cognitive Image 1 on behavioural intentions to revisit (β =-0.7298; p<0.01). The conditional effect (simple slope) of RiskSA was significant (p<0.001) when RiskSA was one SD below the mean (effect= 1.1247), at the mean (effect = 0.468), but not at one SD above the mean (effect = -0.397) (Aiken & West, 1991). As can be seen in Figure 6.4, when the level of RiskSA increased, the strength of the relationship between Cognitive Image 1 (CogSA1) and behavioural intentions to revisit decreases. In other words, the higher the risk, the less effective Cognitive image 1 is to sustain travel intentions.

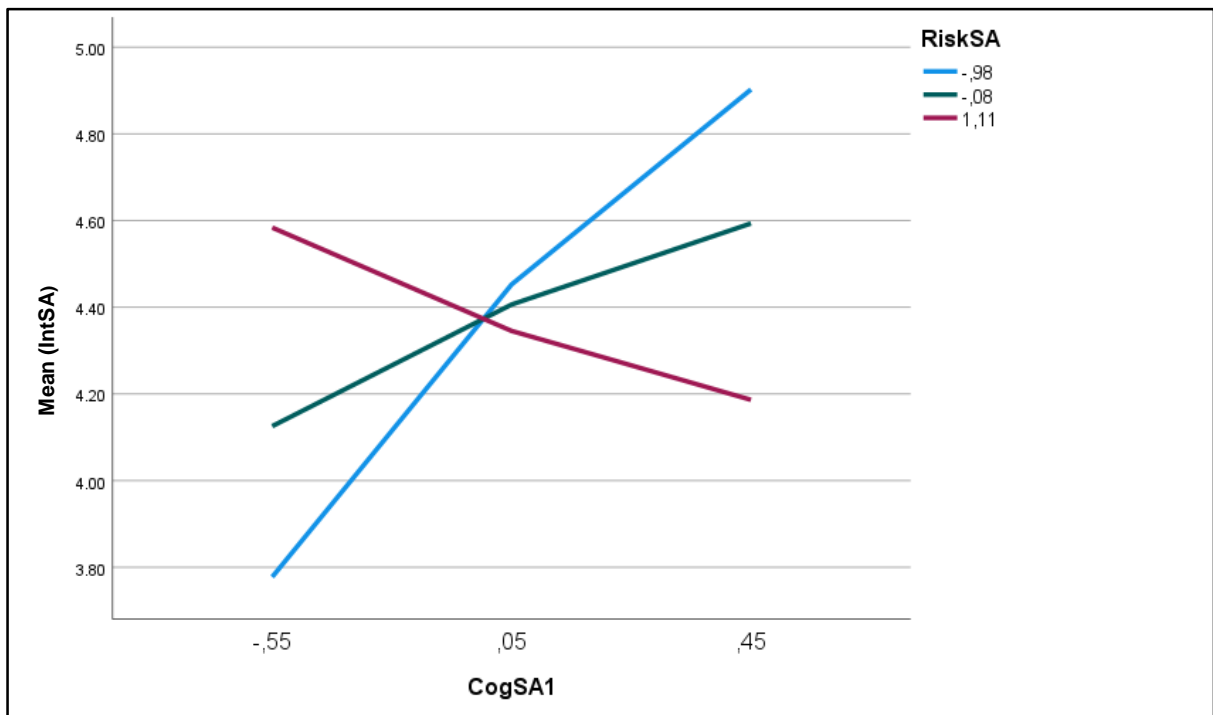


Figure 6.4: Cognitive image 1 and risk perceptions in South Africa

Behavioural intentions to revisit Zimbabwe

Table 6.11 provides the results of the four moderation tests for Zimbabwe. As can be seen, H_{3b}, H_{4a} and H_{4b} were supported as the interaction terms were statistically significant (p<.001; p<.05).

Table 6.11: Moderation tests for Zimbabwe

Predictor	β	p for β
H3a Travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Cognitive image 1 and behavioural intention		
Cognitive Image 1 (X)	0.2489	<.05
RiskZim (W)	-0.2698	<.001
Cognitive Image 1 (X) x RiskZim (W)	-0.0891	0.3952
H3b Travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Cognitive image 2 and behavioural intention		
Cognitive Image 2 (X)	0.4599	<.001
RiskZim (W)	-0.0750	0.2985
Cognitive Image 2 (X) x RiskZim (W)	-0.4503	<.001
H4a Travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Affective image 1 and behavioural intention		
Affective Image 1 (X)	0.2673	<.001
RiskZim (W)	0.1739	<.05
Affective image 1 (X) x RiskZim (W)	-0.0706	<.05
H4b Travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Affective image 2 and behavioural intention		
Affective Image 2 (X)	0.2762	<.001
RiskZim (W)	-0.0745	0.2743
Affective image 1 (X) x RiskZim (W)	-0.1409	<.001

Cognitive image 2 and risk perception

H_{3b} was supported because the overall model was statistically significant [(R² =.3404), F(3, 146) = 25.1156, p<0.001]. The R² change was also statistically significant (R² change= 0.0877; p<0.001). Table 6.11 shows that Cognitive image 2 was positively related to behavioural intentions to revisit, and RiskZim significantly moderated the effect of Cognitive Image 2 on behavioural intentions to revisit (β =-0.4503; p<0.01). The conditional effect (simple slope) of RiskZim was significant (p<0.001) when RiskZim was SD below the mean (effect =0.8638) and at the mean (effect = 0.3595), but not above the mean (effect =0.1768).

As shown in Figure 6.5, as the level of RiskZim increased, the strength of the relationship between Cognitive image 2 (CogZIM2) and behavioural intentions to revisit decreased. In other words, the higher the risk, the less effective Cognitive image 2 is to sustain travel intentions.

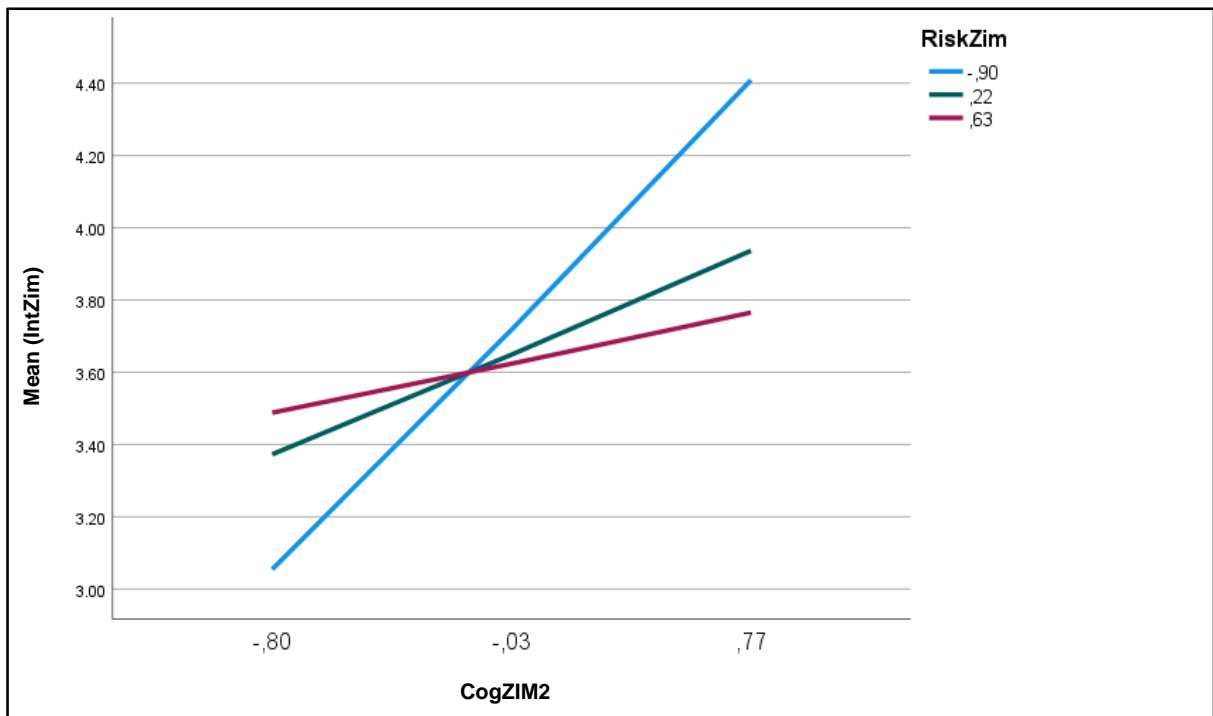


Figure 6.5: Interaction between Cognitive image 2 and risk perceptions in Zimbabwe

Affective image 1 and risk perception

For H_{4a} , the overall model was statistically significant [$R^2 = 0.3700$], $F(3, 138) = 27.0216$, $p < 0.001$]. The R^2 change was statistically significant (R^2 change = 0.0196; $p < 0.05$). Table 6.11 shows that Affective Image 1 was positively related to behavioural intentions to revisit, and RiskZim significantly moderated the effect of Affective Image 1 on behavioural intentions to revisit ($\beta = -0.0706$; $p < 0.05$). The conditional effect (simple slope) of RiskZim was significant ($p < 0.001$) when RiskZim was SD below the mean (effect = 0.3244), at the mean (effect = 0.2525), and at one SD above the mean (effect = 0.2223). Figure 6.6 shows that as the level of RiskZim increased, the strength of the relationship between Affective image 1 (AFFZIM1) and behavioural intentions to revisit decreased. In other words, the higher the risk, the less effective Affective image 1 is to sustain travel intentions.

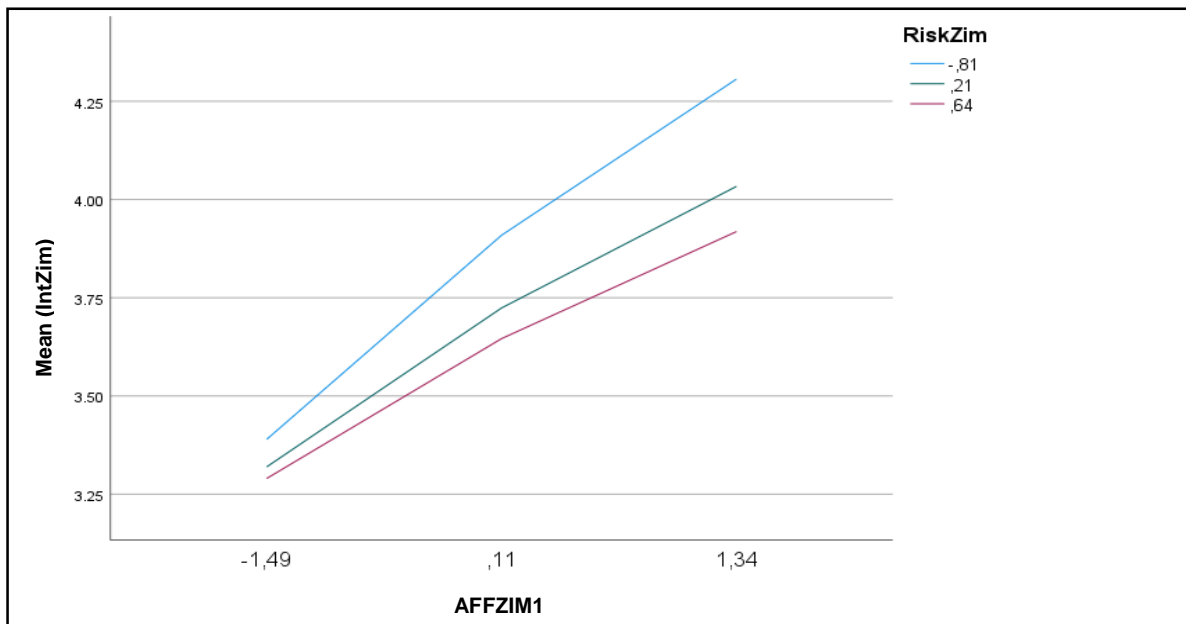


Figure 6.6: Interaction between Affective image 1 and risk perceptions in Zimbabwe

Affective image 2 and risk perception

For H_{4b}, the overall model was statistically significant [(R² = 0.4575), F(3, 140) = 39.3547, p<0.001]. The R² change was statistically significant (R² change= 0.0196; p<0.05). Table 6.11 shows that Affective image 2 was positively related to behavioural intentions to revisit, while RiskZim significantly moderated the effect of Affective image 2 on behavioural intentions to revisit (β =-0.1409; p<0.001). The conditional effect (simple slope) of RiskZim was significant (p<0.001) when RiskZim was *SD* below the mean (effect = 0.4013), at the mean (effect = 0.2443), and at one *SD* above the mean (effect = β =0.1880).

Figure 6.7 shows that as the level of RiskZim increased, the strength of the relationship between Affective image 2 (AFFZIM2) and behavioural intentions to revisit decreased. In other words, the higher the risk, the less effective Affective image 2 is to sustain travel intentions.

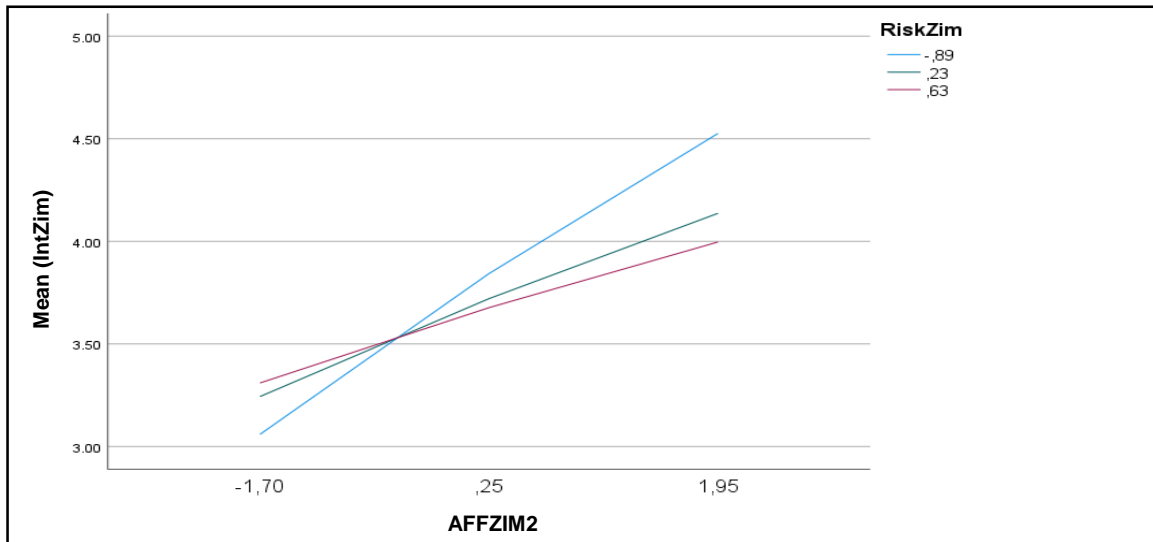


Figure 6.7: Interaction between Affective image 2 and risk perceptions in Zimbabwe

Overall, results show that risk perceptions significantly influence the relationship between destination image (Cognitive image 1, Cognitive image 2, Affective image 1 and Affective image 2) and behavioural intentions to revisit. In this regard, the study appears to corroborate findings by Farrukh *et al.* (2022), which show that risk perceptions positively influence the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The above section ushers the study into the next stage of data analysis showing results from Phase 2 of the study. This will enable the fulfilment of this study's purpose, which is to investigate the role of two demand conditions (travel risk perceptions and digital media usage) on the competitiveness of emerging destinations.

6.3 RESULTS OF PHASE 2

The current section presents the study's empirical results for Phase 2. The main objective was to determine the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media by leisure tourists during their travels. The section starts off with a description of the scales not previously used during Phase 1, namely, digital media usage, TRI (Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism), TAM (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use), and digital media preferences. Destination image and travel risk perceptions are excluded from the initial descriptions and scale refinement, they will, however, be used as part of model testing in the format in which they were used in Phase 1. After the descriptive details, the scales are validated using EFA (digital media usage) and CFA (TRI, TAM). The digital media preferences scale is not used as a single scale, but rather as individual items, which will subsequently be explained. After scale validation, path analyses are presented that initially tested the conceptual model. Due to model properties, these analyses could not be used, and were thus followed up by a series of regressions (multiple and hierarchical) to test the hypothesised relationships. All the analyses are presented for South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively.

6.3.1 Descriptive statistics

The results of Phase 1 included a description of the sample (refer to section 6.2). Additional data specifically for TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and digital media usage is provided below.

The survey commenced by looking at average hours that the respondents spent on online activity (excluding work commitments) per week. Findings show that approximately 56% spent over six hours, 41% spent between two and five hours and only 3% of the respondents spent less than one hour per week (refer to Table 6.12). These findings indicate that most of the respondents are active internet users, and it can be assumed that the individuals in the sample from which data was collected could appropriately respond to questions relating to the usage of digital marketing.

Table 6.12: Time spent online (not work related)

Time spent online (not work related)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	8	3
2-5 hours per week	103	41
6-10 hours	90	36
11-20 hours	25	10
Over 20 hours	25	10
Total	251	100

Exposure to digital media during travel to South Africa and Zimbabwe

The respondents were asked to indicate their exposure to some forms of digital media when travelling.

Table 6.13: Exposure to digital media at different stages of travel

Digital Media	South Africa				Zimbabwe			
	Before	During	After	Not at all	Before	During	After	Not at all
Virtual reality (e.g., 3-D virtual reality videos)	12	12	2	42	11	37	28	21
Augmented reality (e.g., 3-D city tour guide)	8	10	1	45	5	46	18	27
Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	39	15	3	7	50	28	13	5
Review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor)	46	12	1	4	52	23	17	5
Video sharing (e.g., YouTube)	47	5	1	10	39	14	29	13
Official destination website	54	6	3	2	41	30	21	5
Context-aware recommender media (e.g., Foursquare)	14	9	3	40	14	37	20	24

*Values provided as frequencies

It emerged from the study that over 50% of the respondents had exposure to some form of digital media while travelling to both South Africa and Zimbabwe (refer to Table 6.13). Notably, before travelling to both South Africa and Zimbabwe, most of the leisure tourists mainly used digital media, such as official tourism websites and diverse social media sites, including video sharing (e.g., YouTube), review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook). In addition, most respondents primarily used virtual reality (3-D virtual reality videos), augmented reality (3-D city tour guide) and context-aware recommender media (Foursquare) during their travels to Zimbabwe. Furthermore, several respondents also used official tourism websites and social media sites, such as Facebook and YouTube before travelling to Zimbabwe.

The above confirms past studies which show that YouTube, TripAdvisor, and Facebook are social media sites popularly used for their ability to effectively communicate tourism products to tourists prior to travel (see Molina *et al.*, 2020; Madureira & Alturas, 2022; Nilashi *et al.*, 2022). Immersive digital media, such as virtual reality (3-D virtual reality videos), augmented reality (3-D city tour guide) and recommender apps, such as context-aware recommender media (Foursquare) were, however, not as popular as official tourism websites and social media sites. The reason for this is because they are mainly used during the visit or onsite (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019; Mou *et al.*, 2022). The unpopularity can be attributed to the fact that data was collected during the peak of COVID-19 when travel was restricted.

SCALE DESCRIPTIONS

Digital media usage

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they used different types of digital media during their travels (i.e., from planning, to travelling and returning home). The responses were rated on a scale of 1 = never to 5 = always. Descriptive statistics for digital media usage are indicated in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14: Descriptive statistics for digital media usage

Question number	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q17.1	Virtual reality (e.g., 3-D virtual reality videos)	2.492	1.2617	.278	-1.134
Q17.2	Augmented reality (e.g., 3-D city tour guide)	2.271	1.1254	.491	-.634
Q17.3	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	3.404	1.1862	-.501	-.448
Q17.4	Review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor)	3.475	.9620	-.308	-.256
Q17.5	Video sharing (e.g., YouTube)	3.325	1.0430	-.292	-.291
Q17.6	Official destination website	3.669	.9228	-.171	-.502
Q17.7	Context-aware recommender media (e.g., Foursquare)	2.449	1.1557	.330	-.764

N=251

Table 6.14 shows that official destination website has the highest mean score ($m=3.669$), followed by social media sites, including, TripAdvisor ($m=3.475$), Facebook ($m=3.404$) and lastly, YouTube ($m=3.325$), for both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The above were mostly used, from planning, to travelling and returning home. However, 3-D virtual reality videos ($m=2.492$), Foursquare ($m=2.449$) and 3-D city tour guide ($m=2.271$) had the lowest mean scores. In terms of skewness, four out of seven items displayed negative skewness,

indicating that scores were clustered around positive responses on the survey questions (i.e., “always”) (Pallant, 2011). It is evident from the above that respondents used different digital media types at different stages of travel.

Technology readiness index (TRI)

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding the use of digital media in general. The responses were rated on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Descriptive statistics for technology readiness are indicated in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15: Descriptive statistics for technology readiness (TRI)

Question number	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Discomfort					
Q18.1	Sometimes, I think that digital media are not designed for use by ordinary people	2.957	1.0111	-.262	-.536
Q18.2	When using digital media, I prefer to have the basic model over one with a lot of extra features	3.423	.8605	-.403	.345
Q18.3	It is helpful to have types of digital media explained to me by a knowledgeable person	2.583	.98210	.480	-.097
Q18.4	I like to try out all the special features available in different types of digital media to see what they can do	2.622	.91528	.403	-.053
Q18.5	I feel I am usually in control of new digital media	2.746	.95511	.435	-.035
Insecurity					
Q18.6	I worry that information I send over while using digital media will be seen by other people	3.174	.9836	-.266	-.267
Q18.7	I do not feel confident doing business with a place that can only be reached online	3.074	1.1520	-.228	-.748
Q18.8	It can be risky to switch to digital media too quickly	3.000	1.0276	-.134	-.479
Q18.9	The human touch is very important when planning for travel	3.684	.8732	-.544	.402
Innovativeness					
Q18.10	Other people come to me for advice on new digital media	2.966	1.0502	-.201	-.483
Q18.11	In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to use digital media	3.098	.9772	-.179	-.487
Q18.12	I keep up with the latest technological developments in new digital media	3.366	.9477	-.360	-.036
Q18.13	I find I have fewer problems than other people in making digital media work for me	3.416	.8042	-.557	.851
Q18.14	I am always open to learning about new and different types of digital media	3.640	.8177	-.508	.360
Optimism					
Q18.15	Using digital media gives me more control over my trips	3.541	.8417	-.475	.428
Q18.16	I prefer to use the most advanced digital media available	3.355	.8493	-.300	.563
Q18.17	I feel confident that the digital media follows through with what I instruct it to do	3.378	.8055	-.402	.322
Q18.18	Digital media are easier to deal with than people performing the same service	3.243	.9008	-.404	.239
Q18.19	I want to see the benefits of digital media demonstrated before I use it	3.393	.8931	-.196	-.317

N=251

According to Table 6.15, the descriptive statistics for drivers of technology readiness (TRI) show that Innovativeness (*I am always open to learning about new and different types of digital media*) ($m=3.640$) had the highest mean score, while Innovativeness (*other people come to me for advice on new digital media*) ($m=2.966$) had the least. Optimism (*using digital media gives me more control over my trips*) ($m=3.541$) had the highest mean score, while Optimism (*digital media are easier to deal with than people performing the same service*) ($m=3.243$) had the least.

The descriptive statistics suggest that respondents with high levels of innovativeness are open to learning about new digital media and that other people come to them for advice on the same. An explanation for this can simply be that they are risk-takers who are always experimenting, and because of their adaptability and creativity, those willing to learn about digital media approach them for advice (Tang, 2021). As shown by the mean scores, respondents with high levels of optimism prefer to use the most advanced digital media because it gives them more control over their trips, and they find it more flexible and easier to deal with than people (see Yang *et al.*, 2022; Sia *et al.*, 2023).

The descriptive statistics also show that inhibitors of technology; Insecurity (*the human touch is very important when planning for travel*) ($m=3.684$) had the highest mean score, while Insecurity (*it can be risky to switch to digital media too quickly*) ($m=3.000$) had the least. Discomfort (*when using digital media, I prefer to have the basic model over one with a lot of extra features*) ($m=3.423$) had the highest mean score, while Discomfort (*it is helpful to have types of digital media explained to me by a knowledgeable person*) ($m=2.583$) had the least.

The descriptive statistics suggest that respondents who are high in technology Insecurity feel that human interaction is an important component when planning for travel, and they find it too risky to switch to digital media too quickly. Past studies corroborate this finding by suggesting people fear the possibility of unwittingly sharing personal information. This has proven to be the norm, thus online platforms may not be as safe as interacting with people (see Oh *et al.*, 2014; Sia *et al.*, 2023; Romanillos & Moya-Gómez, 2023).

Findings also suggest that respondents high in technology Discomfort prefer to use the most basic model of digital media and that they find it helpful to have types of digital media explained to them by a knowledgeable person. Studies confirm this by affirming that discomfort may occur if virtual tourism technology is relatively new to the targeted users (Senalasarri *et al.*, 2022). Such is said to be the case where the use of digital media may

be relatively new in a specified tourism context, causing discomfort due to confusion among users (e.g., Wibisono *et al.*, 2023).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding the use of digital media in general. The responses were rated on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Descriptive statistics for technology acceptance are indicated in Table 6.16

Table 6.16: Descriptive statistics for perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (TAM)

Question number	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived usefulness					
18.20	Digital media are useful on my trips	3.622	.8300	-.737	1.016
18.21	Digital media enhance the quality of my trips	3.556	.8076	-.416	.480
18.22	Digital media enable me to have more convenient trips	3.604	.7775	-.587	.883
Perceived ease of use					
18.23	Learning to operate different types of digital media would be easy for me	3.518	.7986	-.630	.987
18.24	It is easy for me to become skilful at using digital media	3.552	.8358	-.749	.771
18.25	I find that the digital media that I am familiar with is easy to use	3.730	.7370	-.660	1.248
18.26	My interaction with digital media is clear and understandable	3.572	.7806	-.678	1.081

N=251

Table 6.16 shows that the descriptive statistics for both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use have high mean scores. Perceived usefulness (*digital media are useful on my trips*) (m=3.622) had the highest mean score, while Perceived usefulness (*digital media enhance the quality of my trips*) (m=3.556) had the lowest, suggesting that respondents perceived digital media to be useful when travelling and that it enhanced the quality of the trip (see Liu *et al.*, 2020).

Perceived ease of use (*I find that the digital media that I am familiar with is easy to use*) had the highest mean score (m=3.730). Again, Perceived ease of use (*learning to operate different types of digital media would be easy for me*) recorded the lowest mean (m=3.518), suggesting that respondents perceived the digital media they were familiar with to be easy to use and they also found it easy to learn how to use different types of digital media (e.g., Davis, 1989; Zhou *et al.*, 2022). Respondents were, therefore, more inclined to share positive sentiments regarding the acceptance of technology.

Digital media preferences

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they preferred certain features when using digital media during their travels. The responses were rated on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (responding to: “During my travels, I prefer digital media that...”).

Table 6.17: Descriptive statistics for digital media preferences

Question number	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
19.1	provides me with reliable information about the destination	3.967	.7817	-.845	1.385
19.2	allow me to share tourism experiences online	3.644	.8934	-.802	1.061
19.3	allow me to personalise my itinerary	3.819	.8098	-.520	.553
19.4	provides me with clear details of the product offering	3.843	.8066	-.817	1.540
19.5	provides me with travel safety information	3.879	.7399	-.716	1.518
19.6	project vivid images of the destination	3.818	.7373	-.658	1.401

N=251

In Table 6.17, item 19.1 (*provides me with reliable information about the destination*) had the highest mean score ($m=3.967$), while item 19.2 (*allow me to share tourism experiences online*) ($m=3.644$) had the lowest, indicating that most respondents prefer to use reliable and interactive digital media. The reason for the above can be explained by the high levels of Insecurity, where respondents noted the importance of the human touch as well as dangers of switching between digital media. Notably, digital media platforms that provide reliable destination information as well as allowing the sharing of tourism experiences online, were the most popular among respondents. From the descriptive statistics in Tables 6.13 and 6.14, social media sites (i.e., YouTube, TripAdvisor, and Facebook) proved to be the most used forms of digital media during travel (see Madureira & Alturas, 2022; Nilashi *et al.*, 2022). The above shows that digital media preferences form an important part of decision-making on the type of digital media to use for travel purposes.

6.3.2 Confirmatory factor analysis for technology readiness

The scale used to measure technology readiness (TRI) was based on an existing scale (Walzuch, 2007) as described in the methods section. It was, therefore, necessary to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The four factors with their 19 items included, Discomfort – 5; Insecurity – 4; Innovativeness – 5; Optimism - 5. The CFA solution was found to be inadmissible, due to the covariance matrix between the four constructs not being positive definite. This is evidenced by the multicollinearity (correlation above 0.9) observed between Innovativeness and Optimism, as well as Discomfort and Insecurity.

In addition, the loadings for Discomfort, except for one item, was below the threshold of 0.5. It was, therefore, decided to merge the Innovativeness & Optimism construct, and to disregard the Discomfort construct.

A second CFA was conducted on the revised model including Innovativeness & Optimism (10 items) and Insecurity (4 items). The goodness of fit statistics for the TRI model are presented in Table 6.18.

Table 6.18: Goodness of fit statistics for the TRI measurement model

Chi-square test of model fit			RMSEA			CFI/IFI	
Value	Degrees of freedom	P value	Estimate	P value RMSEA (p<.05)	90% CI	CFI	IFI
2.057	76	0.000	.065	.045	[.050 .079]	.884	.889

Note: RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; CFI = Comparative fit index; IFI = Incremental fit index.

The RMSEA indicated reasonable model fit, while both the CFI and IFI values were slightly below the desired value for good fit (0.9). Reasonable fit was, therefore, evident for the model. Table 6.19 provides the model parameters.

Table 6.19: Model parameters for the TRI measurement model

Question number	Item	Unstandardised factor loadings Estimate	Standardised factor loadings Estimate
Innovativeness & Optimism			
Q18.10	Other people come to me for advice on new digital media	.922*	.562
Q18.11	In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to use digital media	.879*	.577
Q18.12	I keep up with the latest technological developments in new digital media	1.000*	.677
Q18.13	I find I have fewer problems than other people in making digital media work for me	.817*	.632
Q18.14	I am always open to learning about new and different types of digital media	.796*	.605
Q18.15	Using digital media gives me more control over my trips	.722*	.534
Q18.16	I prefer to use the most advanced digital media available	.959*	.691
Q18.17	I feel confident that the digital media follows through with what I instruct it to do	.838*	.647
Q18.18	Digital media are easier to deal with than people performing the same service	.837*	.578
Q18.19	I want to see the benefits of digital media demonstrated before I use it	-.239**	-.168
Insecurity			
Q18.6	I worry that information I send over while using digital media will be seen by other people	1.000*	.454

Q18.7	I do not feel confident doing business with a place that can only be reached online	1.792*	.687
Q18.8	It can be risky to switch to digital media too quickly	1.648*	.718
Q18.9	The human touch is very important when planning for travel	.635*	.324

Note: * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

As can be seen from Table 6.19, all the standardised factor loadings were statistically significant. The factor loadings for Q18.19 (Innovativeness & Optimism) (-.168), Q18.6 (Insecurity) (.454) and Q18.9 (Insecurity) (.324) were below the 0.5 threshold. For this reason, it was decided to remove these three items.

A third CFA was conducted. The goodness of fit statistics for the revised TRI measurement model are presented in Table 6.20.

Table 6.20: Goodness of fit statistics for the revised TRI measurement model

Chi-square test of model fit			RMSEA			CFI/IFI	
Value	Degrees of freedom	P value	Estimate	P value RMSEA ($p < .05$)	90% CI	CFI	IFI
2.334	44	0.000	.073	.021	[.055 .092]	.905	.909

Note: RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; CFI = Comparative fit index; IFI = Incremental fit index.

The RMSEA was below the desired value of .08, while both the CFI and IFI values were above the desired value for good fit (0.9). Thus, acceptable fit was evident for the model.

Table 6.21 provides the model parameters.

Table 6.21: Model parameters for the revised measurement model

Question number	Item	Unstandardised factor loadings	Standardised factor loadings
		Estimate	Estimate
Innovativeness & Optimism			
Q18.10	Other people come to me for advice on new digital media	.928*	.568
Q18.11	In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to use digital media	.881*	.580
Q18.12	I keep up with the latest technological developments in new digital media	1.000*	.680
Q18.13	I find I have fewer problems than other people in making digital media work for me	.810*	.629
Q18.14	I am always open to learning about new and different types of digital media	.785*	.599
Q18.15	Using digital media gives me more control over my trips	.716*	.531
Q18.16	I prefer to use the most advanced digital media available	.963*	.696
Q18.17	I feel confident that the digital media follows through with what I instruct it to do	.830*	.643

Q18.18	Digital media are easier to deal with than people performing the same service	.834*	.578
Insecurity			
Q18.7	I do not feel confident doing business with a place that can only be reached online	1.000*	.555
Q18.8	It can be risky to switch to digital media too quickly	1.393*	.879

Note: * $p < 0.01$

As can be seen from Table 6.21, all the standardised factor loadings were statistically significant and above the threshold of 0.5 (Kline, 2011). The validity analysis indicated a low AVE level (below the 0.5 threshold). Malhotra and Dash (2011) argue that AVE is often too strict, and reliability can be established through CR alone. The correlation matrix indicated high correlation between the two constructs (refer to Table 6.22). However, the HTMT analysis (Voorhees *et al.*, 2016) (refer to Table 6.23) indicated a value of 0.086, which is below the strict thresholds of 0.850 (0.900 for liberal discriminant validity). Hence, it was decided to proceed with the two constructs separately.

Table 6.22: Validity analysis for the TRI model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Innovativeness & Optimism	Insecurity
Innovativeness & Optimism	0.844	0.377	0.018	0.837	0.614	
Insecurity	0.691	0.540	0.018	0.471	-0.133	0.735

Table 6.23: HTMT analysis for the TRI model

	Innovativeness & Optimism	Insecurity
Innovativeness & Optimism		
Insecurity	0.086	

6.3.3 Confirmatory factor analysis for technology acceptance

The scale used to measure technology acceptance (TAM) was based on an existing scale (Kim *et al.*, 2008) as described in the methods section. Consequently, it was necessary to conduct a CFA. The two factors with their 7 items were included (perceived usefulness – 3; perceived ease of use – 4). The goodness of fit statistics for the measurement model are presented in Table 6.24.

Table 6.24: Goodness of fit statistics for the TAM measurement model

Chi-square test of model fit			RMSEA			CFI/IFI	
Value	Degrees of freedom	P value	Estimate	P value RMSEA (p<.05)	90% CI	CFI	IFI
2.889	33	0.000	.087	.021	[.055 .120]	.961	.961

Note: RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; CFI = Comparative fit index; IFI = Incremental fit index.

The RMSEA was slightly above the desired value of .08, while both the CFI and IFI values were above the desired value for good fit (0.9). However, according to Lai and Green (2016), acceptable fit can be assumed for the model. Table 6.25 provides the model parameters.

Table 6.25: Model parameters for the TAM measurement model

Question number	Item	Unstandardised factor loadings	Standardised factor loadings
		Estimate	Estimate
Perceived usefulness			
Q18.20	Digital media are useful on my trips	1.000*	.689
Q18.21	Digital media enhance the quality of my trips	.994*	.704
Q18.22	Digital media enable me to have more convenient trips	1.030*	.757
Perceived ease of use			
Q18.23	Learning to operate different types of digital media would be easy for me	1.005*	.678
Q18.24	It is easy for me to become skilful at using digital media	1.109*	.715
Q18.25	I find that the digital media that I am familiar with is easy to use	.870*	.636
Q18.26	My interaction with digital media is clear and understandable	1.000*	.690

Note: * $p < 0.01$

As can be seen from Table 6.25, all the standardised factor loadings were statistically significant and above the threshold of 0.5 (Kline, 2011).

The correlation matrix indicated high correlation between the two constructs (refer to Table 6.26). However, the HTMT analysis (Voorhees *et al.*, 2016) (refer to Table 6.27) indicated a value of 0.710, which is below the strict threshold of 0.850 (0.900 for liberal discriminant validity). It was, therefore, decided to proceed with the two as separate constructs.

Table 6.26: Validity analysis for the TAM model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Perceived usefulness	Perceived ease of use
Perceived usefulness	0.760	0.514	0.846	0.764	0.717	
Perceived ease of use	0.775	0.463	0.846	0.777	0.920***	0.681

Table 6.27: HTMT analysis for the TAM model

	Perceived usefulness	Perceived ease of use
Perceived usefulness		
Perceived ease of use	0.710	

6.3.4 Exploratory factor analysis for digital media usage

An EFA was conducted to determine the dimensionality and reliability of the digital media usage scale. The scale was developed from general literature as described in the methods section. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.648) and Bartlett's tests ($p=0.000$) indicated data suitability for EFA. Three factors emerged (Eigenvalues >1), explaining 34.9% of the variance. One item, Q17.6 (official destination website) loaded as a single factor onto a third item and was thus removed. Two factors were retained and named 'Hedonic usage' and 'Utilitarian usage'.

The formation of the factors with the specific items are aligned to the literature that indicates that hedonic affordances can be drawn from digital media, such as virtual reality, augmented reality (e.g., Vishwakarma *et al.*, 2020; Mishra *et al.*, 2021) and context-aware recommender media (see Akel & Armağan, 2021).

Virtual reality, augmented reality and context-aware recommender media are popular among tourists due to their immersive, personalisation and interactive nature, making them hedonic for pleasure-seeking tourists (see Mishra *et al.*, 2021; Vieira *et al.*, 2022; Akel & Armağan, 2021).

Furthermore, literature also indicates that utilitarian benefits are the reasons behind the use of social media sites, such as YouTube, TripAdvisor, and Facebook (Akdim *et al.*, 2022). Despite being social in nature, these social media sites are important channels of communication, travel-related information, and image building for value-seeking (utilitarian) tourists (Taecharungroj & Avraham, 2022; Madureira & Alturas, 2022).

All the indicators loaded above the threshold of 0.5, except for one item of Utilitarian usage, Q17.4 (review sites e.g., TripAdvisor), which was slightly below. For the Hedonic usage scale, the Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values were within the acceptable range above 0.6, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was below the desired level of 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). For the Utilitarian usage scale, the Cronbach Alpha and CR values were slightly below the acceptable range of above 0.6, while the Average AVE was below the desired level of 0.5. Considered collectively, the scales were deemed usable even though they were less than the desired level. Table 6.28 shows EFA for digital media usage.

Table 6.28: EFA for digital media usage

Question number	Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor loadings	
				Hedonic Usage	Utilitarian Usage
Q17.1	Virtual reality (3-D Virtual reality videos)	2.492	1.2617	.507	
Q17.2	Augmented reality (e.g., 3-D city tour guide)	2.271	1.1254	.774	
Q17.3	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	3.404	1.1862		.713
Q17.4	Review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor)	3.475	.9620		.483
Q17.5	Video sharing (YouTube)	3.325	1.0430		.517
Q17.7	Context-aware recommender media (e.g., Foursquare)	2.449	1.1557	.516	
	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>			.611	.592
	<i>Composite reliability</i>			.632	.596
	<i>Average variance extracted</i>			.374	.336
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.					

6.3.5 Path analysis: conceptual model testing

Two conceptual models, based on the theoretical model presented in Chapter 4, were tested for South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively. The factors were used as they had been refined during the aforementioned CFA and EFA processes. Table 6.29 presents the descriptive statistics for the factors.

Table 6.29: Descriptive statistics of the conceptual models

South African sample											
Factor*	Innovativeness & Optimism (InnovOpt)	Insecurity	Perceived ease of use (EaseofUse)	Perceived usefulness (Usage)	Hedonic digital media usage (Hedonic)	Utilitarian digital media usage (Utilitarian)	Affective image (AFFSA)	Cognitive image 1 (CogSA1)	Cognitive image 2 (CogSA2)	Behavioural intentions to revisit (IntSA)	
Mean	3.4199	2.8060	3.6590	3.6390	1.8464	3.4044	7.1623	4.4103	3.8386	4.3579	
Std. Dev	.61958	.94992	.63268	.71313	.86590	.92770	1.23502	.46670	.61090	.66610	
Skewness	-.411	-.063	-1.085	-.825	1.031	-.466	-.846	-.661	-.340	-1.205	
Kurtosis	1.176	-.621	3.046	1.899	.903	.164	1.082	-.244	.483	2.160	
Minimum	1.48	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.67	3.20	1.83	1.50	
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	9.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	
N	Valid	124	124	124	124	124	89	97	95	95	
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	35	27	29	29	
Zimbabwean sample											
Factor*	Innovativeness & Optimism (InnovOpt)	Insecurity	Perceived ease of use (EaseofUse)	Perceived usefulness (Usage)	Hedonic digital media usage (Hedonic)	Utilitarian digital media usage (Utilitarian)	Affective image 1 (AFFZIM1)	Affective image 2 (AFFZIM2)	Cognitive image 1 (CogZIM1)	Cognitive image 2 (CogZIM2)	Behavioural intentions to revisit (IntZim)
Mean	3.4546	3.1257	3.5850	3.6086	2.6071	3.4065	5.8875	6.5034	3.1678	3.8211	3.7386
Std. Dev	.57186	.90344	.58262	.62750	1.10768	.77324	1.58202	1.68410	.65792	.73192	.83350
Skewness	-.516	-.330	-.458	-.685	-.010	-.117	-.536	-.511	-.190	-.347	-.517
Kurtosis	1.485	-.314	1.011	2.381	-1.070	.274	.436	-.236	.533	-.419	.713
Minimum	1.57	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.33	1.60	1.50	1.00	2.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	9.00	9.00	4.83	5.00	5.00
N	Valid	184	184	184	184	184	144	152	152	152	154
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	40	32	32	32	30

*Abbreviations used in the conceptual model image are provided in brackets

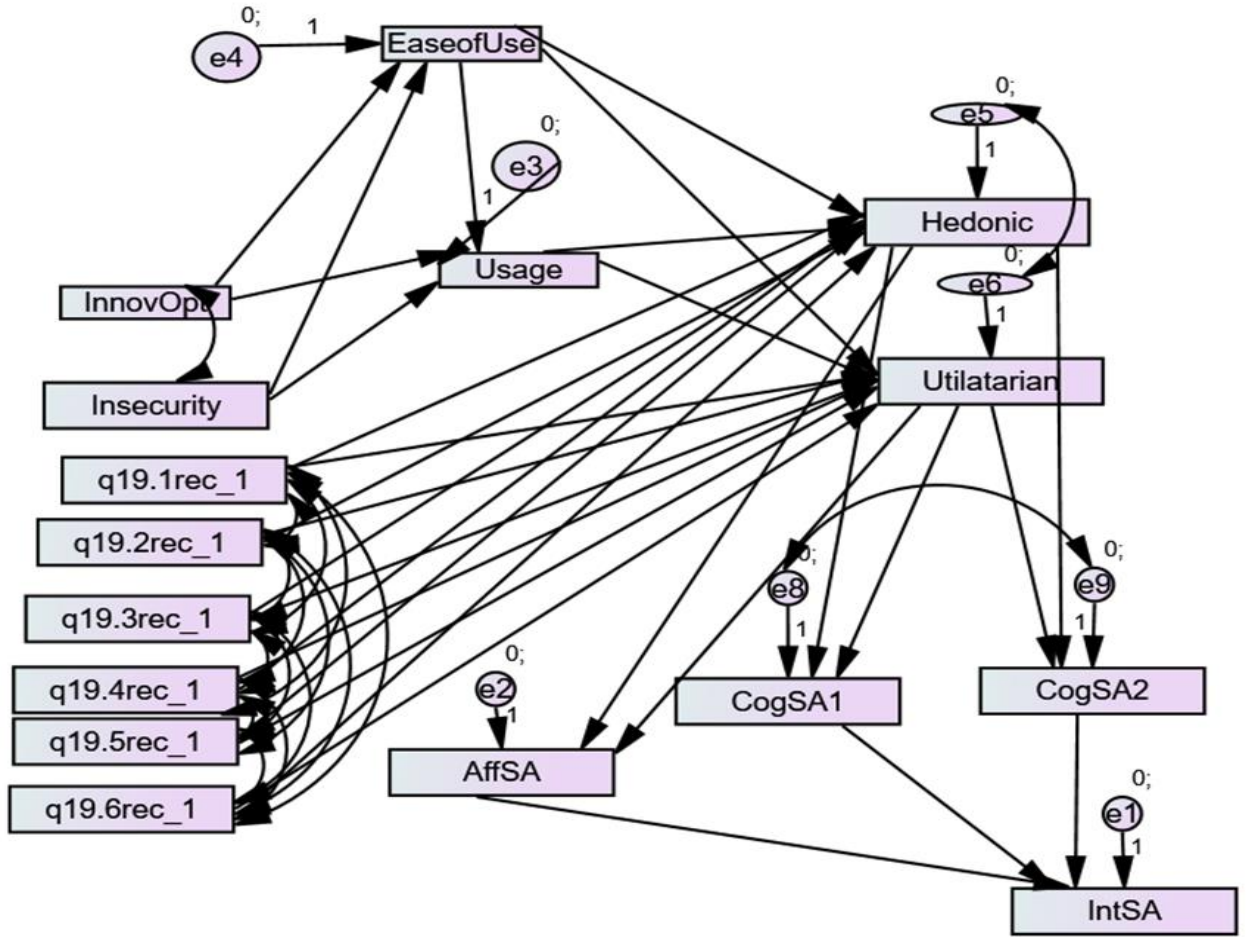


Figure 6.8: Path analysis for South Africa

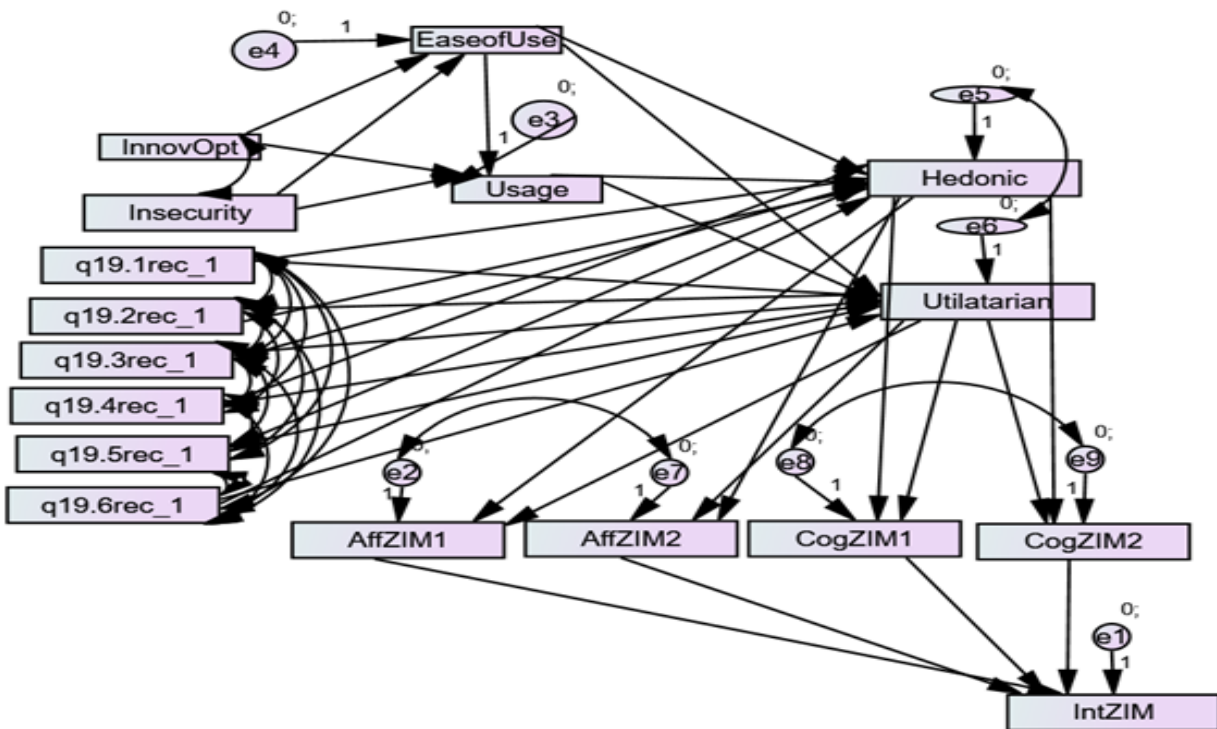


Figure 6.9: Path analysis for Zimbabwe

Path modelling was chosen as the method to test the conceptual model. Path analysis, a precursor to, and subset of structural equation modelling, is a method to discern and assess the effects of a set of variables acting on a specified outcome via multiple pathways (Benitez *et al.*, 2020). The pattern of relationships among variables is described by a path diagram, a type of directed graph (see Everitt & Hothorn, 2011). Variables are linked by straight arrows that indicate the directions of the relationships between them. Straight arrows may only point in one direction, as it is assumed that a variable cannot be both a cause and an effect of another variable, (i.e., the model is recursive and there are no feedback loops) (Garson, 2013). Curved, double-headed arrows indicate correlation between variables. ML estimation was used.

The adequacy of the path model was tested using a set of fit indices as suggested by Kline (2011), including the RMSEA, CFI and IFI.

Tables 6.30 and 6.31 below indicate the fit of the path models for South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively.

Table 6.30: Path model fit: South Africa

Model	RMSEA	CFI	IFI
Goodness-of-fit indices	0.135	0.797	0.812
Indicate acceptable fit	<0.08	>0.90	>0.90

Table 6.31: Path model fit: Zimbabwe

Model	RMSEA	CFI	IFI
Goodness-of-fit indices	0.139	0.735	0.750
Indicate acceptable fit	<0.08	>0.90	>0.90

For the South African sample, although the CFI and IFI met the required thresholds, the RMSEA fit index did not. For the Zimbabwean sample, the fit indices indicated that none of the fit indices met the threshold requirements. No additional allowable and theoretically defensible modifications were possible. Therefore, it was decided to conduct multiple linear regressions as explained below. The moderation effect of preferences was subsequently also not tested.

6.3.6 Relationship tests: regressions

This section shows all the regressions that were conducted for both destinations and the interpretation of the findings. The original path analysis model that could not be tested due to poor model fit had four main relationships (hypotheses), broken down into seven sub-hypotheses (as shown in Chapter 4). The change in data analysis technique (i.e., the regression analyses), however necessitated stating multiple hypotheses in order to test all of the original relationships in order to fully answer the research question. All the regressions are summarised below:

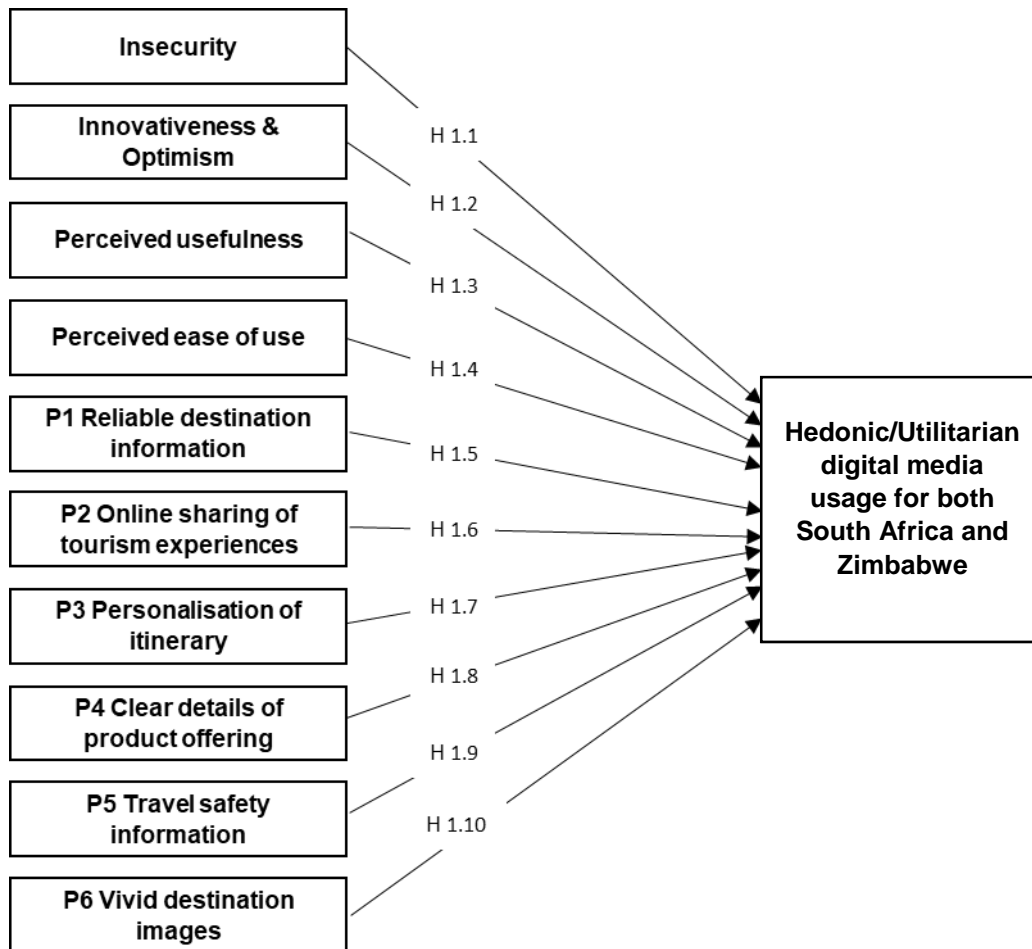
Table 6.32: Regression tests summary for South Africa and Zimbabwe

FOR SOUTH AFRICA	FOR ZIMBABWE
Research hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences and digital media usage. <i>[Multiple regression was used to determine the individual effects of the independent variables on digital media usage]</i>	
1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences effect on hedonic digital media usage	1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences effect on hedonic digital media usage
2. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences effect on utilitarian usage	2. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences effect on utilitarian usage
Research hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, digital media usage and destination image. <i>[Hierarchical regression was used to determine the individual effect of digital media usage on destination image apart from the influence of TRI, TAM, and digital media preferences]</i>	
1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on Affective image (AFFSA)	1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on Affective image 1 (AFFZIM1)
2. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on Cognitive image 1 (CogSA1)	2. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on Affective image 2 (AFFZIM2)
3. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on Cognitive image 2 (CogSA2)	3. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on Cognitive image 1 (CogZIM1)
	4. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on Cognitive image 2 (CogZIM2)
Research hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit. <i>[Hierarchical regression was used to determine the individual effect of digital media usage on behavioural intentions to revisit apart from the influence of TRI, TAM, and digital media preferences]</i>	
1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on behavioural intentions to revisit	1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage effect on behavioural intentions to revisit
Research hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, digital media usage, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. <i>[Hierarchical regression was used to determine the individual effect of destination image on behavioural intentions to revisit apart from the influence of TRI, TAM, digital media preferences and digital media usage]</i>	
1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage + destination image effect on behavioural intentions to revisit	1. TRI + TAM + digital media preferences + digital media usage + destination image effect on behavioural intentions to revisit

Research hypothesis 1: (answered through multiple regression analysis)

There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences and digital media usage.

The research hypothesis is shown in Figure 6.10



NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Figure 6.10: Research hypothesis 1

To answer research hypothesis 1, the following statistical hypotheses were tested:

H_{1.1a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and hedonic digital media usage.

H_{1.1b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and utilitarian digital media usage.

- H_{1.2a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.2b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with utilitarian digital media usage.
- H_{1.3a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived usefulness and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.3b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived usefulness and utilitarian digital media usage.
- H_{1.4a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.4b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and utilitarian digital media usage.
- H_{1.5a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.5b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and utilitarian digital media usage.
- H_{1.6a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.6b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and utilitarian digital media usage.
- H_{1.7a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow personalisation of itinerary*) and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.7b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow personalisation of itinerary*) and utilitarian digital media usage.
- H_{1.8a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.8b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and utilitarian digital media usage.

- H_{1.9a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.9b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and utilitarian digital media usage.
- H_{1.10a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that project vivid destination images*) and hedonic digital media usage.
- H_{1.10b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that project vivid destination images*) and utilitarian digital media usage.

The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression. The assumptions of multiple regression, namely, 1) that no multicollinearity should exist between the independent variables, 2) normality of the residual terms, and 3) homogeneity, are discussed in conjunction with the regression results.

SOUTH AFRICA

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preferences on hedonic digital media usage

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.1) indicated that the correlation between the 10 independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) lies between one and five, which is well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.33: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	0.254	3.945
Insecurity	0.866	1.155
EaseofUse	0.321	3.115
Usefulness	0.255	3.927
P1: reliable destination information	0.267	3.751
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	0.608	1.644
P3: personalisation of itinerary	0.591	1.692
P4: clear details of the product offering	0.300	3.336
P5: travel safety information	0.511	1.957
P6: vivid destination images	0.492	2.032

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern, and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed (refer to Figure 6.11). Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -1.422 and 3.111.

There were a few residuals with values above three, indicating a slight violation of the normality assumption. However, according to Schmidt and Finan (2018), if the sample size is large and the number of observations per independent variable exceeds 10, which is the case here, such a slight violation does not impact the regression values.

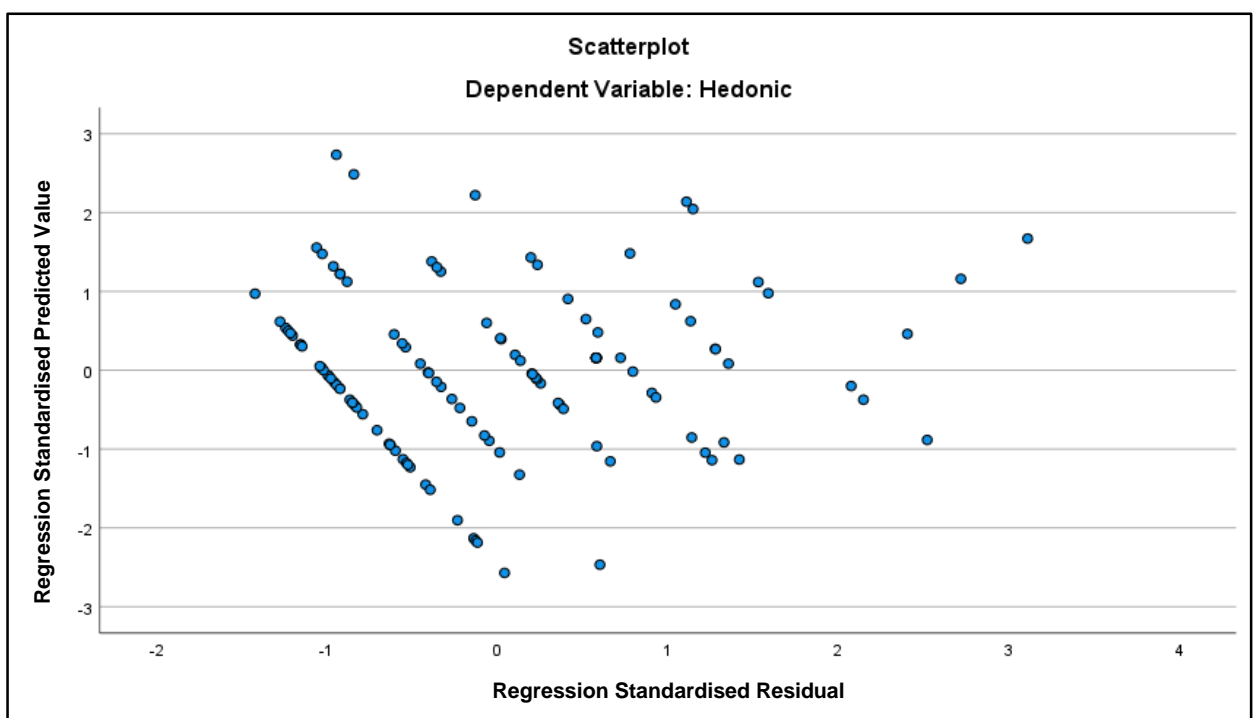


Figure 6.11: Scatter plot

Table 6.34, indicating the regression results, shows that the R^2 value was very small and that only 8.2% of the variation in the dependent variable, hedonic digital media usage, can be explained by the respective set of variables in the model. The F-test for regression was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In other words, the beta coefficients differ significantly from zero.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of hedonic digital media usage as indicated in the table: Innovativeness & Optimism ($\beta=0.324$; $p<0.1$), Insecurity ($\beta=0.192$; $p<0.05$) and Preference 2 (*Online sharing of tourism experiences*) ($\beta=0.196$; $p<0.1$). A moderate positive relationship was evident between Innovativeness & Optimism and Hedonic digital media usage, while both Insecurity and Preference 2 (*Online sharing of tourism experiences*) had weak positive relationships.

Table 6.34: Regression results with hedonic digital media usage as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM and digital media preferences as predictor variables (South Africa)

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	-0.209	0.625	
InnovOpt	0.452	0.240	0.324*
Insecurity	0.175	0.085	0.192**
EaseofUse	-0.093	0.209	-0.068
Usage	0.064	0.208	0.052
P1: reliable destination information	-0.275	0.417	-0.110
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	0.379	0.214	0.196*
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-0.062	0.251	-0.028
P4: clear details of the product offering	-0.245	0.370	-0.105
P5: travel safety information	0.480	0.307	0.189
P6: vivid destination images	-0.041	0.272	-0.019
Adjusted R ²	0.082		
F (p value)	2.1 ($p<0.05$)		

. *** $p\leq 0.01$; ** $p\leq 0.05$; * $p\leq 0.1$

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

The above results (refer to Table 6.34) indicate that only H_{1.1a}, H_{1.2a} and H_{1.6a} were supported.

A weak positive relationship exists between leisure tourists' technology readiness (Insecurity) and hedonic digital media usage. The reason for the weak positive relationship could be that, while leisure tourists might have high levels of digital media Insecurity, they might also prefer to use basic hedonic digital media that resonates with their travel interests. Empirical evidence supports this finding where, for example, virtual reality and augmented reality present benefits such as hedonic affordances to tourists (e.g., Vishwakarma *et al.*, 2020; Oyman *et al.*, 2022). Hedonic digital media, in this case, constitutes immersive digital media, that is, 3-D virtual reality videos and 3-D city tour guide and recommender apps (i.e., Foursquare).

Results also show that a moderate positive relationship exists between leisure tourists' technology readiness (Innovativeness & Optimism) with hedonic digital media usage. Leisure tourists who are high in Innovativeness & Optimism use hedonic digital media for travel purposes. They are always eager to learn and keep up with the latest technological developments in new digital media, which is leading other people to approach them for advice on new types (refer to Table 6.15). In addition, innovative and optimistic leisure tourists feel that digital media gives them more control over their trips and find it easier to deal with than people performing the same service. Such tourists use hedonic digital media that resonate with their pleasure-seeking desires. This finding is empirically supported by Hallikainen *et al.* (2019) who found that digital media enthusiasts scored high for innovativeness and optimism.

Furthermore, a weak positive relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and hedonic digital media usage, signifying that leisure tourists who exude pleasure-seeking travel behaviours, prefer to use digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences. In other words, leisure tourists who are innovative and optimistic are always learning about new types of digital media and this gives them more control over their trips as they share their experiences online.

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preferences on hedonic digital media usage

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the 10 independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between one and five, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.35: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.311	3.211
Insecurity	.935	1.069
EaseofUse	.313	3.199
Usefulness	.380	2.635
P1: reliable destination information	.641	1.561
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.804	1.244
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.729	1.373
P4: clear details of the product offering	.648	1.544
P5: travel safety information	.708	1.411
P6: vivid destination images	.795	1.258

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern, and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed (refer to Figure 6.12). Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -1.989 and 2.423. Being within -3 and +3, the assumption of normality holds.

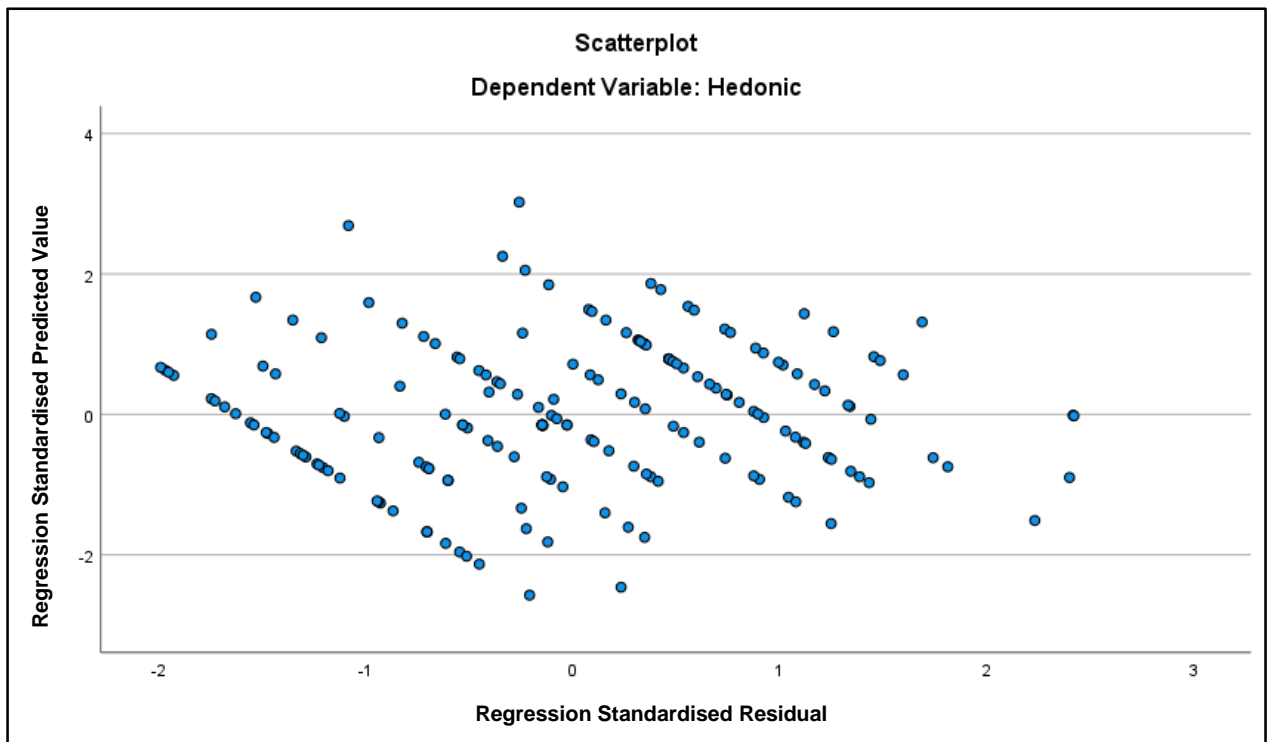


Figure 6.12: Scatter plot

Table 6.36, indicating the regression results, shows that the R^2 value was small and that only 19.8% of the variation in the dependent variable, hedonic digital media usage, can be explained by the respective set of variables in the model. The F-test for regression was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In other words, the beta coefficients differ significantly from zero.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of hedonic digital media usage as indicated in the table: Innovativeness & Optimism ($\beta = 0.607$; $p < 0.01$), Insecurity ($\beta = 0.262$; $p < 0.01$), Digital media usage ($\beta = 0.249$; $p < 0.05$) and Preference 5 (*Travel safety information*) ($\beta = 0.151$; $p < 0.1$). A strong positive relationship was evident for Innovativeness & Optimism and Hedonic digital media usage. However, weak positive relationships were evident for Insecurity, Digital media usage, Preference 5 (*Travel safety information*) and Hedonic digital media usage.

Table 6.36: Regression results with hedonic digital media usage as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM and digital media preferences as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	.665	.567	
InnovOpt	1.176	.230	.607***
Insecurity	.322	.084	.262***
EaseofUse	-.337	.225	-.177
Usage	-.439	.190	-.249**
P1: reliable destination information	.066	.229	.024
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.122	.185	.049
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.026	.192	.011
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.287	.211	-.112
P5: travel safety information	-.396	.206	-.151*
P6: vivid destination images	-.001	.192	.000
Adjusted R ²	0.198		
F (p value)	5.524 (p<0.001)***		

. *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

The above findings (refer to Table 6.36) indicate that only H_{1.1a}, H_{1.2a}, H_{1.4a}, H_{1.9a} were supported.

The study found a weak positive relationship between leisure tourists' technology readiness (Insecurity) and hedonic digital media usage. The weak positive relationship suggests that leisure tourists who are highly insecure, are at the same time seeking to use basic hedonic digital media that resonates with their pleasure-seeking travel behaviours. Empirical evidence supports this finding where, for example, virtual reality and augmented reality present benefits such as hedonic affordances to tourists (e.g., Vishwakarma *et al.*, 2020; Oyman *et al.*, 2022).

In addition, a strong positive relationship was found between leisure tourists' readiness (Innovativeness & Optimism) with hedonic digital media usage. The reason for the strong positive relationship could be that leisure tourists who are high in Innovativeness & Optimism mainly use hedonic digital media during travel. They are always eager to learn and keep up with the latest technological developments in new digital media, which is leading other people to approach them for advice on new types (refer to Table 6.15). In addition, innovative and optimistic leisure tourists feel that digital media gives them more control over their trips and it enables them to fulfil their pleasure-seeking desires.

A weak positive relationship exists between leisure tourists' technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) and hedonic digital media usage. The reason for the weak positive relationship could be that, while leisure tourists find digital media to be easy to use, they also prefer to use digital media that gives them pleasant and pleasurable experiences. These hedonic experiences might eventually outweigh any technological deficiencies they may have regarding the use of digital media.

Lastly, a weak positive relationship was found between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and hedonic digital media usage, suggesting that leisure tourists use hedonic digital media can fulfil the role of increasing a sense of security while travelling. This finding can be explained by the fact leisure tourists were mainly exposed to hedonic digital media as indicated in the descriptive statistics (refer to Table 6.13). Some of them may have been hesitant to use newer digital media (refer to Table 6.15), therefore, they relied on familiar hedonic digital media for the provision of travel safety information.

SOUTH AFRICA

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preferences on utilitarian digital media usage

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.1) indicated that the correlation between the 10 independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between one and five, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.37: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.254	3.945
Insecurity	.866	1.155
EaseofUse	.321	3.115
Usefulness	.255	3.927
P1: reliable destination information	.267	3.751
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.608	1.644
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.591	1.692
P4: clear details of the product offering	.300	3.336
P5: travel safety information	.511	1.957
P6: vivid destination images	.492	2.032

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern, and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed (refer to Figure 6.13). Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -2.737 and 2.435. Considering that these values fall within -3 and +3, the assumption of normality holds.

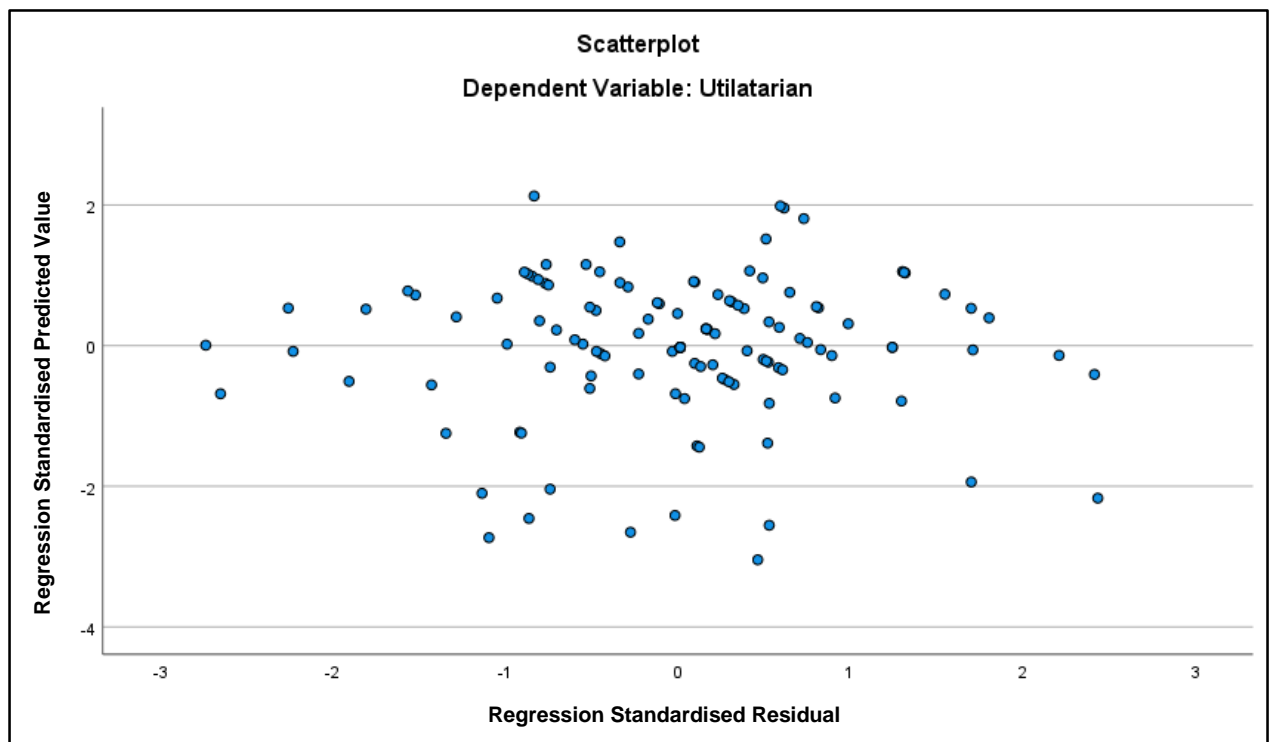


Figure 6.13: Scatter plot

Table 6.38, indicating the regression results, shows that the R^2 value was moderate and that 33.2% of the variation in the dependent variable, utilitarian digital media usage, can be explained by the respective set of variables in the model.

The F-test for regression was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In other words, the beta coefficients differ significantly from zero. The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of utilitarian digital media usage as indicated in the table: Innovativeness & Optimism ($\beta = 0.394$; $p < 0.01$), Preference 2 (*Online sharing of tourism experiences*) ($\beta = 0.225$; $p < 0.05$), Preference 5 (*Travel safety information*) ($\beta = 0.213$; $p < 0.05$). A moderate positive relationship was evident between Innovativeness & Optimism and Utilitarian digital media usage, while both Preference 2 (*Online sharing of tourism experiences*) and Preference 5 (*Travel safety information*) had a weak positive relationship.

Table 6.38: Regression results with utilitarian digital media usage as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM and digital media preferences as predictor variables (South Africa)

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	.848	.572	
InnovOpt	.590	.219	.394***
Insecurity	-.005	.077	-.005
EaseofUse	-.243	.191	-.166
Usage	.194	.190	.149
P1: reliable destination information	.311	.381	.116
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.466	.195	.225**
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.099	.230	-.041
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.206	.338	-.082
P5: travel safety information	.578	.280	.213**
P6: vivid destination images	-.045	.249	-.019
Adjusted R ²	0.332		
F (p value)	7.115 ($p < 0.001$)***		

. *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

As evident from the above results (refer to Table 6.38), only H_{1.2b}, H_{1.6b} and H_{1.9b} were supported.

A moderate positive relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with utilitarian digital media usage. The reason for the moderate positive relationship could be that leisure tourists with high levels of Innovativeness & Optimism use social media sites that will satisfy their utilitarian travel interests of, for example, navigating, making online bookings, and providing access to destination information (see Hadjielias *et al.*, 2022). Digital media that offer utilitarian benefits in this study are social media sites (i.e., YouTube, TripAdvisor, and Facebook). The finding is in line with past studies where scholars confirm that the same digital media offer utilitarian benefits for travellers (Molina *et al.*, 2020; Madureira & Alturas, 2022; Nilashi *et al.*, 2022). However, the studies did not test the relationship between technology readiness variables and type of digital media usage.

A weak positive relationship was found between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and utilitarian digital media usage. The weak positive relationship suggests that some leisure tourists were prioritising digital media for its functionality, while others were focusing more on sharing pleasurable experiences online. The other reason for this weak positive relationship could be that these types of visitors are digital media enthusiasts, who were already using utilitarian digital media for travel purposes.

A weak positive relationship was also found between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and utilitarian digital media usage. This finding can be attributed to the functionality and authenticity of YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook when it comes to the provision of travel safety information (e.g., Molina *et al.*, 2020).

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preferences on utilitarian digital media usage

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the ten independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between one and five, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert

that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.39: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.311	3.211
Insecurity	.935	1.069
EaseofUse	.313	3.199
Usefulness	.380	2.635
P1: reliable destination information	.641	1.561
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.804	1.244
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.729	1.373
P4: clear details of the product offering	.648	1.544
P5: travel safety information	.708	1.411
P6: vivid destination images	.795	1.258

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern, and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed (refer to Figure 6.14). Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -2.777 and 2.606. As these values lie within -3 and +3, the assumption of normality holds.

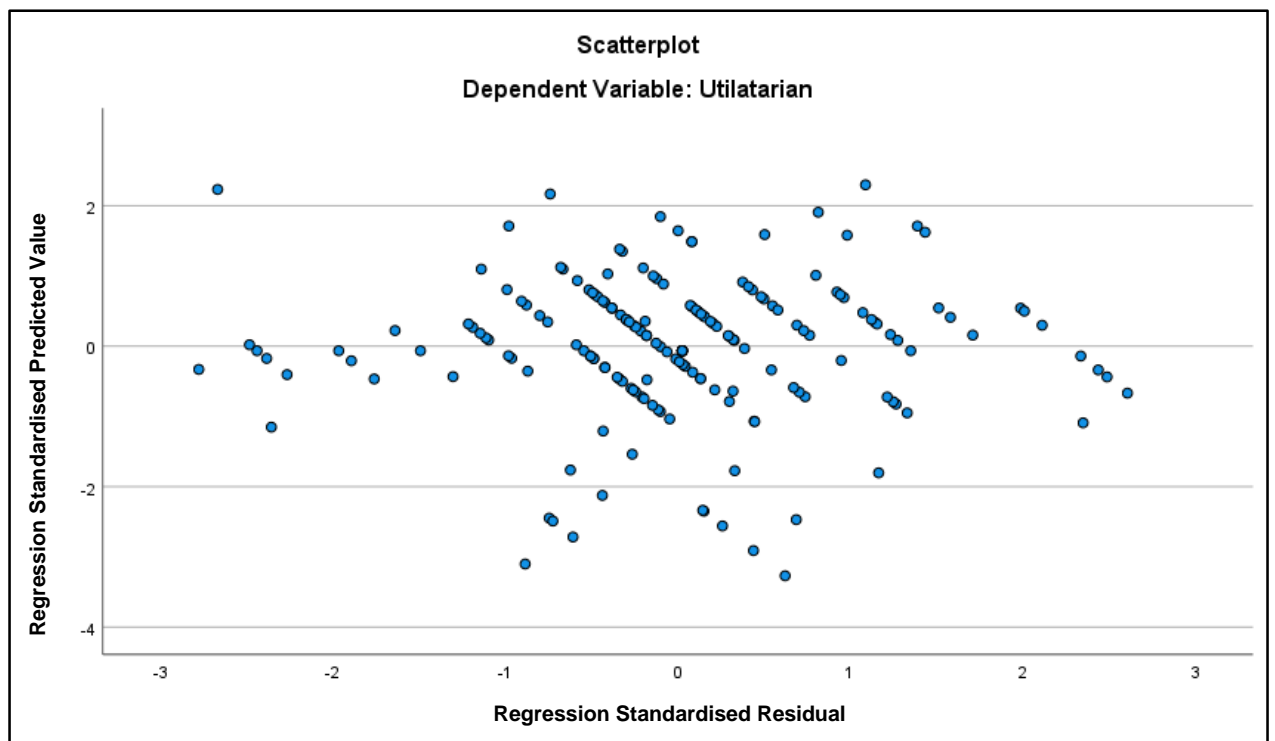


Figure 6.14: Scatter plot

Table 6.40, indicating the regression results, shows that the R^2 value was small and that only 17.2% of the variation in the dependent variable, utilitarian digital media usage, can be explained by the respective set of variables in the model. The F-test for regression was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In other words, the beta coefficients differ significantly from zero. The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variable was a statistically significant predictor of utilitarian digital media usage as indicated in the table: Preference 2 (*Online sharing of tourism experiences*) ($\beta = 0.146$; $p < 0.1$) had a weak positive relationship with Utilitarian digital media usage.

Table 6.40: Regression results with utilitarian digital media usage as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM and digital media preferences as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	1.011	.402	
InnovOpt	.245	.163	.181
Insecurity	.094	.060	.110
EaseofUse	.189	.160	.143
Usage	.104	.135	.084
P1: reliable destination information	.120	.162	.062
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.255	.131	.146*
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.033	.136	-.019
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.016	.150	-.009
P5: travel safety information	-.125	.146	-.068
P6: vivid destination images	.094	.136	.052
Adjusted R^2	0.172		
F (p value)	4.795 ($p < 0.001$)***		

. *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

The above results (refer to Table 6:40) indicate that, only $H_{1.6b}$ was supported while all the rest were not.

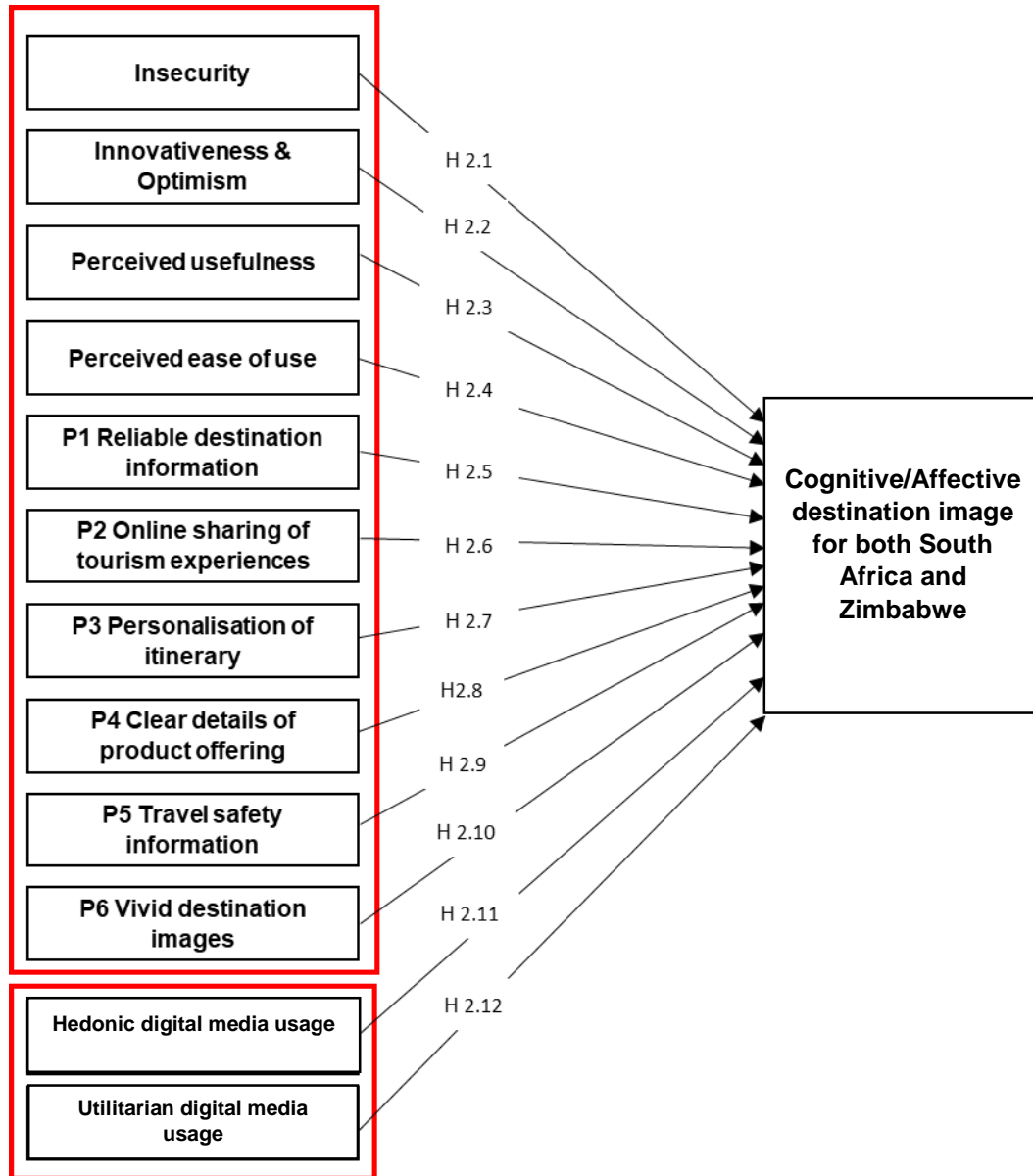
A weak positive relationship was only found between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and utilitarian digital media usage, suggesting that leisure tourists prefer digital media with more functionality than pleasure. Literature confirms this by indicating that digital media affords utilitarian benefits, such as texting, information search and sharing online experiences (Akdim *et al.*, 2022).

No relationship was found between technology readiness, technology acceptance and utilitarian digital media usage. This can be explained by the high level of Discomfort and Insecurity (refer to Table 6.15), where most leisure tourists expressed their interest in the use of basic digital media, as well as emphasis on the importance of human interaction when planning for travel.

Research hypothesis 2: (answered through hierarchical regression)

There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, digital media usage and destination image.

The research hypothesis is shown in Figure 6.15



NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Figure 6.15: Research hypothesis 2

To answer research hypothesis 2, the following statistical hypotheses were tested:

H_{2.1a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and cognitive image.

H_{2.1b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and affective image.

H_{2.2a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with cognitive image.

H_{2.2b}: A relationship exists between leisure Innovativeness & Optimism with affective image.

H_{2.3a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived usefulness and cognitive image.

H_{2.3b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived usefulness and affective image.

H_{2.4a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and cognitive image.

H_{2.4b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and affective image.

H_{2.5a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and cognitive image.

H_{2.5b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and affective image.

H_{2.6a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and cognitive image.

H_{2.6b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and affective image.

H_{2.7a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow personalisation of itinerary*) and cognitive image.

H_{2.7b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow personalisation of itinerary*) and affective image.

- H_{2.8a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and cognitive image.
- H_{2.8b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and affective image.
- H_{2.9a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and cognitive image.
- H_{2.9b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and affective image.
- H_{2.10a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that project vivid destination images*) and cognitive image.
- H_{2.10b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that project vivid destination images*) and affective image.
- H_{2.11a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and cognitive image.
- H_{2.11b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and affective image.
- H_{2.12a}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and cognitive image.
- H_{2.12b}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and affective image.

SOUTH AFRICA

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on Cognitive image 1

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.1) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between one and five, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.41: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
InnovOpt	.232	4.309
Insecurity	.758	1.320
EaseofUse	.352	2.843
Usefulness	.275	3.634
P1: reliable destination information	.251	3.976
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.554	1.805
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.579	1.727
P4: clear details of the product offering	.267	3.747
P5: travel safety information	.441	2.266
P6: vivid destination images	.496	2.016
Hedonic	.746	1.340
Utilitarian	.571	1.752

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.16), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -2.714 and 1.606, well between the thresholds of -3 to +3, therefore, the normality assumption was met.

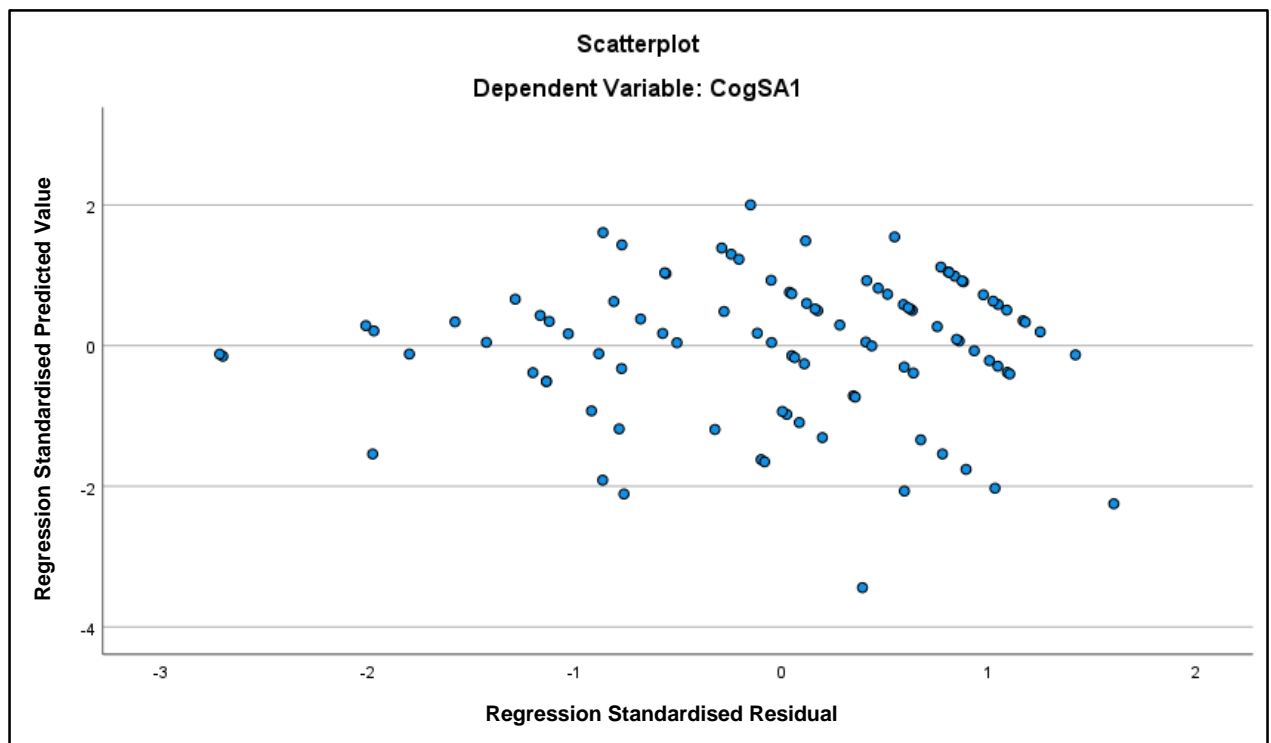


Figure 6.16: Scatter plot

Table 6.42, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain only 9.4% of the variation in the dependent variable, Cognitive image

1. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained increases to 12.8%, thereby indicating that these predictors also contribute to explaining the variation in Cognitive image 1. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.048 and the associated F change value was statistically significant ($p < 0.1$). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p < 0.05$) and ($p < 0.05$) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of Cognitive image 1 as indicated in the table: Preference 1 (*reliable destination information*) ($\beta = 0.490$; $p < 0.05$), Hedonic digital media usage ($\beta = -0.240$; $p < 0.05$). A moderate positive relationship was evident for Preference 1 (*reliable destination information*) and Cognitive image 1, while Hedonic digital media usage had a weak negative relationship.

Table 6.42: Regression results with Cognitive image 1 as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (South Africa)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	4.912	.401		(Constant)	4.839	.401	
Innov&Opt	-.196	.139	-.269	Innov&Opt	-.113	.144	-.156
Insecurity	-.101	.051	-.215**	Insecurity	-.073	.051	-.155
EaseofUse	.174	.128	.219	EaseofUse	.167	.127	.211
Usefulness	-.137	.118	-.215	Usefulness	-.145	.116	-.227
P1: reliable destination information	.648	.234	.530***	P1: reliable destination information	.599	.232	.490**
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	-.082	.119	-.086	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	-.034	.121	-.036
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.016	.139	.014	P3: personalisation of itinerary	.009	.137	.008

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.105	.219	-.090	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.117	.216	-.100
P5: travel safety information	-.167	.177	-.134	P5: travel safety information	-.089	.180	-.071
P6: vivid destination images	.053	.148	.049	P6: vivid destination images	.037	.146	.035
				Hedonic	-.125	.058	-.240**
				Utilitarian	-.013	.060	-.027
Adjusted R ²	0.094			0.128			
F (p value)	2.000 (p<0.05)			2.170 (p<0.05)			
R ² change and associated significance	0.189 (p<0.05)			0.048 (p<0.1)			

. ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

From the above (refer to Table 6.42) it is evident that only H_{2.5a} and H_{2.11a} were supported. Findings show that a moderate positive relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and Cognitive image 1, meaning that digital media that provides reliable destination information is linked to leisure tourists' appreciation of a destination's Cognitive image 1 attributes, that results in a positive image. It is evident that leisure tourists are generally insecure about technology, thus, if they are able to obtain authentic destination information from online sources, their perceptions of the destination will be enhanced.

A weak negative relationship exists between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and Cognitive image 1. In other words, hedonic digital media usage does not necessarily relate to a high Cognitive image 1, rather, it is linked to the formation of low Cognitive image 1 perceptions. Due to its ability to provide reliable destination information, leisure tourists used hedonic digital media to access destination information on the following Cognitive image 1 attributes: shopping facilities, man-made attractions (e.g., museums), services (e.g., banking, medical), general infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation),

transportation infrastructure and nightlife. Generally, immersive digital media (3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide) and recommender apps (Foursquare), just like social media sites, are considered hedonic in nature as long as they are entertaining and visually appealing (Mishra *et al.*, 2021). Tourists could, therefore, be seeking immersive, pleasant and visually appealing Cognitive image 1 attributes of a destination through these digital media.

It can be noted that none of the technology readiness and technology acceptance variables had a direct relationship with Cognitive image 1. Possibly this is attributed to the fact that most leisure tourists exhibited high levels of Insecurity in using new digital media. Regardless of one's level of technology readiness, it, therefore, suggests that 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare were mostly used due to their immersive nature, making them a more viable option for reliable destination information (see Shekari *et al.*, 2022) on Cognitive image 1 attributes.

Empirical evidence shows that a relationship exists between digital media use and destination image but does not specify whether it is hedonic/utilitarian usage or cognitive/affective image (e.g., Song *et al.*, 2021; Wang *et al.*, 2021).

SOUTH AFRICA

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on Cognitive image 2

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.1) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between one and five, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.43: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
InnovOpt	.215	4.642
Insecurity	.760	1.316
EaseofUse	.292	3.429
Usefulness	.275	3.634
P1: reliable destination information	.258	3.870
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.535	1.868

P3: personalisation of itinerary	.592	1.688
P4: clear details of the product offering	.273	3.669
P5: travel safety information	.463	2.162
P6: vivid destination images	.509	1.965
Hedonic	.734	1.363
Utilitarian	.599	1.670

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.17), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -3.165 and 1.793. There were a few residuals with values below -3, indicating a slight violation of the normality assumption. However, according to Schmidt and Finan (2018), if the sample size is large and the number of observations per independent variable exceeds 10, which is the case here, such a slight violation does not impact the regression values.

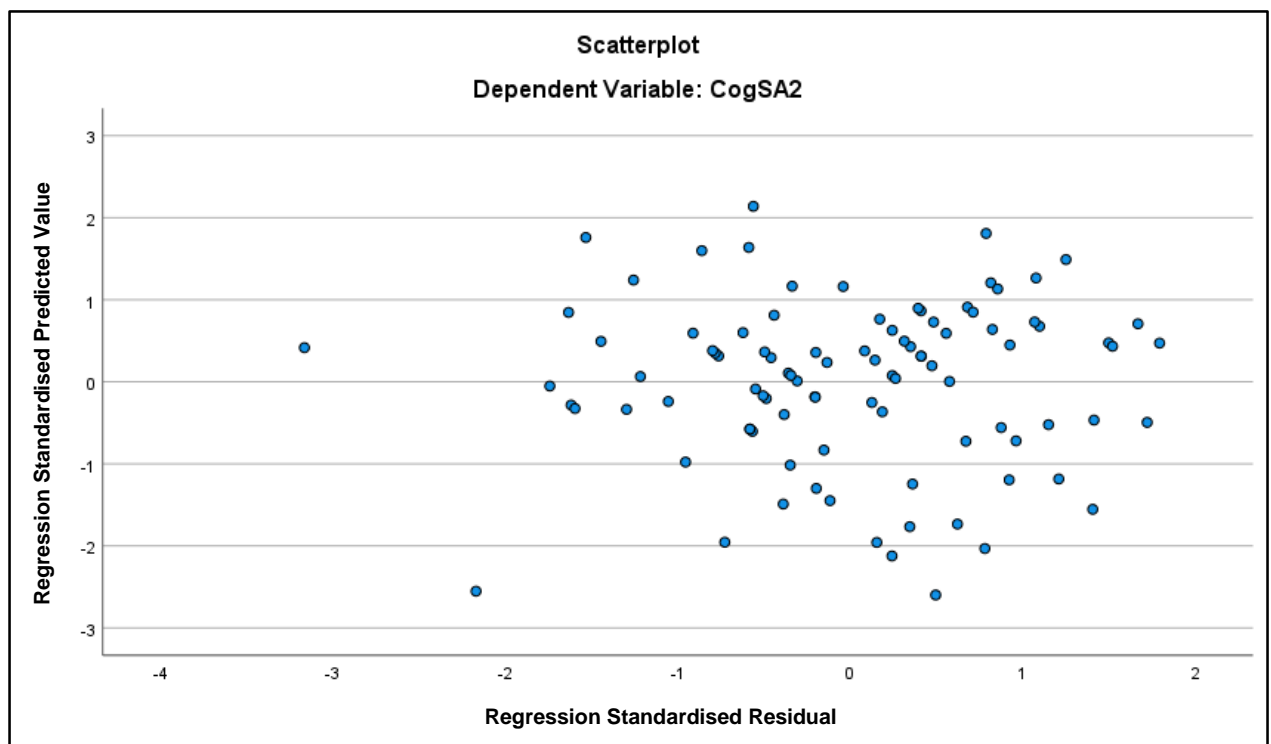


Figure 6.17: Scatter plot

Table 6.44, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain 10.6% of the variation in the dependent variable, Cognitive image 2. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained increased to 13.5%, thereby indicating that these predictors also

contribute to explaining the variation in Cognitive image 2. The R² change for model 2 was 0.044 and the associated F change value was statistically significant (p<0.1). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 (p<0.05) and (p<0.05) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that only the following variable was a statistically significant predictor of Cognitive image 2 as indicated in the table: Utilitarian digital media usage ($\beta=0.247$; p<0.05). A weak positive relationship was evident between Utilitarian digital media usage and Cognitive image 2.

Table 6.44: Regression results with Cognitive image 2 as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (South Africa)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	2.432	.521		(Constant)	2.295	.524	
Innov&Opt	.338	.188	.356*	Innov&Opt	.214	.196	.226
Insecurity	.038	.067	.062	Insecurity	.033	.068	.054
EaseofUse	.073	.187	.070	EaseofUse	.110	.185	.105
Usefulness	-.109	.156	-.129	Usefulness	-.118	.154	-.141
P1: reliable destination information	.474	.309	.292	P1: reliable destination information	.414	.306	.255
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.187	.158	.150	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.083	.163	.067
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.208	.182	-.144	P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.187	.180	-.129
P4: clear details of the product offering	.054	.288	.035	P4: clear details of the product offering	.117	.285	.075
P5: travel safety information	-.088	.232	-.053	P5: travel safety information	-.201	.235	-.120

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
P6: vivid destination images	-.079	.193	-.056	P6: vivid destination images	-.059	.191	-.041
				Hedonic	.037	.078	.053
				Utilitarian	.156	.078	.247**
Adjusted R ²	0.106			0.135			
F (p value)	2.115 (p<0.05)			2.224 (p<0.05)			
R ² change and associated significance	0.201 (p<0.05)			0.044 (p<0.1)			

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

The findings in the above (refer to Table 6.44), indicate that only H_{2.12a} was supported. A weak positive relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and Cognitive image 2. Despite being social media sites, this suggests that YouTube, TripAdvisor, and Facebook were primarily used for their functional ability to provide access to information on scenery and landscape, natural attractions (e.g., animals, parks, beaches), climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals. However, the weak positive relationship could be attributed to the fact that, despite the utility brought forth by social media sites, leisure tourists also seek to experience and share pleasurable and visually appealing images of a destination. Thus, utilitarian digital media usage might not have a strong link with Cognitive image 2.

Furthermore, this finding suggests that despite leisure tourists' high levels of technology Insecurity, their usage of utilitarian digital media is linked to the projection of a destination's Cognitive image 2.

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on Cognitive image 1

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between one and five, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.45: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.261	3.824
Insecurity	.819	1.221
EaseofUse	.304	3.293
Usefulness	.365	2.742
P1: reliable destination information	.644	1.552
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.768	1.302
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.739	1.353
P4: clear details of the product offering	.650	1.539
P5: travel safety information	.700	1.429
P6: vivid destination images	.800	1.251
Hedonic	.703	1.423
Utilitarian	.715	1.398

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable (refer to Figure 6.18) pattern, and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -2.921 and 2.634, well between the thresholds of -3 to +3, therefore, the normality assumption was met.

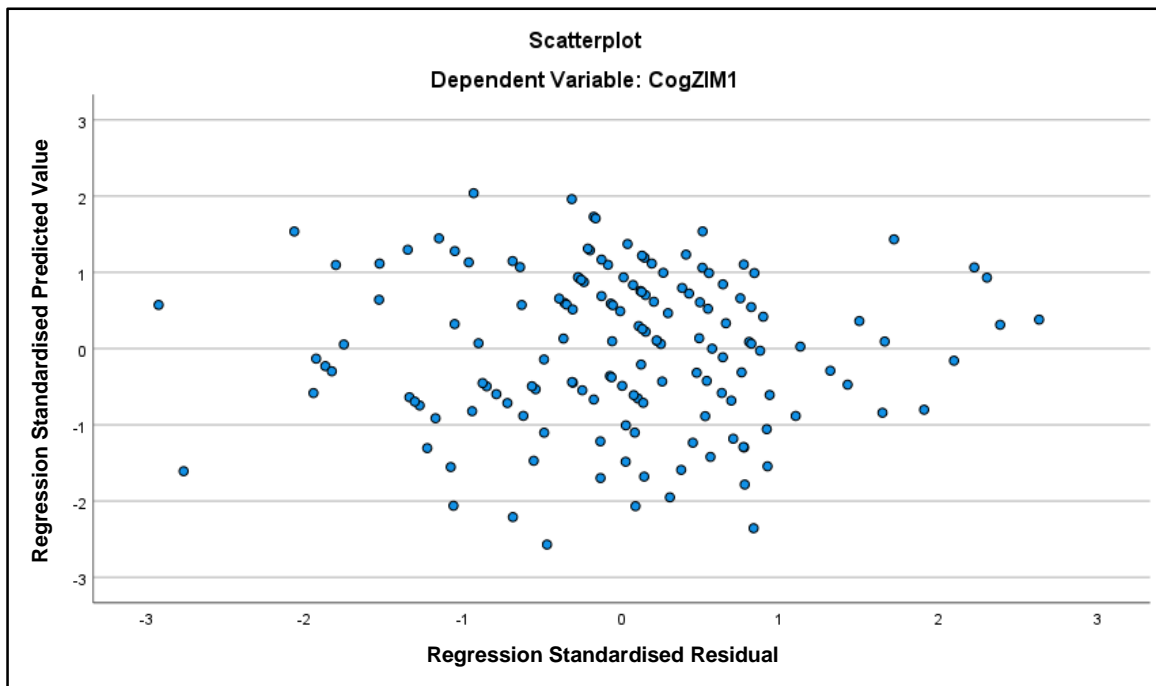


Figure 6.18: Scatter plot

Table 6.46, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain 13.7% of the variation in the dependent variable, Cognitive image 1. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained increased to 21.7%, thereby indicating that these predictors also contribute to explaining the variation in Cognitive image 1. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.086 and the associated F change value was not statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p < 0.001$) and ($p < 0.001$) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variable was the only statistically significant predictor of Cognitive image 1 as indicated in the table: Hedonic digital media usage ($\beta = 0.344$; $p < 0.01$). A moderate positive relationship was evident between Hedonic digital media usage and Cognitive image 1.

Table 6.46: Regression results with Cognitive image 1 as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	2.010	.360		(Constant)	1.885	.351	
Innov&Opt	.467	.146	.435***	Innov&Opt	.227	.151	.211
Insecurity	.099	.056	.139*	Insecurity	.026	.057	.036
EaseofUse	.025	.140	.024	EaseofUse	.096	.136	.092
Usefulness	-.154	.118	-.159	Usefulness	-.059	.116	-.061
P1: reliable destination information	-.186	.141	-.124	P1: reliable destination information	-.202	.135	-.135
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.168	.116	.122	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.153	.113	.112
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.115	.119	-.085	P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.127	.113	-.094
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.163	.130	-.117	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.111	.125	-.080
P5: travel safety information	-.047	.127	-.033	P5: travel safety information	.028	.123	.019
P6: vivid destination images	-.079	.119	-.056	P6: vivid destination images	-.077	.113	-.055
				Hedonic	.196	.049	.344***
				Utilitarian	.001	.074	.001
Adjusted R ²	0.137			0.217			
F (p value)	3.390 (p<0.001)			4.490 (p<0.001)			
R ² change and associated significance	0.194 (p<0.001)			0.086 (p<0.001)			

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

The results above (refer to Table 6.46) indicate that only $H_{2.11a}$ was supported.

When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, hedonic digital media usage is the only predictor of Cognitive image 1, shown by a moderate positive relationship between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and Cognitive image 1. The finding suggests that leisure tourists mainly rely on the immersive nature of 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare when portraying a destination's man-made attractions (e.g., museums), shopping facilities, nightlife, general infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation), services (e.g., banking, medical) and transportation infrastructure. Technology readiness and acceptance had no direct relationship with Cognitive image 1, probably because most of the leisure tourists were already using digital media and found it useful during their trips (refer to Table 6.16). This means that immersive digital media and recommender apps are quite useful in shaping Cognitive image 1 perceptions since they are easy to use due to familiarity.

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on Cognitive image 2

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between one and five, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.47: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.262	3.819
Insecurity	.817	1.224
EaseofUse	.306	3.265
Usefulness	.362	2.762
P1: reliable destination information	.643	1.555
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.766	1.306
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.739	1.353
P4: clear details of the product offering	.649	1.542
P5: travel safety information	.682	1.467
P6: vivid destination images	.797	1.254
Hedonic	.701	1.426
Utilitarian	.714	1.401

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.19), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -2.577 and 2.799, well between the thresholds of -3 to +3, therefore, the normality assumption was met.

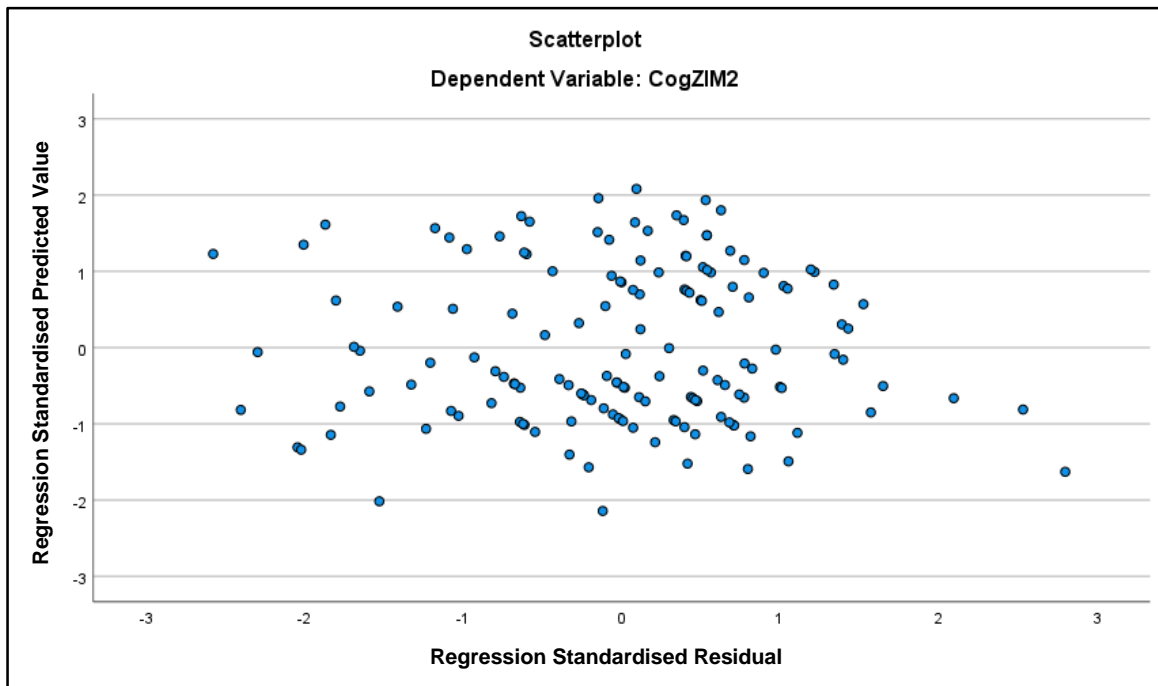


Figure 6.19: Scatter plot

Table 6.48, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain 16.8% of the variation in the dependent variable, Cognitive image 2. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained increased to 31.1%, thereby indicating that these predictors also contribute to explaining the variation in Cognitive image 2. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.143 and the associated F change value was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p < 0.001$) and ($p < 0.05$) for model 2. The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of Cognitive image 2 as indicated in the table: perceived ease of use ($\beta = 0.256$; $p < 0.05$), Hedonic digital media usage ($\beta = -0.435$; $p < 0.01$). A weak positive relationship was evident between perceived

ease of use and Cognitive image 2, while Hedonic digital media usage had a moderate negative relationship.

Table 6.48: Regression results with Cognitive image 2 as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	3.141	.394		(Constant)	3.357	.367	
Innov&Opt	-.325	.159	-.273**	Innov&Opt	.019	.157	.016
Insecurity	-.153	.061	-.193**	Insecurity	-.043	.059	-.054
EaseofUse	.382	.153	.328**	EaseofUse	.297	.142	.256**
Usefulness	.179	.129	.166	Usefulness	.048	.121	.045
P1: reliable destination information	-.080	.154	-.048	P1: reliable destination information	-.050	.141	-.030
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	-.100	.127	-.066	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	-.063	.118	-.042
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.029	.130	.019	P3: personalisation of itinerary	.045	.118	.030
P4: clear details of the product offering	.065	.142	.042	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.006	.130	-.004
P5: travel safety information	.324	.142	.203**	P5: travel safety information	.203	.131	.127
P6: vivid destination images	.168	.130	.107	P6: vivid destination images	.170	.118	.109
				Hedonic	-.276	.051	-.435***
				Utilitarian	-.049	.078	-.050
Adjusted R ²	0.168			0.311			
F (p value)	4.042 (p<0.001)			6.685 (p<0.05)			

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
R ² change and associated significance	0.223 (p<0.001)			0.143 (p<0.001)			

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Only H_{2.4a} and H_{2.11a} were supported, as is evident from the results above (refer to Table 6.48).

The major highlight in these regression results was the weak, though positive, relationship found between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and Cognitive image 2. This could be due to leisure tourists' familiarity with the immersive digital media and recommender apps; hence they find them easy to use when accessing a destination's Cognitive image 2 attributes. Seemingly, such a relationship has not yet been tested or established in literature, as existing studies show a relationship between TAM variables and usage (see Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Li *et al.*, 2022; Singh & Srivastava, 2019; Schiopu *et al.*, 2021).

The abovementioned finding also suggests that, despite preference for a basic digital media model and the need for human touch when planning for travel (refer to Table 6.15), leisure tourists find the immersive digital media and recommender apps easy to use in terms of projecting a destination's Cognitive image 2.

In addition, Cognitive image 2 was linked to hedonic digital media usage only, which is shown by a moderate negative relationship between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and Cognitive image 2. It is implied here that the more leisure tourists used 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare during travel, the more the formation of a less attractive destination's Cognitive image 2 in terms of scenery and landscape, natural attractions (e.g., animals, parks, beaches), climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals. The moderate negative relationship could be due to selective use of immersive digital media and recommender apps at different stages of

travel, which allows immersion, thus not effectively projecting the natural feel of a destination's Cognitive image 2 attributes.

SOUTH AFRICA

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on affective image

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.1) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between 1 and 5, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.49: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
InnovOpt	.230	4.352
Insecurity	.789	1.268
EaseofUse	.370	2.705
Usefulness	.272	3.682
P1: reliable destination information	.240	4.173
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.528	1.895
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.558	1.791
P4: clear details of the product offering	.249	4.011
P5: travel safety information	.453	2.206
P6: vivid destination images	.509	1.966
Hedonic	.759	1.318
Utilitarian	.587	1.703

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.20), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -2.488 and 1.809, well between the thresholds of -3 to +3, therefore, the normality assumption was met.

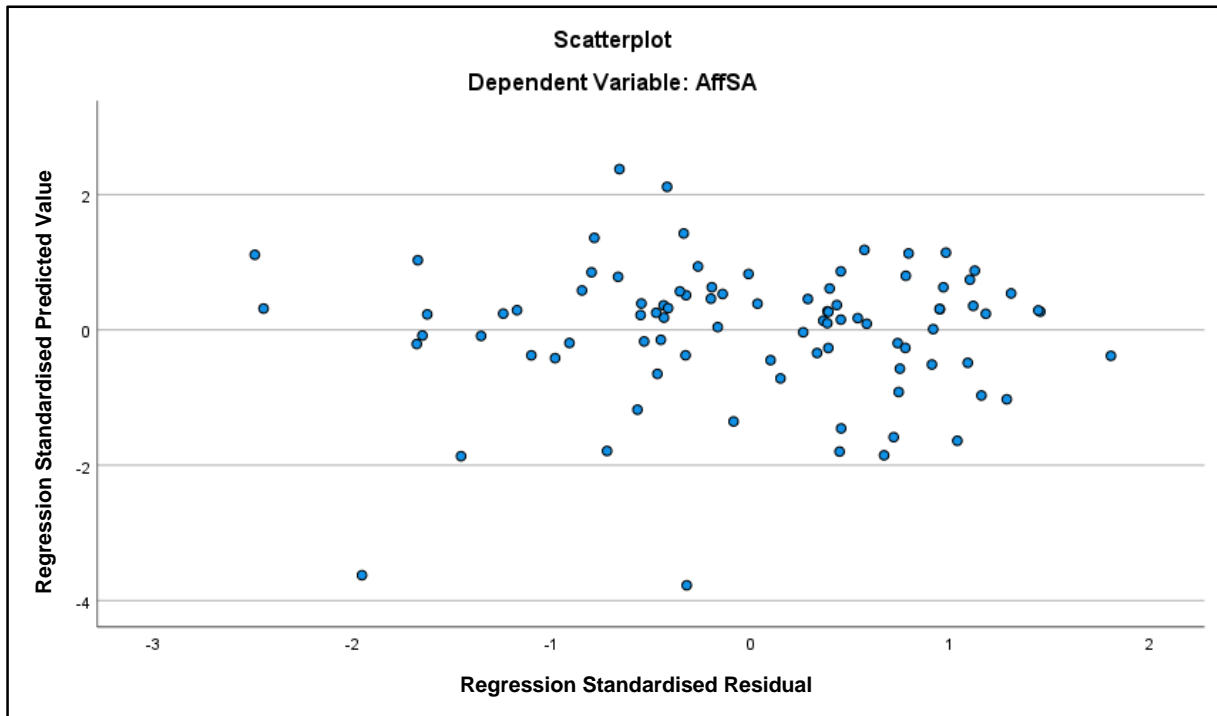


Figure 6.20: Scatter plot

Table 6.50, indicating the regression results shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain 15.8% of the variation in the dependent variable, affective image. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained decreases to 13.7%, thereby indicating that these predictors do not contribute to explaining the variation in affective image. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.001 and the associated F change value was not statistically significant ($p=0.973$). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p<0.001$) and ($p<0.05$) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of affective image as indicated in the table: Insecurity ($\beta=-0.194$; $p<0.10$), Preference 1 (*reliable destination information*) ($\beta=0.372$; $p<0.10$), Preference 5 (*travel safety information*). A weak negative relationship was evident between Insecurity and affective image. Preference 1 (*reliable destination information*) ($\beta=0.372$; $p<0.10$) had a moderate positive relationship with affective image, while Preference 5 (*travel safety information*) ($\beta=-0.322$; $p<0.05$) had a moderate negative relationship.

Table 6.50: Regression results with affective image as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (South Africa)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	6.824	1.052		(Constant)	6.786	1.084	
Innov&Opt	.581	.377	.297	Innov&Opt	.586	.404	.299
Insecurity	-.243	.133	-.198*	Insecurity	-.237	.137	-.194*
EaseofUse	-.130	.333	-.062	EaseofUse	-.122	.341	-.058
Usefulness	-.263	.309	-.159	Usefulness	-.270	.315	-.163
P1: reliable destination information	1.210	.632	.378*	P1: reliable destination information	1.188	.647	.372*
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.156	.323	.062	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.158	.343	.063
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.475	.384	-.161	P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.470	.390	-.160
P4: clear details of the product offering	.797	.609	.255	P4: clear details of the product offering	.797	.620	.255
P5: travel safety information	-1.061	.462	-.323**	P5: travel safety information	-1.055	.483	-.322**
P6: vivid destination images	-.066	.384	-.023	P6: vivid destination images	-.068	.390	-.024
				Hedonic	-.037	.174	-.024
				Utilitarian	.023	.162	.018
Adjusted R ²	0.158			0.137			
F (p value)	2.654 (p<0.001)			2.161 (p<0.05)			
R ² change and associated significance	0.254 (p<0.001)			0.001 (p=0.973)			

. ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

The findings in the table above (refer to Table 6.50) indicate that only H_{2.1b}, H_{2.5b} and H_{2.9b} were supported.

When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, a weak negative relationship is seen between leisure tourists' Insecurity and affective image. This means that insecure leisure tourists have low affective destination image. The weak negative relationship between Insecurity and affective image suggests that while tourists were insecure about the use of digital media for travel purposes, their digital media insecurity was not significant enough to form strong affective image perceptions of the destination. This could be because most of them find human interaction to be very important when planning for travel, thus, find it risky to switch to digital media too quickly (refer to Table 6.15).

A moderate positive relationship between leisure tourists' use of digital media (*that provide reliable information*) and affective image exists. Digital media that provide reliable information about a destination are linked to enhanced tourists' affective images of a destination. This can be explained by the fact that affective image consists of interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative, and safe, of which travel safety is a big part. Leisure tourists may also find such digital media to be useful and easy to use during travel (refer to Table 6.16).

Hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage were not considered as factors influencing affective destination image, suggesting that, while digital media can be important in shaping the affective image of a destination, leisure tourists regard it as a supporting technology. Some leisure tourists prefer human contact because they do not feel confident doing business with a destination online, thus, physical and experiential tangible features would most likely leave a more positive and lasting impression of a destination's affective image.

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on Affective image 1

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between 1 and 5, well below the threshold of 10. Authors

assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.51: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.270	3.703
Insecurity	.810	1.235
EaseofUse	.311	3.220
Usefulness	.363	2.757
P1: reliable destination information	.646	1.547
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.756	1.323
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.730	1.370
P4: clear details of the product offering	.640	1.562
P5: travel safety information	.714	1.400
P6: vivid destination images	.787	1.271
Hedonic	.705	1.418
Utilitarian	.700	1.429

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.21), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -3.036 and 2.534. There were a few residuals with values above 3, indicating a slight violation of the normality assumption. However, according to Schmidt and Finan (2018), if the sample size is large and the number of observations per independent variable exceeds 10, which is the case here, such a slight violation does not impact the regression values.

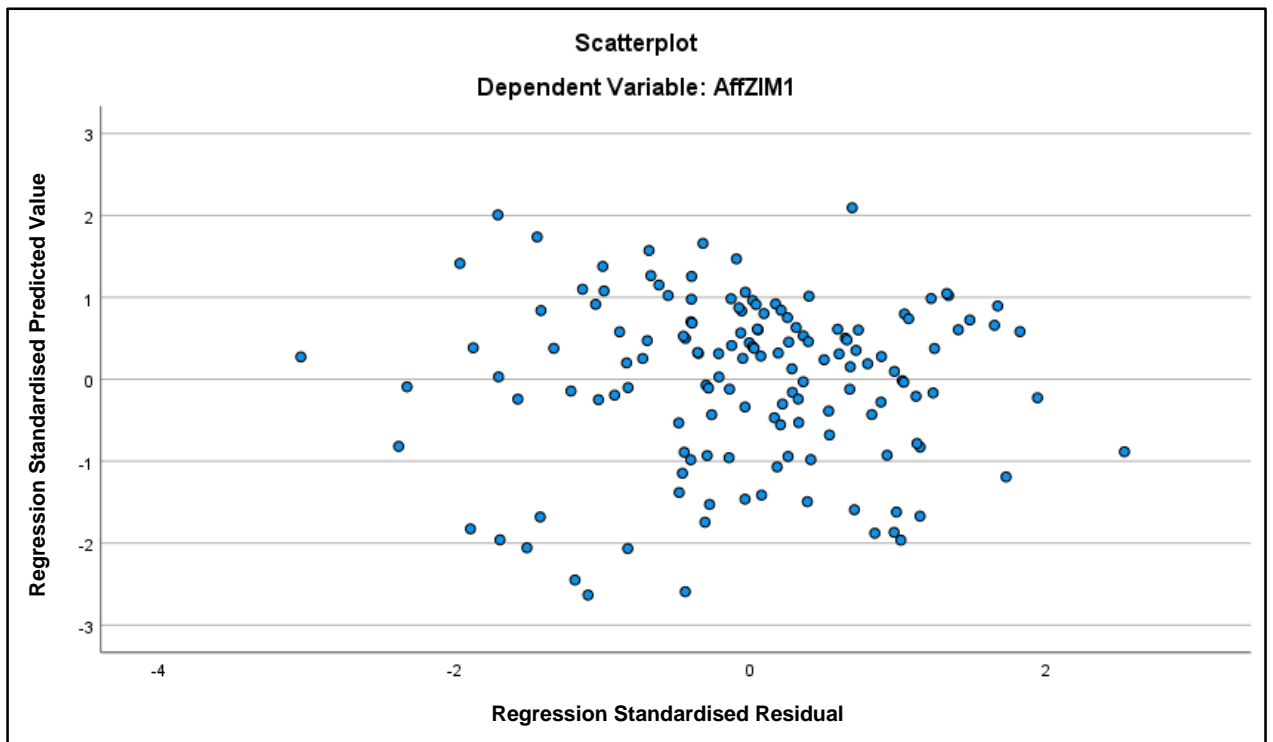


Figure 6.21: Scatter plot

Table 6.52, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain 12% of the variation in the dependent variable, Affective image 1. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained increases to 12.9%, thereby indicating that these predictors also contribute to explaining the variation in Affective image 1. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.020 and the associated F change value was not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p < 0.001$) and ($p < 0.001$) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of Affective image 1 as indicated in the table: perceived ease of use ($\beta = 0.338$; $p < 0.05$), Preference 5 (*travel safety information*) ($\beta = 0.169$; $p < 0.10$), Utilitarian digital media usage ($\beta = -0.163$; $p < 0.10$). A moderate relationship was evident between perceived ease of use and Affective image 1, while Preference 5 (*travel safety information*) had a weak positive relationship. It was also evident that utilitarian digital media usage had a weak negative relationship with Affective image 1.

Table 6.52: Regression results with Affective image 1 as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	2.554	.885		(Constant)	2.793	.901	
Innov&Opt	.416	.359	.162	Innov&Opt	.344	.386	.134
Insecurity	-.021	.138	-.012	Insecurity	-.010	.147	-.006
EaseofUse	.737	.345	.296**	EaseofUse	.843	.349	.338**
Usefulness	-.230	.293	-.099	Usefulness	-.134	.300	-.058
P1: reliable destination information	-.185	.351	-.051	P1: reliable destination information	-.144	.350	-.040
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.200	.291	.061	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.302	.296	.092
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.397	.297	-.123	P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.413	.295	-.128
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.273	.324	-.082	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.246	.325	-.074
P5: travel safety information	.579	.314	.169*	P5: travel safety information	.579	.316	.169*
P6: vivid destination images	.297	.294	.089	P6: vivid destination images	.321	.293	.096
				Hedonic	.105	.126	.077
				Utilitarian	-.335	.191	-.163*
Adjusted R ²	0.120			0.129			
F (p value)	2.955 (p<0.001)			2.766 (p<0.001)			
R ² change and associated significance	0.182 (p<0.001)			0.020 (p=0.192)			

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

From the above (refer to Table 6.52) it is evident that only H_{2.4b}, H_{2.9b} and H_{2.12b} were supported.

When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, a moderate relationship is seen between leisure tourists' technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) and Affective image 1. In this case, a moderate relationship suggests that leisure tourists' perceived ease of use of digital media is linked to enhanced perceptions of a destination's Affective image 1. A possible reason for this could be due to differences in tech-savviness and digital media preferences, hence most leisure tourists' find the digital media they were familiar with easy to use.

A weak positive relationship between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and Affective image 1 could be due to differences in levels of safety concerns in any given destination, based on past travel experiences and destination familiarity. The finding suggests that leisure tourists value practicality and rationality, and therefore, prefer to use utilitarian digital media for its ability to provide travel safety information (see Vieira *et al.*, 2022).

A weak negative relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and Affective image 1, meaning that the utility in YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook usage did not effectively result in leisure tourists perceiving a destination as relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, and progressive. In fact, the finding shows that as leisure tourists used utilitarian digital media during travel, their affective images of the destination were lowered. The reason could be because tourists prefer easy-to-use digital media that provide travel safety information. Past empirical evidence shows a relationship between usage of these social media sites and destination image, without specifying whether the relationship is between hedonic or utilitarian usage and cognitive or affective image (e.g., Ketter, 2016; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2019).

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on Affective image 2

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between 1 and 5, well below the threshold of 10. Authors

assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.53: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.259	3.862
Insecurity	.801	1.248
EaseofUse	.300	3.330
Usefulness	.355	2.820
P1: reliable destination information	.654	1.528
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.749	1.334
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.732	1.367
P4: clear details of the product offering	.656	1.525
P5: travel safety information	.698	1.432
P6: vivid destination images	.808	1.237
Hedonic	.709	1.410
Utilitarian	.702	1.424

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.22), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -3.185 and 2.961. There were a few residuals with values above 3, indicating a slight violation of the normality assumption. However, according to Schmidt and Finan (2018), if the sample size is large and the number of observations per independent variable exceeds 10, which is the case here, such a slight violation does not impact the regression values.

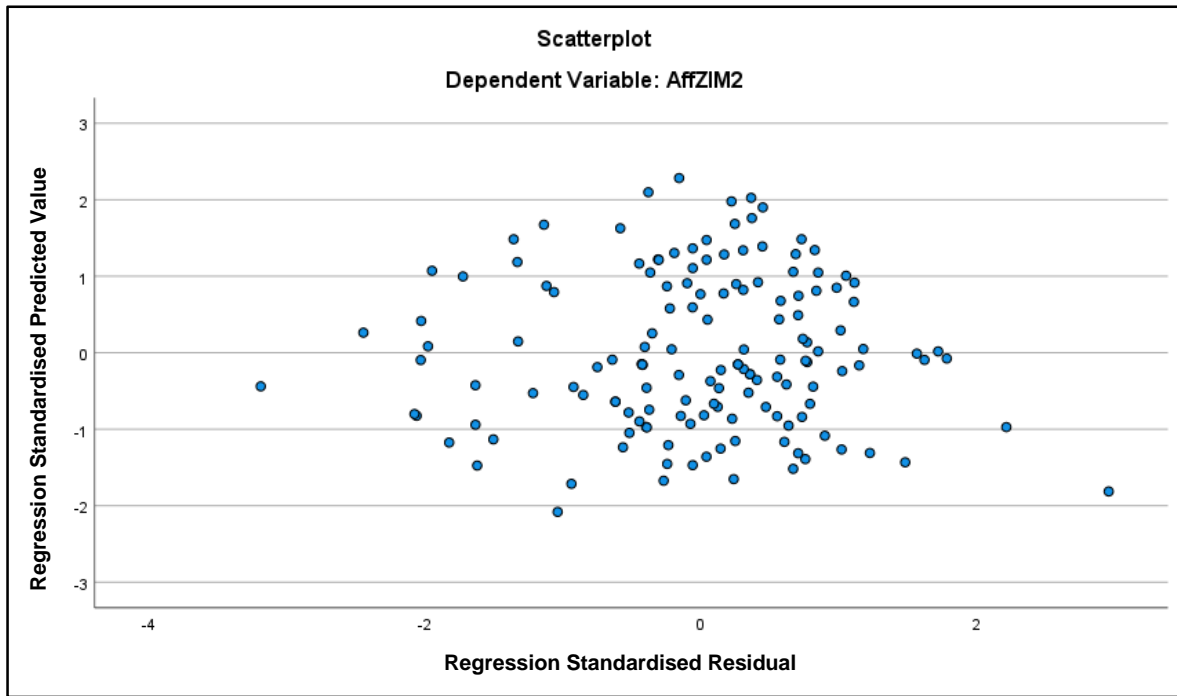


Figure 6.22: Scatter plot

Table 6.54, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM, and digital media preferences explain 16.9% of the variation in the dependent variable, Affective image 2. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained increased to 27.2%, thereby indicating that these predictors also contribute to explaining the variation in Affective image 2. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.105 and the associated F change value was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p < 0.001$) and ($p < 0.001$) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of Affective image 2 as indicated in the table: Insecurity ($\beta = -0.136$; $p < 0.10$), Preference 5 (*travel safety information*) ($\beta = 0.233$; $p < 0.05$), Hedonic digital media usage ($\beta = -0.352$; $p < 0.01$). A weak negative relationship was evident between Insecurity and Affective image 2, while Preference 5 (*travel safety information*) had a weak positive relationship. A moderate negative relationship was evident between Hedonic digital media usage and Affective image 2.

Table 6.54: Regression results with Affective image 2 as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	5.405	.907		(Constant)	6.020	.873	
Innov&Opt	-.125	.372	-.046	Innov&Opt	.499	.376	.185
Insecurity	-.481	.143	-.265***	Insecurity	-.247	.144	-.136*
EaseofUse	.689	.357	.263*	EaseofUse	.551	.339	.210
Usefulness	.025	.301	.010	Usefulness	-.198	.290	-.081
P1: reliable destination information	-.092	.356	-.024	P1: reliable destination information	-.001	.335	.000
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	-.222	.298	-.064	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	-.121	.286	-.035
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.006	.305	.002	P3: personalisation of itinerary	.075	.286	.022
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.295	.331	-.083	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.414	.311	-.116
P5: travel safety information	1.073	.323	.297***	P5: travel safety information	.842	.306	.233**
P6: vivid destination images	.225	.301	.063	P6: vivid destination images	.245	.282	.069
				Hedonic	-.515	.123	-.352***
				Utilitarian	-.227	.187	-.103
Adjusted R ²	0.169			0.272			
F (p value)	3.952 (p<0.001)			5.501 (p<0.001)			
R ² change and associated significance	0.226 (p<0.001)			0.105 (p<0.001)			

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Only H_{2.1b}, H_{2.9b} and H_{2.11b} were supported, as is evident from the findings above (refer to Table 6.54).

When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, a weak negative relationship is seen between leisure tourists' Insecurity and Affective image 2, meaning that insecure leisure tourists have low affective destination images. The weak negative relationship between Insecurity and affective image suggests that while tourists were insecure about the use of digital media for travel purposes, their digital media insecurity was not significant enough to form strong Affective image 2 perceptions of the destination.

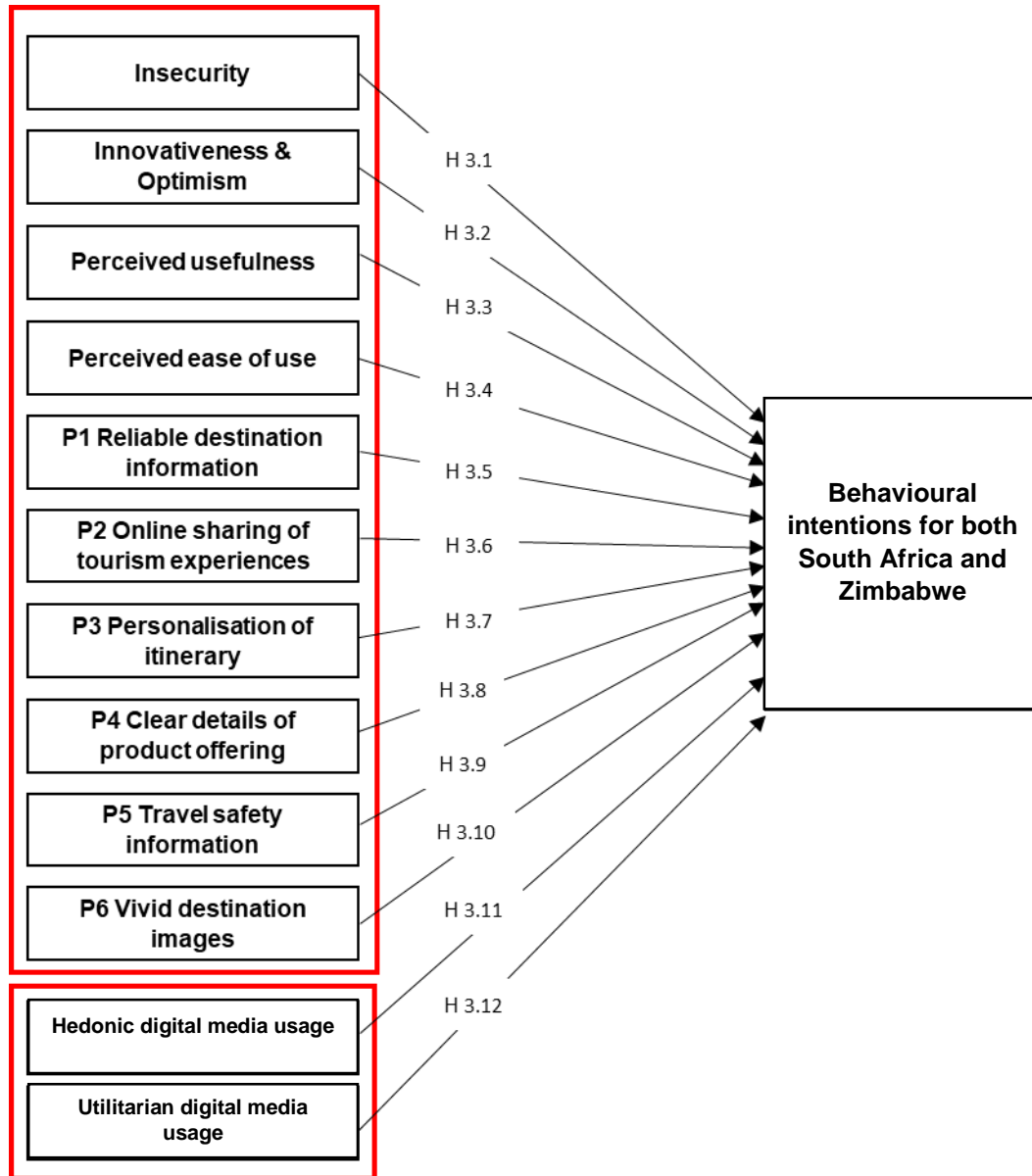
Findings also revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and Affective image 2, probably because leisure tourists prefer digital media that provide travel safety information, at the same time giving them entertaining and pleasant experiences.

Furthermore, findings show a moderate negative relationship between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and affective image, meaning that hedonic digital media usage does not relate to the formation of high Affective image 2 attributes (i.e., interesting, authentic, entertaining and pleasant) of a destination. However, due to its ability to provide travel safety information, leisure tourists rely on hedonic digital media (i.e., 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare) to access safety information on the above affective image attributes. A probability could be because when travelling, tourists prefer hedonic digital media that provide travel safety information.

Research hypothesis 3: (answered through hierarchical regression)

There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The research hypothesis is shown in Figure 6.23



NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Figure 6.23: Research hypothesis 3

To answer research hypothesis 3, the following statistical hypotheses were tested:

- H_{3.1}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.2}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.3}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived usefulness and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.4}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.5}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.6}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.7}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow personalisation of itinerary*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.8}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.9}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.10}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that project vivid destination images*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{3.11}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit.

H_{3.12}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit.

SOUTH AFRICA

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on behavioural intentions to revisit

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.1) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between 1 and 5, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.55: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
InnovOpt	.223	4.491
Insecurity	.753	1.327
EaseofUse	.348	2.870
Usefulness	.273	3.658
P1: reliable destination information	.246	4.063
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.528	1.893
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.575	1.740
P4: clear details of the product offering	.262	3.821
P5: travel safety information	.443	2.259
P6: vivid destination images	.495	2.022
Hedonic	.727	1.376
Utilitarian	.565	1.770

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.24), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -3.083 and 1.516. There were a few residuals with values below -3, indicating a slight violation of the normality assumption. However, according to Schmidt and Finan (2018), if the sample size is large and the number of observations per independent variable exceeds 10, which is the case here, such a slight violation does not impact the regression values.

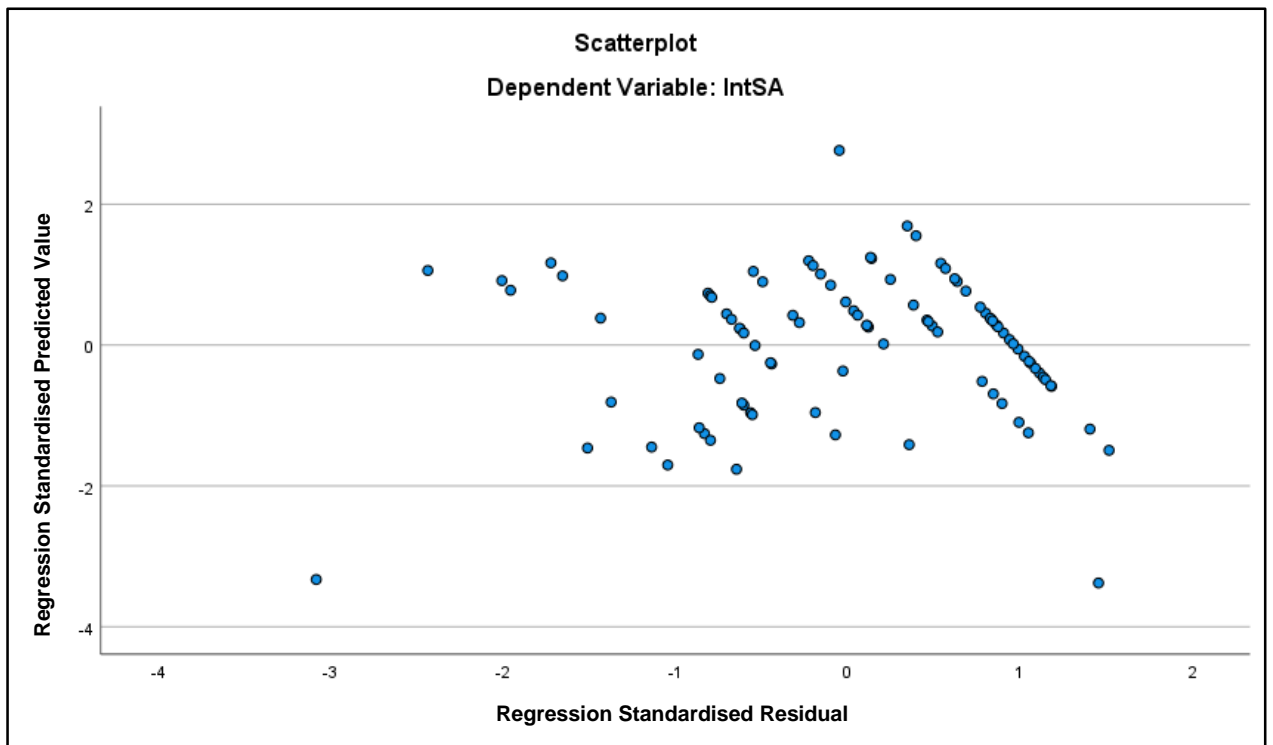


Figure 6.24: Scatter plot

Table 6.56, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain only 1.8% of the variation in the dependent variable, behavioural intentions to revisit. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained decreases to 0.7%, thereby indicating that these predictors do not contribute to explaining the variation in behavioural intentions to revisit. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.012 and the associated F change value was not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$). The F-test for regression was not statistically significant for model 1 ($p > 0.1$) and ($p > 0.1$) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that only the following variable was a statistically significant predictor of behavioural intentions to revisit as indicated in the table: Preference 1 (*reliable destination information*) ($\beta = 0.441$; $p < 0.05$) had a moderate positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit.

Table 6.56: Regression results with behavioural intentions to revisit as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (South Africa)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	3.631	.596		(Constant)	3.506	.612	
Innov&Opt	.192	.209	.187	Innov&Opt	.153	.224	.149
Insecurity	.015	.075	.023	Insecurity	.025	.079	.038
EaseofUse	.183	.192	.164	EaseofUse	.212	.195	.189
Usefulness	-.265	.176	-.294	Usefulness	-.281	.177	-.312
P1: reliable destination information	.814	.353	.471**	P1: reliable destination information	.762	.358	.441**
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.244	.181	.180	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.206	.191	.153
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.191	.208	-.124	P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.187	.210	-.121
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.144	.329	-.087	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.119	.333	-.072
P5: travel safety information	-.028	.264	-.016	P5: travel safety information	-.068	.273	-.038
P6: vivid destination images	-.299	.221	-.196	P6: vivid destination images	-.296	.223	-.194
				Hedonic	-.038	.091	-.050
				Utilitarian	.096	.091	.143
Adjusted R ²	0.018			0.007			
F (p value)	1.168 (p=0.324)			1.058 (p=0.406)			
R ² change and associated significance	0.122 (p=0.324)			0.012 (p=0.569)			

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

The findings in Table 6.56, above, indicate that only $H_{3.5}$ was supported.

When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, a moderate positive relationship between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and behavioural intentions to revisit, is shown. In other words, digital media that provide reliable destination information, are linked to leisure tourists' revisit intentions. Notably, technology readiness, technology acceptance, hedonic and utilitarian variables had no relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit.

The above suggests that while digital media usage can be important factor associated with behavioural intentions to revisit, leisure tourists regard digital media as a supporting technology, therefore, they can still visit in its absence. This can be explained by high levels of Insecurity in using new digital media as well as the importance of human touch when planning for travel. Some leisure tourists do not feel confident doing business with a destination online, thus physical and experiential tangible features would most likely influence revisit intentions when compared to digital media.

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage on behavioural intentions to revisit

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the twelve independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between 1 and 5, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.57: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.262	3.823
Insecurity	.820	1.220
EaseofUse	.306	3.273
Usefulness	.364	2.748
P1: reliable destination information	.643	1.555
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.766	1.305
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.737	1.357
P4: clear details of the product offering	.648	1.543
P5: travel safety information	.698	1.433
P6: vivid destination images	.798	1.254
Hedonic	.702	1.424
Utilitarian	.720	1.388

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.25), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -3.981 and 2.301. There were a few residuals with values below -3, indicating a slight violation of the normality assumption. However, according to Schmidt and Finan (2018), if the sample size is large and the number of observations per independent variable exceeds 10, which is the case here, such a slight violation does not impact the regression values.

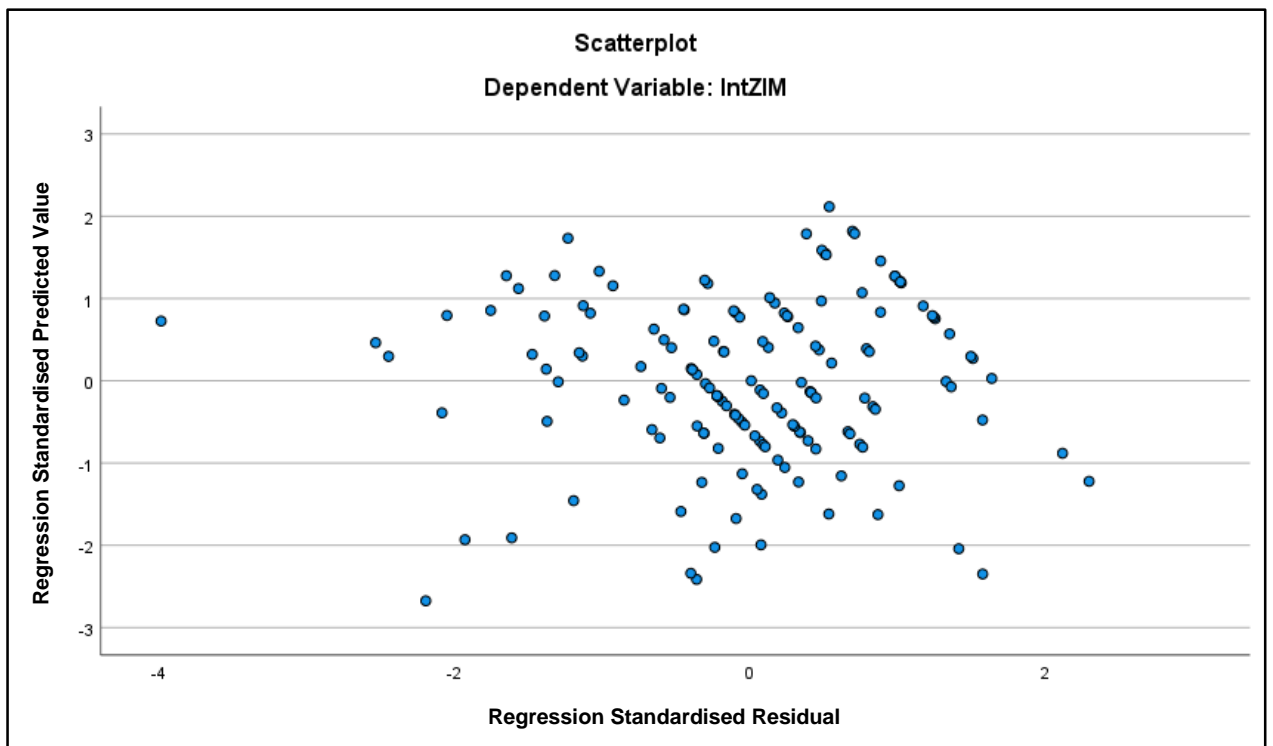


Figure 6.25: Scatter plot

Table 6.58, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain 16.5% of the variation in the dependent variable, behavioural intentions to revisit. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage are added to the model, the percentage variation explained increased to 16.6%, thereby indicating that these predictors also contribute to explaining the variation in behavioural intentions to revisit. The R^2 change for model 2 was 0.012 and the associated F change value was not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p < 0.001$) and ($p < 0.001$) for model 2.

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicated that none of the independent variables were statistically significant predictors of behavioural intentions to revisit in the final model (model 2).

Table 6.58: Regression results with behavioural intentions to revisit as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
(Constant)	2.427	.448		(Constant)	2.507	.458	
Innov&Opt	.025	.181	.018	Innov&Opt	.137	.197	.100
Insecurity	-.102	.070	-.112	Insecurity	-.065	.074	-.072
EaseofUse	.224	.174	.169	EaseofUse	.197	.177	.148
Usefulness	.053	.147	.043	Usefulness	.013	.151	.011
P1: reliable destination information	.024	.176	.012	P1: reliable destination information	.034	.176	.018
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.138	.145	.079	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.152	.147	.087
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.014	.148	.008	P3: personalisation of itinerary	.018	.148	.011
P4: clear details of the product offering	.177	.162	.100	P4: clear details of the product offering	.153	.163	.086
P5: travel safety information	.267	.159	.147*	P5: travel safety information	.229	.161	.126
P6: vivid destination images	.198	.148	.111	P6: vivid destination images	.199	.148	.111
				Hedonic	-.089	.064	-.122
				Utilitarian	-.025	.095	-.023
Adjusted R ²	0.165			0.166			
F (p value)	4.024 (p<0.001)			3.538 (p<0.001)			

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error	
R ² change and associated significance	0.220 (p<0.001)			0.012 (p=0.340)			

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

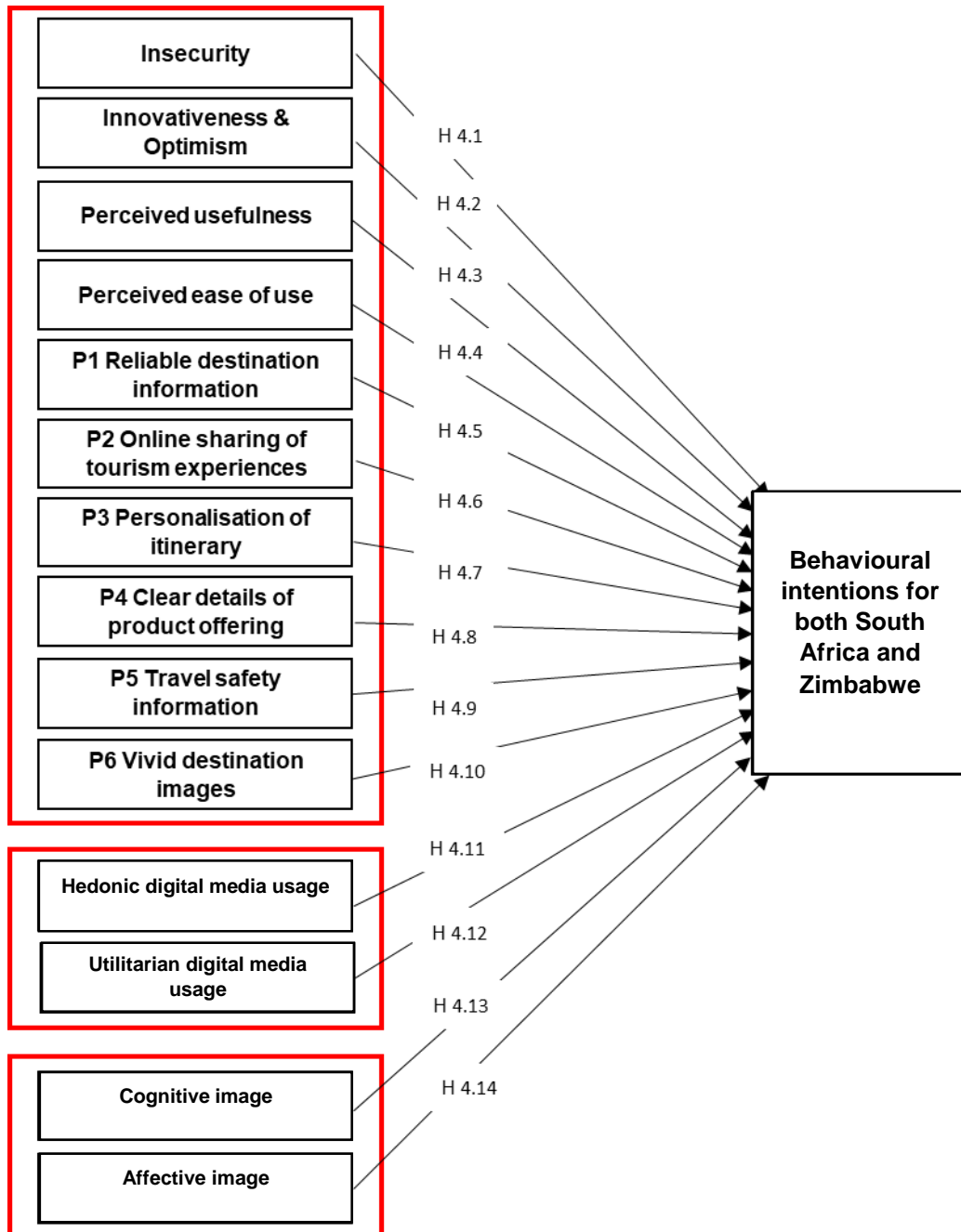
None of the hypotheses were supported.

When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, none of the independent variables had a relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. This could mean that while digital media usage might be known to positively influence behavioural intentions to revisit (e.g., Vieira *et al.*, 2022), leisure tourists who are not tech-savvy and those that have not accepted the use of digital media for travel purposes, regard it as a supporting technology, and therefore, they can still visit in the absence of digital media. A reason for this may be due to their high levels of discomfort in using new digital media as well as their emphasis on the importance of human touch when travelling. Some leisure tourists do not feel confident doing business with a destination online, thus, its tangible features would most likely influence revisit intentions when compared to digital media.

Research hypothesis 4: (answered through hierarchical regression)

There is a relationship between leisure tourists' TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, digital media usage, destination image and intentions to visit.

The research hypothesis is shown in Figure 6.26



NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Figure 6.26: Research hypothesis 4

To answer research hypothesis 4, the following statistical hypotheses were tested:

- H_{4.1}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.2}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.3}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived usefulness behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.4}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.5}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.6}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.7}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow personalisation of itinerary*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.8}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.9}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.10}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that project vivid destination images*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.11}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit.

- H_{4.12}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.13}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit.
- H_{4.14}: A relationship exists between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

SOUTH AFRICA

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, and destination image on behavioural intentions to revisit

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.1) indicated that the correlation between the fifteen independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between 1 and 5, well below the threshold of 10. Authors assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.59: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
InnovOpt	.211	4.732
Insecurity	.729	1.371
EaseofUse	.295	3.395
Usefulness	.262	3.820
P1: reliable destination information	.230	4.340
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.536	1.867
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.567	1.764
P4: clear details of the product offering	.253	3.946
P5: travel safety information	.450	2.223
P6: vivid destination images	.525	1.906
Hedonic	.713	1.403
Utilitarian	.573	1.744
AffSA	.599	1.668
CogSA1	.641	1.561
CogSA2	.618	1.618

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.27), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -3.112 and 1.785.

There were a few residuals with values below -3, indicating a slight violation of the normality assumption. However, according to Schmidt and Finan (2018), if the sample size is large and the number of observations per independent variable exceeds 10, which is the case here, such a slight violation does not impact the regression values.

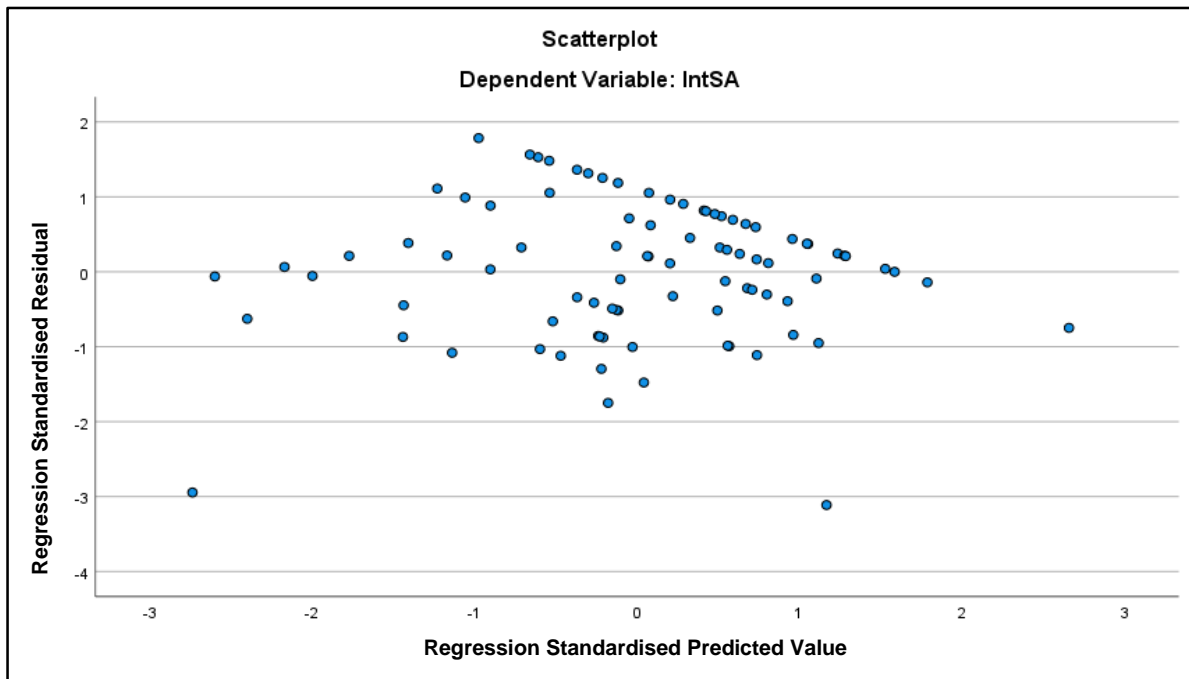


Figure 6.27: Scatter plot

Table 6.60, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain only 5.1% of the variation in the dependent variable, behavioural intentions to revisit. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, the percentage variation explained increases to 6.0%, thereby indicating that these predictors do contribute to explaining the variation in behavioural intentions to revisit. However, when destination image is added to the model, the percentage variation explained increases to 23.8%, making a further contribution. The R^2 change for model 3 was statistically significant 0.179 and the associated F change value was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The F-test for regression was not statistically significant for model 1 ($p > 0.1$) and ($p > 0.1$) for model 2, but statistically significant for model 3 ($p < 0.001$). The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of behavioural intentions to revisit as indicated in the table: Utilitarian digital media usage ($\beta = 0.219$; $p < 0.10$), affective image ($\beta = 0.453$; $p < 0.01$). It was evident that Utilitarian digital media usage had a weak, positive relationship behavioural intentions to revisit, while affective image had a moderate positive relationship.

Table 6.60: Regression results with behavioural intentions to revisit as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, and destination image as predictor variables (South Africa)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 3	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error					
(Constant)	3.500	.610		(Constant)	3.306	.619		(Constant)	.759	1.006	
Innov&Opt	.258	.225	.243	Innov&Opt	.192	.234	.181	Innov&Opt	.046	.217	.043
Insecurity	.011	.078	.016	Insecurity	.022	.079	.033	Insecurity	.091	.074	.135
EaseofUse	.121	.217	.105	EaseofUse	.150	.217	.131	EaseofUse	.210	.199	.182
Usefulness	-.256	.183	-.282	Usefulness	-.272	.182	-.300	Usefulness	-.196	.167	-.216
P1: reliable destination information	.761	.366	.430**	P1: reliable destination information	.680	.368	.384*	P1: reliable destination information	.290	.347	.164
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.301	.187	.219	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.232	.196	.169	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.211	.176	.154
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.114	.222	-.070	P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.090	.222	-.056	P3: personalisation of itinerary	.012	.202	.007
P4: clear details of the product offering	-.054	.352	-.031	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.012	.352	-.007	P4: clear details of the product offering	-.183	.323	-.106

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 3	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error					
P5: travel safety information	-.019	.269	-.011	P5: travel safety information	-.079	.276	-.044	P5: travel safety information	.177	.256	.097
P6: vivid destination images	-.326	.222	-.212	P6: vivid destination images	-.316	.222	-.205	P6: vivid destination images	-.307	.200	-.199
				Hedonic	-.047	.099	-.057	Hedonic	-.006	.092	-.007
				Utilitarian	.152	.093	.217	Utilitarian	.153	.087	.219*
				AffSA	.246	.066	.453***				
				CogSA1	.207	.177	.138				
				CogSA2	-.057	.131	-.052				
Adjusted R ²	0.051			0.060			0.238				
F (p value)	1.466 (p=0.169)			1.457 (p=0.160)			2.786 (p<0.001)				
R ² change and associated significance	0.162 (p=0.169)			0.029 (p=0.266)			0.179 (p<0.001)				

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

From the results above (refer to Table 6.60) it is evident that only $H_{4.12}$, $H_{4.14}$ were supported.

When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, results show a weak positive relationship between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit. The finding shows that usage of YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook for travel purposes is linked to behavioural intentions to revisit. This is simply because the usage of these digital media is increasingly expected amidst a pandemic, such as COVID-19 and associated travel restrictions. This could be because of the functional ability of digital media to navigate, make online bookings and provide access to destination information (see Hadjielias *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, findings show a moderate positive relationship between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit. In other words, tourists' affective image of the destination as interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative, and safe, are linked to their revisit intentions. The attributes of affective destination image that leisure tourists prioritise during their travels can provide valuable insights into how digital media should be portrayed when marketing and promoting a destination. What matters is the ability of the digital media to showcase the affective image aspects of the destination's brand that visitors are attracted to.

It can however be noted that none of the technology readiness and technology acceptance variables had a direct relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. Digital media Insecurity could have led to technology readiness and technology acceptance of digital media not having any effect on revisit intentions. Thus, visitors might have mainly relied on the information garnered from the usage of utilitarian digital media (YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook) to make decisions about revisit intentions.

ZIMBABWE

Regression results: The effect of TRI, TAM and digital media preference, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, and destination image on behavioural intentions to revisit

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed. The assumption of no serious multicollinearity was met because the correlation matrix (refer to Appendix 9, Table A.2) indicated that the correlation between the sixteen independent variables were all below 0.8. In addition, the VIF lies between 1 and 5, well below the threshold of 10. Authors

assert that $VIF < 10$ denotes levels of multicollinearity that are acceptable (e.g., Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

Table 6.61: VIF and tolerance results

	Tolerance	VIF
Innov&Opt	.261	3.834
Insecurity	.775	1.290
EaseofUse	.289	3.460
Usefulness	.347	2.879
P1: reliable destination information	.642	1.557
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.728	1.373
P3: personalisation of itinerary	.705	1.419
P4: clear details of the product offering	.632	1.583
P5: travel safety information	.655	1.526
P6: vivid destination images	.752	1.329
Hedonic	.439	2.280
Utilitarian	.674	1.484
AffZIM1	.348	2.877
AffZIM2	.276	3.625
CogZIM1	.338	2.960
CogZIM2	.483	2.069

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

Regarding the assumption of homoskedasticity, the scatterplot of the standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values did not indicate any noticeable pattern (refer to Figure 6.28), and therefore, homogeneity can be assumed. Furthermore, regarding the assumption of a normal distribution of the residual term, the standardised residual values lie between -2.451 and 2.692, well between the thresholds of -3 to +3, therefore, the normality assumption was met.

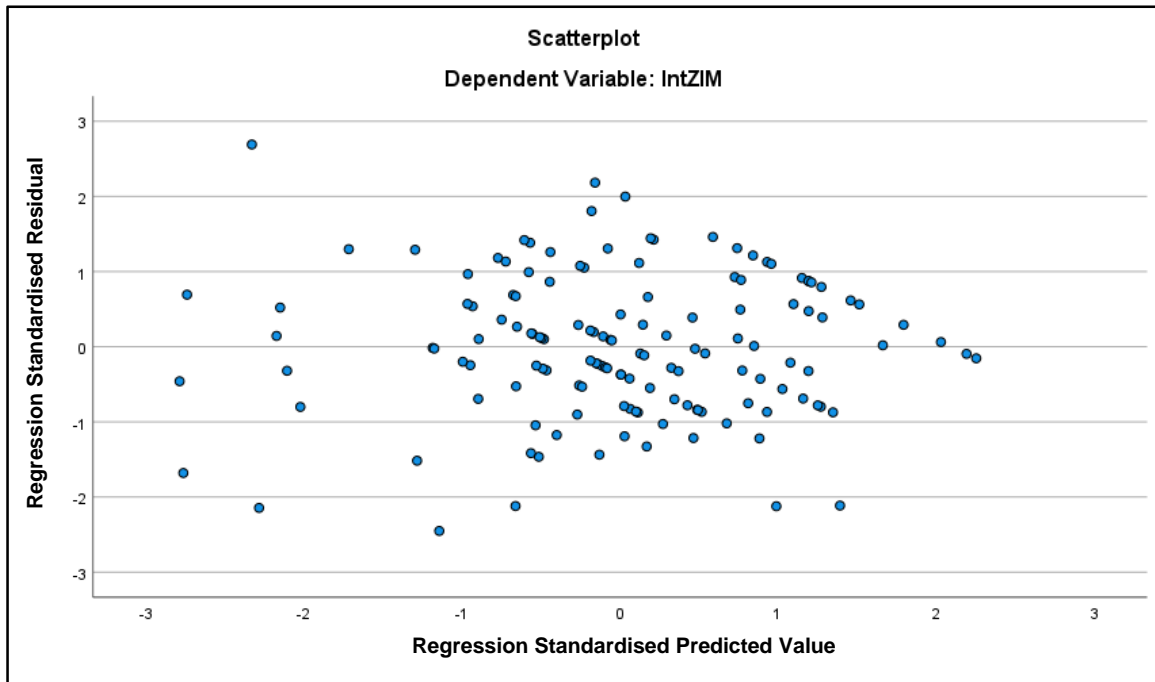


Figure 6.28: Scatter plot

Table 6.62, indicating the regression results, shows that TRI, TAM and digital media preferences explain 17.6% of the variation in the dependent variable, behavioural intentions to revisit. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, the percentage variation explained decreases to 17.4%, thereby indicating that these predictors do not contribute to explaining the variation in behavioural intentions to revisit. However, when destination image is added to the model, the percentage variation explained increases to 45.2%, making a further contribution. The R^2 change for model 3 was statistically 0.269 and the associated F change value was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The F-test for regression was statistically significant for model 1 ($p < 0.001$), model 2 ($p < 0.001$) and for model 3 ($p < 0.001$).

The standardised beta values and associated significance indicate that the following variables were statistically significant predictors of affective image as indicated in the table: Preference 4 (*clear details of the product offering*) ($\beta = 0.171$; $p < 0.05$), Affective image 1 ($\beta = 0.245$; $p < 0.05$), Affective image 2 ($\beta = 0.402$; $p < 0.01$). A weak positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit was evident for both Preference 4 (*clear details of the product offering*) and Affective image 1, while a moderate positive relationship was evident with Affective image 2.

Table 6.62: Regression results with behavioural intentions to revisit as the outcome variable and TRI, TAM, digital media preferences, and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, and destination image as predictor variables (Zimbabwe)

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 3	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error					
(Constant)	2.457	.460		(Constant)	2.562	.472		(Constant)	.904	.518	
Innov&Opt	.090	.188	.066	Innov&Opt	.184	.202	.135	Innov&Opt	.011	.168	.008
Insecurity	-.113	.072	-.126	Insecurity	-.075	.078	-.084	Insecurity	-.031	.064	-.034
EaseofUse	.223	.180	.169	EaseofUse	.204	.183	.154	EaseofUse	-.027	.155	-.020
Usefulness	-.019	.153	-.015	Usefulness	-.051	.158	-.042	Usefulness	.040	.130	.032
P1: reliable destination information	.073	.183	.038	P1: reliable destination information	.090	.184	.047	P1: reliable destination information	.128	.151	.066
P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.148	.152	.084	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.166	.156	.095	P2: online sharing of tourism experiences	.128	.129	.073
P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.014	.154	-.008	P3: personalisation of itinerary	-.002	.155	-.001	P3: personalisation of itinerary	.058	.129	.034
P4: clear details of the product offering	.201	.169	.113	P4: clear details of the product offering	.184	.170	.104	P4: clear details of the product offering	.304	.140	.171**

Model 1	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 2	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)	Model 3	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Beta Coefficients (β)				
	B.	Standard Error			B.	Standard Error									
P5: travel safety information	.264	.167	.144	P5: travel safety information	.225	.169	.123	P5: travel safety information	-.013	.142	-.007				
P6: vivid destination images	.204	.154	.115	P6: vivid destination images	.207	.154	.117	P6: vivid destination images	.136	.129	.077				
				Hedonic	-.078	.066	-.108	Hedonic	-.023	.069	-.032				
				Utilitarian	-.043	.100	-.040	Utilitarian	.040	.083	.037				
								AffZim1	.130	.057	.245**				
												AffZim2	.202	.060	.402***
												CogZim1	-.042	.123	-.037
								CogZim2	.111	.115	.087				
Adjusted R ²	0.176		0.174				0.452								
F (p value)	3.965 (p<0.001)		3.446 (p<0.001)				8.165 (p<0.001)								
R ² change and associated significance	0.235 (p<0.001)		0.011 (p=0.414)				0.269 (p<0.001)								

. ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.1

NB: P1-P6 represent digital media preferences

As is evident from the findings above (refer to Table 6.62), only H_{4.8} and H_{4.14} were supported. When hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage is added to the model, a weak positive relationship is seen between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.

Affective image 1 had a weak positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. This suggests that tourists' perceptions of a destination as relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, and progressive, prompted them to revisit in the future.

A moderate positive relationship also exists between leisure tourists' Affective image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit. In other words, tourists' perceptions of the destination as interesting, authentic, entertaining, and pleasant were highly related to their revisit intentions. This finding corroborates empirical evidence showing that destination image is one of the most prominent influences of behavioural intentions to revisit (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). The aspects of image that are focused on by these tourists can inform how the digital media should be portrayed. What matters is the ability of the digital media to showcase the aspects of the destination's brand that visitors are attracted to.

6.4 CHAPTER SYNTHESIS

In this chapter, the empirical results of the two phases of the study were provided.

Results from Phase 1 are summarised as follows:

EFA was conducted for the travel risk perceptions scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests indicated data suitability for EFA for both the South African and Zimbabwean sample data. One factor emerged for each destination, and the Cronbach Alpha and CR values confirmed factor reliability, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicated discriminant validity at acceptable levels.

An EFA was also conducted for cognitive image, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests indicated data suitability for both the South African and Zimbabwean sample data. Two factors emerged for both destinations (i.e., Factor 1 was named Cognitive image 1 and Factor 2, Cognitive image 2). The Cronbach Alpha values for both Cognitive image 1 and Cognitive image 2 confirmed factor reliability. Similarly, the CR values for Cognitive image 1 and Cognitive image 2 and their respective AVE values were also acceptable. For both South Africa and Zimbabwe, cognitive image factors cuisine, accommodation and personal safety did not load sufficiently on any of the two factors. These items were excluded from further analysis.

EFA was conducted for the affective image scale and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests indicated data suitability for the South African and Zimbabwean sample data. One factor emerged for South Africa. Two factors emerged for Zimbabwe, Affective image 1 and Affective image 2. The Cronbach Alpha values confirmed factor reliability, while both the CR and AVE values were also acceptable for all the affective image factors. South Africa was perceived to be mainly interesting, entertaining, and pleasant, while Zimbabwe was perceived to be mainly interesting, authentic, and entertaining.

Lastly, an EFA was conducted for the behavioural intentions to revisit scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests indicated data suitability for EFA. One factor emerged while the Cronbach Alpha value confirmed factor reliability. Both the CR and AVE values were also acceptable. Hypotheses tests were carried out through regression analysis.

Four hypotheses were tested, and the main results are as follows: there is a relationship between both leisure tourists' cognitive image as well as affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit South Africa and Zimbabwe. Travel risk perceptions moderate the relationships between cognitive and affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit both South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Results from Phase 2 are summarised as follows:

The TRI and TAM were based on existing scales. Therefore, CFA was done to test construct validity of the two scales. Multicollinearity was observed between Innovativeness and Optimism, as well as Discomfort and Insecurity in the first CFA for the TRI. In addition, the loadings for Discomfort, except for one item, was below the threshold. It was, therefore, decided to merge the Innovativeness & Optimism construct and drop the Discomfort construct. Two subsequent CFAs were conducted on the revised TRI model. The RMSEA, CFI and IFI values indicated reasonable fit for the final model. The goodness of fit statistics were presented and the validity analysis was done for the TRI. The correlation matrix showed a high correlation between constructs (i.e., Innovativeness & Optimism and Insecurity). Considered collectively, it was decided to proceed with the two constructs separately.

The two TAM factors were included with their 7 items. The RMSEA, CFI and IFI values indicated acceptable fit for the model. The goodness of fit statistics were presented and the validity analysis was done for the TAM. The correlation matrix showed a high correlation between constructs (i.e., perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use). Considered collectively, it was decided to proceed with the two constructs separately.

EFA was conducted to determine the dimensionality and reliability of the digital media usage scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests indicated data suitability for EFA. Three factors emerged and one item (official destination website) loaded as a single factor onto a third item, and therefore, it was removed. Thus, two factors were retained and named 'Hedonic usage' and 'Utilitarian usage'. Considered collectively, the Hedonic and Utilitarian usage scales were deemed usable even though they were less than the desired levels for the Cronbach Alpha and the AVE. Hedonic digital media emerged as immersive digital media, that is, virtual reality (3-D virtual reality videos) and augmented reality (3-D city tour guide). The hedonic digital media also included recommender apps, that is, context-aware recommender media (Foursquare). Utilitarian digital media emerged as three different types of social media sites (i.e., YouTube, TripAdvisor, and Facebook).

The conceptual model was tested using Path analysis after the factors were refined during the aforementioned CFA and EFA processes. The adequacy of the path model was tested using a set of fit indices including the RMSEA, CFI and IFI. However, none of the fit indices met the threshold requirements. This formed the basis for multiple linear regression analyses, where multiple regression analysis was conducted as a precursor to hierarchical regressions.

Hierarchical regressions were carried out to determine whether digital media usage predicts destination image when controlling for Innovativeness & Optimism, Insecurity, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and digital media preferences, with destination image as the dependent variable.

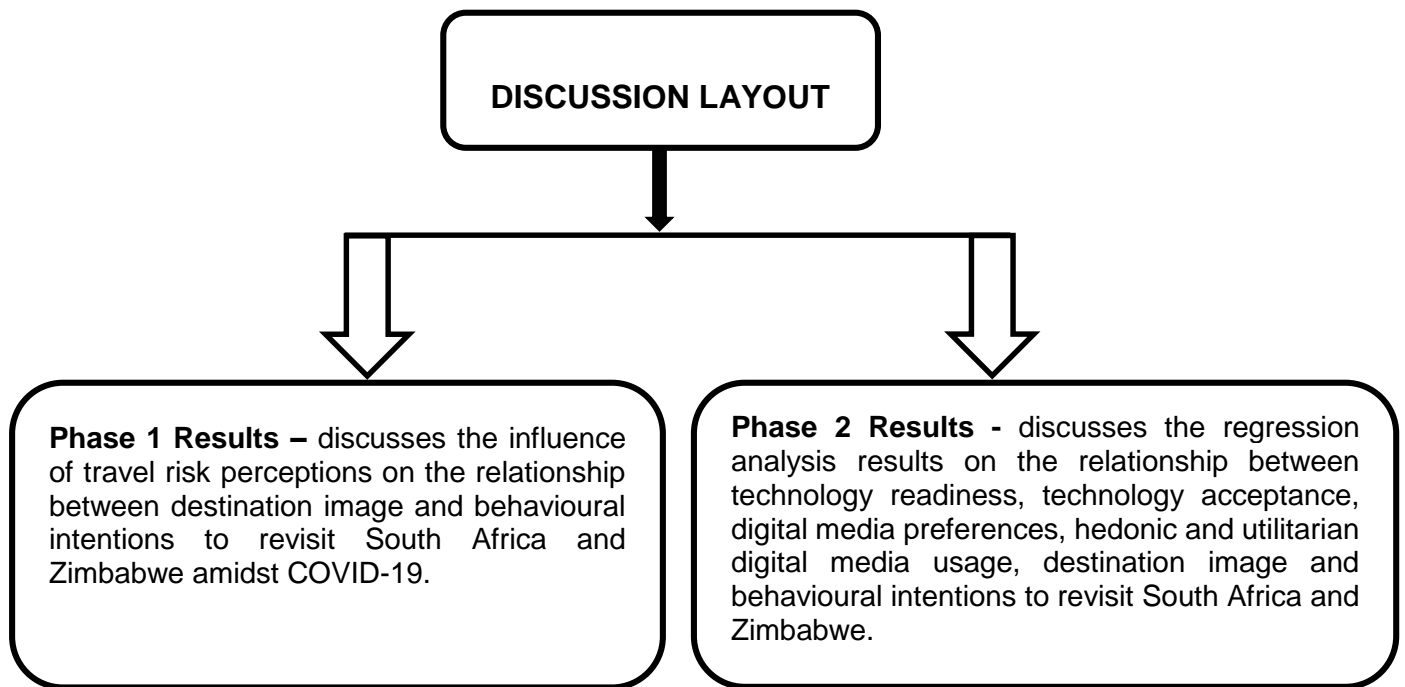
Hierarchical regressions were also carried out to determine whether digital media usage predicts behavioural intentions to revisit when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and digital media preferences, with behavioural intentions to revisit as the dependent variable.

Lastly, a hierarchical regression was conducted to determine whether destination image predicts behavioural intentions to revisit when controlling for Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, preferences, and digital media usage, with behavioural intentions to revisit as the dependent variable.

Chapter 7 discusses the findings in detail.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS



7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the results of the study's two phases and indicates how the results answer to the objectives of Phases 1 and 2 of the study. The discussion of each phase starts with its conceptual model and then proceeds to provide an interpretation of the outcomes of the various hypotheses tested. The discussion explicates the way in which the conceptualised relationships fulfil the purpose of the study, namely, to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. The two demand conditions were investigated as follows: Phase 1: travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis and Phase 2: digital media usage (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences). The purpose of Phase 1 was to determine the influence of leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit two emerging destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Phase 2 of the study sought to determine the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travel.

7.2 RESULTS OF PHASE 1

The main objective of this phase was to determine the influence of leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image perceptions and behavioural intentions to revisit two emerging destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 7.1 presents the conceptual model that was proposed to address this objective.

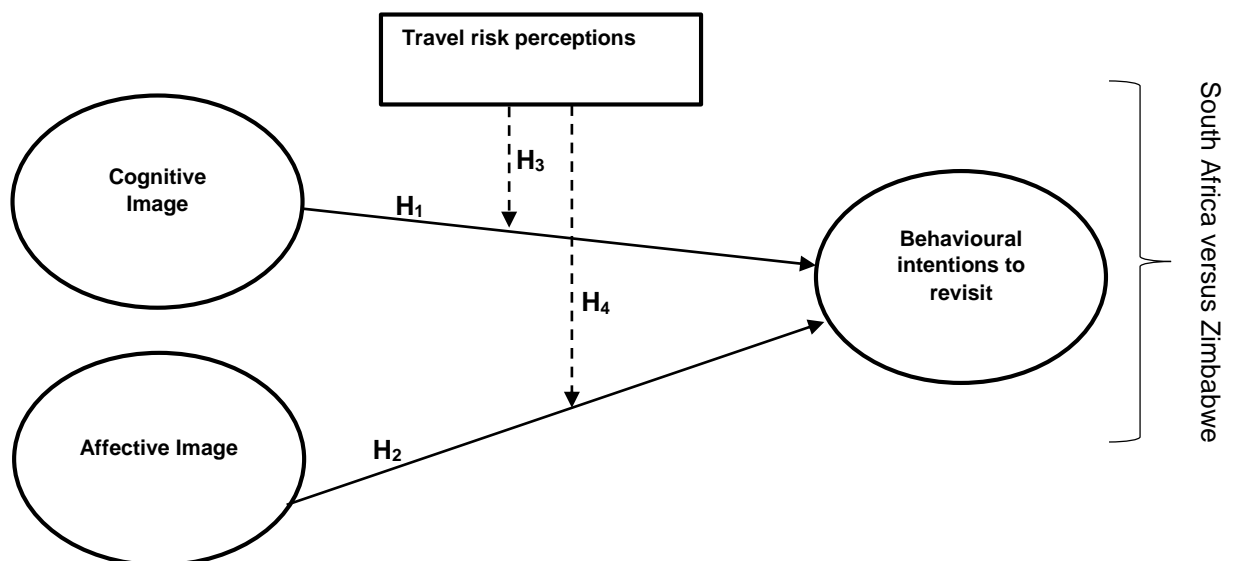


Figure 7.1: Proposed conceptual model for Phase 1 of the study

Source: Adapted from Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020); Agyeiwaah *et al.* (2021)

7.2.1 The relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit

The first sub-objective of Phase 1 was to determine the relationship between leisure tourists' destination image and their intentions to travel to these destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sections below present the tested hypotheses (H_1 and H_2) and a discussion of the findings on the relationship between destination image (cognitive and affective) and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The relationship between cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit

The first regression tested the relationship between leisure tourists' cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The following hypotheses were supported for both countries:

H_{1a} : *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' Cognitive image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

H_{1b} : *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' Cognitive image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

Cognitive image factors that emerged from the EFA for each country were as follows (*arranged in the order of mean scores*):

Cognitive image 1 (CogSA1): shopping facilities, man-made attractions (e.g., museums), services (e.g., banking, medical), general infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation), transportation infrastructure and nightlife.

Cognitive image 2 (CogSA2): scenery and landscape, natural attractions (e.g., animals, parks, beaches), climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals.

Cognitive image 1 (CogZIM1): man-made attractions (e.g., museums), shopping facilities, nightlife, general infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation), services (e.g., banking, medical) and transportation infrastructure.

Cognitive image 2 (CogZIM2): scenery and landscape, natural attractions (e.g., animals, parks, beaches), climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals.

Cognitive image for both South Africa and Zimbabwe consisted of two factors with the same content. This indicates that the same elements were of greatest importance when visitors evaluated the countries from a cognitive perspective. This is an important finding as it shows the relevance of these aspects in the evaluation of closely competing destinations. The cognitive image aspects are things that, to some extent, can be managed by the destination as they are tangible. This finding is commensurate with empirical evidence showing that

cognitive image factors (e.g., culture and nature) are important in tourists' evaluations of SSA destinations such as Mauritius and Kenya (Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023).

It is important to note that the items cuisine, accommodation facilities and personal safety did not load on either of the cognitive factors of both countries, which is an indication that these items held the greatest perceived threats due to high levels of contact. Therefore, the visitors could not express how they felt about the above cognitive image factors at the time of data collection, due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions.

The study found that leisure tourists' behavioural intentions to revisit South Africa and Zimbabwe were significantly positively impacted by both cognitive image factors. Cognitive images for both South Africa and Zimbabwe, that is; Cognitive image 1 (shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, and general infrastructure) and Cognitive image 2 (scenery and landscape, natural attractions, and climate) were seemingly strong enough to encourage revisit intentions. The sample profile included people who had previously visited South Africa and Zimbabwe. This means that they already had a history and experience, which could be expected to impact destination brand image (Yang *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the positive perceptions and behavioural intentions to revisit could have been enhanced by destination familiarity as well. The findings are similar to those of Mohammed, Mahmoud and Hinson (2022) who found that cognitive image factors in the form of heritage brand image significantly influenced tourists' intentions to revisit SSA destinations like Ghana.

Worth noting is that, for South Africa, all cognitive image factors were equally important insofar as their influence on behavioural intentions to revisit was concerned. This was shown by the almost equal Beta (β) size effect in the results chapter (see Table 6.9), implying that leisure tourists had positive memories and experiences with both Cognitive image 1 and Cognitive image 2 factors of South Africa. Apart from destination familiarity, the extent of marketing initiatives by the destination's DMOs could also have contributed. South Africa is known as a powerhouse as far as events and destination promotion is concerned (Hemmonsby & Tichaawa, 2018; Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023).

In the case of Zimbabwe, Cognitive image 1 had a significant impact on behavioural intentions to revisit, however, it was lower than Cognitive image 2. Zimbabwe's Cognitive image 1 may have been lowered by the brand image portrayed by general news since the destination has been in the spotlight with negative publicity, resulting in a negative impact on brand image and international tourist arrivals (see Chigora & Katsande, 2021; Woyo & Slabbert, 2023). At some

point, travel warnings were issued against Zimbabwe by the West leading to the brand's unattractiveness (Woyo, 2018). Cognitive image 2 was more important for Zimbabwe.

The fact that Cognitive image 2 had a more significant impact on behavioural intentions to revisit, could mean that Zimbabwe's destination marketing thrust was mainly on showcasing its natural endowments of scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals. This means that tourists were mainly exposed to these factors in their evaluation of the destination's image, therefore, they were easy to remember. Cognitive image 2 attributes are a common feature among Africa's tourism destinations, as the continent prides itself on rich natural endowments and culture (Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023)

In addition, WEF (2020) recorded South Africa as the only SSA country with a relatively high economic transformation readiness score. Zimbabwe and the other SSA countries were excluded, implying that Zimbabwe as a destination was not economically ready to invest in attractive tourism facilities that form Cognitive image 1, thus these factors emerged weaker than Cognitive image 2 factors. WEF (2023) reports Zimbabwe to be experiencing a collapse of services and public infrastructure, a severe commodity supply crisis and constraints in geoeconomic issues. These factors could have contributed to Zimbabwe's Cognitive image 1 being much weaker than Cognitive image 2 (see Table 6.9) due to lack of financial investment in such.

The findings are supported by Li *et al.* (2018) who put forth that cognitive evaluations are a result of individual views and have a beneficial impact on tourists' intentions to visit a given destination. Examples can be seen in studies, where, for example, bird species and excellent weather conditions, rich biodiversity, complete road signs and warning signs emerged as three separate cognitive image factors influencing revisit intentions (Ren *et al.*, 2022). The current study had two factors emerging for both countries that are comparable to the above, for example, complete road signs and warning signs can be associated with this study's Cognitive image 1 factors, while bird species and excellent weather conditions, and rich biodiversity can be associated with Cognitive image 2 factors. These findings suggest that both Cognitive image 1 and Cognitive image 2 are salient features in South Africa and Zimbabwe's promotional strategies and have, therefore, played an important role in evoking positive cognitive images of the two destinations.

The relationship between affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit

The second regression tested the relationship between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The following hypotheses were supported for both countries:

H_{2a}: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' Affective image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

H_{2b}: *There is a relationship between leisure tourists' Affective image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

Affective image factors that emerged from the EFA for each country are as follows (*arranged in the order of mean scores*):

Affective image SA (AFFSA): interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative, and safe.

Affective image 1 Zim (AFFZIM1): relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, and progressive.

Affective image 2 Zim (AFFZIM2): interesting, authentic, entertaining, and pleasant.

Leisure tourists found South Africa to be mainly interesting, entertaining, and pleasant. Zimbabwe was perceived to be mainly relaxing, safe and accessible for Affective image 1, and interesting, authentic, and entertaining for Affective image 2. These are tourists who have been to the destination before, hence they had a first-hand experience of the two destinations. The results support those of past studies where the above affective image factors have been widely tested and confirmed (see Tapia *et al.*, 2019).

Although some affective image factors for Zimbabwe (relaxing, pleasant, entertaining, and innovative) were rated lower than those of South Africa, they were high enough to confirm a positive influence on revisit intentions. The same can be said for some affective image factors for South Africa (progressive, safe, interesting, and authentic) that had low scores when compared to Zimbabwe. These results suggest that affective image varies between destinations, though the difference was negligible.

The negligible difference is evidenced by the almost equal Beta (β) size effect between South Africa's affective image and Zimbabwe's Affective image 1 as shown in the results chapter (see Table 6.9). However, there was a slight leap in the difference between South Africa's Affective image and Zimbabwe's Affective image 2. This means that Zimbabwe's Affective image 2 was more important than all other affective image factors from both countries. The

reason could be that the tourists had a stronger affective affiliation with Zimbabwe's Affective image 2.

Variations in destination image have been confirmed empirically, where for example, crime and safety concerns have always been the main drivers behind South Africa's negative destination image (Martín *et al.*, 2019; Friedrich *et al.*, 2020), while some studies show that Zimbabwe is classified as a distressed destination (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021).

7.2.2 The influence of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit

The second sub-objective of Phase 1 was to determine whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions influence the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit two emerging destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The travel risk perceptions scale items were adapted from Li *et al.* (2020) who categorised them into six categories (i.e., health risk, psychological risk, social risk, performance risk, image risk and time risk). However, in this study, only one travel risk perceptions factor emerged from the EFA for each destination; RiskSA for South Africa and RiskZim for Zimbabwe.

When put into perspective the travel risk perceptions factor items (RiskSA and RiskZim) in this study fell into one or more categories of the scale items presented by Li *et al.* (2020).

Health risk: 'I feel that coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic will frustrate my travel experience due to fear of contracting the virus'.

Psychological risk: 'If I travel to my destination South Africa/Zimbabwe during COVID-19 pandemic, I am most likely to spend too much time observing COVID-19-related protocols and miss out on scheduled leisure activities'.

'Given the challenges brought forth by COVID-19, I am concerned about the possibility of contracting the virus if I travel to South Africa/Zimbabwe'.

Social risk: 'I fear losing approval and respect from family and friends if I decide to travel to South Africa/Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 outbreak'.

Performance risk: 'I doubt whether the quality of accommodation facilities in South Africa's/Zimbabwe's tourist attractions is in accordance with the World Health Organisation COVID-19 protocol'.

Image risk: 'Given the media coverage of the destination South Africa/Zimbabwe, I feel that the destination is a health risk concerning COVID-19'.

Time risk: ‘If I travel to my destination South Africa/Zimbabwe during COVID-19 pandemic, I am most likely to spend too much time observing COVID-19-related protocols and miss out on scheduled leisure activities’.

Results from the qualitative text analysis (utilising Atlas.ti 8) indicated that leisure tourists were mainly worried about the risk of infection (health risk) during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was illustrated through statements about *concerns over being sick or isolated while travelling; not willing to travel until COVID-19 is managed through vaccinations; worry over bringing the virus to South Africa and Zimbabwe; not worth the risk to travel anywhere at the moment; and hard to tell if one is infected because the new wave is asymptomatic.*

The health risk was more important among leisure tourists travelling to both South Africa and Zimbabwe, due to the common fear of contracting the virus. However, feelings of doubt concerning whether the quality of accommodation facilities in South Africa’s tourist attractions was in accordance with the World Health Organisation (WHO) COVID-19 protocol was the least of worries for those travelling to South Africa. For Zimbabwe, the fear of losing approval and respect from family and friends if one decided to travel to Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 outbreak was the least of worries for those travelling to the destination. However, performance risk was high for Zimbabwe, affirming the report made by WEF (2023) that the destination’s services and public infrastructure are in dire straits.

Most respondents were unwilling to travel to South Africa given the challenges brought forth by COVID-19. They were especially concerned about contracting the virus and were afraid that their travel experiences would be frustrated if they came into contact with strangers while at the destination. Some were in doubt of whether the quality of accommodation facilities in the destination adhered to the WHO’s COVID-19 protocol.

With regards to Zimbabwe, most respondents feared that their travel experiences would be frustrated if they came into contact with strangers and were concerned about contracting the virus while at the destination. They also expressed fear of losing approval and respect from family and friends if they decided to travel to the destination during the COVID-19 outbreak. This means that the magnitude and importance of travel risk perceptions varies between destinations, depending on the perceived risk factors in that destination. This finding is also supported by literature (e.g., Decrop, 2010; de Rooij *et al.*, 2022) which shows that travel risk varies between destinations.

Africa in general is perceived to be a destination plagued by a multitude of crises including health and safety concerns (Muragu *et al.*, 2023). Overall, the above risks emerging from the qualitative analysis are therefore a confirmation of the general perceptions that international visitors have about Africa as a destination.

The sections below show the tested hypotheses (H₃ and H₄) and discussion of findings on the influence of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between destination image (cognitive and affective) and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The influence of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit

The third regression tested the moderating effect of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between leisure tourists' cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The following hypotheses were supported:

H_{3a}: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Cognitive image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

H_{3b}: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Cognitive image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

The results in this phase of the study indicated that travel risk perceptions had a significant moderating effect on the relationships between cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit for both South Africa (only Cognitive image 1) and Zimbabwe (only Cognitive image 2).

In the case of South Africa, RiskSA significantly moderated the effect of Cognitive image 1 on behavioural intentions to revisit. Thus, as the level of RiskSA increased, the strength of the relationship decreased. High-risk factors (drawn from EFAs) such as concern over the possibility of contracting COVID-19 during travel had more influence on this relationship. Furthermore, the potential of coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic was also a major risk due to fear of contracting the virus when travelling to South Africa.

Respondents suggested the implementation of visitor-friendly processes that are conducive for tourists. One was quoted saying: "I would rather expect hotels, airports, restaurants, museums, and others in the tourism industry to provide visitor-friendly processes and systems during the COVID-19 pandemic". Such findings can be attributed to concerns over crowding in places, where respondents felt that destination South Africa's tourist attractions were often

crowded and therefore, they risked contracting COVID-19 while at the destination. Literature also suggests that travellers with a high perceived COVID-19 health risk prefer to visit less crowded spaces within a destination (Park *et al.*, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2022).

RiskSA, however, did not have any effect on the relationship between Cognitive image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit. It means that Cognitive image 2 was strong enough to withstand high travel risk perceptions.

Observably, in the absence of RiskSA, Cognitive image 2 already had a relatively low mean score on three (i.e., climate, hospitality of the locals and available tourist activities) of the five Cognitive image 2 factors. Therefore, this might be the reason why adding travel risk perceptions to the relationship did not yield any effect.

In the case of Zimbabwe, RiskZim did not have any effect on the relationship between Cognitive image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit. It means that Cognitive image 1 was strong enough to withstand high travel risk perceptions. This could be attributed to leisure tourists' prior experience with the destination.

As such, adding travel risk perceptions to the relationship did not yield any change. This is confirmed by some respondents who indicated that, "I would rather expect hotels, airports, restaurants, museums, and others in the tourism industry to provide visitor-friendly processes and systems during the COVID-19 pandemic". Another respondent suggested: "User-friendly techniques" in order for destinations to ensure the provision of processes that are conducive for visitors when travelling during the pandemic. Such remarks seem to emanate from more experienced travellers, who according to literature, are risk-tolerant (see Karl *et al.*, 2020), therefore, their perception of the destination's Cognitive image 1 was not affected by the existence of travel risk. This could be due to the fact that Africa is generally well renowned for its rich natural resources, culture and heritage.

However, for Cognitive image 2, as the level of RiskZim increased, the strength of the relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit decreased. This was attributed to leisure tourists' 'fixed images' of the destination's natural endowments and core product offering being lowered by COVID-19. According to the qualitative results, COVID-19 acted as a stumbling block that affected the smooth running of tourism activities. For example, one respondent indicated that "With COVID-19, there is no hope for tourism.", while another was quoted saying, "It hampers full and free enjoyment of the holiday".

These findings support empirical evidence showing that travel risk perceptions (i.e., health and disease) significantly weaken the relationship between cognitive image and travel intentions (Neuburger & Egger, 2021; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021). The results are expected, given the nature of associated risks. However, in the absence of risk, destination image ideally positively influences revisit intentions (see Yang *et al.*, 2022).

The qualitative results confirm that leisure tourists perceived visiting tourist destinations in South Africa and Zimbabwe as a risky compromise to their health. Leisure tourists mentioned that they looked forward to seeing stringent enforcement of COVID-19 protocols at each tourist destination in these countries. For instance, one of the respondents' bemoaned the risk of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic and articulated that: "I personally have decided not to travel". The need to enforce WHO COVID-19 protocols is also supported by literature (WTTC, 2020; Hambira, Stone & Pagiwa, 2022), which shows that abiding to such will result in a COVID-19-free destination.

It emerged from the study that the common fear (according to the EFA on the travel risk perceptions scale) among leisure tourists is that of concern about the possibility of contracting the virus if they travelled to South Africa or Zimbabwe. This finding is supported by Neuburger and Egger (2021) who share the same sentiments by asserting that fear of contracting COVID-19 influences travel intentions.

Results from the thematic analysis show respondents indicating that they feared the risk of infection, for example, one respondent was quoted saying they had "Concerns over being sick and isolated while traveling" and another saying "No, I will wait till we are vaccinated and safe, after that no problem to travel South Africa or Zimbabwe".

Naturally, the re-occurrence of crises, natural or otherwise, has an undisputed bearing on increased travel risk perceptions and could influence the ability of cognitive image to withstand the influence thereof (Jahari *et al.*, 2021). Accordingly, respondents in this study expected the two destinations to invest in visitor-friendly processes and ensuring that these processes are convenient to the visitor. The above-mentioned emerged as important cognitive image factors that influenced behavioural intentions to revisit the two destinations.

Overall, the results suggest that tourists' risk perceptions of a destination significantly reduce their perceptions of its cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings also suggest that the influence of travel risk perceptions vary depending on the nature and strength of a destination's cognitive image attributes.

The influence of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit

The fourth regression tested the moderating effect of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The following hypotheses were supported:

H_{4a}: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Affective image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

H_{4b}: *Leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between Affective image 2 and behavioural intentions to revisit.*

The results in this phase of the study indicated that travel risk perceptions only had a significant moderating effect on the relationships between affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit Zimbabwe (both Affective image 1 and Affective image 2).

Findings show that none of the travel risk perceptions influenced visitors' affective image of South Africa. This could probably be because of leisure tourists' strong perceptions of South Africa's overall affective image and familiarity with the destination, thus, their travel is not deterred by a crisis (Hajibaba *et al.*, 2015). Besides destination familiarity, South Africa's affective image could have been strengthened by the destination's level of economic transformation readiness (see WEF, 2020), which puts it in a position to invest in destination marketing campaigns that stimulate its image to be interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative, and safe. One respondent indicated that, "There are far more deadly diseases to worry about than COVID-19 (e.g., malaria, TB and hepatitis E), and there are no protocols for these diseases". In other words, the respondent felt that COVID-19 was exaggerated, and it was not a true indication of the actual risks associated with the pandemic in the tourist destination. As a result, it did not weaken their affective image of South Africa.

RiskZim had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between leisure tourists' overall affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit Zimbabwe. This means that their affective images of the destination were not strong enough to withstand risk, an indication that health safety was a major concern affecting tourists' affective ties with the destination. More specifically for Zimbabwe, the moderating effect of travel risk perception was more

pronounced, for instance, as the level of RiskZim increased, the strength of the relationship between Affective image 1 (i.e., relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, and progressive) and behavioural intentions to revisit decreased. Similarly, as the level of RiskZim increased, the strength of the relationship between Affective image 2 (i.e., interesting, authentic, entertaining, and pleasant) and revisit intention also decreased.

According to the EFA mean scores, the strength of the moderating effect of RiskZim on Affective image 1 could be attributed to leisure tourists' reluctance to spend too much time observing COVID-19-related protocols and miss out on scheduled leisure activities while in Zimbabwe.

The other reason could be their reservations on whether the quality of accommodation facilities in Zimbabwe's tourist attractions were in accordance with the WHO COVID-19 protocol. The finding could also be as a result of leisure tourists feeling that destination tourist attractions in Zimbabwe were often crowded and therefore posed a risk of contracting COVID-19 if they travelled to the country. Ultimately, all these factors had a significant negative influence on relaxation and accessibility while at the destination because many protocols had to be observed before enjoying the stay.

Literature suggests that risk of infection while at the destination, government efforts to protect tourists from COVID-19 and crowding at accommodation and dining facilities, are some of the major influences of tourists' risk perceptions of a destination (see Chu, Bao & Sun, 2022). In this case, the perceptions of a destination as relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, and progressive were disrupted by such risk perceptions. Furthermore, leisure tourists indicated that vaccination roll-out was very important before committing to travel. One respondent expressed concern over safety by lamenting that, "No, I will wait till we are vaccinated and safe, after that no problem to travel [South Africa or] Zimbabwe".

Another reason for this negative relationship drawn from the EFA could possibly be the media coverage of Zimbabwe, which made leisure tourists feel that Zimbabwe was a health risk concerning COVID-19. This is because tourists are mainly dependent on media coverage for information, therefore, they trust DMOs and concerned governments to provide destination information that gives assurance on safety for those wishing to travel to a destination (see Cori *et al.*, 2020; Godovykh *et al.*, 2021).

Similarly, as the level of RiskZim increased, the strength of the relationship between Affective image 2 and revisit intention also decreased. This means that affective image perceptions of

Zimbabwe as an interesting, entertaining, and pleasant destination were not strong enough to withstand RiskZim. According to the EFAs, RiskZim factors such as the fear of coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic and frustration of travel experience due to fear of contracting the virus could have weakened the relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. This could also have emanated from tourists having to spend too much time observing COVID-19-related protocols and missing out on scheduled leisure activities. It could also be that tourists had no faith in whether the quality of accommodation facilities in Zimbabwe's tourist attractions was in accordance with the WHO's COVID-19 protocol.

Another reason for the weakened relationship could have been because of the fear of Zimbabwe's tourist attractions being crowded and therefore risking infection of COVID-19. The thematic analysis shows that COVID-19 hampers tourism. For example, a respondent was quoted saying, "It hampers full and free enjoyment of the holiday". Another response pointed to the fact that Affective image 2 could also have been affected by the friendliness of locals, as one respondent was quoted saying that, "Hopefully, the local residents will be more welcoming". This is contrary to previous studies indicating that Zimbabweans are generally regarded as being friendly (Muzapu & Sibanda, 2016; Zibanai, 2018; Chigora *et al.*, 2019) and the destination as mainly interesting, authentic, entertaining, and pleasant (Makuvaza & Makuvaza, 2014; Tsokota *et al.*, 2019).

The weakening effect of travel risk on the relationship between destination image (cognitive and affective) and behavioural intentions to revisit can be attributed to stereotyping and backlash that Africa in general has suffered from the international community, linked to past crises and political insurgencies (see Matiza & Slabbert, 2024; Kanokanga, Tukuta & Chikuta, 2020).

Overall, it is evident from the findings that affective destination image has a positive relationship with revisit intentions (Akgün *et al.*, 2020), but may not always be strong enough to withstand the effect of risk. Ultimately, affective image is said to be a better predictor of tourists' revisit intentions compared to cognitive image (see Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). The aforementioned is as shown by South Africa's overall affective image which was able to withstand travel risk perceptions compared to only one cognitive image factor (Cognitive image 2). This means that leisure tourists were most likely to visit South Africa based on their strong affective image of the destination. These findings are also in tandem with those of Zenker *et al.* (2021) and Tapia *et al.* (2019) who found that affective images mirror an individual's feelings about a destination and can significantly affect their choice of destination and travel behaviour.

7.3 RESULTS OF PHASE 2

In Phase 1 it was indicated how leisure tourists' travel intentions vary between the different dimensions of destination brand image. Travel risk also has different influences on this relationship given the respective destination brand image dimensions. Destination brand image is both induced and organic and media coverage has the ability to portray the destination either as risky or safe. Because tourists are dependent on media as sources of important destination information, digital media marketing might be an effective way of recovering destination brand image during and post-COVID-19 crisis. Phase 2 thus addresses this by determining the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of digital media during travels.

To answer these objectives, a conceptual model was proposed (Chapter 4, Figure 4.2). Although a path model was constructed to test the full conceptual model, poor fit necessitated the use of multiple linear regression and hierarchical multiple linear regressions to establish the relationships and determine the support/not support of the hypotheses. The series of subsequent regression models still tested the individual initially proposed relationships. This chapter discusses the main significant relationships found in these regressions and explains how they relate to answering the research objectives. Each subsection presents a discussion based on the dependent variable (outcome) tested in each instance. It starts off with hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage respectively, followed by cognitive and affective image, behavioural intentions to revisit (without destination image included), and lastly behavioural intentions to revisit (with destination image included). A summary of the full set of hypotheses that were tested can be found in Appendix 10.

As a point of reference, the constructs were represented in the following ways:

- Technology Readiness Index (TRI) was presented by the two refined factors as identified during the EFA: Innovativeness & Optimism and Insecurity. Technology acceptance Model (TAM) was presented by the two original factors as proposed in the theory and confirmed in the analysis: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.
- For digital media preferences, six features when using digital media during travel were identified as follows: Preference 1: reliable destination information. Preference 2: online sharing of tourism experiences. Preference 3: personalisation of itinerary. Preference 4: clear details of the product offering. Preference 5: travel safety information. Preference 6: vivid destination images.
- The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) identified two types of digital media usage, namely, hedonic and utilitarian. Hedonic usage comprised immersive digital media:

virtual reality (3-D virtual reality videos), augmented reality (3-D city tour guide) and recommender apps: context-aware recommender media (Foursquare). Utilitarian usage consisted of video sharing (e.g., YouTube), review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook).

- Destination image (cognitive and affective) and behavioural intentions to revisit are used as they were previously identified and discussed in Phase 1.

7.3.1 The drivers of hedonic digital media usage

The first two regressions tested the relationships between leisure tourists' technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences as independent variables with hedonic digital media use as outcome. In the case of South Africa, the model only explained 8.2% variance, while it was more for Zimbabwe at 19.8%. Figure 7.2 illustrates the supported hypotheses.

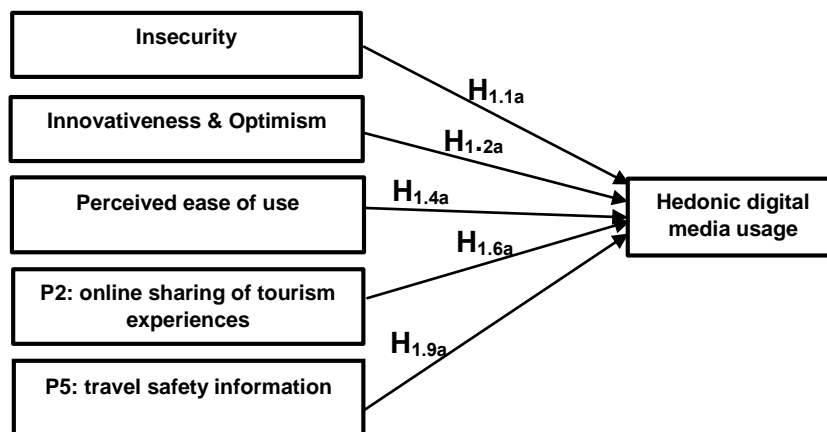


Figure 7.2: Drivers of hedonic digital media usage

The following hypotheses were supported (relevant country indicated in brackets):

- H_{1.1a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and hedonic digital media usage. (South Africa and Zimbabwe)*
- H_{1.2a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with hedonic digital media usage. (South Africa and Zimbabwe)*
- H_{1.4a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and hedonic digital media usage. (Zimbabwe)*
- H_{1.6a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that allow online sharing of tourism experiences) and hedonic digital media usage. (South Africa)*
- H_{1.9a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that provide travel safety information) and hedonic digital media usage. (Zimbabwe)*

The relationship between technology readiness and hedonic digital media usage (H_{1.1a} and H_{1.2a}).

Both technology readiness factors (Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism) had significant relationships with hedonic digital media usage.

H_{1.1a}: Insecurity had a weak positive relationship with hedonic digital media usage. The finding suggests that the more insecure leisure tourists are, the more they use hedonic digital media. In the study sample, the nature of the relationship was influenced by leisure tourists' (who visited both South Africa and Zimbabwe) moderate digital media Insecurity that associates with moderate-to-low hedonic digital media usage. The weak positive relationship might be caused by individuals' insecurity which causes them to use more of 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare whenever they seek to satisfy their pleasure-seeking desires when travelling. This is because hedonic platforms are easy to use hedonic motivations that influence the adoption of virtual reality among travellers (see Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019; Kim & Hall, 2019), therefore visitors who are insecure about the use of digital media use resort to the use of hedonic digital media to cope with their technology insecurities.

This can be a learning point for the two destinations' DMOs to find ways in which they can reduce Insecurity towards the usage of digital media among visitors in order to encourage a balanced use of different digital media for travel purposes.

The finding suggests that insecure and sceptical tourists might also be seeking to use basic hedonic digital media that resonates with their pleasure-seeking travel behaviour, although most of them used official destination websites when planning for travel (refer to Table 6.14). Findings show that this is because insecure tourists feel that it can be risky to switch to digital media too quickly (refer to Table 6.15).

Leisure tourists' Insecurity towards digital media usage are considered moderate in this study, thus, they corroborate some empirical evidence which shows that digital media enthusiasts recorded low for discomfort and insecurity (e.g., Hallikainen *et al.*, 2019; Ciftci *et al.*, 2021), and should be comfortable using the digital media technologies. It would therefore benefit both destinations if they considered a hybrid approach to destination marketing, where DMOs can incorporate both offline (i.e., human touch) and online (i.e., 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare) interactions to facilitate the sharing of tourism experiences during trip planning. This will help them to reach tourists that have high levels of insecurity.

H_{1.2a}: Innovativeness & Optimism had a moderate positive relationship with hedonic digital media usage. The finding suggests that the higher the leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism, the higher the usage of hedonic digital media. In the study sample, South Africa seemingly had more visitors whose high enthusiasm for digital media is linked to high usage of hedonic digital media for travel purposes. The high enthusiasm for digital media makes the tourists less suspicious of new technologies in tourism (see Ciftci *et al.*, 2021).

Both South Africa and Zimbabwe had leisure tourists who are high in Innovativeness & Optimism. However, in the study sample, Zimbabwe seemingly had more leisure tourists exhibiting significantly higher Innovativeness & Optimism linked to very high usage of hedonic digital media for travel purposes. This is shown by a strong positive relationship between Innovativeness & Optimism and hedonic digital media usage. It can, therefore, be said that the larger sample of leisure tourists who had been to Zimbabwe had significantly higher regard for hedonic platforms than those who had visited South Africa.

The strength of the above relationships can be explained by the fact that most leisure tourists who visited South Africa and Zimbabwe are always open to learning about new and different types of digital media, such that other people come to them for advice on new types (refer to Table 6.15). In addition, using hedonic digital media gave them more control over their trips. This finding could be explained by empirical evidence which shows that digital media enthusiasts scored high for optimism and innovativeness (e.g., Hallikainen *et al.*, 2019; Ciftci *et al.*, 2021). People that are innovative and optimistic in relation to technology have high regard for technology (Parasuraman, 2000), and are pioneers in technology adoption.

The destinations' DMOs and policy makers can benefit from this by investing in the necessary technological developments to make sure that 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare provide satisfying hedonic affordances (e.g., digital media that allow the online sharing of tourist experiences) to leisure tourists during travel. Scholars echo the above by suggesting that ICT is associated with tourism development in Africa (Adeola & Evans, 2019a; Adeola & Evans, 2020).

The relationship between technology acceptance and hedonic digital media usage (H_{1.4a}).

As part of technology acceptance, only perceived ease of use (and not perceived usefulness) had a significant relationship with hedonic digital media usage.

H_{1.4a}: Perceived ease of use had a weak positive relationship with hedonic digital media usage. The finding suggests that the more leisure tourists perceive digital media to be easy to use, the more they use hedonic digital media. When compared to perceived usefulness of digital media, perceived ease of use had the strongest relationship, although not a great driver of hedonic digital media usage.

In the study sample, Zimbabwe seems to have had more visitors who perceived hedonic digital media as easy to use. The reason for the weak positive relationship could be that, while leisure tourists found digital media to be easy to use, they also preferred to use digital media that gave them pleasurable experiences. These hedonic experiences reduce technology acceptance deficiencies leisure tourists might have had regarding the perceived ease of use of digital media.

However, it seems in the same sample, South Africa did not have leisure tourists whose perceived ease of use had a significant relationship with hedonic digital media usage. It means that at the time of visiting the country, leisure tourists' perceived ease of use of digital media was not linked to their decision of not using 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare. This is confirmed by the descriptive statistics which show that most leisure tourists visiting South Africa were mainly exposed to utilitarian usage, thus, official tourism websites, YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook before travelling to South Africa (refer to Table 6.13).

However, further research is needed in as far as this finding is concerned because the same individuals exhibited traits of high Innovativeness & Optimism which were associated with high usage of hedonic digital media, yet there was no link between their perceived ease of use and hedonic digital media usage. Empirical evidence suggests that perceived ease of use is a hedonic motivation associated with digital media usage (see Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019; Mishra *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the call for further enquiry is based on the fact that the majority of those who visited South Africa perceived digital media to be easy to use (refer to Table 6.29).

The relationship between digital media preferences and hedonic digital media usage (H_{1.6a} and H_{1.9a}).

Two of the six digital media preferences (online sharing of tourism experiences, travel safety information) had significant relationships with hedonic media usage.

H_{1.6a}: Preference 2 (online sharing of tourism experiences) had a weak positive relationship with hedonic digital media usage. The finding suggests that the more leisure tourists have preferences for digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences, the more they use hedonic digital media. When compared with other preferences, preferences for digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences had the strongest relationship, although not a great driver of hedonic digital media usage. It appears that in the sample, South Africa had more leisure tourists whose preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) had a significant relationship with hedonic digital media usage. This finding suggests that leisure tourists who love to share their tourism experiences online used 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare because such digital media allowed them to socialise with their peers online.

It would, thus, benefit destination South Africa if it invested more in hedonic affordances to recoup the benefits associated with 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare.

H_{1.9a}: Preference 5 (travel safety information) had a weak positive relationship with hedonic digital media usage. The finding suggests that the more leisure tourists have preferences for digital media that provide travel safety information, the more they use hedonic digital media. It seems that in the sample, Zimbabwe had more leisure tourists whose preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) had a significant relationship with hedonic digital media usage, suggesting that leisure tourists who had preferences for digital media that provide travel safety information used 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare because they were mainly exposed to these digital media as indicated in the descriptive statistics (refer to Table 6.13).

When compared with other preferences, preferences for digital media that provide travel safety information had a strong relationship (after digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences), although not a great driver of hedonic digital media usage. 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare are ordinarily used for fun and pleasure, thus the nature of the relationship could be influenced by the fact that the nature of these hedonic platforms may not enable them to effectively provide travel safety information to travellers.

It is already clearly stated in this study that leisure tourists were moderate in their insecurity towards the use of digital media, and that this was associated with moderate-to-low hedonic digital media. This therefore explains why the desire for travel safety information associates with moderate-to-low usage of hedonic platforms.

However, it seems in the same sample, South Africa did not have leisure tourists whose digital media preferences had a significant relationship with hedonic digital media usage. This means that at the time of visiting the country, leisure tourists' digital media preferences were not linked to their decision to use 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare.

Clearly, there is a positive link between technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences and hedonic digital media usage. Thus, destinations South Africa and Zimbabwe should consider investing more in immersive digital media and recommender apps and capitalise on their hedonic benefits.

7.3.2 The drivers of utilitarian digital media usage

For the next two regressions, the dependent variable was changed to utilitarian digital media usage, testing its relationships with technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences. In the case of South Africa, the model explained a greater percentage of variance than in the case of hedonic usage at 33.2%, while it was very similar in the case of Zimbabwe at 17.2%. Figure 7.3 illustrates the supported hypotheses.

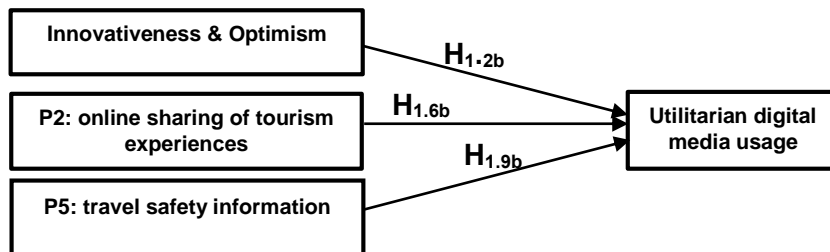


Figure 7.3: Drivers of utilitarian digital media usage

The following hypotheses were supported:

- H_{1.2b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism with utilitarian digital media usage. (South Africa)*
- H_{1.6b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that allow online sharing of tourism experiences) and utilitarian digital media usage. (South Africa and Zimbabwe)*
- H_{1.9b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that provide travel safety information) and utilitarian digital media usage. (South Africa)*

The relationship between technology readiness and utilitarian digital media usage (H_{1.2b}).

Only one of the two technology readiness (Innovativeness & Optimism) variables had a significant relationship with utilitarian usage (Insecurity did not).

H_{1.2b}: Innovativeness & Optimism had a moderate positive relationship with utilitarian digital media usage. The finding suggests that the more leisure tourists are high in Innovativeness & Optimism, the more they use utilitarian digital media. In the study sample, South Africa seemingly had more leisure tourists exhibiting significantly high Innovativeness & Optimism, which was associated with higher usage of utilitarian digital media. Visitors to South Africa indicated that they were mostly exposed to utilitarian digital media. Utilitarian digital media in this study comprised social media sites (i.e., YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook).

This finding is comparable to that of the previous section (i.e., section 7.3.1), which shows a moderate positive relationship between Innovativeness & Optimism and hedonic digital media usage, indicating that leisure tourists who are highly enthusiastic and have high regard for digital media are less suspicious of new technologies used for travel purposes. Accordingly, the more innovative and optimistic they are, the more they use both hedonic and utilitarian digital media.

Despite being more exposed to utilitarian than hedonic digital media when travelling, innovative and optimistic tourists visiting South Africa used both types of media, which can be explained by their tech savvy nature that allows them to always be open to learning about new and different types of digital media. The finding suggests that YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook were mainly used for their functional and tangible benefits of information sharing. This corroborates the assertion by Akdim *et al.* (2022) that leisure tourists used social media sites as a means to access utilitarian benefits such as texting, information search, and online sharing of experiences. In addition, information sharing through social media has been effective in restoring destination image for SSA destinations such as Rwanda after the genocide (Holmes & Buscaglia, 2019).

The sample seems to show that Zimbabwe had more leisure tourists whose Innovativeness & Optimism had no relationship with utilitarian digital media usage, thus, no significant relationship existed. It means that at the time of visiting the country, leisure tourists' Innovativeness & Optimism did not influence their decision not to use utilitarian digital media

such as YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook. Descriptive statistics show that most leisure tourists were mainly exposed to hedonic digital media such as 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare during their travels to Zimbabwe (refer to Table 6.13). These are more hedonic in nature. Innovative and optimistic leisure tourists who were exposed to these hedonic digital media found them to be more pronounced in satisfying their pleasure-seeking desires. The destination might need to consider investing in advanced digital media technologies with provision for such hedonic functionalities.

Notably, the technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) of the leisure tourists who had visited both South Africa and Zimbabwe had no significant relationship with utilitarian usage, explained by the fact that perceived ease of use is normally associated with hedonic usage (e.g., Mishra *et al.*, 2021). This is also proven and discussed in section 7.3.1. Further research is needed in as far as this finding is concerned because the same individuals exhibited traits of high Innovativeness & Optimism, yet they did not find utilitarian digital media to be easy to use.

The relationship between digital media preferences and utilitarian digital media usage (H_{1.6b}).

Two of the six digital media preferences (online sharing of tourism experiences, travel safety information) had significant relationships with utilitarian usage.

H_{1.6b}: Preference 2 (online sharing of tourism experiences) had a weak positive relationship with utilitarian digital media usage. The finding suggests that the more leisure tourists have preferences for digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences, the more they use utilitarian digital media. From the sample, it seems that leisure tourists who had been to South Africa and Zimbabwe found utilitarian digital media more functional with regards to the online sharing of tourism experiences.

When compared with other preferences, preferences for digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences had the strongest relationship (especially for those who visited South Africa), although not a great driver of utilitarian digital media usage. This finding suggests that leisure tourists who love to share their tourism experiences online used YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook because such digital media allowed them to socialise with their peers online.

The weak positive relationship can be explained by the fact that the leisure tourists were innovative and optimistic, and already using YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook due to their

ability to allow the sharing of travel experiences through videos and pictures (Akdim *et al.*, 2022). This suggests that utilitarian digital media were not new to the leisure tourists, shown by their high enthusiasm for digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences (refer to *H_{1.2b}*).

Both destinations can benefit from this and consider investing in new and different types of digital media that provide the necessary characteristics that meet tourists' preferences of digital media, allowing them to share their experiences online.

H_{1.9b}: Preference 5 (travel safety information) had a weak positive relationship with utilitarian digital media usage. The finding suggests that the more leisure tourists have preferences for digital media that provide travel safety information, the more they use utilitarian digital media. When compared with other preferences, preferences for digital media that provide travel safety information had a strong relationship (after digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences), although not a great driver of utilitarian digital media usage.

It seems that in the sample, South Africa had more leisure tourists whose preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) had a significant relationship with utilitarian digital media usage, suggesting that leisure tourists who had preferences for digital media that provide travel safety information used YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook because they were mainly exposed to these digital media as indicated in the descriptive statistics (refer to Table 6.13). YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook are well-known for their functional ability to allow tourists to text, search for information, and share their travel experiences (Akdim *et al.*, 2022).

It appears that this finding was more pronounced for the larger part of the sample that had been to South Africa, because safety concerns have been documented as major hurdles to a positive destination image (Martín *et al.*, 2019; Friedrich *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, leisure tourists were dependent on the credibility of YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook as sources of travel safety information because these social media sites allow DMOs to communicate authentic information about their tourism products to travellers (see Molina *et al.*, 2020).

The sample, as was proven and discussed in 7.3.2, shows that South Africa had more leisure tourists whose digital media preferences had a significant relationship with utilitarian digital media usage. There is a clear positive link between technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences and utilitarian digital media usage. Thus, destinations South Africa and Zimbabwe should consider investing in social media sites as a way to

capitalise on their utilitarian benefits (such as text, information search, and sharing of experiences through videos and pictures).

Given that digital media that provide travel safety information also had the same weak positive relationship with hedonic digital media (refer to $H_{1.9a}$), both South Africa and Zimbabwe may need to focus on both hedonic and utilitarian affordances as both platforms provide the necessary characteristics that address the need for travel safety information. The benefits accruing from utilitarian digital media can play a pivotal role shaping the two emerging SSA destinations' images post COVID-19 (see Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023).

7.3.3 TRI, TAM, preferences, digital media usage as drivers of cognitive image

For the first set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to cognitive image. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model) and digital media usage (second model) to cognitive image. In the case of South Africa, the addition of digital media usage increased the variance explained in Cognitive image 1 from 9.4% to 12.8% and from 10.6% to 13.5% for Cognitive image 2.

For Zimbabwe, the addition of digital media usage also increased the variance explained in Cognitive image 1 from 13.7% to 21.7% and from 16.8% to 31.1% for Cognitive image 2. Figure 7.4 illustrates the supported hypotheses. It summarises all the significant relationships that emerged in the final models for both countries and both cognitive image factors ('cognitive image' thus includes both factors 1 and 2 in the model below). In the subsequent discussion the distinctions are made to indicate which relationships were for which county and also toward which cognitive image factor.

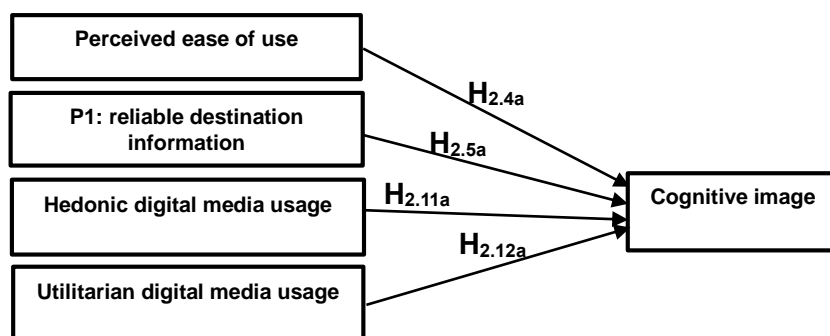


Figure 7.4: Drivers of cognitive image

The following hypotheses were supported:

- H_{2.4a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and cognitive image. (Cognitive image 2 - Zimbabwe)*
- H_{2.5a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that provide reliable destination information) and cognitive image. (Cognitive image 1 – South Africa)*
- H_{2.11a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and cognitive image. (Cognitive image 1 – South Africa and Zimbabwe; Cognitive image 2 – Zimbabwe)*
- H_{2.12a}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and cognitive image. (Cognitive image 2 – South Africa)*

The relationship between technology acceptance and cognitive image (H_{2.4a}).

Only one of the technology acceptance variables (perceived ease of use) had a significant relationship with cognitive image (perceived usefulness did not).

H_{2.4a}: Perceived ease of use had a weak positive relationship with Cognitive image 2.

The finding suggests that the more leisure tourists perceive digital media to be easy to use, the more they form positive Cognitive image 2 perceptions of a destination, although not a great contributor to the formation of positive Cognitive image 2 perceptions.

However, such was not the case for South Africa, where a significant number of this type of visitor's perceived ease of use did not have any significant relationship with their perceptions of the destination's Cognitive image 2. This means that most leisure tourists' (who had been to South Africa) perceived ease of use of digital media did not contribute to the formation of their Cognitive image 2 perceptions of the destination. Notably, they were still able to form positive Cognitive image 2 perceptions of South Africa using utilitarian digital media, regardless of their perceived ease of use of digital media (refer to **H_{2.12a}**).

In order to strengthen Cognitive image 2, both South Africa and Zimbabwe might have to invest in digital media that are easy to use, with simple features that will facilitate effective promotion of the destinations' Cognitive image 2 attributes, namely, scenery and landscape, natural attractions (e.g., animals, parks, beaches), climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals.

Notably, findings show that for leisure tourists visiting both countries, technology readiness and technology acceptance were not significant predictors of leisure tourists' Cognitive image 1. This suggests that despite predicting digital media usage, technology readiness (Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism) and technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) did not have the same contribution on the prediction of Cognitive image 1.

Further research is needed because, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, extant studies have not tested this specific relationship. What is common in literature is the relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (e.g., Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Li *et al.*, 2022) or perceived ease of use and digital media usage (e.g., Singh & Srivastava, 2019; Schioppa *et al.*, 2021), and not specifically perceived ease of use and cognitive image.

The relationship between digital media preferences and cognitive image (H_{2.5a}).

Only one out of six digital media preferences (reliable destination information) had a relationship with cognitive image.

H_{2.5a}: Preference 1 (reliable destination information) had a moderate positive relationship with Cognitive image 1. The finding suggests that digital media that provide reliable destination information are linked to formation of high Cognitive image 1 perceptions of most leisure tourists who had been to South Africa. The above findings and those in section 7.3.4 confirm this. When compared with other preferences, preferences for digital media that provide reliable destination information had the strongest relationship and emerged as a significant contributor to the formation of Cognitive image 1 perceptions for most leisure tourists who had been to South Africa.

It can be stated that the nature of the relationship is influenced by the moderate-to-low usage of utilitarian digital media (refer to H_{1.6b}). This is because, it is clear in this study that the more tourists preferred digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*), the more they used utilitarian digital media for travel purposes.

If the destination can provide reliable information on Cognitive image 1 attributes such as shopping facilities, man-made attractions (e.g., museums), services (e.g., banking, medical), general infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation), transportation infrastructure and nightlife, this can encourage positive brand perceptions. Digital media such as YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook are normally used for utilitarian purposes (see Molina *et al.*, 2020), therefore, they can be useful in providing reliable destination information.

However, such was not the case for Zimbabwe where a significant number of this type of visitor's perceptions of the destination's Cognitive image 1 were not linked to their preferences for digital media that provide reliable destination information. The finding explains the fact that digital media preferences vary between the type of digital media used and its intended purpose during travel, which in turn had a bearing on either Cognitive image 1 or Cognitive image 2 for both South Africa and Zimbabwe. If the two destinations can enhance the functionality of digital media platforms to provide reliable destination information, their cognitive images would be improved.

The relationship between digital media usage and cognitive image (H_{2.11a} and H_{2.12a}).

Both hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage had a relationship with cognitive image.

H_{2.11a}: Hedonic digital media usage had a weak negative relationship with Cognitive image 1. Findings show that hedonic digital media usage did not contribute significantly to the formation of Cognitive image 1 perceptions for South Africa's leisure tourists. This could be because visitors to South Africa indicated that they were mostly exposed to utilitarian digital media (refer to Table 6.13). From the literature, and as discussed in the previous section, Cognitive image 1 comprises attributes that would require utilitarian digital media that provide tourists with factual, rational and reliable destination information (see Kladou, & Mavragani, 2015). However, this does not imply that hedonic media such as 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare cannot contribute to positive perceptions, and this relationship should be studied in future research.

H_{2.11a}: Hedonic digital media usage had a moderate positive relationship with Cognitive image 1. Contrary to the South African sample, hedonic digital media usage was linked to the formation of Cognitive image 1 for the leisure tourists who had been to Zimbabwe. This is because visitors to Zimbabwe indicated that they were mostly exposed to hedonic digital media (refer to Table 6.13). The moderate positive relationship suggests that usage of 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare associate with the formation of high Cognitive image 1 perceptions. In other words, pleasure-seeking tourists were able to access the destination's aesthetics effectively and conveniently and visually appealing (see Akel & Armağan, 2021) Cognitive image 1 attributes such as man-made attractions, shopping facilities, nightlife, general infrastructure, services and transportation infrastructure, mainly through these hedonic digital media platforms.

It can be deduced from the findings that Cognitive image 1 varies between the two destinations. Further research is needed to determine which digital media platforms would significantly contribute to the formation of positive Cognitive image 1 perceptions. Findings in this study show that Cognitive image 1 would require utilitarian digital media to effectively project one destination's attributes, yet hedonic digital media usage is shown to perform the same function in a different destination.

H_{2.11a}: Hedonic digital media usage had a moderate negative relationship with Cognitive image 2. Findings show that hedonic digital media usage did not contribute significantly to the formation of Cognitive image 2 perceptions for Zimbabwe's leisure tourists. Cognitive image 2 comprises attributes that would ideally require hedonic digital media that satisfy tourists' desire for pleasure and entertainment (Wu & Lai, 2021). As indicated in the previous section, those who visited Zimbabwe were mainly exposed to hedonic digital media, however, its usage did not yield positive perceptions of the destination's Cognitive image 2 attributes.

It can be stated that the nature of the relationship is influenced by the moderate digital media Insecurity that associates with moderate-to-low hedonic digital media usage (refer to ***H_{1.1a}***), suggesting that leisure tourists might want to experience Cognitive image 2 (scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals at a destination) without the interference of technology. This can be explained by the fact that hedonic digital media can only go as far as projecting images of actual destinations (Bogicevic *et al.*, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2021) without giving the natural feel of a destination.

The above could be a learning point for the destination to invest a hybrid destination marketing strategy where human interaction and digital media that provide travel safety information are jointly used to build positive perceptions of Cognitive image 2 attributes of a destination. However, for future considerations, research is needed to establish causation so that a more solid conclusion is made on why such is the case.

H_{2.12a}: Utilitarian digital media usage had a weak positive relationship with Cognitive image 2. The finding indicated that leisure tourists to South Africa's usage of utilitarian digital media was linked to the formation of moderate-to-low Cognitive image 2 perceptions for most leisure tourists who had been to South Africa. The weak positive relationship can be explained by the fact that Cognitive image 2 would ideally require hedonic digital media for a better and stronger projection of its attributes (Wu & Lai, 2021) as shown in the above section.

Nonetheless, this finding suggests that leisure tourists' usage of utilitarian digital media (YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook) is related to the formation of positive Cognitive image 2 (scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals) perceptions. Visitors to South Africa indicated that they were exposed mostly to utilitarian digital media.

While Cognitive image 2 attributes can be effectively portrayed through utilitarian digital media, the aforementioned suggests that they can also be projected through hedonic digital media. This depends on how the destination promotes cognitive image attributes through different types of digital media (see Sultan, Sharmin, Badulescu, Gavrilut & Xue, 2021). However, for future considerations, research is needed to establish causation so that a more solid conclusion is made on why such is the case.

7.3.4 TRI, TAM and preferences as drivers of affective image

For the second set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to affective image. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model) and digital media usage (second model) to affective image. In the case of South Africa, the addition of digital media usage decreased the variance explained in Affective image from 15.8% to 13.7%. For Zimbabwe, the addition of digital media usage barely contributed to an increase in the variance explained in Affective image 1 from 12% to 12.9% but contributed more to Affective image 2 from 16.9% to 27.2%. Overall, digital media usage contributed less to the prediction of affective image than was the case of cognitive image previously discussed.

Figure 7.5 summarises all the significant relationships that emerged in the final models for both countries and all the affective image factors ('affective image' thus represents both factors 1 and 2 in the model below). In the subsequent discussion, the distinctions are made to indicate which relationships were for which country and toward which affective image factor. As can be seen from the figure, one additional factor of TRI (insecurity) and one more preference (travel safety information) featured in the final models of affective image. Figure 7.5 illustrates the supported hypotheses.

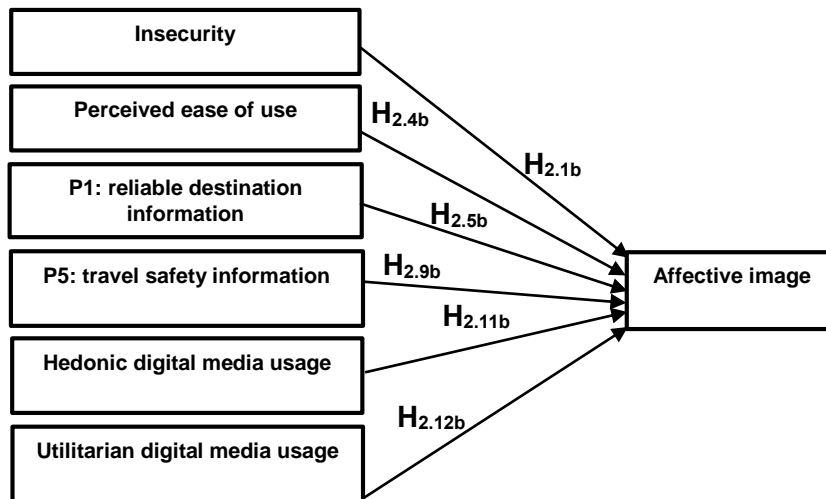


Figure 7.5: Drivers of affective image

The following hypotheses were supported:

- H_{2.1b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' Insecurity and affective image. (Affective image - South Africa; Affective image 2 – Zimbabwe)*
- H_{2.4b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and affective image. (Affective image 1 – Zimbabwe)*
- H_{2.5b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that provide reliable destination information) and affective image. (Affective image – South Africa)*
- H_{2.9b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that provide travel safety information) and affective image. (Affective image – South Africa; Affective image 1 and Affective image 2 - Zimbabwe)*
- H_{2.11b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' hedonic digital media usage and affective image. (Affective image 2 - Zimbabwe)*
- H_{2.12b}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and affective image. Affective image 1 - Zimbabwe)*

The relationship between technology readiness and affective image (H_{2.1b}).

Only one technology readiness variable (Insecurity) had a relationship with affective image (Innovativeness & Optimism did not).

H_{2.1b}: Insecurity had a weak negative relationship with affective image. Findings show that leisure tourists' digital media Insecurity is linked to lower affective image perceptions. Most leisure tourists who had been to the two destinations had moderate levels of digital media

insecurity and positive perceptions of both South Africa (overall affective image) and Zimbabwe (Affective image 1). The positive affective images that tourists have towards the two destinations (refer to Table 6.29) could be because they had been to the destinations before. Literature shows that affective image is formed during and after the visit (e.g., Herrero-Crespo *et al.*, 2022), hence, due to familiarity, tourists in this study were able to make positive assessments of the destinations' affective images without the influence of their insecurity towards digital media usage.

This finding means that leisure tourists' Insecurity towards digital media did not contribute to their positive perceptions of the destinations as being interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative and safe, when such affective image attributes were accessed through digital media platforms.

Further research is needed because, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no investigations have been done on the relationship between technology readiness and affective image. Past studies show that insecure people fear that they may involuntarily share their personal information, thus they are unwilling to use digital media for travel purposes (e.g., Huy *et al.*, 2019; Sia *et al.*, 2023; Romanillos & Moya-Gómez, 2023).

Notably, Insecurity did not have any relationship with Affective image 2. Further research is needed to explain the differences in relationships between technology Insecurity and Affective image 1 and Affective image 2.

The relationship between technology acceptance and affective image (H_{2.4b}).

Only one technology acceptance variable (perceived ease of use) had a relationship with affective image (perceived usefulness did not).

H_{2.4b}: Perceived ease of use had a moderate positive relationship with Affective image

1. The finding suggests that leisure tourists' perceived ease of use of digital media is linked to the formation of high Affective image 1 perceptions for most leisure tourists who had been to Zimbabwe. Affective image 1 attributes depicted a destination to be relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative and progressive. This can be explained by the fact that in the sample, most of those who visited Zimbabwe perceived hedonic digital media as easy to use (refer to section 7.3.1) and can therefore be linked to their positive assessment of the destination's Affective image 1. The finding can also be explained by the results which show that leisure tourists' high insecurity towards digital media was linked to lower affective images (refer to **H_{2.1b}**). This

implies that low levels of digital media insecurity would relate to higher perceptions for the destination's Affective image 1 attributes (i.e., relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, and progressive). The finding therefore suggests that, the less insecure tourists are towards digital media, the more they perceive it to be easy to use.

Notably, perceived ease of use did not have any relationship with Affective image 2, suggesting that leisure tourists' perceived ease of use of digital media did not affect their perceptions of Zimbabwe's Affective image 2 attributes (i.e., interesting, authentic, entertaining and pleasant).

Thus, it would benefit the destination to invest in different types of digital media that are clear, understandable and easy to use in order to make it easy for the visitor to navigate at different stages of travel.

Notably, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, past studies have not tested this relationship between perceived ease of use and affective image. Rather, empirical evidence supports the relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (e.g., Walczuch *et al.*, 2007; Li *et al.*, 2022). Once again, further research is needed to explain the differences in relationships between perceived ease of use and Affective image 1 and Affective image 2. There could be underlying factors that may require a "cause and effect" assessment.

The relationship between digital media preferences and affective image (H_{2.5b} and H_{2.9b}).

Two of the six digital media preferences (reliable destination information, travel safety information) had a relationship with affective image.

H_{2.5b}: Preference 1 (reliable destination information) had a moderate positive relationship with affective image. The finding suggests that digital media that provide reliable destination information are linked to the formation of strong affective image perceptions for most leisure tourists who had been to South Africa. This finding can be explained by the fact that most visitors to South Africa indicated that they were exposed mostly to utilitarian digital media. Such media is often associated with reliable information, as it allows information search and information sharing through videos and pictures among travellers (e.g., Molina *et al.*, 2020).

Ideally, affective images are formed on-site and after the visit (e.g., Herrero-Crespo *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, leisure tourists' affective evaluations of a destination's image are linked to their actual experience. However, this actual experience may differ from what is projected

by digital media, because actual experience involves physical interaction with the destination (see Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; Verkerk, 2022). In other words, the moderate positive relationship can be explained by the fact that visitors found South Africa to be interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative and safe, as a result of digital media that provide reliable destination information.

This finding is also confirmed by **H_{2.5a}** in section 7.3.3 where preferences for such digital media had the strongest relationship with cognitive image. Thus, it can be said that such digital media are strongly related to the formation of both cognitive and affective image perceptions.

H_{2.9b}: Preference 5 (travel safety information) had a moderate negative relationship with affective image. The moderate negative relationship suggests that, for most leisure tourists who had been to South Africa, preferences for digital media that provide travel safety information are linked to their affective image perceptions of the destination. This can be explained by the finding that most leisure tourists visiting South Africa preferred digital media that provide travel safety information (refer to **H_{1.9b}**) to counter their insecurity towards the use of digital media (refer to **H_{1.1a}**). The lower the insecurity towards digital media, the higher the affective image perceptions of destination. In this case, the less leisure tourists preferred digital media that provide travel safety information, the more they developed positive affective perceptions of South Africa. Digital media with such utilitarian affordances include YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook.

The moderate negative relationship may be linked to the type of digital media that travellers felt safe to use. The digital media should also provide sufficient travel safety information to project the destination as safe. If the destination can invest in digital media that provide sufficient travel safety information, it can relate to an improved image on the destination's overall affective image attributes i.e., interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative and safe. The relationship between digital media preferences and digital media used was not tested in this study's final models but should be considered for further investigation.

H_{2.9b}: Preference 5 (travel safety information) had a weak positive relationship with Affective image 1 and Affective image 2. Contrary to South Africa, leisure tourists to Zimbabwe's preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) were linked to the formation of moderate-to-low Affective image 1 and Affective image 2 perceptions. In this case, the more leisure tourists preferred digital media that provide travel safety information, the more they developed positive affective image perceptions of Zimbabwe.

The weak positive relationship suggests that the type of digital media used while travelling was not a reason for their positive affective images of the destination as either relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative and progressive or interesting, authentic, entertaining or pleasant. This can be explained by the fact that leisure tourists' affective evaluations of a destination's image are linked to their actual experience (see Herrero-Crespo *et al.*, 2022), which could have differed from what was depicted by the digital media used.

If the destination can invest in digital media that provide travel safety information, it can relate to positive image perceptions on the following Affective image 1 attributes: relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative and progressive, and Affective image 2 attributes: interesting, authentic, entertaining and pleasant.

The relationship between digital media usage and affective image (H_{2.11b} and H_{2.12b}).

Both hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage had a relationship with affective image.

H_{2.11b}: Hedonic digital media usage had a moderate negative relationship with Affective image 2. Findings show that hedonic digital media usage did not contribute significantly to the formation of Affective image 2 perceptions for Zimbabwe's leisure tourists. Hedonic digital media, in this case, constitutes mainly of immersive digital media (3-D virtual reality videos and 3-D city tour guide) and recommender apps (Foursquare). In other words, it seems that for most leisure tourists in the sample who had visited Zimbabwe, hedonic digital media was not effective enough to evoke positive perceptions of Affective image 2 while at the destination. This contradicts prior studies which show that the interactive nature of virtual reality positively influences positive feelings toward a destination (Griffin *et al.*, 2017; Griffin *et al.*, 2023).

The finding suggests that, in as much as hedonic digital media might offer travel safety information (refer to H_{1.9a}), it was not effective enough to relate to positive image perceptions on the following Affective image 2 attributes: interesting, authentic, entertaining and pleasant.

Zimbabwe had the largest number of visitors who found hedonic digital media to be credible sources of travel safety information. Leisure tourists' low affective image can be explained by the fact that their travel decisions are not only based on feelings, but on factual travel safety information as well. It would benefit the destination if it can focus more on the necessary characteristics of hedonic digital media that can relate to the formation of positive image perceptions of Affective image 2 attributes.

H_{2.12b}: Utilitarian digital media usage had a weak negative relationship with Affective image 1. Findings show that hedonic digital media usage did not contribute significantly to the formation of Affective image 1 perceptions for Zimbabwe's leisure tourists. In other words, it seems that for most leisure tourists in the sample who had visited Zimbabwe, utilitarian digital media was not effective enough to evoke positive perceptions of Affective image 1 while at the destination.

The emotional and experiential nature of Affective image 1 attributes (see Tapia *et al.*, 2019) could explain this finding. Hedonic digital media would ideally be linked to positive Affective image 1 perceptions based on the media's ability to evoke emotions (see Akel & Armağan, 2021). In this case, results suggest that YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook were not effective enough to strongly project positive image perceptions on the following Affective image 1 attributes: relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative and progressive.

Past studies show that Facebook is a more effective destination image restoration tool during a crisis (Ketter, 2016). TripAdvisor is also said to be an effective utilitarian platform that allows tourists to share their experiences, positively influencing destination image (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2019). It would benefit the destination if it can focus more on the necessary characteristics of hedonic digital media that can relate to the formation of positive image perceptions of Affective image 1 attributes.

7.3.5 TRI, TAM, preferences and digital media usage as drivers of behavioural intentions to revisit

For the third set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to behavioural intentions to revisit. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model) and digital media usage (second model) to intentions to revisit. In the case of South Africa, the addition of digital media usage further decreased the negligent variance explained in behavioural intentions from 1.8% to 0.7%. For Zimbabwe, the addition of digital media usage barely contributed to an increase in the variance explained from 16.5% to 16.6%.

Only one of the six digital media preferences (reliable destination information) had a relationship with behavioural intentions in the final models, and this was only in the case of South Africa.

H_{3.5} was thus supported, where Preference 1 (reliable destination information) had a moderate positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. The finding indicates that most leisure tourists in the sample who had visited South Africa, were more likely to do so again if they can access reliable destination information, regardless of their technology readiness, technology acceptance, hedonic or utilitarian affordances of these digital media. Worth noting is that, for most leisure tourists in the sample who had visited Zimbabwe, none of the independent variables (especially digital media preferences) were statistically significant predictors of their behavioural intentions to revisit the destination.

Considering that it has already been shown in this study that utilitarian digital media emerged as the main source of reliable destination information, especially for the larger part of the sample that had been to South Africa, it can be concluded that further research is needed to determine what could have caused the non-existent relationship between utilitarian digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit. There are many other factors that could also influence behavioural intentions to revisit, especially when considering that all the tourists in this study have visited the countries before. Aspects such as destination familiarity could be more important to the digital media exposure to encourage revisitation.

7.3.6 TRI, TAM, preferences, digital media usage and destination image as behavioural intentions to revisit

For the fourth set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was still behavioural intentions to revisit, while destination image was added as an independent variable. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model), digital media usage (second model), and destination image (final model) to behavioural intentions to revisit. In the case of South Africa, the addition of digital media usage slightly increased the small amount of variance explained from 5.1% to 6.0%, but when destination image was added, the variance increased substantially to 23.7%. For Zimbabwe, the addition of digital media usage slightly decreased the variance explained from 17.6% to 17.4%. However, like South Africa, the addition of destination image contributed substantially (almost double to that of South Africa) to an increase in the variance explained to 45.2%. Figure 7.6 summarises all the significant relationships that emerged in the final models for both countries. In the subsequent discussion, the distinctions are made to indicate which relationships were for which country.

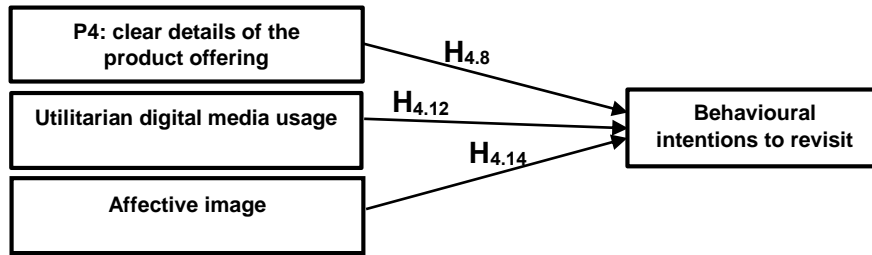


Figure 7.6: Drivers of behavioural intentions to revisit (including destination image)

The following hypotheses were supported:

- H_{4.8}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (that provide clear details of product offering) and behavioural intentions to revisit. (Zimbabwe)*
- H_{4.12}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit. (South Africa)*
- H_{4.14}: *A relationship exists between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit. (South Africa and Zimbabwe)*

The relationship between digital media preferences and behavioural intentions to revisit (H_{4.8}).

Only one out of six digital media preferences (clear details of product offering) had a relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit.

H_{4.8}: Preference 4 (clear details of product offering) had a weak positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. It seems that for most leisure tourists in the sample who had visited Zimbabwe, such digital media had the strongest relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. Preferences for digital media that have clear details of product offering had the strongest relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit when compared to other preferences, although not a great driver of behavioural intentions to revisit.

Usually, such digital media (*providing clear details of product offering*) are utilitarian in nature, hence the weak positive relationship can be explained by the fact that at the time of visiting the country, leisure tourists used more of YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook because they had the capability to provide clear details of product offering. Thus, these utilitarian digital media related positively with behavioural intentions to revisit.

The relationship between digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit (H_{4.12}).

Only utilitarian digital media had a relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit (hedonic usage did not).

H_{4.12}: Utilitarian digital media usage had a weak positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. The finding suggests that utilitarian digital media usage is linked to moderate-to-low behavioural intentions to revisit, as was the case for most leisure tourists in the sample who had visited South Africa. The nature of the relationship can be explained by the fact that utilitarian digital media such as YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook are strong enough to provide clear details of the product offering for them to be linked to positive behavioural intentions to revisit; which proved to be the other significant predictor of intentions.

Past studies show a relationship between Facebook usage and destination competitiveness (Mkwizu, 2019), while others show that YouTube and TripAdvisor usage has a strong positive relationship with destination image (see Arora & Lata, 2020; Marine-Roig, 2022). This study suggest that these platforms are also valuable in contributing toward behavioural intentions to revisit.

Worth noting is that this study also revealed that technology readiness and technology acceptance had no link with behavioural intentions to revisit the destinations. Notably, perceived ease of use had a relationship with affective image (as per the previous regression), but the same did not relate to behavioural intentions to revisit. This suggests that one's technology acceptance and usage (regardless of hedonic or utilitarian usage) can be linked to their affective image of a destination but will not necessarily relate to their revisit intentions as suggested by the findings.

The relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit (H_{4.14}).

Only affective image had a relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit (cognitive image did not).

H_{4.14}: Affective image had a moderate positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. The finding shows that affective image is linked to moderate behavioural intentions to revisit both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The relationship was stronger for South Africa's overall affective image and Zimbabwe's Affective image 2. The moderate positive relationship

can be explained by the ability of digital media to facilitate the creation of desirable destination images through the presentation of reliable destination information which enables the leisure tourists to make meaningful emotional evaluations of a destination.

Findings also revealed that technology readiness, technology acceptance and hedonic digital media usage had no relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. This finding should therefore, be considered for further research to explain why technology readiness, technology acceptance and hedonic digital media usage had significant relationships with digital media usage and cognitive image. Yet, in this case, there is no relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit.

H_{4.14}: Affective image had a weak positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. The finding shows that affective image is linked to moderate-to-low behavioural intentions to revisit. The finding suggests that leisure tourists to Zimbabwe's positive assessments of the destination's Affective image 1 were linked to behavioural intentions to revisit. The strength of the relationship can be supported by evidence from the South African sample showing that digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) are linked to positive affective image perceptions (refer to ***H_{2.5b}***) and high revisit intentions (refer to ***H_{3.5}***). In this case, digital media that provide reliable destination information might have contributed to the nature of the relationship between Affective image 1 and behavioural intentions to revisit Zimbabwe.

While some leisure tourists in the sample who had visited Zimbabwe viewed the destination as relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative and progressive, others also viewed it as interesting, authentic, entertaining and pleasant. The varying affective images were linked to the use of different types of digital media, and this could provide an explanation of the weak positive relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. For those visiting Zimbabwe, hedonic digital media was effective in disseminating travel safety information (refer to ***H_{1.9a}***), while utilitarian digital media provided clear details of product offering (refer to ***H_{4.8}***).

Notably, literature broadly states that destination image is an antecedent to behavioural intentions to revisit (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Guerrero-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2020; Cham *et al.*, 2021; Nazir *et al.*, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2022). However, it does not specify whether the revisit intentions are attributed to either cognitive or affective image, something this study has made clear. An exception is that of a few studies which identify cognitive image as an antecedent to behavioural intentions (see Jose *et al.*, 2022; Das *et al.*, 2023). Thus, this study concludes that affective image is strongly related to behavioural intentions to revisit a tourism destination.

7.4 CHAPTER SYNTHESIS

This chapter discussed the study's key findings, which was done in relation to the existing literature. Anchored on the purpose and study objectives, the chapter critically discussed results focusing on the extent to which the conceptualised relationships fulfil the overall aim of the study, to establish whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions and digital media marketing are viable elements of competitiveness for brands South Africa and Zimbabwe. Findings show that, in the absence of risk, both affective and cognitive brand images significantly positively influenced tourists' behavioural intentions to revisit the two destinations. However, travel risk perceptions vary depending on the perceived risk factors in any given destination.

Technology readiness and technology acceptance had a positive relationship with digital media usage. There is a significant relationship between leisure tourists' technology readiness (Insecurity) and hedonic digital media usage, as well as a significant relationship between technology readiness (Innovativeness & Optimism) and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage. A significant relationship also exists between leisure tourists' technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) and hedonic digital media usage. A significant relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences*) and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) and hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage.

The most pronounced digital media preferences were Preference 1 (*reliable destination information*), Preference 5 (*travel safety information*), and Preference 2 (*online sharing of tourism experiences*). This suggests that hedonic and utilitarian usage was mostly driven using digital media that provided reliable destination information and travel safety information, including those that allowed online sharing of tourism experiences.

For the first set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to cognitive image. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model) and digital media usage (second model) to cognitive image. A significant relationship emerged between leisure tourists' technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) and cognitive image as well as a significant relationship that also emerged between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and cognitive image. Furthermore, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage emerged as significant predictors of cognitive image.

For the second set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to affective image. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model) and digital media usage (second model) to affective image. A significant relationship emerged between leisure tourists' technology readiness (Insecurity) and affective image. In addition, there was a significant relationship between leisure tourists' technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) and affective image. A relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and affective image. Leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide travel safety information*) had a significant relationship with their affective image perceptions of a destination. Furthermore, hedonic and utilitarian digital media had significant relationships with affective image perceptions of a destination.

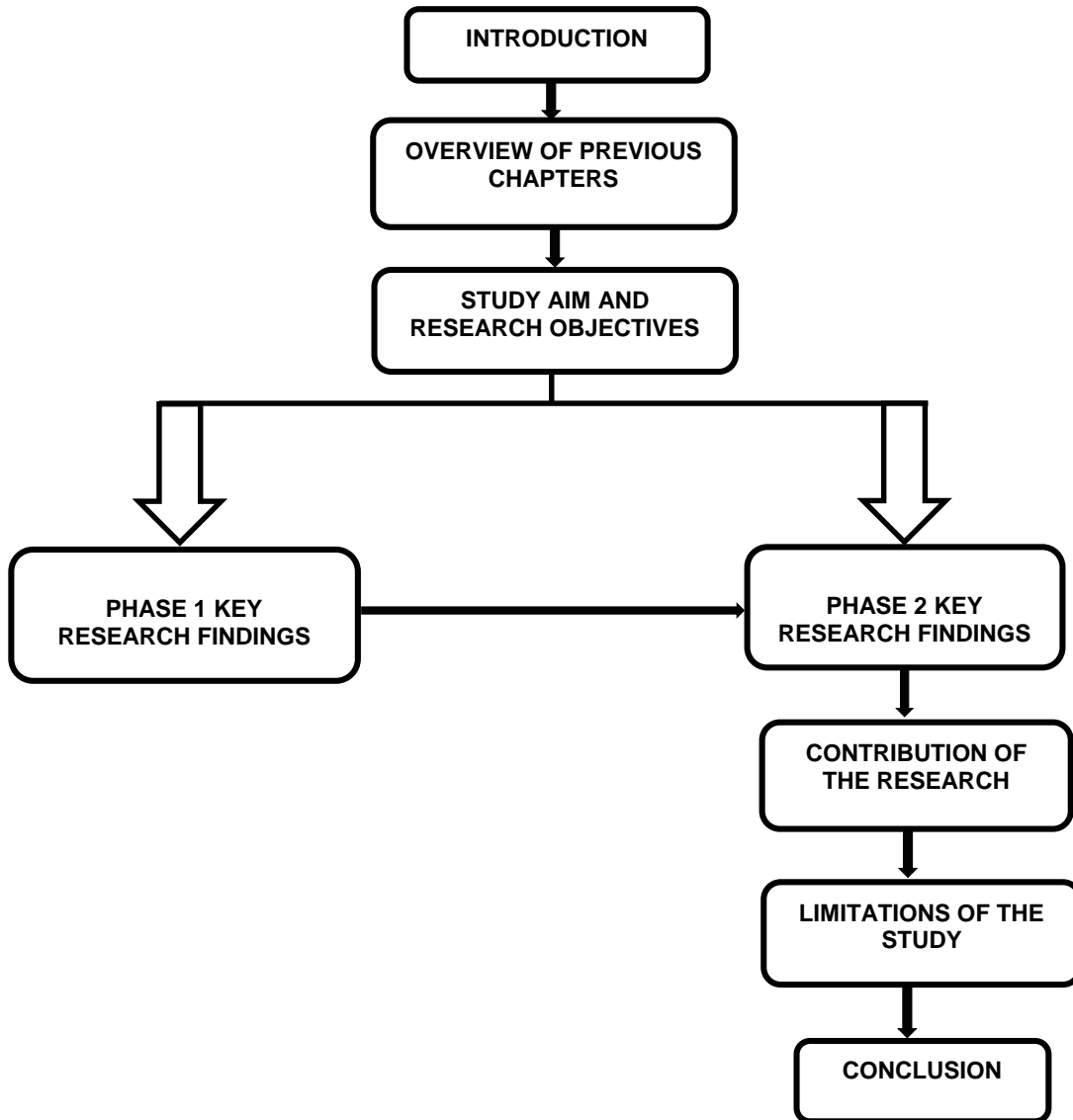
For the third set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to behavioural intentions to revisit. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model) and digital media usage (second model) to intentions to revisit. Only one significant relationship emerged between preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) and behavioural intentions to revisit.

For the fourth set of multiple regressions, behavioural intentions to revisit remained the dependent variable, while destination image was added as an independent variable. The regressions tested the relative contributions of technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences (first model), digital media usage (second model), and destination image (final model) to behavioural intentions to revisit. A significant relationship exists between leisure tourists' preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) and behavioural intentions to revisit. There is also a significant relationship between leisure tourists' utilitarian digital media usage and behavioural intentions to revisit. Furthermore, a relationship exists between leisure tourists' affective image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

Conclusively, destination image related much stronger to behavioural intentions to revisit when compared with technology readiness and technology acceptance, digital media preferences and digital media usage. Results also suggest that destination image varies between destinations, confirmed by the variations in the two destinations' affective images. The next chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



8.1 INTRODUCTION

Destination competitiveness is a critical paradigm for the success of a destination's tourism sector (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Despite the challenges brought forth by COVID-19, Africa has great potential for tourism growth and recovery (WTO, 2022). Destination image has emerged as a confidence building factor resulting in destination competitiveness (Nadalipour *et al.*, 2019). Destination marketing enhances destination image (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), which in turn influences the choice of a destination (Gorji *et al.*, 2023). Worth noting is that there are destination specific factors that shape a destination's image, making it distinct from competition, resulting in revisit intentions (see Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2022). However, some distressed tourism destinations tend to encounter mixed brand images as a result of their political and social instability (see Ragb *et al.*, 2020). This makes it difficult for such destinations to be effectively promoted in order to establish a positive image. Mixed destination images can also be attributed to tourists' travel risk perceptions, given the impact of COVID-19 on travel (see Rastegar *et al.*, 2021; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021; Zheng, Luo & Ritchie, 2021).

Understanding travel risk perceptions amid a crisis such as COVID-19 has a positive impact on the restoration of a destination's image (Golets *et al.*, 2021). This is because travel risk perceptions have a positive influence on a destination's competitiveness (Neto *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, crises can bring forth mixed destination images (see Rastegar *et al.*, 2021; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2021), making it difficult to effectively promote a destination. This means that, crises increase travel risk perceptions, which in turn reduce revisit intentions (Wen *et al.*, 2020; Nazneen *et al.*, 2020). One of the trends emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, is that the tourism industry has been transformed to move towards contact-less travel due to high perceived risk posed by the pandemic (Bae & Chang, 2021). This has led to the adoption of different forms of ICT among destinations to build resilience (Sigala, 2020). Some of the ICTs include immersive virtual solutions (Alkier *et al.*, 2021).

Such technologies provide easy access of destination information, pre-visit and onsite. As a result, digital media are innovative solutions to, and a means of survival for destination resilience during and beyond a crisis (see Lekgau *et al.*, 2021; El-Said & Aziz, 2022). It is therefore paramount that DMOs understand tourists' readiness to adopt digital media and preferences thereof (Hailey *et al.*, 2021).

Tourists have different preferences for hedonic and/or utilitarian travel related digital media owing to the utilities accumulated at all stages of travel (Bosio & Scheiber, 2022). Despite the complexity and human resource constraints in positioning a destination through digital marketing (Huerta-Álvarez, Cambra-Fierro & Fuentes-Blasco, 2020), the role of technological innovations in driving business performance and economic growth in emerging destinations should not be ignored (Yunis, Tarhini & Kassar, 2018). Consequently, digital marketing results in destination competitiveness (Cillo *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, scholars add that, in order to stay competitive, tourism marketing needs to consolidate digital and relational marketing by fostering innovation and establishment of relationships (e.g., Liberato *et al.*, 2018b). This consolidation must be in tandem with changes in tourists' tastes and preferences (Liberato *et al.*, 2018b).

A number of emerging destinations have to some extent adopted digital media marketing (e.g., Njerekai, 2020; Pasanen *et al.*, 2019; Guerrero-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2020). As such, Labanauskaitė *et al.* (2020) posit that a destination's image can be enhanced through digital marketing tools. Success of technology induced marketing is therefore contingent on the fit between marketing and the technology used (Lin *et al.*, 2020). In the end, information disseminated through digital media significantly influences destination image and tourist behaviour (Uşaklı *et al.*, 2017; Song & Kim, 2016). Different types of digital media exist in the tourism context, namely, social media (Hays *et al.*, 2013), virtual reality (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019), augmented reality (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019), official tourism websites (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018) and context-aware recommender media (Choi *et al.*, 2021).

This study took a wider look at destination competitiveness and management of image and travel risk perceptions. This was done to give leeway to build insights of how digital media can be used in future toward a resilient and competitive tourism industry. The remainder of the chapter concludes the study by providing an overview of the entire research. It starts off with an overview of the previous chapters, followed by aims and objectives revisited in order to recollect and reflect on the purpose of this study. Empirical findings are summarised to give a coherent picture of the study's purpose. Thereafter, the theoretical and practical implications of the study are given, followed by limitations and recommendations for future studies.

8.2 OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the problem at hand, forming the introduction and background of this study. Background information was given on destination competitiveness and image, travel risk perceptions and ICT adoption by emerging destinations was given.

The digital media under study were introduced and explained in view of their usage, preferences during travel and their contribution towards destination competitiveness. The chapter clearly defined the aims and objectives of this study, including the study's academic and industry relevance. All this presented an argumentation on the motivation of the study.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature on destination competitiveness models. Literature on the current trends in international, emerging destinations and Sub-Saharan Africa tourism was also reviewed to provide a firm foundation of the background to the study. This was followed by a review of literature on destination image which is a key indicator of destination competitiveness. Given the impact of COVID-19 on destination competitiveness, travellers' risk perceptions could not be overlooked. This was followed by a review of literature on the determinants of travel risk perceptions as well as destination image amidst a crisis. Lastly, contextual information was given about destination South Africa and Zimbabwe as well as how the two brands were performing amidst COVID-19.

Chapter 3 reviewed literature on ICTs, destinations, and their competitiveness. The chapter revealed the extent of ICT adoption in emerging destinations as well as ICT readiness and destination images of those destinations. Specifically, South Africa and Zimbabwe's ICT readiness was analysed. Furthermore, the chapter reviewed literature on digital marketing in tourism and that of digital marketing and destination competitiveness. Lastly, a theoretical context on technology adoption was given to contextualise tourists' technology readiness to adopt different types of digital media during travel.

Chapter 4 presented the two conceptual models proposed for this two-phased study. Phase 1 examined leisure tourists' risk perceptions of the two destinations, informed by destination competitiveness, branding and risk perception theories. Phase 2 of the study sought to understand leisure tourists' 'background' approach to using digital media, in order to determine the types of digital media they used during travel. TRI and TAM (TRAM) theories facilitated the identification of digital media usage traits and their relationship with digital media usage. The chapter argued the hypothesised relationships presented in the conceptual models that answer to the overall aim and objectives of the study.

Chapter 5 gave an account of the guiding philosophy. This chapter explained the survey based quantitative research design which is cross-sectional in nature. The target population, sample size, data collection methods and measurement instrument were explained. This was followed by the data analysis tools and techniques used. The rigour of the study was justified and the ethical principles governing the research was explained.

Chapter 6 presented the two-phased results. In Phase 1, exploratory factor analysis was done to validate the scales and moderated multiple regression was used to test the hypothesised relationships (the influence of risk on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit). In Phase 2, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were done for scale refinement and a series of regressions (multiple and hierarchical regression) were used to examine the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travels.

Chapter 7 discussed the study's findings. The discussion was guided by the study objectives, supported by existing literature. The chapter also argued the results of the model tests for the two respective conceptual models.

8.3 STUDY AIMS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. To accomplish this aim, the study consisted of two phases, each with its own main and sub-objectives built around the two demand conditions under investigation.

Firstly, the study sought to determine whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions influence emerging destination's image and behavioural intentions to revisit amidst a crisis, more specifically COVID-19. Secondly, the study sought to establish the manner in which leisure tourists' technology readiness and acceptance link with the type of digital media during travels. Understanding this relationship along with digital media preferences can lead to effective application of digital media marketing which, in turn, will lead to a competitive destination. The case studies of South Africa and Zimbabwe were used as two competing tourism destinations within Sub-Saharan Africa.

Objective 1 (Phase 1)

To determine whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions influence the relationship between destination image perceptions and behavioural intentions to revisit emerging destinations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sub-objectives

- To determine the relationship between leisure tourists' destination image and their behavioural intentions to travel to these destinations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- To determine whether leisure tourists' travel risk perceptions moderate the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to travel to these destinations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Results from Phase 1 show that not all dimensions of destination brand image (both cognitive and affective) perceptions were strong enough for both South Africa and Zimbabwe (even though they may be positive) to encourage revisit intentions given the contagion and life-threatening nature of COVID-19. However, travel risk perceptions vary depending on the perceived risk factors in a given destination, and as such, had varied influences on the different dimensions of brand image for the two respective countries. Both South Africa and Zimbabwe's cognitive and affective brand images related to revisit intentions. However, South Africa's cognitive brand images related to shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, general infrastructure, transportation infrastructure and nightlife were at stake as a result of tourists' travel risk perceptions. To the contrary, the opposite effect of risk perceptions emerged for Zimbabwe's corresponding cognitive image factors. Contrary to South Africa, both of Zimbabwe's affective image factors were also not able to withstand the effect of travel risk perceptions.

Objective 2 (Phase 2)

To determine the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media by leisure tourists during travels.

Sub-objectives

- To measure the technology readiness and technology acceptance of these leisure tourists.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital media.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' technology readiness and the type of digital media used during travels.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' technology acceptance and the type of digital media used during travels.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourists' digital media preferences and the type of digital media used during travels.
- To determine whether there is a relationship between the type of digital media used during travel and leisure tourist's destination image perceptions.

- To determine whether there is a relationship between leisure tourist's destination image perceptions and their behavioural intentions to revisit.

Results from Phase 2 of the study indicated the extent to which both dimensions of the TRAM, that is, TRI (technology readiness) and TAM (technology acceptance) contributed to the prediction of digital media usage. It also became clear that these factors along with digital media preferences and type of digital media used during travel contributed distinctly to both brand image and behavioural intentions toward the two emerging destinations. The prominent TRAM factors are summarised in Section 8.4 where they are integrated with the findings of Phase 1 to provide the overall conclusions of the study.

8.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section presents main findings arising from empirical research. This study was guided by theory in order to bring out the key variables significant to the empirical research. The framework in Figure 8.1 summarises the factors that emerged in the final regression models for each dependent variable. They incorporate the results for both countries. Accordingly, the results of the two phases are integrated to show how the drivers of digital media usage can assist in mitigating travel risk perceptions while enhancing a destination's brand image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

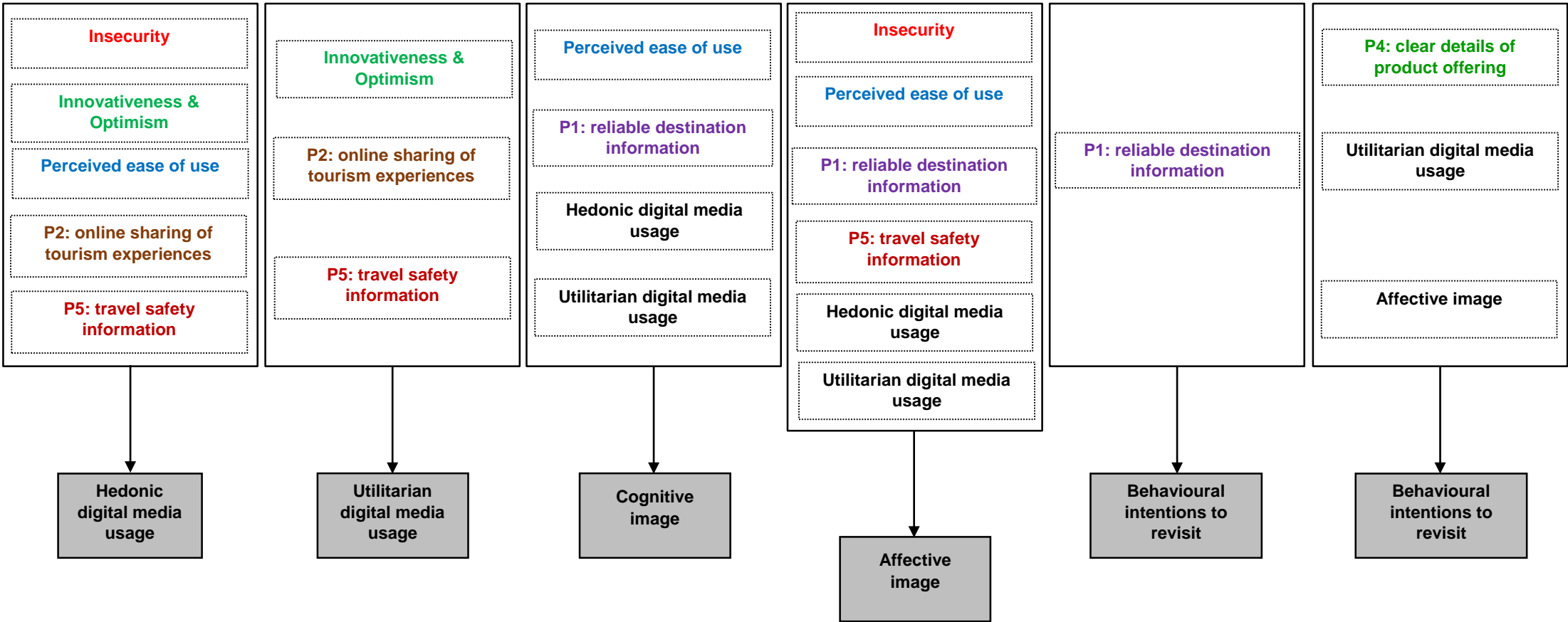


Figure 8.1: Summary of findings

As indicated in Phase 1, travel risk perceptions had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit, while Phase 2 showed that digital media usage was linked to positive destination image formations and behavioural intentions to revisit. Accordingly, digital media usage will be associated with the reduction of destination image uncertainties (see Schiopu *et al.*, 2021) and positive behavioural intentions to revisit (see Zhang *et al.*, 2018). This effect will differ between countries, but the results indicate trends that can be applied in different contexts.

Technology readiness and technology acceptance had a positive relationship with **digital media usage** (hedonic and utilitarian). Both technology readiness factors (**Insecurity, Innovativeness & Optimism**) had significant relationships with **hedonic** digital media usage, while only one technology readiness factor (**Innovativeness & Optimism**) had a significant relationship with **utilitarian** digital media usage. Only one technology acceptance factor (**perceived ease of use**) had a significant relationship with **hedonic** digital media usage. Preferences for digital media *that allow online sharing of tourism experiences* and those *that provide travel safety information* had significant relationships with **hedonic** and **utilitarian** digital media usage.

For the first set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to **cognitive image**. Technology acceptance, digital media preferences and digital media usage emerged as significant predictors of cognitive image. Only one technology acceptance factor (**perceived ease of use**) had a significant relationship with cognitive image. Preferences for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) had the strongest relationship with cognitive image when compared to other preferences. Lastly, **hedonic** and **utilitarian** digital media usage emerged as significant predictors of cognitive image.

For the second set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to **affective image**. Technology readiness, technology acceptance and digital media preferences and digital media usage emerged as significant predictors of affective image. Only one technology readiness factor (**Insecurity**) had a significant relationship with affective image. In addition, only one technology acceptance factor (**perceived ease of use**) had a significant relationship with affective image. Preferences for digital media *that provide reliable destination information* and those *that provide travel safety information* had significant relationships with affective image. Lastly, **hedonic** and **utilitarian** digital media had significant relationships with affective image perceptions of a destination.

For the third set of multiple regressions, the dependent variable was changed to **behavioural intentions to revisit**. Digital media preferences emerged as significant predictors of behavioural intentions to revisit. Only preferences for digital media *that provide reliable destination information* had a significant relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit when compared to other preferences.

For the fourth set of multiple regressions, **behavioural intentions to revisit** remained the dependent variable, while **destination image** was added as an independent variable. Digital media preferences, digital media usage and destination image emerged as significant predictors of behavioural intentions to revisit. Only preferences for digital media (*that provide clear details of product offering*) had a significant relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit when compared to other preferences. **Utilitarian** digital media had a significant relationship with behavioural intentions to revisit. Lastly, a relationship exists between leisure tourists' **affective image** and behavioural intentions to revisit.

The subsequent section summarises the theoretical implications of these findings.

8.4.1 Positive destination image formations are key drivers of behavioural intentions to revisit

Two main similar cognitive image factors emerged for both South Africa and Zimbabwe confirming that the two destinations are closely competing in as far as Cognitive image 1 (i.e., shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, general infrastructure, transportation infrastructure and nightlife) and Cognitive image 2 (i.e., scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals) factors are concerned. As a result, these cognitive image factors were strong enough to positively influence leisure tourists' behavioural intentions to revisit both South Africa and Zimbabwe. Scholars support this relationship (e.g., Ren *et al.*, 2022; Joo *et al.*, 2023).

Different elements of cognitive image were able to withstand travel risk perceptions. As seen in the case of the two competing destinations, South Africa's Cognitive image 2 and Zimbabwe's Cognitive image 1 were strong enough to encourage revisit intentions. This was despite the presence of high travel risk perceptions. The findings are not surprising because despite the impact of COVID-19 on travel, cognitive attributes still positively influence image due to tourists' destination familiarity (see Jahari *et al.*, 2021). The nature of hedonic (pleasurable) and utilitarian (functional) digital media, presents the platforms as potential mitigations on the effect of travel risk perceptions on the relationship between a destination's cognitive brand image and behavioural intentions to revisit.

Furthermore, the desire that tourists have for digital media (*that provide reliable destination information*) makes such platforms potential solutions toward the reduction of challenges posed by travel risk perceptions in shaping a destination's cognitive brand image. This is because these digital media have a positive relationship with positive cognitive image formations.

Affective image results in behavioural intentions to revisit. As seen in the case of the two competing destinations, leisure tourists who are familiar with the two destinations found South Africa to be mainly an interesting, entertaining and pleasant destination and Zimbabwe to be mainly relaxing, safe and accessible. In addition, all affective image (i.e., interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative and safe) factors for South Africa were able to withstand travel risk perceptions.

These affective images were strong enough to withstand travel risk because tourists were familiar with the two destinations, having visited them before. Ideally, the re-occurrence of crises, naturally increases travel risk perceptions (Jahari *et al.*, 2021). Digital media platforms that provide reliable destination information are linked to these positive affective image formations which are related to behavioural intentions to revisit. There is evidence of variations in destination image, though negligible.

Variations in destination image have been confirmed empirically in different non-related studies, where for example, crime and safety issues have always been the main reason behind South Africa's negative destination image (Martín *et al.*, 2019; Friedrich *et al.*, 2020). In the case of Zimbabwe, some studies show that the country is categorised as a distressed destination (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021) bedevilled by the land reform program and political insurgencies that have destabilised the tourism sector (Woyo & Slabbert, 2020). More specifically, affective image varies between destinations. Unlike past empirical evidence, this study makes plain that the variations in destination image are mainly attributed to affective image factors. Overall, both cognitive and affective image result in behavioural intentions to revisit.

8.4.2 Travel risk perceptions play a significant role in shaping different dimensions of destination brand image

Leisure tourists expressed concern over certain travel risk factors affecting their cognitive images. It emerged from the study that as a solution, COVID-19 protocols should be strictly observed and abide by WHO guidelines. For example, travellers expected strict measures to be taken in observing COVID-19 protocols and visits to be restricted to few people per day to

avoid overcrowding. This result is in line with the UNWTO Barometer (2020) whose submissions show that among other things, factors like mandatory testing and diminished traveller trust had a negative impact on foreign visitor arrivals. This study supports previous research that when travel risk reduction measures are employed (e.g., adherence to COVID-19 protocols, visitors testing, visitor friendly processes etc.), tourists' revisit intentions may rebound.

Affective travel risk perceptions that emerged for both South Africa and Zimbabwe include; the possibility of contracting the virus, coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19, the destination being a health risk concerning COVID-19 and that travellers felt that tourist attractions are often crowded and therefore they risked contracting COVID-19 if they travel to either South Africa or Zimbabwe. Leisure tourists were more hesitant to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic mainly due to concerns about the possibility of contracting the virus if they travelled, as well as the destination being a health risk.

However, using evidence from South Africa, it can be noted that affective image factors are key destination image factors that can induce revisit intentions even in the presence of perceived travel risk. This is because of the destination's relatively high economic transformation readiness score (WEF, 2020), which puts it at a vantage point when it comes to investment in the requisite facilities and infrastructure to enhance affective image.

Further, the study affirms that travel risk perceptions are country specific and affect different aspects of destination competitiveness brought about by strong branding. This is shown by the variations in affective image which differed between the two destinations. This finding is however not unique to travel risk related studies. Literature corroborates the finding by confirming that risk perceptions differ as a result of the subjective nature of affective image (see Martín *et al.*, 2019; Friedrich *et al.*, 2020; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021).

8.4.3 Technology readiness and technology acceptance lays a foundation for digital media usage

Technology readiness plays an important part in shaping digital media usage. It emerged from the study that, despite high levels of digital media Insecurity, leisure tourists used 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare during travel. These digital media are hedonic in nature.

Leisure tourists with high Innovativeness & Optimism towards digital media mainly used hedonic and utilitarian digital platforms for travel purposes. Such individuals are mainly

technology enthusiasts who are always open to learning about new and different types of digital media. They also prefer to use digital media that gives them control over their trips to satisfy their pleasure-seeking travel behaviour. However, despite Innovativeness & Optimism having a positive relationship with both hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage, the link with utilitarian usage was much stronger.

Technology acceptance plays an important part in shaping digital media usage. Findings show that perceived ease of use is an antecedent to hedonic digital media usage, a finding confirmed by past studies (e.g., Mishra *et al.*, 2021). However, this study specifies the types of hedonic digital media that are perceived to be easy to use for travel purposes. Ordinarily, innovative and optimistic travellers find digital media they are familiar with to be easy to use, thereby giving them more control over their trips.

Preferences for digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences and those that provide travel safety information emerged as the main antecedents to hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage. Despite high digital media Insecurity, leisure tourists used immersive platforms (3-D virtual reality videos and 3-D city tour guide), recommender apps (Foursquare) and social media sites (YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook) during travel. Such media can be dovetailed to portray pleasant and appealing features that arouse interest in the places shown (hedonism), as well as acting a source of critical travel information (utilitarian).

The above digital media platforms and associated preferences have the potential to reduce travel risk perceptions due to their interactive ability which allows tourists to share online tourism experiences and destinations to provide travel safety information. In other words, the digital media are a less risky alternative to physical travel (e.g., Schiopu *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the above digital media (especially social media sites) seem to be popular and dominant among African tourism destinations. African destinations like Rwanda have successfully recovered their image through digital media, while Egypt, Kenya and Morocco are effectively using it to promote their tourism brands (Marzouk, 2022; Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023).

8.4.4 Different digital media platforms serve different needs (preferences)

Six features emerged as preferences for using different types of digital media for travel purposes, namely: Preference 1: reliable destination information, Preference 2: online sharing of tourism experiences. Preference 3: personalisation of itinerary. Preference 4: clear details of the product offering, Preference 5: travel safety information and Preference 6: vivid destination images.

However, the study revealed that the most preferred digital media were those that provide reliable destination information and travel safety information including those that allow online sharing of tourism experiences. Notably, digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences had a much stronger relationship with hedonic digital media than those that provide travel safety information. The same can be said for digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences which had a much stronger relationship with utilitarian digital media than those that provide travel safety information. This is despite the weak positive relationship in both cases. This means that such type of affordances are predominantly key drivers for both hedonic (3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare) and utilitarian (YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook) digital media usage.

Development of the digital media preferences scale was unique to this study because it helped determine the most preferred digital media during travel, hedonic or utilitarian. The scale development was pivotal in determining the type of digital media (hedonic and utilitarian) that positively relate to a destination's brand image and whether these preferences would also be linked to behavioural intentions to revisit and ultimately destination competitiveness.

Literature shows that preferences in general lead to usage (Pradhan *et al.*, 2018; Wong *et al.*, 2020) without specifying the type of preferences and usage. This study however makes a novel contribution to the body of knowledge and destination marketing practice by revealing the specific digital media (*that allow online sharing of tourism experiences; that provide travel safety information*) that is linked to usage type (hedonic and utilitarian).

Furthermore, owing to the growth rate of global internet and mobile usage, Africa is presented with an opportunity use an amalgam of digital media (see Mkwizu, 2019; Hinson, Osabutey & Kosiba, 2020) to promote its natural and cultural endowments (see Matiza & Oni, 2014; Ukpabi *et al.*, 2023) according to tourists' digital media preferences.

The study also reveals that digital media (*that provide reliable destination information; that provide travel safety information*) are linked to positive destination image formations. Furthermore, the study reveals that behavioural intentions to revisit is positively related to digital media that provide clear details of product offering.

Empirical evidence shows that prior to travel, tourists worry much about their travel safety and security when selecting a destination (Ragab *et al.*, 2020). Africa as a continent has already been labelled as unsafe due to recurring socio-political and health crises-related issues (Muragu *et al.*, 2023). As a result, digital media (*that provide reliable destination information;*

that provide travel safety information) are important platforms that can attenuate travel risk perceptions, while facilitating the formation of positive destination image perceptions, most likely the case for those visitors that have not been to Sub-Saharan Africa.

8.4.5 Managing destination image through different digital media functionalities

Perceived ease of use of digital media emerged as an antecedent to cognitive image. Leisure tourists mainly used immersive digital media because they found it to be easy to use while at the destination and during navigation. These media (3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare) in turn, were able to project vivid images of all cognitive image factors of a destination due to their hedonic nature. Additionally, the functionality of utilitarian digital media facilitated its prediction of cognitive image. YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook were mainly used because of their functional nature and ability to provide reliable travel related information. This in turn was useful in mainly projecting vivid images of a destination's man-made attractions, shopping facilities, nightlife, general infrastructure, services and transportation infrastructure.

Notably, technology readiness (Insecurity) and technology acceptance (perceived ease of use) had a relationship with affective image, though negative. Such visitors had no confidence in digital media, therefore they considered human interaction to be a very important element when planning for travel. Furthermore, hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage emerged as predictors of affective image. This was mainly due to the pleasurable and functional nature of hedonic and utilitarian digital media respectively.

Evidence in past studies show the singular use of digital media for destination marketing purposes as a way of enhancing competitiveness post COVID-19 (e.g., Chirisa *et al.*, 2020; Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). Apart from consensus with previous studies which suggest that digital media influence hedonic/utilitarian values, which in turn result in behavioural intentions to revisit (e.g., Kuo, 2022), this study suggests that hedonic and utilitarian values of digital media are also positively related to cognitive and affective destination image. Thus, it is an important contribution because literature already supports the relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit (see Styliadis *et al.*, 2022), moreso in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa (Mohammed *et al.*, 2022).

Literature in general shows that there are various risk factors driven by varying influences. These include time, psychological, financial and satisfaction risks (Neuburger & Egger, 2021); health and hygiene, accidents, crimes and natural disaster risks (e.g., Maser & Weiermair, 1998); and physical, functional, equipment, social and communication risks (Zhan *et al.*, 2022).

However, when it comes to pandemics such as COVID-19, a whole new set of destination specific risks emerged from this study.

Scholars note that risk perceptions can be destination specific (e.g., Hajibaba *et al.*, 2015; Miao *et al.*, 2021). For example, in this study, cognitive image elements for South Africa such as shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, general infrastructure, transportation infrastructure and nightlife could not withstand risk. Concern over the extent of investment in visitor-friendly processes and systems during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially at hotels, airports, restaurants, museums, and other tourism facilities was one of the major travel risks for those travelling to South Africa. This is because leisure tourists were worried about crowding in South Africa's tourist attractions, therefore they risked contracting COVID-19 while at the destination.

In the case of Zimbabwe, cognitive image elements such as scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals could not withstand risk. Leisure tourists visiting Zimbabwe were mainly worried about contracting the COVID-19 virus after coming into contact with strangers. Consequently, they were willing to travel only after vaccination roll-out was complete. Again, following media coverage during the pandemic, respondents felt that destination Zimbabwe was a health risk concerning COVID-19.

Worth noting is that affective image elements such as: relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative and progressive; interesting, authentic, entertaining and pleasant could not withstand travel risk perceptions of destination Zimbabwe. However, given the significant relationship between digital media usage (hedonic and utilitarian) and destination image (cognitive and affective), immersive digital media, recommender apps and social media can circumvent the effect of travel risk perceptions by projecting vivid destination images, providing reliable destination information as well as travel safety information.

Findings show that cognitive image is related to digital media that provide reliable destination information. However, this differed between destinations due to the extent of exposure to the type of digital media that provide reliable destination information. Furthermore, it emerged from the study that affective image is positively linked to digital media that provide reliable destination information and those that provide travel safety information. It is therefore evident that digital media preferences vary between the type of digital media used and its intended purpose during travel, which in turn has a bearing on the strength of a destination's brand image.

Digital media that provide reliable destination information and those that provide clear details of product offering play an important role in influencing behavioural intentions to revisit. Such digital media are usually utilitarian due to their functional ability to allow the sharing of travel-related information.

Affective image was the only significant predictor of behavioural intentions to revisit. This means that leisure tourists were mainly driven to revisit by a destination's relaxing, safe, accessible, innovative, progressive, interesting, authentic, entertaining and pleasant nature.

Digital media's ability to provide reliable destination information and clear details of product offering have proven to be the most effective in creating fond and pleasant affective memories of a destination. However, worth noting is that affective image differs between competing destinations. Despite being positive, the implications on behavioural intentions to revisit may vary according to affective image attributes in a given destination.

8.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

8.5.1 Theoretical contribution

Overall, the purpose of this study was to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. The study was structured around two phases, hence, the two demand conditions were investigated per phase. The theoretical contribution of this study is therefore broken down and explained according to the input of each phase i.e., Phase 1: travel risk perceptions amidst a crisis and Phase 2: digital media usage (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences).

Phase 1

In Phase 1, the study was guided by the relationship between destination image (cognitive and affective) as well as the influence of travel risk perceptions on this relationship. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by adding that not all cognitive image attributes will lead to behavioural intentions to revisit. Factors such as cuisine, accommodation facilities and personal safety which did not have any effect on behavioural intentions to revisit both South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Apart from the common cognitive image dimension of friendly locals, the study discovered that cognitive image factors such as 'visitor-friendly processes' are what also encourages tourists to visit. For example, leisure tourists indicated that they would visit if DMOs and government invested in visitor-friendly processes and systems at hotels, airports, restaurants, museums, and other tourism facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of affective image, this study adds to the body of knowledge by highlighting destination-specific affective images and their varying impacts on behavioural intentions to revisit emerging competing destinations. As shown in this study, some affective images for Zimbabwe (i.e., relaxing, pleasant, entertaining and innovative) were rated lower than those of South Africa, while some from South Africa (i.e., progressive, safe, interesting and authentic) had lower scores compared to those of Zimbabwe. The strength of these destination-specific affective images therefore has a bearing on destination choice and revisit intentions (Gorji *et al.*, 2023). This is an important contribution because the study informs future destination marketing research on consumer (leisure tourists) behaviour and destination brand image in as far as destination competitiveness studies are concerned.

This study unearthed that the importance and or ranking placed by leisure tourists on the health risk (posed by COVID-19 risk perceptions) is destination-specific (refer to Table 6.5). This can be a learning point for similar future studies as past studies show health risk in the context of psychological distance (Li *et al.*, 2020) and accommodation facilities, diet, sickness, physical harm and timely treatment (Zhan *et al.*, 2022), but do not make comparisons of how these risks are ranked per destination. The above suggests that tourists' evaluations and ranking of travel risk perceptions are contingent on the destination in question. It is therefore evident that, had it been a different set of destinations under review, a unique set of risk factors would have emerged from the study.

Notably, the above risk factors negatively influenced the relationship between cognitive image and behavioural intentions to revisit. This is despite the positive influence of cognitive image factors for South Africa (scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals) and those of Zimbabwe (man-made attractions, shopping facilities, nightlife, general infrastructure, services and transportation infrastructure) on behavioural intentions to revisit. Little is known about travel risk perceptions and destination image amidst COVID-19 in the African context, as most studies have investigated risk perceptions of travellers to developed destinations (Li *et al.*, 2020; Neuburger & Egger, 2021; Bhati *et al.*, 2020; Rastegar *et al.*, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2022).

Overall, the study acknowledges that external knowledge exists but it is imperfect. As a result, meaningful insights were unearthed by modifying the positivist approach by way of integrating quantitative and qualitative data on travel risk perceptions amidst COVID-19. As a result, the study advances the theoretical understanding of destination image in Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa.

Phase 2

This phase was guided by the antecedents (technology readiness, technology acceptance, digital media preferences) and outcomes (destination image, behavioural intentions to revisit) of the use of different digital media during travels.

It emerged from this study that Insecurity and Innovativeness & Optimism are antecedents to hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage. However, unlike most studies, in this case, Innovativeness & Optimism loaded as one factor. Past studies have always presented them separately as indicated in the TRI model by Parasuraman (2000).

Most literature shows use of singular digital media in empirical studies, while some scholars investigate virtual reality and augmented reality combined. This study, however, makes a combined analysis of seven (*virtual reality, augmented reality, context-aware recommender media, YouTube, TripAdvisor, Facebook and official destination website*) different types of digital media used for travel purposes. From this analysis, six types of digital media formed two types of usage. Immersive digital media, that is, virtual reality (3-D virtual reality videos), augmented reality (3-D city tour guide) and recommender apps, that is, context-aware recommender media (Foursquare) formed hedonic digital media usage, while social media (i.e., YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook) formed utilitarian digital media usage.

This is a significant theoretical contribution because findings revealed tourists' technology readiness and acceptance to use these digital media against the type of usage (hedonic/utilitarian) while travelling. Tourists who are innovative and optimistic use 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare for hedonic purposes. YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook were used for their utilitarian affordances by innovative & optimistic tourists. This adds to the body of knowledge by informing research to consider how leisure tourists use digital media for different purposes at different stages of travel.

These findings contribute to theory by laying the foundation for the inclusion of different types of digital media in destination competitiveness studies which can facilitate the building of resilience in tourism during COVID-19 and beyond. Notably, this study provides a theoretical foundation of the relationship between digital media preferences and the type of digital media (hedonic/utilitarian) used for travel purposes. This has not been fully addressed in literature. In addition to submissions in previous studies where hedonic/utilitarian usage results in behavioural intentions to revisit (e.g., Kuo, 2022), this study suggests that hedonic/utilitarian usage also is positively related to cognitive and affective image.

The digital media preferences scale was developed in this study. This is a major theoretical contribution where six features emerged as measurement items for the digital media preferences scale. The scale is the first of its kind within the context of studies of this nature. This scale strengthens the weight of antecedents to digital media usage which contribute to the ultimate competitiveness of a destination through destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. This study suggests that digital media preferences and type of digital media used are dependent on the extent of digital media exposure at the destination visited. In addition, the preferences were uniquely linked to specific digital media platforms and could indicate how specific aspects of destination image can be managed. Furthermore, these preferences provided an indication of how digital media platforms can be of use in the management of travel risk perceptions.

This above is a significant theoretical contribution because prior research focused on developed destinations whose ICT infrastructure and technology readiness are well established.

8.5.2 Managerial implications of the study

This serves as a learning point for policy makers and DMOs to take into account the hedonic and utilitarian affordances of different types of digital media when formulating digital media marketing strategies. This study helps marketers understand how travel risk perceptions, digital media usage, digital media preferences and digital media-enabled destination (cognitive and affective) images relate to destination competitiveness.

Digital media have the power to induce positive perceptions of a destination. As a result, investing in their different capabilities will culminate to effective risk-reducing strategies for policy makers and DMOs when marketing and packaging a destination amidst a crisis. Given that South Africa and Zimbabwe are not the only competing emerging destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa, their DMOs should always bear it in mind that during a crisis, tourists with high perceived travel risk will always seek and compare information about safer destinations. As a result, the information they get about a destination from various digital media will frame their perceptions about its brand image.

Notably, cognitive and affective images have distinct relationships with behavioural intentions to revisit. DMOs should not take for granted that cognitive images are fixed on positive attributes of a destination's resources and attractions. As shown in this study, Cognitive image 2 for Zimbabwe could not withstand the risk factors associated with COVID-19 as a result, perceptions of the destination and travel behaviour were affected negatively. In addition,

affective images should not be taken for granted either as they may not be strong enough to withstand risk as shown by the Zimbabwean case. DMOs should therefore bear this in mind when segmenting and developing digital marketing strategies for their various source markets.

Zimbabwe policy makers together with DMOs, should consider investing in inclusive measures towards the destination's economic transformation readiness. This will help the destination to effectively conciliate the challenges alluded to by the WEF (2023) report. These challenges once addressed, can effectually contribute to the success of the destination's Cognitive image attributes.

The study revealed that tourists were concerned about health and safety, psychological well-being, social approval, performance of tourism facilities, image portrayed by media and time factor when traveling. As a result, they preferred to have the above factors addressed for them prior to travel. Notably, health concerns were the major issue that resulted in leisure tourists adjusting their travel behaviour by putting their physical travel plans on hold. Policy makers and DMOs should therefore consider investing in COVID-19 friendly environments and protocols, as well as general safety and security in order for tourists to have less risky experiences while at the destination. In addition, in order to ensure the smooth running of tourism business, health and safety measures should be put in place regardless of COVID-19 or any other pandemic.

TRAM theory is therefore important to policy makers and DMOs because it primarily focuses on the customer (in this case leisure tourist) and enables segmentation according to an individual's technology readiness and digital media preferences. Technology has proven to be a disruptor of tourism and an enabler of resilience in the wake of COVID-19. This study equips policy makers and DMOs with pointers to help re-design both cognitive and affective image. However, for South Africa, more can be done to ensure that the cognitive image of the destination is reinforced through hedonic mediums, while the same should be done for Zimbabwe through utilitarian digital media.

When travelling, visitors want travel safety and reliable destination information, hence they had lower affective images for both South Africa and Zimbabwe. For example, tourists want clear and factual information to help them determine whether the destination is relaxing, innovative, progressive, safe and accessible, pleasant, entertaining, interesting and authentic. Policy makers and DMOs should consider investing in digital media that offer utilitarian affordances in order to stimulate positive affective images.

Overall, digital media plays a pivotal role in shaping leisure tourists' perceptions of a destination. In addition, leisure tourists' preferences and usage of different digital media can be influential in curbing the risks associated with travel during COVID-19. Policy makers and DMOs need to consider significant investment in both hedonic and utilitarian digital media in order to provide tourism gratification through vivid destination images and experiences. This will help build tourism resilience and destination competitiveness, particularly for a crisis such as COVID-19.

The managerial implications across the different digital media types and preferences covered in this study are given below and indicate how these can be used in general; to manage risk perceptions, enhance destination image, encourage revisit intentions, and ultimately lead to destination competitiveness.

Managerial implications across the different digital media types and preferences

Managerial implications of digital media preferences

Notably, digital media that allow online sharing of tourism experiences and those that provide travel safety information have an exceptionally significant relationship with hedonic and utilitarian digital media usage. In order to fully cultivate competitiveness through the aforementioned digital media preferences, policy makers and DMOs should consider collaborating and investing in virtual reality, augmented reality, context-aware recommender media and social media sites such as video sharing and social networking sites.

In addition, digital media that provide reliable destination information and travel safety information are key in forming positive destination brand images. Furthermore, digital media that provide reliable destination information and those that provide clear details of the product offering are instrumental in inducing revisit intentions. Accordingly, policy makers and DMOs should consider investing in such digital media (*that provide reliable destination information; that provide travel safety information; that provide clear details of the product offering*) to give a true picture of the extent of travel risk as a way of managing cognitive and affective responses following a crisis. This will at the same time promote the destination's brand image and encourage revisit intentions, which in turn contributes to competitiveness.

Evidently, digital media preferences vary between the type of digital media used and its intended purpose during travel. DMOs can segment their tourism markets guided by the above digital media preferences in order to have a better understanding of the antecedents to digital media usage, which contribute to the ultimate competitiveness of a destination through

destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit. This is because digital media preferences and type of digital media used are dependent on the extent of digital media exposure at the destination visited.

Managerial implications of immersive digital media

Immersive digital media in this study comprised virtual reality and augmented reality and were categorised as hedonic media.

South Africa and Zimbabwe's DMOs may consider prioritising immersive 3-D Virtual reality videos and 3-D city tour guide which projects vivid destination images through high quality visuals. These immersive digital media can be added as a link to the destinations' websites in order to allow travellers to get a 'feel' of the destination before travelling. The same can be done for recommender apps. South Africa and Zimbabwe's DMOs should also consider prioritising virtual reality, augmented reality and context-aware recommender media in their destination marketing strategy. This will build stronger positive cognitive and affective images for their tourism destinations.

It emerged from the study that hedonic and utilitarian platforms fulfilled visitor preferences for digital media that provide reliable destination information and travel safety information including those that allow online sharing of tourism experiences. These platforms were also strong predictors of destination image (i.e., cognitive and affective). DMOs for both destinations should therefore consider re-designing and re-enforcing virtual reality (3-D Virtual reality videos), augmented reality (e.g., 3-D city tour guide) and context-aware recommender media (Foursquare) as they have proven to have favourable hedonic affordances for tourists. This is mainly due to their immersive nature and ability to provide pleasurable and memorable experiences.

The managerial implications of the immersive digital media are explained below.

Virtual reality

In as much as the adoption of virtual and augmented reality technologies will not give a true sense of physical experience, it has the advantage of enhancing destination image by reproducing the physical destination (see Musavengane & Leonard, 2022). Having learnt from the COVID-19 experience, policy makers and DMOs alike, may need to consider virtual reality as an alternative to the physical environment when managing travel risk perceptions. Furthermore, it is recommended that the smart tourism trajectory desired by the two destinations be supported by immersive technologies such as virtual and augmented reality

in order to bring convenience to business operations (see Sorokina *et al.*, 2022). Given the adverse impact of COVID-19 on tourism, virtual reality could be a new paradigm. DMOs can therefore take advantage of 3-D virtual reality videos to undertake virtual marketing campaigns through interactive content and immersive experiences. This will in turn will improve destination competitiveness through enhanced destination brand image and revisit intentions.

Augmented reality

DMOs are also encouraged to take advantage of Augmented Reality's ability to augment and personalise tourist experiences in order to enhance their destination image and competitiveness (see Aziz & Friedman, 2019). Augmented reality is effectively used while at the destination to project the real-world through 3-D city tour guides. DMOs can utilise this type of immersive digital media to manage travel risk perceptions by providing real-time travel safety information and reliable destination information through storytelling.

When designed effectively, augmented reality can be a useful digital marketing tool for DMOs who are competing on the basis of destination brand image. This is because 3-D city tour guides provide real-time information on a destination's shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, general infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, nightlife, scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals and so on. By allowing tourists to virtually interact with the physical environment, augmented reality when implemented effectively can vividly project a destination's interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative and safe brand image attributes. Augmented reality's ability to act as a tour guide by providing personalised content can assist DMOs to constructively promote tourism attractions through interactive 3-D city tour guides, which in turn leads to a destination's competitiveness.

Managerial implications of recommender apps

Recommender apps in this study comprised context-aware recommender media and were categorised as hedonic media.

South Africa and Zimbabwe's DMOs should consider prioritising context-aware recommender media in their destination marketing strategy. This will build stronger positive brand images (Shafiee *et al.*, 2016) for their tourism destinations and enhance competitiveness (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015).

The managerial implications of the recommender apps are explained below.

Context-aware recommender media

Context-aware recommender media usually request for personal information in order to provide accurate location-based information that can improve destination image and future behavioural intentions to revisit. This calls for DMOs to encourage tourists to disclose their personal data by extending attractive hedonic/utilitarian benefits of using the context-aware recommender media (see Bosio & Scheiber, 2022). Policy makers can invest in tourist data protection measures in order to ensure effective implementation of context-aware recommender media applications such as Foursquare. This will help curb digital media insecurity levels among travellers.

Furthermore, by virtue of being context aware, Foursquare can be an effective tool for enhancing a destination's brand image by managing travel risk perceptions. This can be done by providing real-time information on health and safety protocols, travel safety information on World Health Organisation compliant tourism facilities and services, including services such as route mapping and planning. Such real-time information if craftily designed by policy makers in collaboration with DMOs, has a bearing on a destination's brand image and competitiveness. This of course entails setting up requisite ICT infrastructure.

Overall, in order to lower the levels of Insecurity among visitors, DMOs can place emphasis on human interaction in order to help simplify online sharing of tourism experiences and the provision of travel safety information during trip planning for those using 3-D virtual reality videos, 3-D city tour guide and Foursquare.

Managerial implications of social media sites

Social media sites in this study comprised YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook and were categorised as utilitarian media.

South Africa and Zimbabwe's policy makers and DMOs should consider fully utilising their social media sites. This can be done by reconfiguring YouTube, TripAdvisor and Facebook sites to provide clear and up to date information on shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, general infrastructure, transportation infrastructure and nightlife, scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals. The importance of utilitarian digital media should not be ignored, hence, DMOs should consider re-designing and re-enforcing social media sites such as video sharing (e.g., YouTube), review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook). These

platforms are very useful when it comes to facilitating online interactions, providing factual and up-to-date destination information. Destination image is dependent on information sources and digital media used by DMOs to promote a destination. Accordingly, if destination information disseminated through digital media is misleading, destination image and behavioural intentions to revisit will be negatively affected.

The managerial implications of the social media sites are explained below.

YouTube

DMOs can take advantage of YouTube's utilitarian benefits in their marketing campaigns by sharing a destination's information through large videos. Due to its ability to carry large volumes of travel-related information, YouTube can be an effective destination marketing tool in as far as managing travel risk is concerned. DMOs can take advantage of the utilitarian nature of YouTube by sharing informative content on health and safety information in a destination's tourism attractions and facilities. Testimonials and detailed information on crisis-related protocols can be shared in detail in order for visitors to be better informed when scheduling their leisure activities. This has a bearing on shaping a positive brand image and revisit intentions.

TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor, is one of the most popular interactive review sites that allows the sharing of valuable travel-related information. DMOs can leverage this digital media to manage travel risk perceptions by ensuring that universal and up to date information is provided at the traveller's convenience. This can be done through collaboration with tourism industry players, concerned government departments and world tourism bodies. Site links with information on health and safety, travel restrictions and World Health Organisation protocols can be provided in order to encourage destination trust and revisit intentions. Engaging with travellers and acknowledging feedback on TripAdvisor can position a destination as empathetic and responsive to visitor concerns and feedback. This in turn builds trust and confidence among travellers, while positioning the destination's brand image against competitors.

Facebook

Facebook allows the sharing of diverse content, including large videos. It also facilitates effective promotion of tourism products and services. This can be done through information sharing, encouraging user generated content, virtual tours and providing clear details of the tourism product offering. DMOs can take advantage of these features and share travel safety information in order to manage travel risk perceptions. Information on World Health

Organisation health protocols and resources can be shared through visuals, testimonial videos, influencer and opinion leader storytelling videos as ways of providing reliable and factual destination information.

In addition, DMOs can effectively use Facebook to tell captivating stories (through images and videos) about the destination's shopping facilities, man-made attractions, services, general infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, nightlife, scenery and landscape, natural attractions, climate, available tourist activities and hospitality of the locals. This will in turn project a destination to as interesting, entertaining, pleasant, accessible, authentic, relaxing, progressive, innovative and safe. Ultimately, revisit intentions will be driven by these destination image factors and can be viable ways of enhancing destination competitiveness if carefully implemented.

Overall, social media has proven to be an effective destination digital media marketing tool. Therefore, DMOs are recommended to use it as a destination image communication tool for competitive advantage (see Govers *et al.*, 2007; Marine-Roig & Huertas, 2020). Social media is conveniently accessible to tourists for the dissemination of travel-related information. This is an avenue worth exploring for DMOs to collect statistical traveller information that will help tailor-make marketing communication strategies and improve decision making during travel (see Nijkamp, Kourtit & Suzuki, 2021).

This study gives insight to policy makers and DMOs to be resilient and fluid when managing a crisis or disaster. Literature shows that social media among other digital media is an emerging phenomenon in destination marketing given that the future of tourism is 'untact' due to emerging technologies and perceived travel risks (Jahari *et al.*, 2021; Bae & Chang, 2021).

Official tourism websites

Policy makers and DMOs can collaborate by having a 'one stop shop' destination website by adding links to social media sites, in order to improve tourists' browsing experience, information accessibility, personalisation, interactivity, convenience and aesthetics (see Kanazawa *et al.*, 2021).

The limitations of the study are discussed next.

8.6 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study is not without its limitations. The study which commenced pre-COVID-19 was affected by disturbances caused by the pandemic. This prompted an online survey resulting in a low response rate during data collection. The researcher resorted to sharing the survey link on LinkedIn in order to increase the response rate. The researcher also applied the convenient random sampling technique in the form of a snowball where the survey link was shared with colleagues.

The size of survey instrument was quite lengthy and could have been the reason of the high non-response bias and abandonment rate increase. In addition, the study took place at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when travel was restricted. As such, physical travel was not a priority during this period.

Tourists' travel risk perceptions and attitude towards digital media use may have been skewed by the COVID-19 period during which the data was collected, therefore should be investigated again under 'normal' circumstances. The data presented a number of issues that restricted some of the initially planned model testing. However, alternatives could be found that still allowed testing hypotheses that would meet the study aims and objectives.

The study focused on international leisure tourists who have been to South Africa and Zimbabwe as the target population for the study. To increase the study impact, future studies could focus on more than just two Sub-Saharan Africa destinations for a broader comparative analysis. This study only focused on international leisure tourists, therefore future studies can combine different types of tourists in order to make a comparative analysis of the key digital media usage drivers and or differences if any among travellers.

For future research a sample could be drawn to compare findings and the applicability of the cognitive and affective image scales in developing versus developed countries.

The antecedents to digital media use in this study are limited to TRI, TAM variables and digital media preferences. However, the researcher had confidence in the fact that TRI and TAM (TRAM) are tried and tested models, hence their efficacy and reliability is known. Notably, this study considered TRAM as the main antecedent to digital media usage. However, there could be other antecedents to digital media use such as age, gender, level of education and so on. Furthermore, when these variables are adopted as moderators, different results could emerge.

When measuring digital media usage, future studies should consider its measurement per destination under investigation, rather than focusing on usage in general. This was a limitation in this study because digital media usage was not specifically measured for the destination under review. This will help to clearly establish cause and effect among variables being measured between the destinations under review.

A comparison of destinations across continents can be done; for example, emerged versus emerging economies. In addition, generational differences, travel experiences and level of education can be investigated as possible moderators of the relationship between technology acceptance and use in relation to destination image and future behavioural intentions to revisit.

This study applied a post-positivist paradigm where the study was mainly quantitative, although qualitative risk perceptions measures were included in the survey instrument. However, due to the multi-dimensionality and complexity of the concept of travel risk perceptions, future studies are recommended to adopt a pragmatic approach to research that is more flexible and reflexive. Future studies therefore need to strike a balance between innovative quantitative and qualitative data collection methodologies such as the gamification of travel applications. This will help unearth a number of contextual complex realities (through real-time interaction) from various tourists' experiences in various destinations. This is because travel risk perceptions are a socially constructed phenomena therefore, they require adopting a pragmatic approach in order to fully understand the varying tourist perspectives.

Overall, this study was cross-sectional, therefore results cannot be generalised over time due to volatility in consumer behaviour in tourism as well as digital media used for travel purposes. Furthermore, despite the study being predominantly quantitative in nature, the qualitative data presented opinions of individuals on only one construct (i.e., travel risk perceptions), therefore, the results cannot be generalised in the long term. However, despite the qualitative aspects being limited in terms of data, some interesting trends were observed that warrant further investigation in future studies. Advances in ICT and related tourism technologies are rapidly changing tourism behaviour and digital media usage, therefore future destination competitiveness studies should take into consideration such changes before attempting to reproduce this study. For example, tourism technologies such as AI-driven facial recognition (see Gupta, Modgil, Lee & Sivrajah, 2023) and ChatGPT (see Gursoy, Li & Song, 2023) could be the future of destination competitiveness while providing capabilities for identifying traveler's preferences.

8.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of two demand conditions on the competitiveness of emerging destinations. It is evident that the internet is a lucrative platform that can provide DMOs with an opportunity to invest in digital media that enable value co-creation and communication. This will allow the online sharing of travel information as well as provision of travel safety information among tourists and various tourism stakeholders.

South Africa being the most technologically advanced country in Africa has an upper hand opportunity to invest in innovation and technology in tourism. However, in order to partake on the tourism-related benefits of the fourth industrial revolution, South Africa needs to review its regulatory impediments towards the growth of the sector. The same can be said for Zimbabwe whose technology fissures exhibit an inert ICT policy that has hindered the successful implementation of tourism related marketing strategies. However, if fully operationalised, the ICT policy can help catapult Zimbabwe's destination image through virtual promotion. This could be as a result of the non-existence of adequate digital media to facilitate these hedonic and utilitarian affordances among tourists. South African and Zimbabwean governments are highly recommended to seriously embrace digital media in order to build resilience for their tourism sectors (see Chirisa *et al.*, 2020).

The study recommends policy makers and DMOs to focus more on hedonic and utilitarian benefits of using digital media during travels. This is because tourists do not consider technology readiness and technology acceptance inhibitors when making travel decisions, rather, they are interested in the benefits offered by the digital media used. Policy makers and DMOs are thus encouraged to invest in digital media that; allow online sharing of tourism experiences; provide travel safety information; provide reliable destination information; provide clear details of the product offering.

This study also recommends policy makers and DMOs to include in their digital media marketing communications, a message portraying safe and risk-free destination when it comes tourists' health and communicable diseases like COVID-19. This will build confidence among travellers during uncertain times. The study provides evidence that different digital media platforms can effectively be used toward this purpose. The relationship between resilience and destination competitiveness should not be limited to COVID-19 only but to future unanticipated "tourist shocks", hence the emphasis on investing in digital media for branding and risk perception management for a competitive destination. Lastly, tourism recovery and competitiveness are contingent on policy makers and DMOs' restoration of traveller confidence.

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APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT



Questionnaire nr:					
Date distributed:					
Place:					
Fieldworker:					

Letter of introduction and informed consent

Department of Marketing Management

Antecedents and outcomes of digital marketing media usage by tourists visiting emerging destinations

Research conducted by:
(u13301935)
Cell: +263774199954

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Siphwe P Mandina a PhD student from the Department of Marketing Management at the University of Pretoria. The objective of this study is to determine the antecedents and outcomes of digital marketing media usage by tourists visiting emerging destinations

Please note the following:

1. This is an anonymous study **survey** and your name will not appear on the questionnaire. The answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
2. Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
3. Please answer the questions in the questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than **20 minutes** of your time.
4. The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal and in a condensed form in popular media. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

Please sign the form to indicate that (OR by clicking the continue button):

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

Respondent's signature

Date

APPENDIX 2

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



Approval Certificate

19 October 2020

Ms SP Mandina

Department: Marketing Management Dear Ms SP Mandina

The application for ethical clearance for the research project described below served before this committee on:

Protocol No:	EMS174/20
Principal researcher:	Ms SP Mandina
Research title:	Antecedents and outcomes of digital marketing media usage by tourists visiting emerging destinations
Student/Staff No:	13301935
Degree:	Doctoral
Supervisor/Promoter:	Dr EA du Preez
Department:	Marketing Management

The decision by the committee is reflected below:

Decision:	Approved
Conditions (if applicable):	
Period of approval:	2021-01-01 - 2021-03-31

The approval is subject to the researcher 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 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. If during the course of the research it becomes apparent that the nature and/or extent of the research deviates significantly from the original proposal, a new application for ethics clearance must be submitted for review.

We wish you success with the project. Sincerely

pp PROF JA NEL

CHAIR: COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS

APPENDIX 3
TITLE REGISTRATION (REVISED)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic
and Management Sciences

100
1920 - 2020
Advance

Our ref: 13301935
Contact person: Ms S Qokose
Tel: +27 12 420 3328
E-mail: sibabalwe.qokose@up.ac.za

26 March 2024

Dear Ms Mandina

APPROVAL OF REVISED TITLE REGISTRATION

I have a pleasure in informing you that the following **revised** title registration has been approved.

Travellers' digital media use and risk perceptions: Implications for emerging destinations' digital media marketing and competitiveness

Your enrolment as a student must be renewed annually until you have complied with all the requirements for the degree, preferably during the official period of enrolment but before **28 February**. You will only be entitled to the guidance of your supervisor if annual proof of registration can be submitted

Yours sincerely

For: **Prof Chitiga-Mabugu**
Dean Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

APPENDIX 4

FIELDWORK REQUEST

**Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences**

Midlands State University
Department of Marketing Management
P.Bag 9055
Gweru
Zimbabwe

2021.03.31

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to request permission for Ms Sipiwe Mandina to collect data in a field setting as part of her PhD study. She obtained ethical clearance for her study from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences in October 2020 (protocol nr EMS174/20).

In her study titled "Antecedents and outcomes of digital marketing media usage by tourists visiting emerging destinations" she looks at the role that such media plays in the formation of destination brand perceptions. Her questionnaire also includes questions related to COVID-19 and travel intentions to Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

Her target population is international visitors that have visited Zimbabwe before. As part of her data collection plan, she initially planned to undertake face-to-face data collection. However, given COVID-19 restrictions this plan could not be executed. The student then obtained permission from Zimbabwe Tourism Authority and South African Tourism to send the survey out to their existing databases of past visitors. Up to this point, data collection has been very slow. This could be ascribed to the current global stand-still in travel resulting in lack of interest in travel related communication. However, with the slow lifting of travel bans, it is expected that visitor movement will increase. This creates the opportunity to collect data from visitors while in the destination.

It is therefore requested that Ms Mandina be granted permission to conduct field-based data collection among visiting tourists, keeping in mind all the required COVID-19 protocol to be followed.

Thank you for your consideration.

ELIZABETH A. DU PREEZ
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
STUDY SUPERVISOR

CC Midlands State University
Faculty of Commerce Research Board

Dean: Postgraduate Studies

APPENDIX 5

SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM INFORMED CONSENT

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Batandwa Simelane**

<batandwa@southafrica.net>

Date: Tue, 15 Dec 2020, 10:41

Subject: Re: Invitation: SAT Domestic Survey

Presentation @ Tue 24 Nov 2020 2pm - 3:30pm
(SAST) (elizabeth.dupreez@up.ac.za)

To: Elizabeth du Preez

<elizabeth.dupreez@up.ac.za>

Dear Elizabeth,

SAT has approved the usage of the database for the survey. However, there are certain issues that need fixing. we looked at the questionnaire from the consumer's point of view and how it will make their lives easier.;

- Is it possible to streamline the questionnaire or survey. We found that the one page question makes the questionnaire longer. Is it also possible to show the consumer how far they are with the survey. For example: 25% complete or 2/5 pages.
- We had a look at the introduction, would it be possible to write from a consumer's point of view. Neesha has asked that we simplify the introduction so that it is easy for the consumer to understand.

Dear Visitor

South Africa misses hosting you at our various tourism sites!

While waiting for your next holiday, we cordially invite you to participate in a survey regarding your use of digital marketing media during travels. The survey includes questions on how technology use impacts your image of the destination and resultant intention to revisit and recommend. It also includes some questions on how Covid-19 has affected your travel plans.

Your participation in this study is very important to us and will be used to ensure that we continue offering you unforgettable holidays. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes.

All fully completed questionnaires will be entered into a lucky draw where you stand a chance to win a US\$ 70.00 Amazon gift voucher.

To complete the anonymous survey in English, please follow the link to the survey

- Would it be possible to add our branding to the questionnaire? Since we will be using the SAT database, we feel that there consumer needs to know that we are part of the process and we are working together.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL pretoria.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3MCHHGKSpqIMeDr. The page features the University of Pretoria logo and the text: "Please indicate the average number of times per year that you travel abroad for leisure purposes." Below this, there are two input sections: "Please indicate as a number" with a text box, and "I don't travel abroad that often (please elaborate)" with a larger text area. Navigation arrows are visible at the bottom of the form.

When would you like us to send the survey out, with the festive season and holidays coming up, the response rate might be low.

Kind regards,
Batandwa

APPENDIX 6

ZIMBABWE TOURISM AUTHORITY INFORMED CONSENT



DTSR/RE/11/19/mc

14 November 2019

University of Pretoria
Faculty of Economic Management Sciences
South Africa

ATTENTION: SIPHIWE PLAXEDES MANDINA

**AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – FOR SIPHIWE PLAXEDES
MANDINA IN THE TOURISM SECTOR**

Reference is made to your letter dated 13 November 2019, in which you sought authorization to conduct research in the tourism Sector. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) hereby grants you permission to approach all relevant tourism players to conduct your study on ***“An Assessment of the intention to use and use and acceptance of context-aware mobile marketing technology in an emerging competitive destination”***

ZTA fully supports this study as the results will contribute positively to the development of tourism. It is our sincere hope that you will be able to share findings from your study with us.

G. CHIDZIDZI (MR)
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE



HEAD OFFICE

Tourism House
55 Samora Machel Av
P.O. Box CY 286 Causeway
Harare
Tel: 263-4-780651/
774709, 774760, 78036
Fax: 263-4-758826/2
E-mail: marketing@ztazim.co.zi
info@ztazim.co.zi
Website: <http://www.zimbabwetourism.co.zi>

Bulawayo
Coal House
95 R. G. Mugabe Way
P. O. Box FM 151
Bulawayo
Tel: 263-9-723541/
Email: zta@byo.ztazim.co.zi

Mutare
109 H. Chitepo S
Cnr Fifth Av
3rd Floor
Zimre Centre
Tel: 020-66611/15/11
Email: mutare@ztazim.co.zi

Gweru
Civic Centre
8th S
Box 193
Gweru
Tel: 054-231671/
Fax: 054-231671
Email: midlands@ztazim.co.zi

Victoria Falls
Shop 13-14 Galleria Building
P. O. Box 10
Victoria Falls
Tel: 263-13-44371/
Fax: 263-13-44381
Email: ztavicfalls@ztazim.co.zi

Beitbridge
NSSA Building
1st Floor Left Wing
Great North Road
Beitbridge
Tel: 263-286-23642/
Email: bb@africaonline.co.zi

Masvingo
2nd Floor, Zimre Centre
Cnr Hughes Street
Simon Mazorodze Rd
Tel: 263-39266240-
P.O. Box 1741
Masvingo
E-mail: masvingo@ztazim.co.zi

Karib
Stand No. 48
Observation Point
Mahombokomb
Karib
Tel: 263-261-214627/
Email: ztakariba@africaonline.co.zi

Chiredzi Office
Old Mutual House, 1st Floor
Chironga Drive
Chiredzi
Tel: 263-231-265
263-231-269
Fax: 263-231-270
E-mail: marvelous@ztazim.co.zi

APPENDIX 7

ZIMPARKS INFORMED CONSENT



PARKS AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
HEAD OFFICE

"All correspondence to be directed to the Director General"

Ref: ...15.1/43/P/PP...

TQA00200/2020/tm

HEAD OFFICE

Parks and Wildlife
Management Authority
Cnr Borrowdale Rd &
Sandringham Drive,
P. O. Box CY 140 Causeway,
Harare,
Zimbabwe

Contact Details

Tel: +263 242 792786 - 9,
+263 242 707624 - 9

Email: info@zimparcs.org.zw

Director General

Mr Fulton U. Mangwanya

MISSION

To conserve Zimbabwe's
wildlife heritage through
protection and
sustainable utilization of
natural resources for the
benefit of the present and
future generations.

CORE VALUES

- Teamwork
- Commitment
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Innovation

VISION

To be The World Leader In
Sustainable Conservation

24 November 2020

Siphiwe P Mandina
8577 Windsor Park
Gweru
0774199954

Dear Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO ACCESS ZIMPARKS INTERNATIONAL
TOURISTS' DATABASE**

Reference is made to your letter dated 08 October 2020 in which you requested permission to access the Authority's international tourists' database.

The Authority is unable to grant your request since the requested database contains privileged information. However, you're welcome to share your survey instrument and work with the Authority's Marketing department to gather the desired information on your behalf.

Yours faithfully


F. U. MANGWANYA
DIRECTOR GENERAL

APPENDIX 8

LEISURE TOURIST QUESTIONNAIRE

(The same questionnaire was distributed to both samples and only the countries' names were changed. Visitors that visited both, were directed via skip logic to answer the questionnaire for both countries)

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.

Yes (1)

No (2)

Are you 18 years or older?

Yes (2)

No (3)

Have you visited Country X before?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q2 How many times have you visited Country X? (please indicate your response as a number)

Nr of times visited: (1) _____

No previous visits (4) _____

Q3 In what year/s did you visit? (please indicate all applicable starting from your most recent visit)

Year 1 (1) _____

Year 2 (4) _____

Year 3 (5) _____

Other (please indicate) (6) _____

No previous visits (7) _____

Q4 Have you visited Country X, one of our neighbouring countries, before?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q5 How many times have you visited Country X? (please indicate your response as a number)

Nr of times visited: (1) _____

Q6 In what year/s did you visit? (please indicate all applicable starting from your most recent visit)

Year 1 (1) _____

Year 2 (4) _____

Year 3 (5) _____

Other (please indicate) (6) _____

Q7 Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the issues presented to international travel, do you have any plans to travel abroad?

I have already started travelling (8)

Yes, soon (4)

Yes, in the distant future (5)

Not likely (6)

Definitely not (7)

Please elaborate (9) _____

Q8 Would you consider Africa a safe leisure travel option in the near future?

Yes (please elaborate) (4) _____

No (please elaborate) (5) _____

Not sure (please elaborate) (6) _____

Q9 Given the current global safety conditions, to what extent do you agree with the possible risks involved when travelling to Country X? (Indicating on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel that coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic will frustrate my travel experience due to fear of contracting the virus (1)					
Given the challenges brought forth by COVID-19, I am concerned about the possibility of contracting the virus if I travel to Country X (2)					
I fear losing approval and respect from family and friends if I decide to travel to Country X during the COVID-19 outbreak (3)					
If I travel to destination Country X during COVID-19 pandemic, I am most likely to spend too much time observing COVID-19 related protocols and miss out on scheduled leisure activities (4)					
Given the media coverage of destination Country X, I feel that the destination is a health risk concerning COVID-19 (5)					
I feel that destination Country X's tourist attractions are often crowded and therefore I risk contracting COVID-19 if I travel to the country (6)					
I doubt whether the quality of accommodation facilities in Country X's tourist attractions is in accordance with the World Health Organisation COVID-19 protocol (7)					

Q10 I have travelled to Country X before:

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q11 Given the current global safety conditions, to what extent do you agree with the possible risks involved when travelling to Country X? (Indicating on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel that coming into contact with strangers during the COVID-19 pandemic will frustrate my travel experience due to fear of contracting the virus (1)					
Given the challenges brought forth by COVID-19, I am concerned about the possibility of contracting the virus if I travel to Country X (2)					
I fear losing approval and respect from family and friends if I decide to travel to Country X during the COVID-19 outbreak (3)					
If I travel to destination Country X during COVID-19 pandemic, I am most likely to spend too much time observing COVID-19 related protocols and miss out on scheduled leisure activities (4)					
Given the media coverage of destination Country X, I feel that the destination is a health risk concerning COVID-19 (5)					
I feel that destination Country X's tourist attractions are often crowded and therefore I risk contracting COVID-19 if I travel to the country (6)					
I doubt whether the quality of accommodation facilities in Country X's tourist attractions is in accordance with the World Health Organisation COVID-19 protocol (7)					

Q12 Any comments regarding your expectations regarding COVID-19 protocol at tourism destinations? _____

Thank you for answering the first background questions on Covid-19 related issues. Before commencing with digital media, please take a moment to read through the explanation of terms used in the survey: Digital media makes use of both mobile devices and personal computers powered by Internet connectivity to enable real-time tracking and interaction. Some examples of digital media and respective travel applications (apps) to guide in the completion of this questionnaire are listed below: Digital media: media and communication channels (e.g., virtual and augmented reality, social media, official tourism websites and context-aware recommender media). Virtual reality (VR) apps: make use of a computer-generated 3D environment to give a virtual tour in the form of real-time simulation of one or more of the user's five senses. Examples in this study are 3-D VR videos. Augmented reality (AR) apps: which provide users with context-sensitive information of their immediate environment. Examples in this study are 3-D city tour guides. Social media apps: "Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content." Examples in this study are social media (e.g., Facebook), social media review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) and social media sites (e.g., YouTube). Official tourism website: A form of cost-effective digital marketing meant to enhance digital presence of Destination Marketing Organisations Context-aware marketing recommender apps: recognise user's context to provide relevant real-time information and services. This real-time contextual information helps tourists decide on what to do (activities) or where to go. An example in this study is Foursquare. Thank you, let us start.

Q13 Please indicate the average number of times per year that you travel abroad for leisure purposes.

Please indicate as a number (4) _____

Q14 I don't travel abroad that often (please elaborate) (5) _____

Q15 How many hours on average do you spend on online activity (excluding work commitments) in a week?

Less than one hour (1)

Two to five hours (2)

6–10 hours (3)

11–20 hours (4)

Over 20 hours (5)

Q16 Do you use any of the following smart phone/mobile device(s) to access travel information when travelling abroad? (Indicate all applicable options)

Tablet (1)

Laptop / notebook (3)

Portable global positioning system (GPS) (4)

Smart phone (5)

Other (please specify) (6) _____

I don't use such devices (please explain) (7) _____

Q17 Please indicate how often you use of each of the following digital media during your travel journey (from planning, to travelling and returning home). Note: three additional options ('Other') have been added. Please provide the rating in the scale, along with the details below the scale.

(Indicating on the scale from 1 = never to 5 = always)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	often	Always
	1	2	3	4	5
Virtual reality (3-D Virtual reality videos) (1)					
Augmented reality (e.g., 3-D city tour guide) (2)					
Social media (e.g., Facebook)					

(3)					
Social media review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) (4)					
Social media sites (YouTube) (5)					
Official destination website (6)					
Context-aware recommendation (e.g., Foursquare) (7)					
Other A (8)					
Other B (9)					
Other C (10)					

Please indicate what 'Other A', 'Other B' and 'Other C' referred to in the question above (if you have selected these options).

Other A (4) _____

Other B (5) _____

Other C (6) _____

Q18 Please indicate your agreement with the following sentences regarding the use of digital media in general.

(Indicating on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

Discomfort					
Sometimes, I think that digital media are not designed for use by ordinary people (1)					
When using digital media, I prefer to have the basic model over one with a lot of extra features (2)					
It is helpful to have types of digital media explained to me by a knowledgeable person (3)					
I like to try out all the special features available in different types of digital media to see what they can do (4)					
I feel I am usually in control of new digital media (5)					
Insecurity					
I worry that information I send over while using digital media will be seen by other people (6)					
I do not feel confident doing business with a place that can only be reached online (7)					
It can be risky to switch to digital media too quickly (8)					
The human touch is very important when planning for travel (9)					
Innovativeness					
Other people come to me for advice on new digital media (10)					
In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to use digital media (11)					
I keep up with the latest technological developments in new digital media (12)					
I find I have fewer problems than other people in making digital media work for me (13)					
I am always open to learning about new and different types of digital media (14)					
Optimism					
Using digital media gives me more control over my trips (15)					
I prefer to use the most advanced digital media available (16)					
I feel confident that the digital media follows through with what I instruct it to do (17)					
Digital media are easier to deal with than people performing the same service (18)					

I want to see the benefits of digital media demonstrated before I use it (19)					
Perceived usefulness					
Digital media are useful on my trips (20)					
Digital media enhance the quality of my trips (21)					
Digital media enable me to have more convenient trips (22)					
Perceived ease of use					
Learning to operate different types of digital media would be easy for me (23)					
It is easy for me to become skilful at using digital media (24)					
I find that the digital media that I am familiar with is easy to use (25)					
My interaction with digital media is clear and understandable (26)					

Q19 To what extent do you prefer the following features when using digital media during your travels?

(Indicating on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

During my travels, I prefer digital media that:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
provides me with reliable information about the destination (1)					
allow me to share tourism experiences online (2)					
allow me to personalise my itinerary (3)					
provides me with clear details of the product offering (4)					
provides me with travel safety information (5)					
project vivid images of the destination (6)					

Q20 I was exposed to some form of digital media of Country X during my travels:

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q21 At which stage(s) were you mostly exposed to the following types of digital media of Country X during your travels? Note: three additional options ('Other') have been added. Please indicate the time-periods, along with the details below the scale. *(Indicate all of the relevant options for each type of media)*

	Not at all	Before	During	After
Virtual reality (3-D Virtual reality videos) (1)				
Augmented reality (e.g., 3-D city tour guide) (2)				
Social media (e.g., Facebook) (3)				
Social media review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) (4)				
Social media sites (YouTube) (5)				
Official destination website (6)				
Context-aware recommendation (e.g., Foursquare) (7)				
Other A (8)				
Other B (9)				
Other C (10)				

Please indicate what 'Other A', 'Other B' and 'Other C' referred to in the question above (if you have selected these options).

Other A (4) _____
Other B (5) _____
Other C (6) _____

Q22 Referring to the digital media of Country X that you were exposed to during your travels, to what extent would you agree with the following
(Indicating on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

The digital media:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
facilitated online interaction and direct responses from service providers (1)					
provided me with up to date content about the destination's attractions (2)					
communicated honest-traditional values of the destination (3)					
had appealing features that aroused my interest in the places shown (4)					
simplified the online booking process (5)					
allowed me to share my tourism experiences online (6)					
provided the opinions and experiences of other travellers (7)					

Q23 Below are pairs of words that describe Destination Country X. Please indicate your agreement by ticking the most appropriate position between the two opposing adjectives

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AF11	Distressing						Relaxing
AF12	Unpleasant						Pleasant
AF13	Boring						Entertaining
AF14	Reserved						Innovative
AF15	Undeveloped						Progressive
AF16	Unsafe						Safe
AF17	Uninteresting						Interesting
AF18	Artificial						Authentic
AF19	Inaccessible						Accessible

Q24 If you had to rate the quality of Country X's tourism offering, what would that rating be in terms of the following aspects? (Indicating on the scale from 1 = very poor to 5 = excellent)

	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Scenery and landscape (1)					
Natural attractions (e.g., animals, parks, beaches) (2)					
Climate (3)					
Hospitality of the locals (4)					
Nightlife (5)					
Cuisine (6)					
Shopping facilities (7)					
Accommodation facilities (8)					
Personal safety (9)					
Available tourist activities (10)					
General infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation) (11)					

Q25 How advanced do you regard Country X to be when it comes to ICTs (Information and Communication Technology)? (Indicating on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

Country X:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Has ICT infrastructure that enables ease of internet access to visitors (1)					
Effectively makes use of digital media to enable online bookings (2)					
Uses digital media to allow visitors easy navigation between places/attractions within the destination (3)					
Effectively uses digital media to provide visitors with travel related information (4)					
Presents different opportunities where digital media is used to enhance the experience of attractions or services (5)					

Q26 Please indicate your agreement with the following sentences regarding your intentions toward Destination Country X.

(Indicating on the scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
I have a strong intention to revisit Country X on my next trip (1)					
I have a strong intention to revisit Country X in the distant future (2)					
I would say positive things about Country X to other people (3)					
I would recommend that someone visits Country X (4)					

Q27 Any other comments about using digital media during travels?

And lastly, please share the following personal information:

Q28 Country of origin

Q29 Age (as a number)

Q30 Gender

Male (1)

Female (2)

Other (3)

Prefer not to say (4)

Q31 Highest level education completed

Primary school (6)

High school (1)

Diploma/certificate (2)

Undergraduate degree (3)

Post-graduate degree (4)

No schooling (5)

Q32 Annual household income (\$USD)

Less than 24 999 (1)

25 000 to 39 999 (2)

40 000 to 59 999 (3)

60 000 to 79 999 (4)

80 000 to 99 999 (5)

Over 100 000 (6)

Prefer not to say (7)

APPENDIX 9

CORRELATION MATRIX

Table A.1: Pearson correlation matrix for South Africa

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. InnovOpt															
2. Insecurity	-.327**	--													
3. EaseofUse	.797**	-.299**	--												
4. Usefulness	.781**	-.264**	.729**	--											
5. Pref 1	.357**	-.073	.341**	.585**	--										
6. Pref 2	.338**	-.076	.217*	.322**	.349**	--									
7. Pref 3	.325**	-.068	.274**	.453**	.548**	.433**	--								
8. Pref 4	.458**	-.089	.446**	.582**	.780**	.456**	.537**	--							
9. Pref 5	.238**	-.031	.229*	.400**	.636**	.376**	.500**	.636**	--						
10. Pref 6	.296**	.028	.236**	.429**	.633**	.502**	.395**	.554**	.491**	--					
11. Hedonic	.257**	.091	.160	.198*	.079	.257**	.125	.125	.180*	.141	--				
12. Utilitarian	.492**	-.146	.344**	.489**	.403**	.427**	.325**	.408**	.405**	.352**	.389**	--			
13. AFFSA	.305**	-.266*	.234*	.249*	.300**	.146	.083	.294**	.049	.157	.000	.170	--		
14. CogSA1	-.086	-.143	.047	-.014	.241*	-.063	.065	.100	.058	.084	-.317**	-.087	.323**	--	
15. CogSA2	.371**	-.082	.331**	.301**	.289**	.244*	.142	.292**	.178	.200	.218*	.397**	.459**	.220*	--

 ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

Table A.2: Pearson correlation matrix for Zimbabwe

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Innov&Opt	-															
2. Insecurity	-.022															
3. EaseofUse	.784**	-.015														
4. Usefulness	.733**	-.043	.729**													
5. Pref 1	.336**	-.137	.379**	.362**	--											
6. Pref 2	.363**	.024	.294**	.260**	.136	--										
7. Pref 3	.354**	-.128	.384**	.370**	.326**	.297**	--									
8. Pref 4	.338**	-.155*	.421**	.398**	.494**	.074	.301**	--								
9. Pref 5	.376**	-.045	.346**	.398**	.409**	.233**	.264**	.373**	--							
10. Pref 6	.245**	.072	.207**	.249**	.313**	.234**	.310**	.189*	.300**	--						
11. Hedonic	.215**	.283**	.042	-.023	-.072	.121	-.019	-.159*	-.113	.024	--					
12. Utilitarian	.404**	.106	.387**	.352**	.190**	.277**	.176*	.149*	.144	.181*	.246**	--				
13. AFFZIM1	.339**	.034	.341**	.240**	.097	.188*	.053	.077	.251**	.159	.082	.059	--			
14. AFFZIM2	.236**	-.258**	.286**	.252**	.192*	.067	.167*	.161	.353**	.134	-.382**	-.050	.611**	--		
15. CogZIM1	.190*	-.196*	.316**	.306**	.203*	.040	.193*	.254**	.303**	.172*	-.466**	-.009	.462**	.748**	-	
16. CogZIM2	.248**	.183*	.136	.056	-.145	.186*	-.061	-.145	-.032	-.039	.442**	.165*	.508**	.075	.098	--

 ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

APPENDIX 10

TESTED HYPOTHESES

Table A.1: Phase 1 Hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Hypothesised path	Standardised regression weight		P-value		Comment	
		South Africa	Zimbabwe	South Africa	Zimbabwe	South Africa	Zimbabwe
H _{1a}	Cognitive image 1→Behavioural intentions to revisit	0.257	0.196	0.05	0.05	Supported	Supported
H _{1b}	Cognitive image 2 →Behavioural intentions to revisit	0.226	0.492	0.05	0.001	Supported	Supported
H ₂	Affective image →Behavioural intentions to revisit	0.499	–	0.001	–	Supported	Not supported
H _{2a}	Affective image 1→Behavioural intentions to revisit	–	0.567	–	0.001	Not supported	Supported
H _{2b}	Affective image 2→Behavioural intentions to revisit	–	0.620	–	0.001	Not supported	Supported
H _{3a}	Cognitive image 1 →Risk perceptions →Behavioural intentions to revisit	-0.7298	-0.0891	0.001	0.3952	Supported	Not supported
H _{3b}	Cognitive image 2→Risk perceptions →Behavioural intentions to revisit	-0.1715	-0.4503	0.4104	0.001	Not supported	Supported
H ₄	Affective image →Risk perceptions →Behavioural intentions to revisit	-0.0689	–	0.2204	–	Not supported	Not supported
H _{4a}	Affective image 1→Risk perceptions →Behavioural intentions to revisit	–	-0.0706	–	0.05	Not supported	Supported
H _{4b}	Affective image 2→Risk perceptions →Behavioural intentions to revisit	–	-0.1409	–	0.001	Not supported	Supported

Table A.2: Phase 2 Hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Hypothesised path	Standardised regression weight		P-value		Comment	
		South Africa	Zimbabwe	South Africa	Zimbabwe	South Africa	Zimbabwe
H _{1.1a}	Insecurity→ hedonic digital media usage	0.192	0.262	0.05	0.01	Supported	Supported
H _{1.1b}	Insecurity→ utilitarian digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H _{1.2a}	Innovativeness & Optimism→ hedonic digital media usage	0.324	0.1	0.607	0.01	Supported	Supported
H _{1.2b}	Innovativeness & Optimism→ utilitarian digital media usage	0.394	-	0.01	-	Supported	Not supported
H _{1.3a}	Perceived usefulness→ hedonic digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H _{1.3b}	Perceived usefulness→ utilitarian digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H _{1.4a}	Perceived ease of use→ hedonic digital media usage	-	0.249	-	0.05	Not supported	Supported
H _{1.4b}	Perceived ease of use→ utilitarian digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported

H1.5a	Digital media preferences (P1)→ hedonic digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H1.5b	Digital media preferences (P1)→ utilitarian digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H1.6a	Digital media preferences (P2)→ hedonic digital media usage	0.196	-	0.1	-	Supported	Not supported
H1.6b	Digital media preferences (P2)→ utilitarian digital media usage	0.225	0.146	0.05	0.1	Supported	Supported
H1.7a	Digital media preferences (P3)→ hedonic digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H1.7b	Digital media preferences (P3)→ utilitarian digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H1.8a	Digital media preferences (P4)→ hedonic digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H1.8b	Digital media preferences (P4)→ utilitarian digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H1.9a	Digital media preferences (P5)→ hedonic digital media usage	-	0.151	-	0.1	Not supported	Supported
H1.9b	Digital media preferences (P5)→ utilitarian digital media usage	0.213	-	0.05	-	Supported	Not supported
H1.10a	Digital media preferences (P6)→ hedonic digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H1.10b	Digital media preferences (P6)→ utilitarian digital media usage	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.1a	Insecurity→ Cognitive image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.1b	Insecurity→ Affective image	-0.194	-0.136	0.10	0.10	Supported	Supported (Affective image 2)
H2.2a	Innovativeness & Optimism→ Cognitive image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.2b	Innovativeness & Optimism→ Affective image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.3a	Perceived usefulness→ Cognitive image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.3b	Perceived usefulness→ affective image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.4a	Perceived ease of use→ Cognitive image	-	0.256	-	0.05	Not supported	Supported (Cognitive image 1)
H2.4b	Perceived ease of use→ Affective image	-	0.338	-	0.05	Not supported	Supported (Affective image 1)
H2.5a	Digital media preferences (P1)→ Cognitive image	0.490	-	0.05	-	Supported (Cognitive image 1)	Not supported
H2.5b	Digital media preferences (P1)→ Affective image	0.372	-	0.10	-	Supported	Not supported
H2.6a	Digital media preferences (P2)→ Cognitive image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.6b	Digital media preferences (P2)→ Affective image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported

H2.7a	Digital media preferences (P3)→ Affective image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.7b	Digital media preferences (P3)→ Affective image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.8a	Digital media preferences (P4)→ Cognitive image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.8b	Digital media preferences (P4)→ Affective image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.9a	Digital media preferences (P5)→ Cognitive image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.9b	Digital media preferences (P5)→ Affective image	-0.322	0.169; 0.233	0.05	0.10; 0.05	Supported	Supported (Affective image 1&2)
H2.10a	Digital media preferences (P6)→ Cognitive image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.10b	Digital media preferences (P6)→ Affective image	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H2.11a	Hedonic digital media usage→ Cognitive image	-0.240	-0.435; 0.344	0.05	0.01; 0.01	Supported (Cognitive image 1)	Supported (Cognitive image 1&2)
H2.11b	Hedonic digital media usage→ Affective image	-	-0.352	-	0.01	Not supported	Supported (Affective image 2)
H2.12a	Utilitarian digital media usage→ Cognitive image	0.247	-	0.05	-	Supported (Cognitive image 2)	Not supported
H2.12b	Utilitarian digital media usage→ Affective image	-	-0.163	-	0.10	Not supported	Supported (Affective image 1)
H3.1	Insecurity→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.2	Innovativeness & Optimism→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.3	Perceived usefulness→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.4	Perceived ease of use→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.5	Digital media preferences (P1)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	0.441	-	0.05	-	Supported	Not supported
H3.6	Digital media preferences (P2)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.7	Digital media preferences (P3)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.8	Digital media preferences (P4)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.9	Digital media preferences (P5)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.10	Digital media preferences (P6)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.11	Hedonic digital media usage→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H3.12	Utilitarian digital media usage→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.1	Insecurity→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported

H4.2	Innovativeness & Optimism→ behavioural intentions to revisit.	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.3	Perceived usefulness→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.4	Perceived ease of use→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.5	Digital media preferences (P1)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.6	Digital media preferences (P2)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.7	Digital media preferences (P3)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.8	Digital media preferences (P4)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	0.171	-	0.05	Not supported	Supported
H4.9	Digital media preferences (P5)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.10	Digital media preferences (P6)→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.11	Hedonic digital media usage→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.12	Utilitarian digital media usage→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.13	Cognitive image→ behavioural intentions to revisit	-	-	-	-	Not supported	Not supported
H4.14	Affective image→ behavioural intentions to revisit	0.453	0.245; 0.402	0.01	0.05; 0.01	Supported	Supported (Affective image 1&2)

APPENDIX 11

EXTRACTS FROM QUALITATIVE DATA

Table B1: Extracts from Qualitative data

Response ID	COVID-19 Protocol
R_1hyAO94hQiS6R8E	Most protocols are being observed though a few tend to forget keeping on their masks especially teenagers. I feel it needs more push may they still believe that is mostly spread in elderly people yet is not like that.
R_4PxX6XKooYzNKY9	I would not travel overseas anywhere at present, plus South Africa has a virulent strain of Covid. Once Covid is managed through vaccinations and it is safe to travel again I would travel.
R_R48rqzuPj0r8qOZ	Risks overstated
R_3KB1bt7vsQM8hDk	Covid protocols are a necessary evil if we are to be safe when travelling to any destination.
R_25XbeldoCWg9vIr	Tourism needs to open up more while we make COVID-19 prevention precautions even stronger.
R_1FtvoBYNu61SP3O	People should be tested before getting to those places
R_1FIU9OQLqFNWm6u	They should make the destinations more safely and make sure their clients observe the given COVID-19 precautions
R_22zVSjLVbFQyhqt	I would expect to see masks being worn and hand washing facilities, and possibly temperature taking stations. Would also expect to see social distancing measures in use and information explaining what is expected of us.
R_1Nm2Wfrnb67ax6r	Most of the people travelling from outside my country are found to be positive as they enter at my country's borders, making me wonder if they are really checked before they leave their countries.
R_1dMoNNn2LLLNbwj	Covid 19 protocols should highly be followed all the time
R_3KxrgfjrDWiTPrT	There are far more deadly diseases to worry about than Covid 19 eg malaria, TB and hepatitis E. There are no protocols for these diseases.
R_3s554bpMRhgiFm2	I LOVE TRAVELLING I HOPE ALL TOURISM DESTINATIONS FOLLOW RECOMMENDED COVID 19 PROTOCOLS AND BE OPEN FOR VISITS
R_1fehmHrBfv0jG	abiding by WHO guidelines is the solution
R_2a9p8wLMba6IOAX	Restoring traveller confidence by providing clear information to travellers and businesses, and limiting uncertainty.
R_5nUVChzfZfYTEop	I expect Covid 19 protocols to be followed from the Border Post to the Accommodation in order to reduce contracting the virus.
R_un46REiRBr5PIrv	COVID-19 protocols must be adhered to and enforced at all times. Vaccination campaigns must be carried out to educate the tourists.
R_XMIKatQuSVCQQ25	They should check covid 19 and get the results within minutes of waiting everyone entering a country of destination
R_2dg1yFdAHRx5E0b	At tourism centers I think the staff should be tested and also vaccinated against covid and covid regulations must be observed at all times
R_24dUIQW5z7ZTDcq	User friendly techniques
R_xtpqaH2wPh3eoI9	I have not travelled since the onset of the pandemic
R_237hFuNLFdGjnMh	However my comments above, I believe tourist places strongly follow and adopt valuable information and measures to avoid COVID
R_2D2FNCqzoMDsell	the most important thing is following the guide lines.
R_1dfTg8914fnjaUB	I would expect them to be followed but risks are still too high
R_2PmPik2aQKPFYLR	Concerns over being sick and isolated while travelling
R_7P8t7HMkWUI9frz	Nil but all are understandable.
R_083SmDfyazH0kX7	Sensible controls will protect us and still allow us to enjoy our vacation
R_UrNwzU6gn7eJROF	Hopefully the local residents will be more welcoming
R_3IKw86f7KrcQKrw	I prefer to wait next year before traveling to Africa...
R_1LwiCgdsWfWhZd	Not worth the risk to travel anywhere at the moment
R_V3FaPavGVpCZsGZ	No
R_1mlyoV6p2Z9Jfla	I would very carefully research the protocols offered by travel companies and act accordingly
R_Rs1y9zK4od8eWI3	no, I will wait till we are vaccinated and safe, after that no problem to travel SA
R_zVBwpllrE77DvWh	No
R_2yr9XOoPCAJevjo	It hampers full and free enjoyment of the holiday.
R_vYX8q015U26sITb	No comments
R_pQzhEoPk2coX4lh	I am more worried about bringing SA residents the virus than getting it myself
R_3iXcVXi5ZOGQDLA	With COVID-19 not Hope for tourism
R_2CBzXYZYqW92m1z	No comment
R_22snJ4f4Z2o1GnO	I expect to see a higher level of adherence to COVID-19 health guidelines

R_SCYocwhJQ6A2Rjj	It's hard to say, we actually now don't know if it's only getting in contact with a person or even facilities or items a person who may have been positive to can expose one to the virus. Destination places yes, maybe a free space but facilities of accommodation and transportation we are not yet certain as to what extent can we be assured of the exposure to covid 19. this virus survives in surfaces, so disinfection maybe a shortfall in other institutions and may not be practiced as its to be. So its a bit scary hence one cannot be 100% certain of safety in this era. Again with the new wave, people are asymptomatic so we might be having people without symptoms yet transmitting the virus. So it's wise to stay at home or within your country and take necessary precautions to save yourself.
R_24vAdKSEkQZ3Hgg	Measures should be put in place to ensure that WHO COVID-19 protocols are strictly adhered to all the time to protect and prevent spreading of the disease.
R_1pMuu9uBfgLUIKZ	nothing much
R_1nNjnNLM3FyRhUp	I expect strict measures and visits should be restricted to few people per day to avoid overclouding.
R_2ceGQgbk9B775xf	Vaccinations need to speed up
R_p9qUJ1vAZ2tLVLX	As long as i have been vaccinated and carry out government advice i would think that it would be ok to visit
R_23etlFtrKAcoPGC	private sanitised ablutions would be nice in campsites
R_p3Hde3KY3KeyABr	Honesty from the government to begin with!
R_3FLE6igduTQtnxL	Expect total adherence to all protocols
R_3nMI5LGuT2kVgSF	I personally have decided not to travel
R_2wbtipMDPS84YNy	to strict
R_2rwJEqJHwc8HpkG	None
R_1dhuyj92obtM20G	I expect the protocols to be in place
R_1hRoiQyaNnh7uGF	None
R_BJP2UpRnoocWrHH	Covid 19 protocols should be strictly observed
R_sTI2CrFT2npoPYJ	We should continue to observe and keep up-to-date information and the pandemic
R_BY3fpGPHUN8W5X3	What i can say is that Zimbabwe is a safe country to travel to. have been there two times
R_yKHfOUWWFiohwwV	Take protective measures
R_3qpMpYFoeXmIHnO	I hope to strengthen the epidemic protection
R_3qefHE7qNaNqkh5	I hope to strengthen the epidemic protection
R_9GLvQtJWuBd4nqV	Take protective measures
R_ZaGB8trKRabecRH	no
R_1o6GHYQIkIfLPHG	no
R_1diRgIZW06qR2FG	We hope to strengthen protection against the epidemic
R_1NIXOczjWLBmUgD	no
R_1NDEel2wG3ovWZr	Take protective measures
R_2y1VwNX8HsfoUvY	no
R_QnomhjaugFLeG9X	Take protective measures
R_YVnsLELzrgapEvT	no
R_1DoGCCViVLg4uPS	no
R_3NJOMTLGPYTIUY9	no
R_1I71hCOSgztzuSx	no
R_T0MZR5NKXzC7nr3	no
R_6u4Kryh3YQkYoUx	no
R_4PzeQP06V4PtAZj	No
R_3fclfbxjzKGoSI4	no
R_33vg2L0oc1dUYMa	No
R_1MN91gMpcb2MCqE	no
R_1BUW4Tm7O2HGrVD	no
R_BzV1V2DkboA3BVD	no
R_UmXJIOeolx3kpDH	I hope to strengthen the epidemic protection
R_2zHISMzcXQyTJAa	no
R_2dAtaFRlgLVEbTQ	No
R_Uaao1TSCjoxW0yR	no
R_3NvOkfuPBmuDOx3	no
R_RehQHCxjOOuNEvT	no
R_2CcQUergFf2ibGx	no
R_cucuj1W4uileGtP	no
R_25KsVU8x99J7pAl	no
R_CeppJfixMOHSqDn	no
R_1dyT7cuwRkkZKoz	Take protective measures
R_5nd89u0ZzItEZxL	We hope to strengthen protection against the epidemic
R_w6GMSnGAK2CpJGV	no
R_3EGpvigRaAOYdDI	no

R_2whQsOplivUmNnH	no
R_1eREN8WCVHKQdLd	no
R_31XkYzIBPvt2btU	No
R_3HNv4Eyaqpe2M9	No
R_3LegCO6T0dVmqvp	no
R_2rjUJnBbYdcxkuA	no
R_2SjGIFLowKmHgHI	No
R_3DhIHvYtu3yro53	We hope to strengthen protection against the epidemic
R_1FnTs0uZTenxdb6	I hope to strengthen the epidemic protection
R_3D25RBT7Hr8xLld	Take protective measures
R_3kn5AjVmC1f9eLW	We hope to strengthen protection against the epidemic
R_T6ZHjjiwplqe5a1	Take protective measures
R_1NFaAECIWhxFaiM	no
R_1kLUGhJINjFxFw9w	I would rather hotels, airports, restaurants, museums, and others in the tourism industry focus on ensuring that they are safe and health, regardless of COVID-19. At some point in time, COVID-19 will no longer be an issue. It is better to focus on the bigger picture and not just COVID-19. After all, there is always the risk of the next COVID-19.
R_1EZpJFaHYWBTna2	no
R_27xnRvzzCTOpfMg	vaccination for everyone as soon as possible is the only solution
R_2EAKdGjh2iC4B2D	I expect all UNWTO member states to follow the recommended health and safety protocols
R_Ailc9DeB54acmzv	no
R_d4JNJPgkGQAJOBD	Take protective measures
R_294YAoK17XxSE4c	Take protective measures