

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR TOURISM PROMOTION AND ITS
EFFECT ON TOURISM INDUSTRY IN CROSS RIVER STATE**

BY

AHAIWE, IFEOMA GLORIA

REG.NO.PG/MA/16/82078

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND TOURISM

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

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TITLE PAGE

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR TOURISM PROMOTION AND ITS
EFFECT ON TOURISM INDUSTRY IN CROSS RIVER STATE**

A PROJECT REPORT

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BY

AHAIWE, IFEOMA GLORIA

REG.NO.PG/MA/16/82078

SUPERVISOR: DR. E.I. ITANYI

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APPROVAL PAGE

Ahaiwe Ifeoma Gloria, Reg. No. PG/MA/2016/82078, a master of arts degree student in the department of archaeology and tourism has satisfactorily completed the requirements for the award of Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Archaeology and Tourism. The research work embodied in this project report is original and has not been submitted in part or in full for any other diploma, degree, masters of this kind in any other university.

Prof. A.M. Ibeanu
(Head of Department)

Date: _____

Dr. E.I. Itanyi
(Supervisor)

Date: _____

External Examiner

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is specially dedicated to the Almighty God, my husband and children.

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This research work will not be complete without the guidance and protection the Almighty God.

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PREFACE

This research work investigates social media and tourism promotion and its effect on the tourism industry in Cross River State. For the purpose of clarity, the work is divided into five chapters. Chapter one contains the general introduction, statement of the problem, research objectives, research methods, significance of the study, scope of the study and limitation of the study. Chapter two handles theoretical and empirical reviews as well as theoretical orientation. Chapter three discusses the geographical location of Cross River State, historical background of Cross River State, socio-political organization, and socio-economic activities.

Chapter four focused on data presentation and analysis. The chapter deals with seven types of social media used and their functions, strategies for effectiveness of social media marketing, social media as a tool for tourism marketing, social media and tourism promotion in Cross River State, social media and tourism development: implications for economic and social development in Cross River State. Chapter five is on the summary, recommendations and conclusion.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

Social media is becoming more crucial to hospitality and tourism enterprises. On the one hand, hospitality and tourism establishments offer intangible and experiential products. Visitors rely on information delivered to them, either online or offline, to identify and evaluate the product alternatives. User reviews and comments are experiential and highly trustable. On the other hand, development of Internet technologies has reduced the barrier for providing information online.

Almost anyone with Internet access could easily blog, tweet, review, comment, and update his or her Facebook status. These communication tools have led to an explosion of social media. In September 2010, Facebook was ranked as the number one website online which can reach 39.2% of the Internet population; YouTube was ranked number two with 31.8% (Google, 2010). More importantly, the traffic of those websites continues to increase, dwarfing the most popular mass media sites, while consistently increasing their amount of unique daily visitors.

Faced with the explosive volume of social media and its increasing influence, hospitality and tourism enterprises are searching for ways to make sense of this media and manage it to their advantage. Placing the phenomena into an appropriate theoretical context that better describes the complex and dynamic relationships inherent in social media will help enhance our understanding of it.

Social media had revived more ancient types of decision-making prevalent before the emergence of mass media when the exchange of opinions between one's families, relatives, friends, and neighbours was the basis for product purchase (Dellarocas 2003). Different from the one-way model of communication in most mass media, social media represents two-way communication between consumers and the materialisation of the communication content. As the digital version of word-of-mouth, social media represents the solidification, storage, and retrieval of the word-of-mouth content online. However, the large-scale, anonymous, ephemeral nature of the Internet induces new ways of capturing, analysing, interpreting, and managing social media content (Dellarocas 2003). In-depth theoretical and behavioural understanding of this content might be crucial for making sense of this media.

Social media is changing the methods by which tourists search, find, evaluate, trust and collaboratively produce information about tourist supplies and other members of the value chain. Consequently, a tourist is one who becomes the consumer, and who participate in not only the production but also marketing of tourists product. Using social media, travellers become co-producers, co-marketers, co- consumers by creating User-Generated Content (UGC) and social intelligence (Manap, 2013). The User-Generated Content of the online comment, profiles and photographs by tourists is trust word they for new users. U G E has AID effect on travellers by creating affection, interest desire and action (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012) sources of information and its evaluation, channels used for booking and buying travel product including travel route and reservation and also disseminating experiences through word of mouth affair the trip. The

UGC content can be in the form of any comments on Amazon, Facebook or YouTube. Nielson (2009) argues that the internet is the mass medium used for social media and is still in competition with traditional marketing techniques.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Cross River State, though described as the tourism hub of the nation, has been experiencing a decline in the contribution of the sector to world's economy. The decline is as a result of poor implementation of existing policies, the low budget for the tourism sector, lack of tourism personnel, among others. Again, the fixing of the price is such that any class of consumer can derive as much satisfaction as they want from their tourism experience.

In each of the three senatorial districts in Cross River state, these tourism products are adequately distributed. However, the state tourism potential has been underdeveloped as there are a relatively large number of sites which have not been visited due to inadequate or lack of promotion. As such, these sites are not generating sufficient revenue for the state Government, hence, the need to appraise a promotional strategy whose reach extends to the international or global community, and that is internet marketing.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this work is to assess the extent to which the internet could serve as a strategic tool for tourism marketing in Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

- i. To determine the impact of the website in promoting tourism awareness in Cross River State.
- ii. To ascertain the relationship between social media marketing and the level of patronage of tourism products in Cross River State.
- iii. To evaluate strategies for social media marketing of products in Cross River State to achieve its business and organisation goals.

1.4 Method of Research

Descriptive research design was used to prosecute the study. A questionnaire was designed and used, to know the point of view of respondents regarding the extent of social media usage in promoting tourism products in Cross River State. The first part of the questionnaire contains information regarding demographics and usage pattern of social media of the respondent. The second part has a series of close-ended indirect questions which were based on the relationship between social media marketing and the level of tourism products patronage in Cross River State. The survey was conducted online through social networking sites and responses of 150 Cross River State social networkers were collected. The instrument (questionnaire) was put over Google docs and the link was sent to users to fill the instrument through various social networking sites like Facebook, Orkut, Twitter, LinkedIn, Hi5, Bebo etc. The respondents and other people on different social networking sites were also requested to post the link from their profile. Hence, the sampling technique used was non-probability convenience sampling.

The population of the study comprised tourism stakeholders, tourism manager/staff and tourists (both local and international) in the twelve major tourism attractions in Cross River State. They include Ikom monoliths, the last of the drill monkeys (*Afi* Mountain sanctuary), the Agbokim waterfalls, Kwa falls, Calabar museum, Brickfield prison wall, Calabar Carnival, Leboku festival, Marina Resort, Mary Slessor Home Akpap- Okoyong, Tinapa and Obudu Mountain Resort.

Furthermore, three respondents from each of these sites were interviewed using in-depth interview method. Descriptive statistics was used in analysing the findings. For a visual representation of the findings, column and bar charts were used. Data collected from secondary sources (like textbooks, journal articles, newspapers and internet materials) were used to supplement the primary data.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This work will be of help to all the stakeholders of tourism development in Cross River State and Nigeria at large. It will also benefit the Tourism Development Commission, the Tourism Bureau and the Government of Cross River State on the use of the internet to increase the state tourism market reach. It will also enhance communication with existing and potential customers, provide accessible information and develop the state tourism brand image, thus, rejuvenating Cross River Tourism growth potentials and increase its contribution to the economy.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study encompassed the overview of tourism, the tourism potentials, tourism products, internet marketing, social media tools, and customers' patronage of tourism products, tourism product awareness and the implications on tourism business in general in Calabar, Cross River State. The study frame consisted of local and international tourists as well as management, staff and indigenes of selected destinations in Cross River State, Nigeria. The strategies of social media marketing in an organisation are the main factors that contributed to well-being of the most companies operating in business. This is because the use of social media in marketing their products and service create customer awareness.

Planning a successful use of social media marketing strategy involves linking a commission and business strategy to marketing decision and programs. In the current situation, the case study company is using social media marketing in marketing their tourism company and therefore, it is essential for us to understand how the company is planning its operation. Also, what are the current benefits of the company resulting from the use of social media marketing strategy in an organisation, define how the organisation uses the social media tools such as facebook, twitter and YouTube to achieve a marketing objective for the organisation.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

In this study, the researcher encountered four significant problems.

- i. Lack of Interest to Comment on Social Media:** Comments not a representative sample: Current and potential customers do not comment on social media. It is unknown whether those comments represent the views of most customers. It would be a mistake to change a product based on comments if the vast majority of customers are happy but not commenting on the product.
- ii. Comments Difficult to Match with Segments:** A further issue is that it is difficult to attribute comments to the particular customer segment. Therefore the organisation does not know if their targeted group has a problem with the product.
- iii. Comment Difficult to Attribute to Individuals:** It is difficult to analyse trends using social media data. If adverse comments are replaced with positive comments over a six month period, it is impossible to know if customers have been made happier or if the happy comments are from a new group. It was challenging for the researcher to interview customer to know if they are happy using social media or not.
- iv. Poor Network and Internet Facilities:** Poor internet facilities and network are significant challenges in this research, as people who requested to participate in the survey (via questionnaire) complained of internet data. People approached used their mobile data for the survey. In other instances, the location of a cyber café for the survey was either far for a respondent or close for the daily business. Those respondents finding it difficult with internet network were earmarked for in-depth interviews.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This section reviews major theoretical frameworks which may apply to the study and understanding of social media. One can separate these theories into two schools: micro-theories deal with those frameworks studying the dynamics of the contribution of information online and communication of individual social actors; and macro theories are those theories looking at the structure and dynamics of social actors and social media content through global or abstract views.

2.1.1 Micro-Theories

A) Word of Mouth/Psychological Ownership Theory and Perceived Control

Historically, tourism researchers have found that advice from friends and relatives is the most frequently obtained and influential source of information used by consumers in their travel decision making (Crotts 1999; Perdue 1993). The information communicated by friends and relatives is construed to be more credible, honest, and trustworthy than that generated from marketers since the communicators are not compensated for the referral.

Advancements in the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies now allow consumers to access personally meaningful critiques not only from friends and relatives but from strangers (e.g. travel blogs, which continue to grow in popularity). As an illustration, TripAdvisor, currently purports over 40 million reviews attracting over 50 million unique users each month (Dépêches 2010).

Asatryan and Oh (2008) applied the Psychological Ownership Theory in explaining why former guests are motivated to offer WOM feedbacks. On one level, some customers develop feelings of connections with firms they are loyal to that manifest into a sense of ownership, as evidenced by the 'mine', 'my', 'our' language they use in their reviews. In such circumstances, one would assume that a loyal guest would provide positive feedback to others, directing their negative feedback to management (Mattila 2001). However, where no such loyalty exists, the motive to write either a negative or positive review may be a desire to control or influence the business indirectly by communicating with its future potential customers. Loyal consumers' motives in posting positive reviews on travel blogs are attempts to reward firms; the motives of non-loyal customers are based on the satisfaction of being helpful to other consumers.

According to Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2003), the desire by the consumer to control through such communications may result in feelings of efficacy, intrinsic pleasure, and extrinsic satisfaction in providing such advice to others. These propositions point to strategies in which a firm can leverage customer feedback and social media for a firm's strategic benefit. On the one hand, firms should enhance the perception of psychological ownership and control among their customer base through loyalty and guest feedback and service recovery programs; they should keep more negative evaluations internal and positive feedback external. On the other hand, firms that do not emphasise customer loyalty or guest feedback should expect customers to both reward and punish their performance through social media.

B) Social Exchange Theory

Given that all social media are dependent on users providing content, an understanding of the motives of why individuals participate appears fundamental. Social exchange theory was originated from sociology studies exploring exchange between individuals or small groups (Emerson 1976). The theory mainly uses cost-benefit framework and comparison of alternatives to explain how human beings communicate with each other, how they form relationships and bonds, and how communities are formed through communication exchanges (Homans 1958).

The theory states that individuals engage in behaviours they find rewarding and avoid behaviours that have too high a cost. In other words, all social behaviour is based on each actor's subjective assessment of the cost-benefit of contributing to social exchange. They communicate or exchange with each other contingent on reciprocal actions from the other communicating party (Emerson 1976). The mutual reinforcement could be analysed through a microeconomic framework, though many times the rewards are not monetary but social, such as opportunity, prestige, conformity, or acceptance (Emerson 1976). The theory was arguably best summarised by Homans (1958, p. 606) when he wrote:

Social behaviour is an exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige. Persons that give much to others try to get much from them, and persons that get much from others are under pressure to give much to them. This process of influence tends to work out at equilibrium to a balance in the exchanges. For a person in an exchange, what he gives may be a cost to him, just as what he gets may be a reward, and his behaviour

changes less as the difference of the two, profit, tends to a maximum.

Hence, the reasons why people engage in a social exchange have been posited as a) an expected gain in reputation and influence on others; b) anticipated reciprocity on the part of others; c) altruism; and d) direct reward. Given that participation in social media is not compensated, the first three reasons appear to have particular relevance to why people participate in social media.

Travel blogs and social media sites have long recognised that there are far more people consuming information than generating. On YouTube, for example, though subscribers have uploaded over 2 billion videos and audio tracks to the social media site since its founding in 2005, the same site is accessed by more than 10 million unique daily visitors indicating there are far more viewers than contributors. The Global Web Index (2009) (TrendsStream Limited 2010; Li 2010), which tracks this phenomenon, suggests that users of social media can be segmented into four main groups. They are: (1) watchers (79.8% of the US social media users), who consume content only to help with their decision making; (2) sharers (61.2%), who upload and forward information to others in order to help others and demonstrate knowledge; (3) commenters (36.2%), who both review and rate products and comment on those who do in an effort to participate and contribute; and (4) producers (24.2%), who create their own content in an effort to express their identity and recognition. Framed in a social exchange theory, watchers take but do not reciprocate from the exchange suggesting they consider the cost of posting or commenting too high or fear of offering their opinion or raising their profile.

Though far more research is needed to test the validity of such groupings, segmenting users as to their exchange behaviours has a certain level of face validity. Given such a hierarchy of users based on their active exchanges, firms attempting to leverage social media to their advantage should attempt to engage consumers of all four segmentation levels. For watchers, the task is first to identify the specific social media they use, what information they seek, and what makes it engaging, to develop and position content that is relevant. The same strategy and content should be useful as well for sharers.

However, the tendency of sharers should be facilitated by marketers by simplifying the process of forwarding content (e.g., Retweet and Facebook forward links) as well as recognising and rewarding the desired behaviour. Facebook's OpenGraph has allowed a user to "like" or "comment" on any content on the web (Zuckerberg 2010). Firms may find advantages in getting ahead of this trend by proactively adding a commenting feature to each of their web pages. By doing so, they can directly manage the content of such comments which in effect will discourage spammers and trolls. Lastly, in regards to producers, attempts by firms to engage with their customers who create unique platforms for their customers may produce dividends at the brand or chain level. Publically recognising such sites that are helpful to the firm and increasing their visibility through search engine marketing are options.

C) Social Penetration Theory

Similar to social exchange theory, social penetration theory explains how human exchange forms relationships (Altman and Taylor 1973). However, the latter focuses more on the individual and dyadic levels while the former could explain behaviour at aggregated and organisational levels. Social exchange theory states that human beings form close relationships through self-disclosure.

Using an analogy of peeling of the layers in an onion, one must disclose himself or herself through the continuing process of exposing one's inner self and identity. It starts with public, visible, and superficial information, such as gender, clothing preferences, and ethnicity; slowly, as the relationship progresses, one starts to share his or her feelings; in the deepest level, one will expose his or her goals, ambition, and beliefs (Altman et al. 1981).

In the social world online, we may be able to design social networks in a way to separate these different layers of information. By default, specific information will be disclosed to the public, while private and semi-private information could be confidential; There might be ways to determine the levels of relationships from the mode and frequencies of communication, which could be all tracked online easily through online social media sites. A recent privacy lawsuit against Facebook highlighted the importance following the layered rules of social penetration in order (Gaudin 2010).

2.1.2 Macro-Theory

A). McLuhan's Media Theory

McLuhan is a Canadian philosopher and educator, the author of the famous quote "the media is the message" (McLuhan 1995). He argued that the media itself would transform people and society, instead of the actual content of the media. The actual messages people are communicating won't be any different on the new media; the interactivity and frequency of new communication pattern will change our behaviour forever. Thus, the media's effects on society are much higher than the content of the media.

He separates media into "cool" media and "hot" media. The former one requires a viewer to exert much effort and participation in understanding the content, such as television, seminars, or cartoons; the latter refers to those media that enhance one sense, so the viewers do not need to exert many efforts, such as films, radio, and photography (McLuhan 1995).

If we use McLuhan's arguments, social media will transform the users not due to its contents, but due to the mode of communication, it entails. For example, Twitter is only a micro-blogging service with a limitation of 140 characters. Theoretically, one can perform all the functions of Twitter through a blog service. However, it is precisely the limiting factors that made Twitter more nimble and real-time.

Many breaking news stories were spread out on Twitter, such as China's Sichuan earthquake and Mumbai's terrorist attack in 2008 (Parr 2009). As business managers and consumers, one needs to realise the changing behaviour due to the usage of new social

media services and adopt an attitude of acceptance toward those technologies and behaviour.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Previous Studies on Social Media and Marketing

Over the last few years, scholars have researched emerging issues related to social media and social media marketing. Some studies have explored the effectiveness and measurement issues related to word of mouth in social media (e.g. Smith et al., 2007; Trusov et al., 2008; and Fogel, 2010). Researchers have explored the consumer behaviour and attitude toward social media sites and implications for marketers (e.g. Chung and Austria, 2010; Hensel and Deis, 2010; Kyle and Michael, 2010; and Diffy and Kearns, 2011). Some authors have studied the social media in the context of a promotional mix (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Markus and Markus, 2010; Spiller, 2011 and Vij, 2012).

Others have focused on issues like measurement of return on investment on social media investment (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; and Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011). While other have evaluated product performance with social media (Asur and Huberman, 2010; and Lica and Tuta, 2011), some still examined the effectiveness of Blogs (Singh et al., 2008; Colliander and Dahlen, 2011). Social media mix has also been studied (Lewis et al., 2008; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009; and Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011). Mangold and Faulds (2009) are of the view that social media is an element of the promotion mix because in a traditional sense it enables companies to talk to their customers; while in a nontraditional sense it enables customers to talk directly to one another.

The content, timing, and frequency of the social media-based conversations occurring between consumers are outside managers' direct control. This stands in contrast to the traditional integrated marketing communications mix whereby a high authority of control is present. Therefore, managers must learn to shape consumer discussions in a manner that is consistent with the organisation's mission and performance goals. The purpose of social networking sites is to facilitate the talks between biggest fans of the organisation. Methods by which this can be accomplished include providing consumers with networking platforms and using blogs, social media tools, and promotional tools to engage customers. Providing information to the consumers regarding the product of their company closely bounds the customer to the company.

Colliander and Dahlén (2011) have compared the effects of brand publicity in social media advertising (blogs) and traditional media. Consumer responses towards a brand have been studied in seven favourite blogs and seven popular online magazines. They have demonstrated the greater publicity effectiveness of social media and the underlying factors behind it. Unlike online-magazines readers, who have a one-way relationship with content, blog readers socialise with bloggers besides reading their posts. This study displayed clearly how the writer–brand relationship and writers' credibility affected readers' perceptions of brand publicity on blogs.

Elizabeth *et al.* (2010) have explored social media trends, including social media opportunities and mobile marketing, and the potentially lasting effects that these trends have on advertising. In a survey of 3300 marketers conducted by Stelzner (2011), it has

been found that 90% of the marketers agree that social media is essential for their business. One-third of the marketers want to know how to monitor and measure the ROI of social media marketing activities. The majority of marketers (58%) are using social media for 6 hours or more each week and more than a third (34%) invest 11 or more hours weekly. 77% of marketers are planning to invest in video marketing like YouTube. 70% of the marketers want to learn more about Facebook and 69% want to learn more about blogging. 72% marketers have increased traffic and 62% marketers have improved their search rankings by using SMM.

Asur and Huberman (2010) have demonstrated how social media content can be used to predict real-world outcomes. Their study demonstrates how sentiments extracted from Twitter can be utilised to improve the forecasting power of social media. Similarly, Lica and Tuta (2010) show how social media can be used for predicting the success of a product or service. Spiller (2011) has examined the social media and its role in direct and interactive integrated marketing communication. The study explores how the marketers approach the social media as awareness and branding tool, rather than a direct response channel; and also identifies the opportunities to use social media as a relationship and sales channel. Hanna *et al.* (2011) have suggested a systematic way of understanding and conceptualising online social media as an ecosystem of related elements involving both digital and traditional media. They have shared several insights and lessons related to the strategic integration of Social media marketing into a firms' marketing communication strategy.

2.2.2 Consumer Engagement

Overall, social media marketing is a way by which brands engage with consumers in their efforts of further developing consumer relationships. Thus, one important aspect is consumer engagement. Consumer engagement is a central concept in the social psychology literature as it explains how social relationships initiate, endure and develop to being a higher-order construct, customer presenting themselves in a physical, emotional and cognitive presence in interacting with the brand (Nammir, Narane and Ali 2012).

In the online environment, consumer engagement is becoming more and more relevant since it is capable of influencing the final purchasing decision (Zailskaite-Jakste, Kuvykaite 2012). Thus, the concept of consumer engagement on social media was analysed in various aspects. Mollen and Wilson (2010) defined consumer engagement as including consumer experience as well as the interactive relationship between the brand and the consumer. In contrast Haven (2007) defined engagement on social media as the level of involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence that a person has with a brand over time. Haven's (2007) engagement framework of the 4 Is offers a more holistic appreciation of the consumer's action, emphasising the importance of people's behaviour and influencing powers.

According to Brodie, Hollebeek, Ilic and Juric (2009), the engagement process is occurring through the interaction of the consumer and the brand. Thus it can be analysed from both perspectives. From the consumer point of view, engagement depends on whether or not they are creatively motivated by a brand to get involved or when he or

she will be encouraged by other consumer or when they will receive some benefits (Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite 2012).

Consumers are more engaged with the brands when they can submit feedback (Mangold and Faulds 2009). Thus social media provides the perfect opportunity to ensure this aspect. Also, Mangold and Faulds (2009) present social media as a hybrid element in the promotional mix, magnifying the brand's promotional efforts. Again, Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite (2012) provided the stages of consumer engagement on social media, which are watching, sharing, commenting, producing and curating. Throughout this process, consumers are engaged by receiving cognitive and social benefits guaranteed through social interaction (Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite 2012).

Consumer engagement is seen as a strategic imperative for understanding their behaviour and co-creating interactive experiences on a cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspect (Brodie, Ilic, Juric and Hollebeek 2011). The whole customer experience of engagement should provide additional value for the customer (Sashi 2012). In this aspect, consumer engagement is achieved by optimising the consumer's direct and indirect experience with the brand and by fulfilling their physical and emotional needs (Pringle and Field 2008). Thus, brands have to engage with consumers in communication and encourage them to become active and loyal consumers (Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite 2012).

Also, consumers are more likely to talk about the brand when they know a lot about it and when they feel special (Mangould and Fauld 2009). Enabling consumers to feel special is done by offering products, information and special deals that are available

exclusively to a subset of consumers (e.g. Unilever's Dove "Campaign for Real Beauty" offered coupons on social media) and by the brand supporting causes that are important for consumers (Mangould and Fauld 2009).

2.3 Theoretical Orientation

Do theories matter for social media? Facebook was created because a Harvard undergraduate student wanted to connect with his fellow students (Mezrich et al. 2009); Twitter came from a brainstorming session of Twitter founder Evan Williams (Johnson 2009); neither was created due to a deep understanding of social network theories. More importantly, in today's online world, the large amount of behavioural data can be captured and analysed instantaneously, and new ideas can be tested out easily through various social media platforms. Some ideas will fly and become popular; some others will die off due to a lack of participation.

Businesses could test out new marketing methods and ideas easily online and get instant feedback from their customers. For example, Amazon has been the most significant social science laboratory by testing many models of consumer purchase behaviour (Contractor 2009). As Chris Anderson announced, online data deluge will make theories obsolete (Anderson 2008).

However, theories are still crucial for researchers and businesses to understand and take advantage of this media. First, relevant theories could help interpret and make sense of data. One can easily capture many types of behavioural data about customers, such as clicks, impressions, search volumes, comments, reviews, etc., but what do they represent?

Appropriate theoretical models could help make sense of data. Secondly, theoretical frameworks could help discover new opportunities in the field. After all, the core technology of Google was invented by adopting the old theories of biometrics in order to solve the problems of finding quality web pages online (Vise and Malseed 2006).

Potential opportunities may exist when we survey relevant theories in communications, sociology, and computer and information sciences. For example, complex interactions exist between informational artifacts and actors in social networks; one can share and recommend a piece of text, picture, or video to friends, and other people may discover you through shared information artifacts and add one as a friend.

Understanding this complex and dynamic relationship is essential for harnessing the power of social networks for marketing purchases, for example, discovering opinion leaders. Some traditional theories, such as social exchange theory, social penetration theory, and social network theory, could be valid paradigms in studying and explaining how people form networks, how they express their opinions, and how they pass information to each other. For example, Buckner's (1965) theory on rumour transmission indicates that accuracy and speed of rumour passing will be based on the structure of the network and the mental sets of individual actors in the network.

Thirdly, theoretical frameworks could help avoid technological dominance over our lives and society. Fast development of technologies could easily overwhelm users, both as business managers and consumers. Understanding their implications from a global and abstract view could help them deal with the inundation of information technologies.

CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Geographical Location of Cross River State

Cross River State is located geographically at latitude $04^{\circ}57^1$ North and longitude $08^{\circ}20^1$ Eastland it is situated at elevation 98 meters above sea level. To the North of it are the upper regions of the Cross River, Oban and Ogoja, while to the West are the lands inhabited by the Ibibios and Ibos. Calabar is bordered on the East by Cameroun and to the South by the estuary of the Cross River, which flows into the Bight of Biafra (Aye, 1967).

Fuller (1996) describes Calabar as “Canaan city of Nigeria”, Udo calls it “the New York city of Ibibio land and more recently as “a Cross River State metropolis (Akoda 2002) among other designations. Calabar derives its historical fame from its cosmopolitan character, being a crossroad of religion, culture, trade, civilisation and administration; it exerts tremendous social, cultural and economic pull on all the societies of the lower-Cross River region and beyond. Given this background, Calabar is naturally endowed with equatorial rainforest and agrarian vegetation which attracted early settlers, whose major occupations, such as hunting, fishing and farming, were supported by these natural resources.



Figure 1: Map of Cross River State Showing Calabar Municipal

3.1.1 Climate and Vegetation

The climate, vegetation and soil of Calabar are generally similar to those of West Africa, but there are also some varieties which are a function to the local structure and relief. The temperature in Calabar is high throughout the year with a gradual increase from about 22.5°C in the south to about 30°C in the North with seasonal variation between wet and dry months. Rainfalls decrease from over 3,000mm in the southeast to about 1,500mm in the north (Udofia and Inyang, 1987).

Climate and edaphic factors determine vegetation cover. On the swampy coast and creeks are found salt and freshwater mangroves. North of this, where soil water is salt-free because of heavy rains and surface drainage, acid tolerant vegetation such as palms and grooves of tropical hardwood trees are found. This forest, known as Rainforest, extends to the slopes of the transitional borderland (Udofia and Iyang, 1987). The basement complex area with its coarse-grained mineral rich soils produces wiry grasses on the mountains, and tall grasses mixed with trees on the slopes. In summary, the climate and vegetation of Calabar fall into four main categories namely equatorial, tropical, Guinea, Savanna and montane climates.

Udofia and Inyang, (1987) wrote that drought had occurred twice in 1972-74 and 1982,83. In these years the harmattan has been longer with a short break of one to four weeks between each. Sensitive fruit trees like mangoes and African plums have been fruiting twice in response to the second harmattan. This change is affecting farming calendar in the region (Udofia and Inyang, 1987). Udofia and Inyang (1987) also observed changes in the appearance of “foreign” weeds and the disappearance of others.

For example, a hitherto unknown weed which appeared in the region in the peak of Awolowo's political power has been nick-named Awolowo's because of its toughness.

Moreover, with regards to tourism activities, it is pertinent to point out that these climatic conditions, vegetations and relief affect tourism activities in the areas. Climates and vegetation affect and influence the activities of man, hence seasonality of economic activities and socio-cultural events (Hanyi, 2006). In line with this statement, the climate and vegetation of Calabar have greatly influenced tourism activities in the area. Because of the rainy season, tourism activities and events like, traditional wrestling, boat regatta, Ekpe masquerade festivals etc, have been shifted to dry season (from November). Other international events like the Obudu mountain race also held in November of every year.

3.2 Historical Background of Cross River State

According to Eyo (1986), old Calabar could be traced to leadership captains, trading agents, missionaries and colonial administrations which were at the end of the 17th century. It is possible that the Phoenician expedition of Hano visited the Cross River estuary in 600BC when it sighted the volcanic eruption of the Cameroun Mountain (Eyo, 1986). The earliest information on regular trade within this area of West Africa dates from, 1668 when two English traders were reported killed (Eyo, 1986). Old Calabar at first appeared on the Dutch maps on the 17th Century as Izio Rey, a name given to the Cross River.

Historically, old Calabar's cultural and political influence extended over the fertile cross River Basin which represents 1/6th of the total area of Eastern Nigeria including

Ibibio, part of the Igbo hinterland and the numerous ethnic groups settled along the upper reaches of the river. The political boundaries of the areas as administered from old colonial Calabar changed gradually in modern times (Eyo, 1986).

Several autonomous settlements, populated by different ethnic groups, formed the present-day Calabar municipality. These were the *Efik* settlements of old Calabar town, Duke town and Big *Qua* towns. These settlements soon expanded to include the nearby smaller villages and plantation settlements of predominately *Qua*, *Ibibio*, *Igbo* and *Efik* populations. The various groups moved into the area by the end of the 17th century. There was also a significant influx of slave population during the slave trade and plantation-founding periods of the late 18th and 19th century (Eyo, 1986). The name Calabar (Calliber, Calabaros or Calapongas) is thought to be of European origin, and to mean the form, the claw bar, while the prefix old was added in order to differentiate it from the “New Kalabar” settlement in the Niger estuary (Eyo, 1986).

Also, Aye (1967) recorded his version of the history of Calabar. According to him Calabar from its early foundation and down to the close of the last century was today made up of several settlements near and yet isolated from one another. Creek town was in 1833 estimated by Holman to have stood a distance of 12 miles from Duke town and built on the edge of the creek, a short distance from the river. Today, Creek was spread down to the Creek (Aye, 1967) about 1830, Henshaw town, as recorded by (N.D) was about four miles south of Duke’s town, while Willy town Robins town or old town stood about three and a half miles North of Duke town (Aye, 1967). Obutoug or old town was separated from Atakpa or New town in the south by a forest once leopard infested. From

the time of United States rule in the last 18th century by Effiom Edem, anglicised as Duke Ephraim, it has since been called after that powerful ruler, Duke town.

Qua settlements occupied the immediate hinterland in the east, with the Efik settlements in the South and south-east today owing to their rapid growth within the past century these settlements or towns as they are commonly known, have expanded and crept into one another, presenting a picture of a sort of conurbation to form one modern Calabar (Aye, 1967).

3.4 Socio-Political Organisation

The most significant problem that confronts humanity since antiquity has been that of politics, it is, the art or science of government (Aye, 2000). This is based on being prudent and sagacious in devising and pursuing measures for adoption to promote the public welfare of the nation, and this problem will continue to plague humanity to the end of time as long as man himself fails to be sincere in his art of government. A man by nature is selfish, greedy and covetous. On civilisation, ancient or modern, has as yet been able to free itself from these traits (Aye, 2000).

Calabar has three principal landlord kingdoms, namely the Qua Kingdom of Ejagham (Ekoi)/Bantu origin, the Efut and the Efik Kingdoms. The Qua Kingdom has the Ndidem of the Qua nation as the Grand Patriarch, the Efut have the Muri Munene as the Grand Patriarch, and the Efik Kingdom patriarch is known as the Obong. The Efik political authority as it concerns the Obong is hinged on a political tripod: Creek Town, made up of Ambo, Cobham and Eyo; Old Town, made up of Obutong; and Duke Town,

or Atakpa, made up of Duke/Archibong, Eyamba, Ntiero, Henshaw and Cobham. A separated Obong ruled each leg of this tripod at one time or the other. Table 1 is the names of governors of Cross River State from 1999 to present.

Table 1: Names of Governors of Cross River State from 1999 to Present

Names	Title	Took Office	Left Office	Party
Donald Duke	Governor	29 May 1999	29 May 2007	PDP
Liyel Imoke	Governor	29 May 2007	29 May 2015	PDP
Benedict Ayade	Governor	29 May 2015	Till Date	PDP

Source: Fieldwork, 2017.

3.5 Socio-Economic Activities

During their early settlement in old Calabar and prior to their trade with Europeans, they were mainly farmers and fishermen, cultivating such crops like plantain (*Musa paradisiaca*), Bananas (*Musa sapientum*), Cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*), Yams (*Dioscorea alata*), Oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*), Pepper (*Capsicum annum*). Other agricultural products include pawpaw (*Carica papaya*), Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*), Maize (*Zea mays*) and variety of other plants and vegetables (Aye, 1967). Hunting was done by men with cap guns and by trappings. They traded with the Portuguese whom they called “Botoki”. Their trade reverted to Dutch and later the French, and finally to the English (Aye, 1967).

Tom Shott inhabitants extracted salt cut from sea water and also engaged in fishing for fish, shellfish and shrimps. On market days these people met in the open market and exchanged their commodities, but later pieces of iron were put into

circulation. About the seventeenth century, the need for more slaves of the American colonies necessarily brought into old Calabar a change in trade from the ordinary commodities to that in slaves (Aye, 1967). So for one of the earliest known records of trades of old Calabar was that by Barbot in 1698. The head of each house or family lineage conducted trade transactions with Europeans. The Ephraim belongs to Atatps (or Duke town), while Mbo Otu “king Robin and Oyo (Eyo) were of the old town and creek town respectively (Aye, 1967).

The contents of Duke’s diary made it quite clear that among the items of trade for export from old Calabar in the eighteenth century, that of slaves surpasses all. Names of British ships captains who were familiar with the rulers and traders of old Calabar includes names like captains cooper, fair-weather, Brighthouse, Aspinal, Hewitt, of ford or Hughes and many more were documented (Aye, 1967). The volumes of traffics in slaves between 1700 and 1800 were immense. The smallest cargo recorded in Duke’s diary was that of captain fair weather whose lender went away with slaves on August 25, 1987, and the largest consignment was that of combesboch with 639 slaves (Aye, 1967).

Beside slaves other items of trade were yams which the diarist recorded having sold 1,000 to captain savage for 100 copper rods on February 14th 1985; and on December 14th of the same year, 6,000 were sold to captain fair-weather with two tons of palm oil. Captain Hughes is also reported buying 1,500 yams for 150 copper. Redwood was exported in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but by the nineteenth century, the supply began to run short. Cattle and other products were also exported while iron

found its main outlet through Cameroun's and could only be exported when some tiny quantities trickled through old Calabar (Aye, 1967).

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the colleague humanitarians were beginning to tell on the slave traffic, and these urged on the slow changing pattern of trade from the illegitimate to the legitimate and palm produce began slowly to displace the slave trade (Aye, 1967). John Adams in 1989 wrote that the people of old Calabar have exported seven or eight hundred tons of palm oil, besides bar wood annually and that their attention was directed to this owing to their losing the trade on slaves (Aye, 1967).

These exported goods often paid for imports. European traders, apart from the copper currencies, paid for them in European manufactured goods of various types most of these were tobacco, rum, brandy, gin, and champagne, gunpowder, cannon and cannon balls and a host of others (Aye, 1967).

While the men in Calabar were engaged in slave traffic, the women are naturally artistic. A typical example of feminine activity was the engraving industry, and the beautiful finished products attracted the attention of the English ships captains who began to import home some substantial quantities regularly (Aye, 1967).

Presently, there are other economic activities which also generate revenue for the Calabar municipality. They include palm oil, cocoa, pineapple and cashew. These agricultural precludes as the mainstay of the economy of the municipality, coupled with some trade in aquatic animals like fish, tourist attraction situated in the locality that generates revenue for the municipality (Mofineiws, July-August 2004, Vol. 3, No-6).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Presentation

Social media websites come in a wide variety of flavour, which is broadly based around the premise of personal interaction, creating, exchanging and sharing content, rating it and discussing its relative merits as a community. In today's consumer's life, social media have reached the position where very fast-evolving growth and its overwhelming coverage in the digital media scene have been recognised. More than 70% of companies have already used social media and many are unresisting of social media's increase. Social media is approaching a large number of active internet users all the time by its variety of platforms which provoke online customer's interaction, facilitate the content creation and sharing (Bloomberg Business Week, 2009).

It is practically impossible to design a marketing strategy without considering social networks. Social media had become a significant gradient in today's marketing mix in general and in the promotion mix in particular. Adapting some form of marketing online through social media is a crucial node for all businesses, especially in an industry where trends constantly change such as fashion and handicrafts. Efforts are made here to present the data collected from respondents and analyse them descriptively.

The survey conducted online through social networking sites gave us a total of 150 responses across Cross River State networkers. Table 1 below is the profile of the respondent

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Variable	Classification	Total Number (%)
Gender	Male	71
	Female	79
Age	Less than 18	0
	18-24	68
	25-39	72
	40-60	10

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

The 150 respondents agreed that the motivational factor for people joining/following a brand page/brand on social networking platforms varies from person to person. The main reason fans come to join a brand page or brand following is through brand invitation/advertising followed by a friend invitation. The search factor (personal Research) plays an important role; thus, it is crucial for brands to be found if consumers search for them. Brand loyalty also plays a role in motivation towards brand following on the social networking platforms. Brand loyalists are consumers who will market a particular brand and talk positively about it among their friends/peers via networks in order to receive exclusive deals and offers and exclusive content tool where the consumers want to feel exclusive. The attachment to the brand is a crucial motivator to advocate the brands. Demonstrating an appreciation for the brand, showing what one like,

and supporting the Brand's values play an active role in generating advocacy. Seven types of social media used by customers and their primary functions are discussed below.

4.1.1 Seven Types of Social Media Used and Their Functions

i. Social Network Sites:

The purpose of those sites is to allow users participate in a social network by creating their profile and connecting with friends or other contacts within the network or inviting friends and real-world contact to join the online community. So, there are vast numbers of users engaged in the social network sites. It is an online meeting platform for people for creating the content, sharing them with others, and interacting with the likeminded people easily (Ryan and Jones 2009). The social networks like Facebook, Myspace, Bebo and LinkedIn have attained popularity on the stream of social media marketing. Social network site is best places to look for advertising changes based on analyses of users profile information. Controversies around the benefit of advertising in social network site still take place.

ii. Forum and Discussion Sites:

The advent of forum and discussion sites comes at very early in the days of internet development. Certain groups such as Yahoo Groups and Google Groups came up. These Groups are created with public or only-member access which allows the user to post messages and to discuss within the forum (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Forum and discussion sites are used for many reasons in marketing. These include:

- (a) Closer to Customers:** Checking out what consumers are talking about in forum is a great way to find out what makes them tick. The more a marketer can learn about customers, the better prepared the marketer will be to engage customers in a meaningful way.
- (b) Raise of Profile:** Contributions to the discussion in forum can provide excellent opportunities for help and advice, and as such, create an avenue for the product owner to demonstrate expertise on the topic under discussion. Soon people will start to respect and trust contribution in forum and that can do wonders for online reputation and profile of the product.
- (c) Nipping Bad Things in the Bud:** By participating in forum, the product owner will be able to spot potentially negative comments or conversation relating to the business or brand and be proactive in resolving them before they escalate.

iii. Social Bookmarking:

Social bookmarking allow users to save bookmarking to their favourites web resources such as pages, audio, video, etc and categorise them using tag labels that help a customer to identify and file the content he wants later. The idea of social bookmarking services is to stimulate the users to manage their bookmarking using tags instead of having them in the browser-based systems of the computer's folder. This also makes them easy to share with friends, colleagues or the world at large, and the tag-based organisation because no more cumbersome in the hierarchical folder systems to remember.

The advantage of using bookmarking in marketing is that it creates exposure to one's business through its useful content. It makes it easy for visitors to bookmark your pages by providing share links or icons encouraging them to explore the social element of these sites to improve their content exploration to getting valuable and targeted traffic to the website. The tags applied to the web pages by people who add them to social bookmarking sites are useful.

iv. Social Media Submission Sites:

Social media submission sites are made for submission and discussion of articles about the online market. Users submit articles, videos, podcasts, among others to the website in order to vote for particular content. Thus, the more people vote for a particular content item, the higher the content rises in ranking. Submissions that get enough votes end up on the site's homepage, which can drive significant traffic. However, as the votes are made, they come with lots of discussions and debate on the site, which offers the website owner tremendous insight into the way people think and react on the website contents of interest to them. Examples of some favourite social media submission sites are Digg (www.digg.com), Reddit (www.reddit.com) and sphinn (www.sphinn.com).

There are many advantages of social media submission sites. First, it amplifies the visibility of a particular website. Second, it can draw traffic to a website. Again, if a company has the articles or contents rise high in those social media submission sites, that company will get significant traffic and loyalty. Besides that, the opportunity for a company to reinforce its profile is an added advantage (Ryan & Jones 2009).

v. Reviews and Rating Sites:

They allow users to review and rate companies, products services, books, music, hotels, restaurants, anything they like. Websites like www.epinions.com, www.loudervoice.com, etc. can be reviewed by users as well as the component added to a broader site, such as the product rating and review facilities on e-commerce sites like Amazon (www.amazon.com).

Review and rating sites rely on advertising to generate revenue and therefore offer advertising opportunities for businesses either directly or through advertising and affiliates networking. Even if people are not rating a marketer's business directly, he can still get valuable information on these sites on what is working for consumers and what is not within one's particular industry with the use of review and rating sites. It also helps in posting reviews about a business. That sort of feedback is pure gold, reinforcing what you are doing well and points out areas where one can improve for marketing the site is a research free tool (Ryan & Jones 2009).

vi. Podcaster of Interest:

A podcaster can be a valuable channel to reach the target market. Unlike mass media, this social media platform open the new way for companies to be digital conscious players. Companies can create own podcasting services which provide podcasts to prospect customers. Initially, if customers are less technology savvy, they prefer to view now or listen now with nothing to install or register. However, if the

customers find the content compelling and right for them, then they will subscribe to the company's site (Ryan and Jones 2009).

vii. Micro-Blogging

Micro-blogging is a relatively new trend that is far-reaching through early online adopters and looks set to explode as more people embrace social media and learn of its existence. It is necessarily a short message broadcast service that let people keep their friends up to date via short text posts (usually less than 160 characters). Examples of favourite micro-blogging sites are twitter (www.twitter.com) (the most significant player in this space) and Google-acquired Juiku (www.juiku.com).

The real value of micro-blogging is not necessary in the individual posts, but in the collective aggregation of those mini-posts into more than the sum of their parts. When you receive frequent, short updates from the people you are connected to, you begin to get a feel for them, to develop a better understanding of what they are all about, and to feel a stronger connection with them. Micro-blogging is efficient in improving customer service on micro-blogging sites; a company can share information about products and services very quickly. People can post their opinions, which can be positive comments or complaints. Those are like instant feedback for the company to analyze, resolve any mistakes and to improve customer service managing system.

4.1.2 Time Spent on Networking

Social networking is now an essential aspect of the day, with most people spending more than an hour online. The below chart depicts very clearly that how much it

is important for the marketers to exploit the situation by making useful marketing strategies. 6% of our respondents spent more than three hours on social network, 10% agreed that they spent two to three hours on a daily basis networking, 38% are of the view that less than an hour is enough for them to socialize via network; while 46% spent one or two hours on social media. The above information is represented in figure 2.

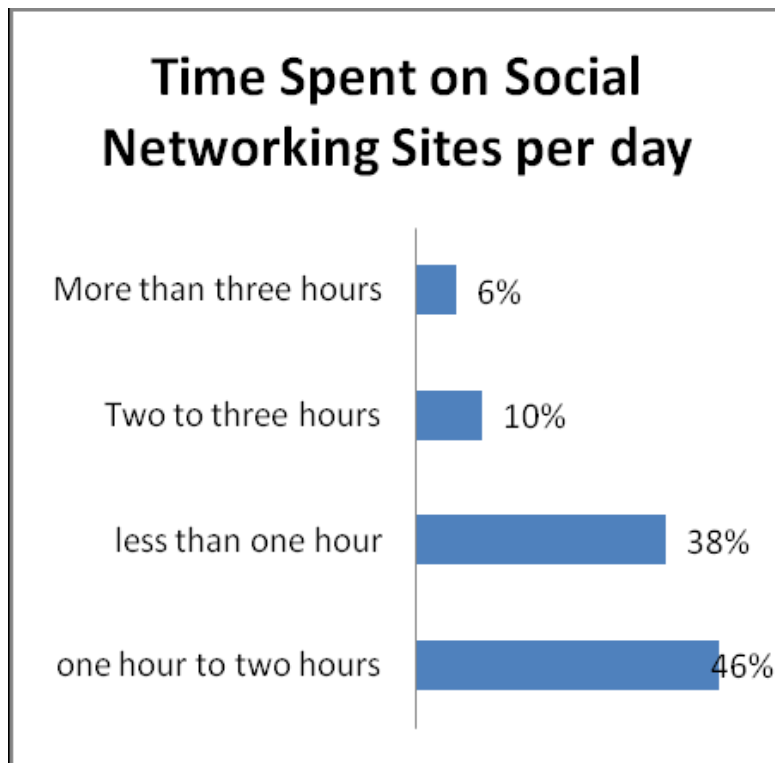


Figure 2: Time Dedicated for Socializing

Our survey further revealed that social media helped people connect with long lost friends. This is evident with 58% respondent in the survey using such a platform to connect with friends. 24% of respondents believe in exchanging their views and experiences on various products/Services, while 18% are for playing games and participating in contests. Therefore, tourism products and service marketers have plenty

of opportunities to communicate with their targets and offer them their products/service to persuade them to transact and become a loyal customer to them. It is a fast-growing platform for brands in all the sectors. Social media acts as a useful tool as it is the best way to reach out market segment without incurring a considerable cost.

The 150 respondents in Cross River State are all using social media networks and consider social media before starting of purchase any tourism product or visiting destination site(s). To them, their decision-making process is based on social media. More than two third of users are always considering social media networks at the time of getting into the purchase decision. So, it is of enormous importance for the tourism marketers (like travel agents) to put information on the social sites where there is large probability to come into the eyes of consumers and if successes into pursuing the customers' then positive word of mouths will automatically get started. This will eventually give rise to multiple impacts and conversation will get started on the web.

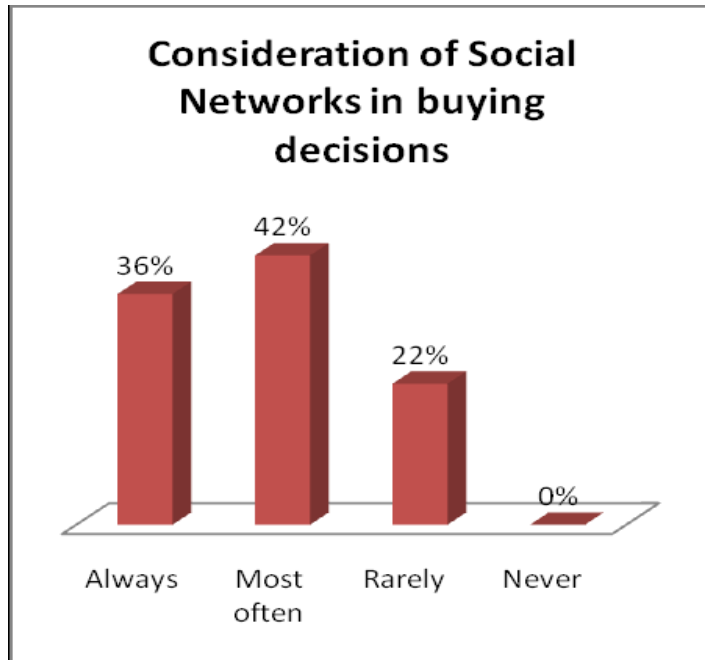


Figure 3: Considering Social Media in Buying Decision

4.1.3 Strategies for Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing

Based on the 150 respondents and the literature reviewed, we identified some measures for effective implementation of social media marketing strategies by marketers of tourist destination/attractions, products and services:

1. Setting specific objectives. The objectives should be clear regarding financial or non-financial result anticipated from the campaign.
2. Allocating sufficient resources regarding time, money and manpower. There should be a separate social media marketing department and budget allocated to it.
3. Conducting research to identify the areas required to be focused during the campaign.

4. Developing a Social Media Marketing Plan – What, When, Where and How the campaign will work. Either:

- What kind of Information will be shared with the audience? (Information should be real and the quality of content should be good, content and themes can be according to days and events),
- When is the time to target the traffic on social media sites? (The frequency, reach and yield of a social media marketing campaign should be based on the analysis of data collected during research phase)
- Where should one focus his effort? (The networking sites and target audience therein should be based on the findings of data analysis during preliminary market research).
- How should one go about engaging the target audience on social media sites? (Go for video advertisements, fan page, Information update and Contest etc. Find the bloggers and journalist who are talking about the industry).
- Make Internal Collaboration - All the employees of the organisation should be part of the campaign plan. They are the real advocates for the company and the campaign.
- Integrate and synchronise social media marketing with other marketing communication messages across the channels, online as well as offline.
- Build Relationships (Do's : Start- interaction, participate, be true, listen to your customers, make them feel special, provide customer services, give timely

response/information, involve and engage your customers in co-creating the marketing events and content, make your customers a part of your organization, provide proper feedback and rewards to your customers, and value their interest and privacy).

(Don't: Do not disturb your customers without their permission or interest, do not irritate your customers by passing unnecessary comments, videos, pop-ups and advertisements, do not share customer information and data without their permission, and do not interfere in their other social activities on social networking sites).

8. Monitor the Results (Watch the changes in financial results - sales and revenue during the campaign. Keep following the non-financials like number of fans, unique visitors, comments, Likes, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) rankings etc.)

Above all, social media marketing content should be 'interesting', 'informative', 'interactive' and 'reliable'. Marketers should align their social media marketing effort with the changing tastes and preferences of customers, especially millennials (defined as those born in the 1980s) as social networking is reported to be embraced by 75 percent of the Millennials, compared with 50 percent of the Generation X members and just 30 percent of Baby Boomers, (Sandeep and Jyoti, 2013).

4.2 Social Media as a Tool for Tourism Marketing:

Social media, also known as consumer-generated media, has brought many changes in communication with customers, in tools and strategies for communication, to

be more precise (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Kumar, and Mishra, 2015). There are many different definitions used in order to define social media. It is a relatively new term in marketing and there is no general opinion to refer to its exact meaning. One of the reasons must be every day changing and evolving nature of social media. Mangold and Faulds (2009) made a clearer view of social media existing today.

Social media can be interpreted as a way to experiment with new opportunities that can help improve and create new forms of customer value which is very significant when it comes to attracting new customers (tourist in the case of tourism) and building strong relationships with them, as well (Constantinides, 2014; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). The Internet has changed from world of information to world of influence at the same time and its elements such as social media ‘start to revolutionise the state of marketing, advertising and promotions’ (Hanna, Rohn, and Crittenden, 2011). Because of this, companies begin to consider social media as an essential element of marketing strategy.

What one may ask is: what makes social media so attractive and useful tool in every aspect of our lives, including tourism? Firstly, according to Rashtchy, Kessler, Bieber, Shindler and Tzeng (2001), the internet has become a mass media vehicle for the consumer – sponsored communication. Advantages and disadvantages of the social media as a marketing tool for tourism development in Cross River State are:

- **Reduced Costs** - Based on the fact that most of the social media sites are free, there is no cost for creating a profile and sharing information. The most famous example is Facebook, with a slogan “Facebook is free and always will be”.

However, these sites offer the possibility of targeting consumers using specific criteria, which costs less in comparison to other advertisement options such as television. Therefore, advertising tourism destination sites or products and services via social media is cost-effective.

- **Social Interaction** – Taking into account the number of hours spent online, checking email, social network sites, blogs, reading newspapers, watching videos, the internet has become an important arena. Consumers behaviour studies reveal that individuals give significant consideration to information shared online, spending more time with websites that provide third-party evaluation. Social media gives the users (tourists) reasonable opportunity to interact with a networking platform to discuss destination sites, interact on products purchased as souvenirs.
- **Targeted Market** – Thanks to the ability to target audience and different target groups based on their preferences, the online market has become very popular and frequently used. This means that, based on the preferences, one checks out in social media (such as interest in some movie or travel), one will get adds regarding his interest. Google has gone even further by using its algorithm to offer adds based on recent search. However, according to Hill, Provost and Volinsky (2006), traditional marketing methods do not appeal to some segments of customers. Some consumers value the appearance of being on the cutting edge or “in the know” deriving satisfaction from promoting new and exciting products” (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).

- **Customer Service** – Social media sites offer different types of shortcuts with the idea to make the purchasing process easier and faster. One of the most famous frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is with quick lines to different companies and with explanations regarding the content on the site. “A thoughtful logistics system guarantees a fast delivery after the checkout process contributions to customer satisfaction, which in turn contribute to loyal behaviour” (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).
- **Interactivity** – Steuer (1992) broadly described interactivity as the extent to which users participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time” (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).

Nowadays, using different social media tools such as social network sites, blogs or websites, tourists are enabled to reach information quickly and in more significant details. Various forum offer an option for starting a discussion regarding concrete and precise questions that help one decide on the purchasing service or product. Finally, the development of ICTs and particularly the internet empowered the new tourists who are becoming known and are seeking exceptional values for money and time. They are less interested in following the crowds in packaged tours and much more keen on pursuing their preferences and schedules” (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The process of changing the behaviour of the tourist, their preferences and demand undergo the process of increasing the importance of social media as a marketing tool.

Therefore, becoming an essential variable in this research, the internet has influenced and changed the way and how tourists search and buy not only products but also refer to services as well. Internet influences tourists' travel planning: where to go, when is the best time to go, what to see, where to eat, what others say about the destination and some other information about destination are available online. According to Tunnard and Haines (1995) "information is used to position, market and sell destination" (as cited in Esu & Ebit, 2010).

According to Singh (2014), social media is playing an imperative role in a digital marketing world. He also suggests that social media is an appropriate tool used to increase brand awareness and that availability of media network is a significant factor. Social media is an authoritative source of travel planning (Amaro and Duarts, 2014). Several other studies agree to the importance of social media and its impact on travel decision (Marchiori & Onder, 2015). There are a large number of possibilities to market and brand services (and products) through social media. Awareness, proper networking, analysis of competitors, addressing all issues, brand value, more online visibility and reputation management are some of the aspects to deal on social network sites (Singh, 2015). Every day increase in the number of network users is one more reason to pay more attention to the potentials of social network sites for marketing.

4.3 Social Media and Tourism Promotion in Cross River State

Social media sale promotion has the same objectives as any other form of sales promotion: to increase sales, to attract new customers, to stimulate the quick response of

an individual (Nayem, 2013). Research has shown that sales promotion influences purchase intention. Ye and Zhang (2014) examined this relation and results shows that there is a positive effect of online sales promotion on purchase intention. Also, the importance of attracting new customers and increasing purchase intention by this promotional tool is suggested by Faryabi, Fesaghandis and Saed (2014).

Social media plays an increasingly important role in many aspects of tourism, especially in information search and decision-making behaviours and tourism promotion focusing on the best practice for interacting with consumers via social media channels (social sharing of holiday experiences). The most profound effect that social media has had on the tourism industry till date is the choice of destination and booking of flight and accommodation. Tourists interest in destination sites such as Obudu Mountain Resort, TINAPA, Cross River National Park, among others is made possible due to the use of social media.

Presently, a tourist, from the comfort of house, can make a reservation for flight and accommodation of choice. Interestingly, tourists post memories of their visit to Cross River State on social media, and subsequently, new admirers can take a clue from the pictures and video clips of previous visits to decide whether to visit such destination. While scholars research and document their research findings, tourists on the other hand, clip-video and picture destination sites and post them on social media. This singular act guarantees the documentation of such sites via electronic devices. Thus, both printed copy of research and electronic copy aims at documentation.

People have always loved sharing photos and videos taken of their travels. What social media has done is to facilitate and expand people's ability to share travel experiences with a broader audience than ever before. Over 97% of millennials share photos and videos of their travel online, building an important web of peer-to-peer content that serves to inspire potential guests. This trend has not gone unnoticed in many hotels and resorts have turned to run social contests and campaigns to ensure that they get some credit for their guest through social activities. Hotels and Restaurants used guests wedding photos instead of staged, professional photographs to market their wedding venues.

Social media has also had a significant impact on the travel agency in Cross River State. The availability of information and ease of self-service booking have travel agencies to change from a brick – and –mortar model to a more digital one. Travel agencies are not obsolete – they are still responsible for 55% of all airline booking, 73% of a package booking. However, many agencies have shifted their focus from in – person to online experience as they adapt to new technology and market trends. Agents working with millennial travellers should take into account the generation's preference for “experiences over material” instead of trying to sell them on flight upgrades and lodging up.

Acquiring new customers by most marketers is far more expensive than retaining existing ones. Loyalty programs have become a core piece of the travel business model and social media has had a massive impact on how hotel loyalty programs are constructed. Many customers understand that the opinion that they share with their

networks have tremendous influence. As a result, these guests feel entitled to compensation for the positive word-of-mouth marketing that they are doing for a brand. More than 25% of our respondents that participated in loyalty programs posted about a brand in exchange for loyalty points. Thus, with the availability of technologies that allow mention and hashtag tracking across social media channels, it is easier for hotels to discover new ways of improving in hotel business by promoting their hotels through social media and giving out royalty to passionate guests as benefits for participating in social media.

Finally, social media has altered the landscape of marketing in the leisure and hospitality industry. Most travellers determine their travel plans based on reviews and social media shares, making online customer service a crucial part of building a positive brand reputation. The prevalence of social media has disrupted traditional customer service models –for hotels and travel agencies alike.

4.4 Data Analysis:

In the course of this research in Cross River State, our informants (those orally interviewed) agreed that they learned about the tourist sites by word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and got specific information about the tourism products from the local in the territory rather than from websites. A higher number respondent further stated that they did not join any social network groups on Cross River Tourism.

Some who joined the social network group (Facebook Fan Page) created by Cross River Tourism Bureau explained that they were not motivated to patronize these tourist

sites due to irregular updates and delay in responding to messages sent/questions asked about the destination through the social networking sites such as the Cross River Tourism facebook fan page. This confirms the result of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (2015) that the tourism marketing skill of Nigeria is below average; thus, resulting in under – development and moderate level of patronage of tourism products.

This is largely because in addition to the fact that most of the Tourism sites are under-developed; the internet is also not adequately utilised in creating awareness and the desired level of interest in the available sites. Laudon & Laudon (2007) noted that many tourism-related organisations would have to go through significant business processes re-engineering to take advantage of the emerging technologies in order to transform their processes and data handling as well as their ability to operate and compete in the emerging global mark place. This situation is exact of tourism organisation in Cross River State.

4.4.1 Social Media and Tourism Development: Implications for Economic and Social Development in Cross Rivers State

As a global phenomenon and platform for knowledge, information and person to group communication, the social media has come to shape our live in very fascinating and remarkable ways. Scholars like Lasswell (1927); Field (1991), Klapper (1960) and Cantril (2005) have demonstrated in varying degrees the power the media could exercise upon the individual and society.

More recently, Castells (2010, 2012) and Mutsvairo (2016) have also shown both the utilitarian purposes as well as changing the nature of social media, particularly when they are deployed in certain contexts in combination with other medias. The social media in particular has come to represent the perfect example of the democratization of information and technology with demonstrable capacity to migrate communication of interactive dialogue, and social activation.

The social media has become a market place of ideas and creativity for tourism and tourism related products and services. Product and services are sold online; thus, providing opportunity for startups to commence businesses on a small scale. Both Cross River State indigenes and none indigenes have perfect amazing entrepreneurial skill to make a living through opportunities provided by social media platforms, and have equally become employers of labor. This assertion is evident in high number of cyber cafés, travel agencies, and souvenir shops with online sales in Calabar.

Huge financial transactions have been conducted by individuals and organizations, online deposits and transfers, have made financial transactions easier. In the past, it was difficult to travel without physically going to transporting and tourism organization to make booking and other logistics. Today, tourists wishing to visit any destination site in Cross River State will from the comfort of their house made reservations for flights and accommodations. Again, through social media, tourists can have a video or audio call with a travel agent for purchase of package tour. Through the website of travel agents, tourists can now preview a destination site by clicking on video clips of destination sites

and festivals on the web page. This singular act gives tourists true feeling and courage to take decision on which destination to visit.

In the Tourism industry, websites and social media provide a wealth of information with regards to experiences and review of the destination, property facilities and restaurants (Manap, 2013). Social media has added new channels of communication to tourism. Most tourists always use the internet for destination information prior to decision making. The tourism industry value chain starting from countries tourism – boards, tourism agent, tour operators, transportation and airline companies, hotel and restaurant operators, destination management companies and local tourist management organisation all use social media tools to reach potential customers (Ernestad, 2010). Social media generates more business exposure, increased traffic and improves search generating leads and improved sales at lower cost (Sterner, 2011).

Social media provides a virtual network place where people can enjoy expressing and exchanging opinions, disseminate and control messages (anywhere, anytime). There is a wide variety of social media, ranging from social sharing sites such as YouTube, MySpace through social networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook etc. With the introduction of the World Wide Web, the internet became a global network and with the increased usage of internet, social media emerged and got popular; especially after 2003. Social Media Marketing (SMM) also picked up all over the world by the end of first decade of 21st century (Vij, 2012). Social media expedites conversation as opposed to traditional media, which delivers content but doesn't allow readers/viewers/listeners to

participate in the creation or development of the content.” In today’s competitive world, brands are fighting for space in the minds of consumers.

Though the traditional modes of advertising and marketing like television, print media and outdoor media still contribute to a major chunk of the advertising budget, they cannot be solely relied upon to ensure reach to the target audience. Using social media like blogs and networking sites for marketing of products is fast increasing its importance. Social media provide marketers interactive communication environments with opportunities to enhance existing relationships with consumers. Consumers’ comments on Cross River State tourism product on social media can produce a negative or positive product buzz and the virtual messages affect consumer purchasing decisions. Social media marketing is creating new opportunities as well as new challenges to the marketers. Companies are looking for different ways to reach their target customers. Social Media Marketing (SMM) is the buzz word in the field of marketing and companies are adopting it to reach their customers to achieve better performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

This research revealed the important of a social media in promoting tourism. Social networking is a powerful medium to advertise good thing about people and places. Therefore, it is now being used to promote the tourism industry through networking sites where people mostly communicate and meet new ventures. The marketing practitioner in the tourism industry must adopt and integrate social media in their marketing strategies rather than taking social media as just an optional extra. Tourism organization has to use social features to break communication barriers and increase efficiency for them to remain competitive. Social media is one of the effective communication channels in the tourism industry and has more efficiency in recent years than other channels. Tourists refer to social media at all stages of their trips and this communication channel has fundamentally changed the decision making of travelers.

The widespread of social media among young people is even increasing and negative effects on every sector, however the greatest impact is on the tourism sector. Hospitality, travel, transportation enterprises and even tour operators in tourism sector are getting reviewed extensively. As the product of tourism sector is service, marketing this product is very important in spite of the high quality of service at some enterprise slightest negative comment can affect business in worst sense for this reason; tourism enterprises should use social media in an effective way creating official accounts and hiring staff to manage these accounts.

As the young generation might share negative comment using photos and videos on social media account enterprises should resolve this dissatisfaction of the guests and find most efficient solutions to prevent the possibility of involvement of other people from this review. This situation is of great importance for business when considering the speed of social media. Today, most large tourism businesses utilize social media effectively, since there are many social media network including on line booking sites the guests can share their comments promptly and enterprises provide solution as soon as they enter the process to prevent their brand images. Social media is a good advertising tool as there is a high potential in this sense due to positive reviews of the guests, As a result, the tourism enterprise should be aware of this new power of advertisement world and use social media as a new communication and advertising tool in the most efficient way to provide best service to the guest.

5.2 Recommendations

This research has explored the use of social media in marketing tourism destination sites in Cross River State. We have identified that tourism business, agencies, hotels, transportation enterprises should use social media effectively and also, related staff should use social media platform for social networking as a marketing tools. Irrelevant comment made through fake accounts should be dealt in legal ways to protect brand image. Use of emerging technologies in tourism marketing has emerged as one of the most effective tools in the marketing competition. Few areas the researcher did not investigate are considered here to be adequate for recommendation for further studies:

1. Scholars are encouraged to further study the legislative and regulations governing social media. Such a study would enable the general public to understand if there adequate or existing laws guaranteeing the continued survival of businesses marketed on the social media.
2. Scholars are also encouraged to further study the marketing options at the disposal of tourism industry. Specifically, marketers are not sure of what customers what to see on social media, what to advertise, and timeframe to handle their comments. Such a study would ultimately help both social networkers and tourism industry in proffering emerging problems on the social media.

CONCLUSION

Tourism destination in Cross River State have a potential to grow just like destinations in other parts of the world. However, the growth pace of tourism in Nigeria generally has been painstaking slow as observed by the World Tourism Organization (2013). The advent of the internet and its application to tourism has proven successful in the marketing of destination in the developed countries of the world such as USA and even South Africa. This can also prove to be the case in Cross River State, Nigeria. Social media continues to grow. Its impacts are felt on many social and economic aspects. The tourism industry is primed to take advantage of social media outlet, as the industry has long relied largely on destination reputation, consumer opinion, and spread of information and positive word of mouth advertising. Social media plays a very important role in the tourism industry. Internet is maximally utilized to unleash the great tourism potentials embedded in Cross River State, the unique tourism zone of Nigeria.

According to the theory and our respondents tourism marketers (airlines, travel agents, etc) use social media in their marketing communications because it allows them to inform their customers and create a two-way communication. Two-way communication enables companies to both listen to their customers and respond to criticism quick and easy. This communication can also help companies to influence consumers and differentiate their company.

Our study has also shown that the use of social media can help companies strengthen their corporate identity, build confidence for the company as well as create relationships. Companies want to be present where consumers are today, to monitor what

is being said about them and their competitors and social media enables them to do that. Social media can also help companies identify their fans and critics. The use of social media is a cost effective way to become global and create reach.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

S/N	Name	Approx. age	Occupation	Place of interview	Mode of interview	Remark
1	Bassey Ubong	35	Cyber Café	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable
2	Ekpo Joseph	40	Tour Operators	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable
3	Egede Afia	46	Social Networker	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable
4	Agbo Udoh	53	Social Networker	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable
5	Edem Anthony	47	Social Networker	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable
6	Caleb Mathew	49	Tour Guide	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable
7	Nfan Gaga	39	Social Networker.	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable
8	Philip Osang	40	Tour Guide	Cross River State	Direct	Reliable