

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM



**EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERNATIONAL
TOURISM MARKETING; A CASE STUDY OF GHANA'S YEAR OF
RETURN 2019**

BY

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**LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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DECLARATION

I declare that this long essay is my original work which I produced after intensive research. In situations where other people’s views have been presented, full acknowledgement has been made. None of the material contained in the work to my knowledge has been presented, either wholly or in part for the award of a degree in this or any other institution or university.

Name of Student.....

Signature.....

Date.....

This study has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University’s Supervisor

Name of Supervisor.....

Senior Lecturer,
School of Graduate Studies and Research,
Ghana Institute Of Journalism.

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Lord Almighty, my parents, friends especially Benjamin Kwaku Asare and family members for their support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The world was taken aback when Ghana took centre stage in organizing one of the best global festivals under the name “Year of Return”. An exercise launched by Ghana’s President, HE Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in commemoration of the 400 years celebration of the arrival of blacks on the coast of America. The President echoed during the launch “we know of the extraordinary achievements and contributions they (African in the diaspora) made to the lives of the Americans, and it is important that this symbolic year, we commemorate their existence and sacrifice” (Business Ghana, 2019). The campaign brought about fresh impetus to the quest to unite Africans on the continent with their brothers and sisters in the diaspora. The exercise was a launch pad to boost tourism in Ghana with the main objective of making Ghana a key travel destination for African Americans and the rest of the African diaspora, rebuild lost past of these 400 years and more importantly promote investment in Ghana and foster relationships with Africans in the diaspora (Business Ghana, 2019).

Indeed, the Year of Return which took centre stage was catalyzed by the emergence of modern technology (Business Ghana, 2019). The emergence of Web 2.0 has brought about an apparition of interactive platforms termed “social media”. Lange-Faria and Elliot (2012) opined that social media has become the modus operandi used in the twenty-first century, with applications that foster unprecedented growth in human interaction in modern times. These social media platforms are key platforms where users can become members, create a profile, and build a personal network

connecting them to other users with whom they share their own content beyond what traditional media provided (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2017). Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube are few examples of social media sites.

The increasing prevalence of social media platforms is one significant development in the evolution of the internet. It enables internet users to collaborate, communicate, and publish original content in the form of blogs, videos, wikis, reviews, or photos (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). According to Leung, Law, and Lee (2016), social media appears to be a strategic tool that plays an important role in tourism and hospitality management and marketing. Social media has made an indelible mark on the web landscape, without it, no marketing campaign strategy is complete (Ayisi, 2017). Using peer recommendations, sharing, building brand personality and others are some of the wonderful benefits it brings. The exponential spread of a marketing message by online word of mouth, sometimes referred to as word of mouse is what social media excels at with 2.4 billion users worldwide (Facebook 2019). With the ability to display text, images and videos, these platforms have immense marketing potential for tourism marketing. Indeed it's the engine spearheading international tourism all over the world (Ayisi, 2017).

Contrary to social media impact on tourism, traditional tourism marketing had many challenges, in that its scope and reach was limited and so was its impact even though it costs as twice as social media marketing (MoT 2019). Due to the apparent challenges in traditional marketing the Year of Return adopted social media marketing. Hence making Ghana a brand; beyond it being the gateway to African whilst displaying the rich culture and history of the country. In conclusion, the long essay examined the effects of social media on international tourism marketing

1.2 Problem statement

The influence of social media on tourism has attracted the attention of practitioners and researchers in tourism and hospitality across the globe (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2016). Most studies have however, looked at the influence of social media on travel planning process for that matter (Ráthonyi, 2013; Ayeh, Au & Law, 2016).

In addition, Ayisi (2017) cited that studies on social media on tourism have largely been done in Western and Asian contexts. Even though social media is not a new phenomenon, empirical studies on this subject have been conducted in the setting of the developed world (Fong 2018). In Ghana for instance, research have seldom focused on social media application in the tourism sector which is mostly dominated by traditional form of media and communication (MoT, 2019).

Indeed, the calls for research to understand social media usage and its usefulness on tourism marketing in Ghana cannot be over emphasized (MoT, 2019); since, information gap exists, pertaining to the role and potential of social media in particularly enhancing Ghana as an attractive and safe tourist destination for events such as the year of return especially (MoT, 2019).

1.3 Justification for the research

According to Hanekom (2015) tourism is observed as a critical constituent for the development of most African nations; because of its capacity to spur growth across the wider economy and create jobs. There is a need for ongoing efforts to promote the tourism industry for it to remain competitive and continue contributing to the welfare of a people. According to Safko (2016) social media became more effective than the traditional marketing that was done in the last few decades, due to the numerous benefits that it offers.

The benefits of social media in marketing tourism are immense to both the tourism marketers and the travellers. There are great opportunities in the tourism industry in Ghana which need to be fully exploited. Marketers in the tourism industry must as well exploit the business opportunities presented by social media in order to remain effective in their promotional efforts of the tourism industry. Therefore, the motivation for this long essay was based on the need to understand the influence of social media in promoting tourism business activities in Ghana with the Year of Return as the case study. Furthermore, the study's rationale was to broaden the understanding of the utilisation of social media in promoting tourism in order to aid the decision making process of the marketers and assist in policy formulation

1.4 Research objectives

The general objective of the long essay was to examine the effects of social media on international tourism. However, the specific objectives were as follow:

1. To ascertain the role social media played as a digital market tool in the year of return campaign in Ghana.
2. To examine the traditional and new forms of tourism marketing in Ghana.
3. To explore the challenges faced by organisers of year of return.

1.5 Research questions

Sequel to the above objectives; the following research questions were raised.

1. What role has social media played as a digital marketing tool in the year of return campaign in Ghana?
2. What are the traditional and new forms of tourism marketing in Ghana?

3. What are the challenges faced by organisers of year of return?

1.6 Scope of study

The main motive of the study focused on Africans is the diaspora. However, the year of return attracted more Africans from America than any other country; hence the study was limited particularly to African-Americans.

Most of the regions in Ghana had special events outlined by the Ministry to embellish the year of return festival throughout the year. Greater Accra, Central region and the Ashanti region dominated in terms of cultural event outlines. Our study was however limited to the capital; Greater Accra Region, the highly concentrated marketing hub for the campaign.

Imagery, quick messages and videos helped market the campaign internationally. Social media made engagement easy, interactions more responsive and sharing less cumbersome. Various social media platforms were instrumental but the study will be limited to popular digital social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter for the inquiry.

1.7 Organization of study

The long essay was divided into four main chapters. Chapter one dealt with the introduction which comprises the background of the study, followed by problem statement, justification of the research, research objectives and questions; as well as the organisation of the study. Chapter two reviewed literature on the study; this consisted of definitions on international tourism and social media, as well theories underpinning the study and the challenges realized to applying social media on tourism. Whereas, chapter three covered the research methodology; the themes of the

methodology include the research design, methods of data collection, merits and demerits of the method(s) adopted as well as the constraints and ethical consideration realised during the data collection. Chapter four concluded the findings of the study. In this chapter made some recommendations based on the study findings and limitations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review presented works resulting from survey of academic literature to show the need for the research. It is here that the research unpacked the concepts and definitions in the research work and uncover the relationship between them. The literature review therefore included overview of tourism in Ghana, issues surrounding the year of return, social processing theory, social media definitions, types of social media tool, effect of social media on tourist buying decisions and so on.

2.2 Overview of tourism in Ghana

In Ghana, MoT (2017) defines tourism as all the activities undertaken by individuals travelling to places away from their usual environment or homes, and staying there for business, leisure and other purposes. In view of the definition; the tourism sector in Ghana is currently one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy and is the fourth highest foreign exchange earner for the country (Adu-Ampong, 2018). It was therefore estimated that in 2013, a direct contribution of US \$1.3 billion and a total contribution of US \$ 3.0 billion to GDP was made by the tourism sector in Ghana. This accounted for 3.0% of total GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2014). The composition of international tourists arriving in Ghana are concentrated in a few key markets; key amongst them were Nigeria (19%), the USA (13%), UK (9%), Cote d'Ivoire (5%), India (3%), Germany (3%), South Africa (3%) and the Netherlands (3%) (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2014)

The motives for these international tourists' activities to Ghana are diverse. According to the Ghana Tourism Authority (2017), the purposes of these tourist rated as follow; 40% of arrivals are professionally related travel thus; businesses, conferences, study and/or training. Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) was the second most important travel reason and scored 25% of arrivals to Ghana. With leisure holiday travel coming in as a third main purpose with 19% of arrivals; however, in recent times, there has been increased efforts of tourist to travelling to Ghana, as the Year of Return saw 45% arriving for leisure, to visit ancestral slave locations and forts for historical and cultural purposes and retracing of blood line of families (MoT, 2019).

2.2.1 Year of Return 2019

The Year of Return, Ghana 2019 was an initiative of the government of Ghana along with U.S. based, The Adinkra Group, which is intended to encourage African diasporans to come to Africa (specifically Ghana) to settle and invest in the continent (wikipedia 2020). It was formally launched by President Nana Akufo-Addo in Washington, D.C. as a programme for Africans in the diaspora to unite with Africans. The year 2019 was therefore symbolic as it commemorates 400 years since the first enslaved Africans touched down in Jamestown, Virginia in the United States of America. The programme was Ghana Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture lined up activities in "celebration of the resilience of the African spirit. MoT (2019) indicated the activity saw a boost in the overall tourism potential of the nation and a realization of oneness as many African Americans shared their stories and experiences after visiting many memorable and significant sites in the country.

2.3 Theory of Social Information Processing

The social information processing theory gives clear analyses on how interpersonal influence processes through the use of social media. The premise behind this theory is that by contrast the social environments offers an important source of information and cues about individual's behaviour and perceptions (Tham, Croy, and Mair, 2013). This differs from the traditional face-to-face contexts in that the information delivered on social media platforms has extended from natural language to other formats of communicative languages such as audio, text, video, and rich media (Tham et al. 2013).

The other difference from face-to-face contexts is that the personal influence on social media platforms is expanded in terms of its scale and scope as a larger number of individuals can get connected by informational linkages than conventional communication tools. Indeed, social media differs from traditional face-to-face contexts in that less effort is invested by people to reach larger numbers of people and as a result, individuals are encouraged to act on their natural impulse to share information and knowledge. For instance, computer-mediated communication on social networks allows immediacy of feedback which provides an unprecedented ability to connect people sequentially and concurrently.

Guo (2014) stated that social media has pervasive and compelling power than conventional mass media because of the ability of social media to influence a larger number of people, the ability to deliver rich information, and the minimal effort required from individuals to make influence attempts. This theory implies that social media can be successfully applied in promoting tourism business and national brands. This buttresses the point for the intense focus on applying social media to the promotion of year of return in 2019.

2.4 Social media

There exist different and confusing concepts among researchers on social media definitions (Kaplan and Haenlein 2012). However, the two substantive definitions that are dominant with regards to social media are cited as follows. Brake and Safko (2009:6) cited social media as “referring to activities, practices, and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media”. Kaplan and Haenlein (2012:61) provided an alternative definition claiming it is “a group of internet-based applications that is built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (UGC)”. Academics in tourism and hospitality such as Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides (2015), and Rathonyi (2015), have noted that the definition by Kaplan and Haenlein (2012) is broader and in-depth than the one given by Brake and Safko (2009). For instance, Fotis et al. (2015) explained that the latter described only a subset of social media which refers to online systems enabling users to become members, create a profile, build a personal network connecting them to other users with whom they exchange on a frequent basis skills, talents, knowledge, preferences, and other information.

2.5 Types of social media

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2012) there are different types of social media hence their categorization into various types. These therefore include but not limited to; Social Networking Sites, Blogs and Micro-Blogs, Content Community Sites, Collaborative projects, Virtual Worlds, and Sites Dedicated for Feedback. The current research however, examined the ones pertinent to the research for that matter.

2.5.1 Blogs and Micro-blogs

Blogs are the type of social media which are equivalents of personal web pages and come in a multitude of different variations; from personal diaries describing the author's life to summaries of all relevant information in one specific content area (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012, p. 63). Constantinides (2009) in his article alluded to the fact that, this phenomenon of blogs is the fastest growing category of Web 2.0 applications. Mangold and Faulds (2009) agreed that blogs are user-sponsored cited which presents their information in the form of image-based, text-based, video based, or audio-based material attracting online users from all location and in recent times furthered heavily in international tourism promotion. In the context of tourism blogs like Traveplanet and Igougo have be created to encourage and enhance tourist activities around the world (Grotte 2010).

2.5.2 Collaborative projects

Among the well know user generated content are encyclopaedia Wikipedia, Delicious, Digg, Newsvine, Mixx it, Reddit, Merlot and so on. These collaborative projects are websites that enable the joint and simultaneous creation of content by many end-users and are most probably the most democratic manifestation of UGC (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Even though these websites may have a few errors to the easy of posting from any user it seem to easily spread information about happening especially tourism (Chan and Guillet 2012).

2.5.3 Social network sites

Xiang & Gretzel, (2017) indicated that, social networks sites allow virtual meetings were people create personal profiles, develop relationships, communicate, and

connect to other individuals whom they might or might not know physically. While social networking sites are a type of social media, some authors refer to all social media sites as social networking sites with different capabilities such as video or photo sharing (O' Connor 2010). In deed well known social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Faceparty, and Habbo; professional/business networking sites like LinkedIn have great influence in marketing events than traditional print media as for as tourism in concerned. For instance Facebook has a billion user hence marketing tourists destinations can reach a larger population overnight (Ayisi). Similarly, According to World Travel Market 2014 Industry Report, social media network sites altered the travel plans of more than half of the respondents who use it and more than a third of people changed their hotels as a result of what they found on social media networks (<http://www.newmediatrendwatch.com/>)

2.5.4 Content communities

As far as media sharing is concerned; content communities and their associated web sites allow users to organize and share particular types of contents [UGC] (Constantinides, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Examples of media-sharing sites are photo sharing sites like Flickr, Instagram, and Snapchat; video sharing sites like YouTube and Ning; text-sharing sites like BookCrossing and Slideshare; music sharing sites like Jamendo and iTunes; and virtual worlds like Second Life. Constantinides (2009) explained that content aggregators particularly adopt applications that allow users to easily access fully customized, syndicated web content. Examples of this category are uk.my.yahoo.com/, google.com/ig and netvibes.com/. Also these same content aggregators use web sites gathering material from different sources and creating a new customized product or service (using

google maps for example). In the case of the year of return the MoT adopted media sharing to collect and share images of fortes and castles via pages link instagram and so on (MoT 2019).

2.6 Social media influence on tourist behaviour/decision-making

Within the academic literature on social media and tourism, it has often been postulated that consumers' behaviour, in terms of how they plan and consume travel related products, have always been influenced by developments in Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and most especially, social media applications (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2016; Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). Gretzel et al. (2008) further predicted that social media impacts on travel will continue to be tremendous. In recent years, social media sites have become the medium through which contemporary tourists make their travel related purchasing decisions. This is evidenced by the huge impact social media sites have on the way tourists create, search, organize and share tourism experiences (Rathonyi, 2015).

Indeed studies have proved that tourists use the internet as a planning resource for their travel (Coxet al., 2009; O'Connor, 2010). Travellers utilize social media in three phases of their travel planning process, thus; pre-trip (influence on destination choice, accommodation choice, and other travel decisions), during trip (find information about specific attractions, stay connected with friends) and post-trip (share experiences and photos with friends and other travellers, provide evaluation and reviews about destination, accommodation, restaurants). Howbeit, this study focused on social media usage on all stages since they were relevant for the year of return event. It is however, noteworthy to indicate that tourist and tourism are sold experiences and can be view as high risk since consumers are unable initiate trail

before purchase of the service. As a result of its experiential nature, it requires extensive information search in order to arrive at a decision (Cox et al., 2009).

According to Rathonyi (2015), tourists in order to decrease this uncertainty in making travel decisions, tourists collect information in connection with the travel. Social media applications such as TripAdvisor, offer tourists the opportunity to collect and review various forms of travel information early in the travel decision-making process in order to minimize the risk of making wrong decisions. The review of travel-related information on social media sites helps to reduce traveller's uncertainty in their travel decision and stimulate self confidence in the organization of their travel. Furthermore, most studies have recognized Consumer Generated Media (CGM) or UGC as one of the important external sources of information for travel planning because of its high credibility (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013; Rathonyi, 2015). For some tourists, a recommendation from an acquaintance or friend has a huge impact on their travel decision-making process. For others, the need to obtain confirmation from other users that they have planned the best trip is crucial (Rathonyi, 2015). Indeed customers to an extent see themselves in the reviews of others and understand the products based on the perception of their "friends" or fellow consumers.

In addition, available literature on the influence of social media on travel in the tourism and hospitality industry has indicated that social media use as a global phenomenon varies by culture (Cox et al., 2009; Gretzel et al., 2008; Rathonyi, 2015). Gretzel et al. (2008) claimed that the impact of social media on holiday-related travel planning differs among national tourism markets, with cultural differences contributing to such a difference. They further alluded that an adequate number of cross-cultural studies of social media influence on tourism are needed to substantiate such a claim (Gretzel et al. 2008). It is against this backdrop that this study examined

the influence of social media on international tourists' travel decision-making to Ghana for the year of return.

In short, social media applications exert influence on tourists' behaviour; most especially, providing tourists with a pool of travel information and contents from other users to aid their travel planning and decision. Again, they provide information with access beyond the boundaries of one's immediate social circle; enabling the acquisition of more extensive information from internet users around the world (Leung et al., 2013). However, it has been found that tourists' propensity to use social media or CGM on social media platforms is determined by several characteristics of the CGM and some socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists like sex and age (Cox et al., 2009; Ráthonyi, 2015).

2.7 Empirical review on social media and traditional sources of information

This was an actual research carried out on students from the University of Debrecen, on the influence of social media on tourism amongst the students. The study sought to ask students to indicate their agreement or disagreement with five statements in the form of 'I trust information about holidays provided by.....' followed by the information source identified in table 2.1 below. Due to the internet and mobile telephone access it was realised that social media sites dominated the survey and had highest trust with regards to the likert scale adopted. Followed by friend and family members, as well as official website of the event organisers or the event itself. Looking at the data in the table it was evident that social media was dominant and similarly to findings by Cox et al (2018).

Table 2.1: Level of trust in information source

Information source	Mean	SD
Official website	3.91	1.02
Social media sites (Facebook, Flickr, Blogs, Youtube)	4.55	1.22
Friends and family	3.98	0.89
Travel agents	2.8	0.99
Others	2.8	0.89

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

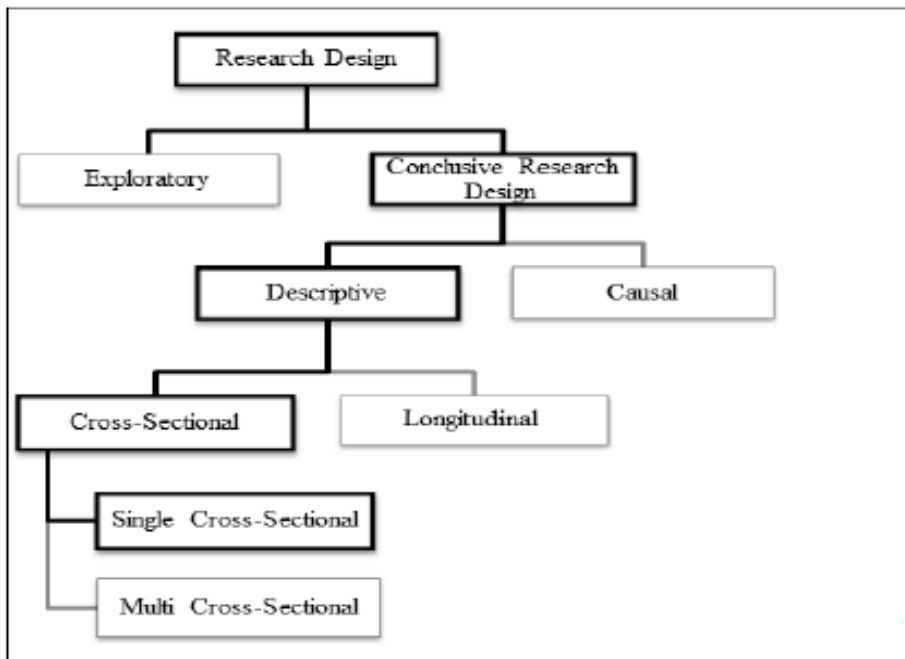
This chapter discussed the methodology underlying the current research work and the methods adopted for data collection. The chapter's methodology employed follows these orders; thus, a research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, administration of instrument, and methods of data collection, as well as data analysis and ethical issues.

3.2 Research Design

Every research be it in the social science or otherwise needs a blueprint to follow in order to ensure objectives are achieved. According to Malhotra and Das (2010:60) defined research design as "*a framework or blueprint for conducting the marketing research project*". The research design is broken into two main groups; thus the conclusive research design and the exploratory research design. The design selection is actually based on the objectives of the research, the type of data that must be collected and overall conclusions that the research intends to raise for that matter.

The study adopted an exploratory design since it focused on the use of desk/secondary research to gain insight into the research problem sited in chapter one of the research study.

Figure 3.1: Research Design



Source: Malhotra and Das (2010, p-71)

3.3 Research Approach

The long essay adopted a desk research study method. The study involved research that is conducted without fieldwork. In other words, it was solely based on published articles and reports on the subject matter. The following steps are taken to conduct a desktop study.

- i. Defining the study objective or aim for that matter which helped to guide the study.
- ii. Defining the research plan.
- iii. Searching key terms in the electronic database search engines. These will include; journals and scanned articles from local and international sources on the subject matter.
- iv. Concluding and verifying the data gathered from the published reports.
- v. Report findings

3.4 Justification for the methodology

Relying on secondary data or desk research for this topic is justifiable for a number of reasons for that matter. Desk research is cost effective and quick (less time consuming) to undertake in relation to field research work. Also due to covid-19 restriction and implementation protocol desk research was realised to be safe for research since there was no administration of questionnaires to any group of people to complete.

3.5 Research Instrumentation

Historical data and prior research findings existing on various electronic libraries on social media impact on tourism was the main instrument adopted for the current research.

3.6 Data collection procedure

The search for data is done by identification of keywords; such as social media, tourism, year of return, impact of social media on tourist and tourism. These keywords were used on electronic library platforms like; EBSCOhost, Emerald, Google, ScienceDirect and Wikipedia databases search engines. The researcher applied the Boolean operator (AND) used to combine keywords for the searches. Information obtained was reviewed and analyzed by carrying out an extensive review via reading, comparing ideas, and taking note of the outcomes of the various literatures including the theory about the research topic. Also correlation among various literature, theory providing a clear picture and outcome relating to the topic, and finally finalize on a specific one that best examines the research area.

3.7 Limitation

The use of a desk research may not do full justice to the study matter, this is because prior findings and current findings from the field may be at variance with each other. Also desk research does not afford the researcher any change of making personal input or drawing conclusion to the study. Finally, contribution of case study or sample area may not be admitted which make it difficult to implement findings.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Since the study did not have participants to draw responses from, no official notification was made to any group with regards to data collection from them. Having stated that, ethical consideration still existed for this research. This involved appropriate referencing of all material obtained from electronic libraries, journals and books of various authors that were used for the research. The research ensured that not theories were missed quoted or twisted to fit the researcher's purpose.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the summary, conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study. The summary, conclusions and recommendations were all derived from on the study's findings in relation to the research objectives.

4.2 Summary

The specific findings relating to the objective of the study were presented in the sections below.

4.2.1 Role of social media as a digital marketing tool in the year of return campaign in Ghana.

As far as the theory of social information processing is concerned, a clear indicating had been given that social media usage results in a clear interpersonal virtual connection between people of various social systems (Tham, Croy, and Mair, 2013). In deed the use of social media as digital marketing tool had proved successful since the afford the use of electronic tools based on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 which allows the creation and exchange of user granted content (Rathonyi 2015). This technological innovation in communication allowed creation of content on the year of return event making it a worldwide phenomenon, attracting people especially from the diaspora and other parts of the continent to visit Ghana on the historical 400 year history of the first slave migration from Ghana. The ease by which the

communication was made across the globe was via social media platforms such as facebook, twitter and so on.

4.2.2 Examine the traditional and new forms of tourism marketing in Ghana.

Traditional media such as radio, television, print and outdoor advertisement and promotions had their limitations when it comes to tourism marketing which needs to have a nation-wide or a global appeal for that matter. The study revealed that social media activities such as blogging allowed bloggers who generally have large following to easily propagate the event across the globe. Also a major interactive website for connecting people such as Facebook with close to two billion users made it an instant phenomenon for people all over the globe to be notified of the event taking place in Ghana. In deed the web 2.0 and its associated technologies is able to reach a larger number of people give an event a global appeal than traditional marketing communication media.

4.2.3 To explore the challenges using social media by organisers of year of return.

The main issues realised by the research with regards to using social media by organizers for the year of return 2019 was as follow. Thus, controlling the type of communication put out by independent content generators via social media was challenging. This was because bloggers, content communities and others alike also put out their own information without any control from the organizers or the ministry of tourism for that matter. In some cases these content generators had attached their own packages to the promotions which in some cases made it difficult for the quality of the information to be accepted by users of these sites, hence a major setback for the organisers.

4.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research the following conclusions were made. Thus, the research findings opened a new door and add to the existing body of knowledge as far as social media usage in tourism marketing in Ghana is concerned. New information is being added on how social media can be adopted and used by event organizers to reach a large population for their events; for which the year of return was a good example. Also indigenous knowledge is being provided in the Ghanaian context since most of the existing literature was largely foreign.

Also, traditional marketing tools which used to be the most dominant communication tool are becoming less recognized, this is because social media is cost effective and does not even require the need to have a specific location to place promotional messages due to the fact that most prospective tourist have access to mobile gadgets that allows them to receive these promotional messages.

Also, students and researchers who might want to consider researching into the same topic would have good grounds to start from. Furthermore, the limitation of social media usage was made known to people using social media to promote major events. In other words they would be accustomed with the challenges associated with its usage and how these challenges can be mitigated to get the most out of this web 2.0 technologies.

Finally, the existing researcher can leverage on the technology to market or selling personal business ideas for profit purposes over a short period of time due to social media apparent reach.

4.4 Recommendations

It is therefore recommended to the organisers of the year of return 2019 to designate particular bloggers and websites to promote the event. Since this will ensure uniformity and consistency in the messages being communicated to tourist around the world purposely to create trust and confidence amongst prospective tourist.

It is also suggested that the ministry of tourism and other state agencies should be at the forefront of communication to tourist via specially setup social media sites, travel arrangement sites, hotel booking and so on in order to provide reliable information to the tourist.

Finally, it is suggested to future students and researchers who are considering the same or similar topic to adopt a field study coupled with data collected from a larger sample size in addition to using secondary data. This will ensure enough data is collected to properly dig into the matter and also to improve the chances of generalization of results.

4.5 Limitation of the study

The main limitation of the study was the fact that it was solely focused on secondary or prior existing data on the topic. These materials were largely foreign with very little emphasis on Ghana or African for that matter. Therefore the tone of the findings could in some cases were non-applicable to the Ghanaian society.

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APPENDICES
GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

Dear Sir/Madam

**EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERNATIONAL
TOURISM MARKETING; A CASE STUDY OF GHANA'S YEAR OF
RETURN 2019**

This questionnaire is to participants of the year of return 2019; is strictly for academic purposes as a partial fulfillment for the award of a Master's degree in development communication. It seeks to find out more information on the above stated topic and would be grateful if you could respond to the following questions. Please be assured that any information given will be used solely for the stated purpose and will be strictly confidential.

Section A: BIO Data

1. Gender: Male [] Female []
2. Age 21-30yrs [] 31-40yrs [] 41-50yrs [] 51-60yrs []
3. Education: Primary [] High School [] Diploma [] Bachelor's Degree []
Post Graduate [] Others []
4. Marital status: Married [] Unmarried [] Separated []
5. Country of origin [] Ghana [] Other African Country [] Europe [] Asia []
USA [] Americas []
6. Social media user: Yes [] No [] Not sure what it is []
7. Type of tourist: Regular [] Occasional [] Not sure []

Section B: Social Media and Tourism

Kindly response appropriately using the scale provided 1strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Social media was responsible for information of the year of return					
Social media promotions made a positive impression of the event					
Social media promotions was better than traditional advertising					
Without social media the I shall be unaware of the year of return					
Social media provided proper travel planning					
Social media has a better reach than other forms of promotional					
Year of return was successful due to social media adoption by organisers					

Section C: Recommendations

8. Which type of social media communication do you prefer?

.....

9. What challenges do you encounter with social media communications?

.....

10. Kindly make recommendation to improve social media communication of the even.

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Thank you.