

UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)
INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON PUBLIC RELATIONS
PRACTICE WITHIN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN ACCRA METROPOLIS

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INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON PUBLIC RELATIONS
PRACTICE WITHIN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN ACCRA METROPOLIS

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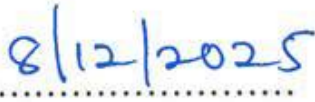
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DECLARATIONS

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Aloysius Agbavittor, hereby declare that this research project is my own work and has not been submitted to any other institution for any award.

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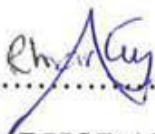

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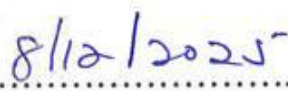
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SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

I, the undersigned supervisor, declare that I supervised the preparation and presentation of this work in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of MA dissertation as laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC).

.....


DATE:


DR. RHODALENE AMARTEY

(Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and loved ones, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and prayers have been my strength throughout this academic journey. Their steadfast belief in me has been a constant source of motivation, and for that, I remain deeply grateful.

Also, to the management and staff of the firm I work for, Jubilee Tours Ltd for their understanding and patience throughout this academic journey.

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May God richly bless you all.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of fake news on public relations practice within the tourism industry in the Accra Metropolis. The rapid growth of digital media has accelerated information sharing but also facilitated the spread of misinformation capable of damaging destination image, eroding tourist confidence, and disrupting communication processes.

A quantitative research design was adopted, employing structured questionnaires administered to public relations practitioners, tourism officials, media personnel, and tourists. A total of 50 valid responses were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis and regression techniques to identify patterns and relationships.

Findings revealed that social media platforms are the primary channels through which fake news spreads, with bloggers, influencers, and unverified online reports identified as key sources. The study established that fake news significantly undermines brand reputation, stakeholder trust, and tourist behaviour, while increasing the workload and communication costs of tourism organizations.

Practitioners employ several mitigation strategies, including social media monitoring, fact-checking, rapid response communication, and collaboration with credible media outlets. The study concludes that fake news poses a major threat to tourism growth and effective public relations management in Ghana. It recommends investment in digital literacy, adoption of verification tools, capacity building for PR professionals, and stronger policy frameworks to safeguard destination reputation. This research enriches the expanding body of scholarship on tourism communication and provides practical guidance for policymakers, public relations professionals, and industry stakeholders in formulating strategic responses to misinformation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Acronym	Full Meaning
PR	Public Relations
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council
UN	United Nations
SCCT	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UK	United Kingdom
EC	European Commission
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
AI	Artificial Intelligence

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by presenting the background to the research and the problem it seeks to address. It outlines the research objectives, formulates key questions and hypotheses, defines the scope of the research, and highlights the study's significance to theory, practice, and policy formulation. The chapter also describes the organization of the study and concludes with a summary of its main themes.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The global tourism industry has been steadily recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, with international tourist arrivals reaching 98 percent pre-pandemic levels in 2024 (UN Tourism, 2025; World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2024; Moodie Davitt Report, 2024). This resurgence is driven by strong demand in Europe, robust performance from large source markets, and increased air connectivity and visa facilitation. The WTO Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) predicts the sector will reach \$11.1 trillion in economic contribution by 2024, surpassing its pre-pandemic peak. By 2034, the tourism industry is expected to reach \$16 trillion, accounting for 11.6 percent of the global economy. (WTTC, 2024; Moodie Davitt Report, 2024)

Tracing the origin of the term 'fake news' is a complex and contested endeavor. Its origin dates to the late 19th century in America, when this kind of printed lies was described simply as "false." The recent popularity of the term 'false news' began in 2010, after Roberts used it in one of its

blog entries, although the largest expansion of the term occurred after it was used by President Donald Trump in 2016. (Wikipedia, 2025; History Rise, 2024; Britannica, 2025)

In 2017, the term “fake news” was named Word of the Year by the British Collins dictionary, which described it as “false, often sensational information, disseminated under the guise of news reporting.” (European Commission, 2017), this definition is quite limited. It prefers to talk about disinformation, which it defines as “an ecosystem of introduction, propagation and consumption of false, inaccurate or misleading information designed to cause public harm or for profit “.

Insisting on internationality, (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018) classify fake news in three categories:

- i. **Disinformation:** false information deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization, or country.
- ii. **Misinformation:** Information that is false but not deliberately created with the intention of causing harm. Instead, it often arises from misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or careless reporting. Unlike disinformation, which is intentionally deceptive, misinformation may be spread unknowingly by individuals or organizations who believe the information to be true.
- iii. **Map-information:** information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organization or country.

In the digital era, the tourism industry has become increasingly vulnerable to the dissemination of fake news, which refers to deliberately misleading or false information presented as news. Social media platforms and online forums have made it easier for false narratives to spread rapidly, posing significant threats to the reputation of tourist destinations and the credibility of stakeholders involved. (Kaszás, Chovanová Supeková, & Keklak, 2025)

Public relations practitioners are now working in a landscape where the abundance of fake news has become a significant issue. Fake news, which can be any stories written unintentionally to create false facts or disinformation (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017), can undermine the credibility of communication and influence public relations practice.

In the tourism sector, Public Relations (PR) practitioners face growing challenges in managing the impact of misinformation and rebuilding public trust.

This is because the tourism industry is highly dependent on perception, reputation, and consumer trust. A single piece of fake news-such as reports of political instability, disease outbreaks, or safety concerns can significantly reduce tourist visits to a destination. This situation compels PR practitioners to adopt new strategies for media monitoring, crisis communication, and brand recovery. (Ismail, Hattingh & Matthee, 2024; Abdallah, 2021). This study aims to explore how fake news affects public relations practice, how PR practitioners are responding to misinformation in the tourism industry, and what this signifies for the future of the industry.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public relations practice in recent times has experienced a profound transformation largely due to rapid technological advancement and evolving societal norms, what was once a field characterized by traditional methods like press release and in-person media engagements has changed dramatically due to modernization. (Pandey, 2024)

Today, Public relations practitioners operate in fast-paced digital environments where social media, real-time communication, and data-driven strategies are crucial. The evolution has reshaped how organizations connect with their audiences, manage their reputations, and handle crises. (Pandey, 2024)

Despite the central role of PR in crisis management, there is limited empirical research exploring how fake news affects PR practices, specifically in the tourism industry. The rapid proliferation of digital content complicates the job of PR practitioners, who must distinguish between authentic and false narratives and respond effectively. (Ismail, Hattingh, & Matthee, 2024; Tahir, 2019)

Few studies provide real-world data on how tourism PR practitioners experience and respond to fake news crises, especially in emerging economies. (Kaszás et al., 2025)

While fake news has been discussed in media studies, the specific tools, frameworks (like SCCT or Agenda-Setting), and strategic adaptations used by PR teams in tourism remain underexplored. (Ismail, Hattingh, & Matthee, 2024)

There's a lack of scholarly attention on how digital platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and travel review sites contribute to the spread of fake news - and how PR practitioners in tourism combat it in real-time. (Twum, Sarpong, & Agusah, 2025)

Although there are studies on destination image and crisis communication, the direct link between fake news and its effects on tourist trust, behaviour, and long-term destination reputation is still developing. (Abdallah, 2021)

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of fake news on PR practices in the tourism industry. Specific objectives include:

1. To examine the sources and nature of fake news affecting the tourism industry.
2. To identify the challenges fake news presents to PR practitioners within the tourism industry.
3. To explore the strategies used by PR practitioners to combat fake news.
4. To assess the overall impact of fake news on brand reputation and tourist behaviour.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the common sources and types of fake news affecting the tourism industry?
2. How does fake news challenge the roles and responsibilities of PR practitioners in tourism?
3. What strategies are employed by PR practitioners to mitigate the effects of fake news?
4. What is the impact of fake news on tourist perception and destination image?

1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This research seeks to find out if there is any correlation between fake news and Public Relation practice in tourism within the Accra Metropolis.

Based on the research questions stated, the following hypotheses were formulated.

1. There are common sources and types of fake news affecting the tourism industry.
2. Fake news challenges the roles and responsibilities of PR practitioners in tourism.
3. PR practitioners employ strategies to mitigate the effects of fake news.

4. Fake news impact on tourist perception and destination image.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study critically examines the impact of fake news on public relations practices within the tourism industry of the Accra Metropolis. It investigates the nature and sources of misinformation affecting tourism institutions, the challenges these narratives pose to PR practitioners, and the strategies employed to counter their influence. Emphasis is placed on how fake news shapes destination image, undermines brand reputation, and alters tourist behaviour, thereby affecting the broader communication environment of the sector.

The scope is deliberately confined to tourism-related institutions, government tourism agencies, PR practitioners and communication stakeholders operating within Accra Metropolis. By focusing on this metropolitan context, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how fake news interacts with local tourism communication practices. Data collection is restricted to respondents within the study area, ensuring that the findings reflect the realities of Accra's tourism environment. While the insights generated are highly relevant to this context, they may not be directly transferable to other regions or sectors without careful consideration of local socio-cultural and geopolitical dynamics.

Although the study contributes meaningfully to scholarly work on fake news and tourism communication, several limitations must be acknowledged. The first limitation is its geographical restriction to the Accra Metropolis. This narrow focus means that the findings may not fully capture the experiences of PR practitioners in other Ghanaian regions or sectors or international tourism destinations. Comparative studies across multiple regions would be necessary to establish broader generalizability.

Also, fake news is a dynamic and fast-evolving digital phenomenon. New forms, platforms, and dissemination patterns continue to emerge, and this study reflects only the realities within the timeframe of its execution. The conclusions must therefore be interpreted within this temporal boundary, acknowledging that future developments may alter the landscape of misinformation in tourism communication.

Despite these constraints, the study provides a robust foundation for further scholarly inquiry. It highlights the vulnerabilities of tourism institutions to misinformation, underscores the importance of adaptive crisis communication strategies, and offers practical insights for safeguarding destination reputation in an era of digital uncertainty.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will contribute to the understanding of the evolving nature of public relations in a digital environment where misinformation is prevalent. The notable forms of fake news include prank or trolling, discredit, suppress and shown out opposing information (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018). Most institutions or organizations in the tourism industry have invested a great deal to create a niche for themselves and establish their reputation over time. But one fake news in contemporary digital era within a twinkle of an eye erode these gains in a sensitive tourism sector. In effect, fake news destroys one's credibility and can hurt the soul. (Kaszás, Supeková, & Keklak, 2025)

This is because stakeholders in the tourism industry deserve the truth and so such real news is a benefit. At the center of all this is the PR practitioner. The research will provide insights for PR practitioners, tourism marketers, and policymakers on how to manage reputational crises caused by fake news. Again, the research is significant because just a few previous studies have provided a basis for this research, and this study will add to existing theory and will provide the foundation

for further studies. Academic researchers may also find the findings useful in building theories around media influence, trust, and crisis communication in tourism.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One offers a comprehensive introduction to the research, the background of the study, presenting the problem statement, outlining the study's objectives, formulating key research questions and hypotheses, and highlighting the significance of the investigation. Chapter Two presents a review of existing literature related to fake news, PR strategies, and tourism industry trends. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques. Chapter Four discusses findings from the study and their implications for PR practitioners in the tourism industry. Chapter Five summarizes conclusions, recommendations, and future research directions.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an extensive overview of the study, setting the foundation for understanding the impact of fake news on public relations (PR) practices within the tourism industry. It began by highlighting the global resurgence of tourism following the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the sector's economic growth and the increasing role of digital media in shaping perceptions.

The chapter explored the origins and evolution of the concept of fake news, distinguishing between disinformation, misinformation, and map-information, and highlighting their relevance to PR in tourism. It also addressed how fake news can threaten the credibility of tourist destinations, influence consumer trust, and complicate crisis management strategies.

Additionally, the study outlined the core research objectives, which focus on identifying sources of fake news, understanding the challenges faced by PR practitioners, exploring strategies for mitigating misinformation, and assessing its impact on brand reputation and tourist behaviour. The research questions were formulated to guide the investigation, ensuring a structured approach to addressing these concerns.

The scope of the study was defined, focusing on the tourism industry within the Accra Metropolis and its response to misinformation. The significance of the study was established by emphasizing its contribution to existing knowledge, supporting PR practitioners, tourism marketers, and policymakers in combating fake news and protecting the industry's reputation.

Lastly, the chapter outlined the organization of the study, describing the structure of subsequent chapters that will delve into literature reviews, research methodologies, findings, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines different perspectives as looked at by different scholars within PR practice. Each has been discussed under various themes such as concept of fake news, the role of PR in the tourism industry and impact of fake news on tourism. Again, this chapter looks at the theoretical framework and its relevance to the study; all these will help bring out an understanding of the issues been looked at in the study.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 CONCEPT OF FAKE NEWS

Fake news encompasses misinformation, disinformation, and hoaxes presented as legitimate news. It often spreads through social media and can be politically, financially, or ideologically motivated. The rise of "clickbait" headlines and algorithm driven content distribution has intensified the reach and impact of fake news. (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024; Agrane, 2022; Parliamentary Assembly, 2024)

(Farhoudinia et al., 2023) conducted a systematic analysis of false news in business and management studies. They highlighted the socio-technical issues of digital platforms and their role in spreading information, and how it could primarily impact corporate reputation. Their study provides practical implications for a range of stakeholders impacted by or engaged in the dissemination of fake news, including brands, consumers, and policymakers. It highlights the social consequences and potential future risks associated with misinformation, particularly within

the context of social networking and digital media. The authors emphasize the importance of fostering greater awareness and accountability among online communities to curb and counter the spread of fabricated content. This perspective underscores the fundamental nature of fake news as untruthful information deliberately circulated to mislead audiences. But is too simplistic and generalized without specific reference to the tourism industry. While Farhoudinia et al.'s work provides valuable insights into the general business environment, it lacks specific reference to the tourism industry, a sector uniquely vulnerable to reputational damage due to its reliance on perception, trust, and emotional appeal. Tourism destinations and service providers often depend on digital platforms for visibility and engagement, making them particularly susceptible to the rapid spread of fake news. The absence of targeted research on how fake news affects tourism institutions, traveler behaviour, and destination branding represents a critical gap that this study aims to address.

(Kim et al., 2021; Quandt et al., 2019) on the other hand said news creation and consumption are the fundamental aspects that form the relationship between news and people. They further observed that fake news is no longer confined to the propaganda of inflammatory politicians. It is increasingly produced for financial gain or even personal amusement. With the rapid expansion of social media platforms, individuals now generate and circulate false information for motives that extend beyond traditional political agendas. This research is more on financial gains of false news by those who engage in it and not specific to any industry. Also, it is too simplistic as there is a wide range of reasons for what we call “falsification of information” which results in fake news: from accidental mistakes to negligent behaviour (Kim et al., 2021; Quandt et al., 2019)

While existing literature explores general motivations for fake news, there is a lack of targeted research on how these motivations manifest and impact industry-specific sectors, such as tourism.

The tourism industry, which relies heavily on trust, perception, and digital engagement, is particularly vulnerable to reputational damage caused by misinformation. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how various forms and motives of fake news affect tourism institutions, destination branding, and consumer behavior.

(Hernández-Rodríguez, 2023; Newman et al., 2020) analyzes the content of 416 fake news items identified during the first half of 2021 by Maldita.es and Newtral.es, from Spain, and Colombia check and La Silla Vacía, from Colombia. To them, discussion about fake news usually leads to the fact that they are intentionally manufactured. The results show that most of the authors of fake news are anonymous. The interests of the promoting actors are political-governmental, political-institutional and reputational. They are multiple and come from various groups who are the actors interested in lying. For those surveyed by the Reuters Institute, people who bring fake or wrong content are politicians (40%); activists (14%); journalists (13%); commoners (10%); and foreign governments (10%) (Hernández-Rodríguez, 2023; Newman et al., 2020)

This study, much as is true, is limited in scope and is specific to a jurisdiction and cannot be generalized. While this study offers valuable insights into the actors and motivations behind fake news, its scope is geographically limited to Spain and Colombia. As such, its findings cannot be broadly generalized across different cultural, political, or industrial contexts. Moreover, the study does not explore how these motivations and actors' impact specific sectors, particularly the tourism industry, which is highly sensitive to reputation and public perception. The absence of sector-specific analysis leaves a gap in understanding how fake news affects tourism institutions, destination branding, and traveler behavior across diverse regions.

Boudana (2024), by contrast, investigates how news media define and frame the concept of fake news, thereby shaping public perceptions in terms of its causes, responsibilities, and possible

solutions. The study begins by mapping the discourse on fake news through a semantic network analysis of 1,646 articles published between 2017–2018, when the term reached its peak, and again in 2021–2022. It then examines the definitions and framing strategies in a representative sample of 122 articles drawn from the clusters identified in the initial analysis. Findings from both periods reveal consistent patterns, with political actors, social media platforms, and professional journalists emerging as the dominant figures influencing the construction of the “fake news” narrative. Again, this study, much as is true is limited in scope and is specific to a jurisdiction, the United States of America and cannot be generalized. Also, it looks at a narrower actor as against that of JC Hernández-Rodríguez · (2023) which added commoners to its list of actors.

While Boudana’s study offers valuable insights into media framing and the construction of fake news narratives, its scope is geographically confined to the United States and cannot be generalized across other cultural or media ecosystems. Furthermore, the study focuses on a narrower set of actors excluding everyday individuals or “commoners” who, as (JC Hernández-Rodríguez, 2023) notes, play a significant role in the dissemination of fake news. This omission limits the understanding of how grassroots misinformation spreads and affects public trust. Additionally, neither study explores the sector-specific implications of fake news, particularly in industries like tourism, where reputation and perception are critical. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how fake news regardless of its source affects tourism institutions, destination branding, and consumer behavior.

2.1.2 THE ROLE OF PR IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Public Relations (PR) in tourism involves managing the public image of a destination or tourism-related business. PR practitioners in the tourism sector aim to build trust, engage with potential tourists, and maintain a positive image through media relations, crisis management, and content creation. Effective PR strategies rely on transparency, timely communication, and building long-term relationships with audiences.

However, with the advent of social media and the 24/7 news cycle, managing PR in tourism has become increasingly challenging. PR practitioners are now tasked not only with managing positive media coverage but also swiftly responding to negative press, which includes addressing fake news. (Abdallah, 2021; Kaszás et al., 2025)

While existing literature acknowledges the general challenges of PR in the digital age, there is limited research specifically addressing how fake news impacts PR strategies within the tourism sector. Most studies focus on corporate or political contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how tourism PR professionals detect, respond to, and recover from misinformation crises. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the unique vulnerabilities of tourism-related PR and proposing sector-specific strategies for managing fake news. (Ismail et al., 2024; Tham, 2022)

(Zhang et al., 2024) examines the challenges and strategies of cross-cultural communication in tourism PR, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity in global tourism promotion. This paper seeks to examine tourism public relations strategies from a cross-cultural perspective, assessing their significance, current applications, and the challenges they encounter in the era of globalization. By engaging with theories of tourism public relations and cross-cultural

communication, the study develops an analytical framework for understanding how such strategies operate across diverse cultural contexts.

Findings indicate that communication barriers arising from cultural differences, along with the difficulty of shaping a coherent cross-cultural image of tourist destinations, represent major obstacles. In response, the paper proposes several coping strategies: strengthening cross-cultural communication competencies, innovating methods of information dissemination within tourism public relations, and reinforcing the cross-cultural branding of destinations to enhance their global appeal. This study, although detailed, does not fully address the impactful role of PR in tourism. It looks at the cross-cultural perspective of it, this remains on cultural communication challenges rather than strategic crisis management, reputation defense, and media engagement roles that PR practitioners must fulfill in today's volatile information environment. As such, there is a need for research that examines how tourism PR professionals navigate the broader spectrum of reputational risks, especially those amplified by the digital media landscape.

(Ritsakulchai, 2022) also focuses on developing PR materials to promote sustainable tourism in Wanyai, highlighting the role of effective communication in fostering sustainable practices. This study aimed to analyze tourism management challenges and to develop a promotional brochure for the industry. The research focused on sustainable tourism in an area situated between Mueang Mukdahan district and That Phanom district in Nakhon Phanom province both recognized as popular tourist destinations. However, the specific district under study remains relatively unknown to visitors and attracts only a limited number of tourists.

In response to these issues, the study concentrated on designing public relations materials, including tourist routes and brochures, to encourage sustainable tourism and enhance the visibility

of these locations. This study is more of a case study of a particular locality Thailand's tourism industry. It is limited in generalization.

It focuses primarily on promotional material development rather than the strategic role of PR in managing broader reputational risks, such as those posed by fake news and misinformation. Moreover, it does not address how digital media dynamics, especially the spread of false narratives, impact tourism perception and destination credibility. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how PR practitioners in the tourism industry respond to misinformation and protect reputational integrity in a globalized digital environment.

Mkhize and Jeewa (2023) examine how South African timeshare businesses adapted their public relations and marketing strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic to sustain stakeholder engagement. Prior to the height of the pandemic, travel agencies and timeshare operators had already begun leveraging digital marketing and social media as tools for strategic communication and audience interaction.

Grounded in McGuire's (1969) theory of information processing and Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) destination image branding framework, the study employed content and thematic analysis of two South African timeshare companies, focusing on their Facebook activity. The analysis explored the public relations tactics and marketing approaches adopted during the pandemic period.

Key findings reveal that timeshare businesses actively engaged customers through posts designed to stimulate online participation. These included the sharing of images, informational updates, competitions, and promotional discounts, thereby maximizing the potential of social media to foster both short-term and long-term stakeholder relationships. This study is impactful and looks at all the essential instruments available to the PR practitioner in the tourism industry. The

limitation is that it deals with only the accommodation aspect of tourism, leaving out key aspects such as destination and attractions.

Furthermore, the study does not explore how fake news, or digital misinformation may have influenced public perception or disrupted PR efforts during the pandemic. This research aims to fill that gap by examining how PR strategies across the broader tourism sector beyond accommodation respond to and recover from misinformation-driven crises.

(Rupasingha, 2021) This study explores the significant role of PR in rebuilding Sri Lanka's tourism image post-crisis, focusing on strategic communication efforts. This study primarily examines the concepts of public relations and tourism, the interrelationship between them, and the role of public relations within the tourism industry. Attention is given to how public relations contribute to shaping Sri Lanka's image in the global tourism market.

The findings indicate that public relations and tourism are closely interconnected. Public relations play a significant role in promoting tourist destinations and in cultivating a positive image among tourism consumers, thereby enhancing the country's international appeal. Also, the study reveals that at present numerous Public Relations strategic plans and campaigns are implemented to uplift the Sri Lankan tourist image, to decrease the negative impact of the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks and the COVID-19 impact on the tourist customers. This study is more of a case study of a particular locality Sri Lankan tourism industry. It is limited in generalization as it only highlights the significant impact of PR on tourism.

2.1.3 IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON TOURISM

Previous studies have explored the role of fake news in various industries, but its impact on tourism PR specifically is still under-researched. The spread of false information can damage the reputation of tourist destinations, affecting bookings and visitor numbers. In some cases, fake news can lead to crises, forcing PR teams to engage in damage control. For example, false reports of a natural disaster or terrorist threat in a popular tourist destination can result in immediate declines in tourism. (Abdallah, 2021; Kaszás et al., 2025).

PR practitioners in the tourism industry are increasingly adopting strategies to address fake news. These strategies include monitoring social media platforms, utilizing fact-checking services, employing crisis communication tools, and collaborating with influencers to counter misinformation.

(Ismail et al., 2024) in their study, provides a comprehensive review of how fake news affects tourism, highlighting its influence on traveler perceptions and decision-making processes. Fake news within the tourism industry has the potential to shape consumer behavior, expectations, and perceptions of destinations and entertainment options. Understanding its impact on the sector and the stakeholders involved is therefore essential. This study employed a systematic review methodology, analyzing thirty-one papers drawn from four academic databases.

The findings reveal that the influence of fake news on consumers creates a ripple effect that extends to businesses and even national economies. The dissemination of misinformation was found to occur primarily through online platforms such as social media, review sites, and websites, but also offline via editorials, opinion pieces, and entertainment programs. The motivations behind the creation of fake news were largely self-serving, with individuals seeking personal or financial gain.

To identify fake news, both automated detection tools and manual verification methods were utilized. The study concludes that tourism departments can mitigate these challenges by raising awareness through workshops and online campaigns so that businesses and consumers are better equipped to recognize and respond to misinformation. The gap in this research is that it only mentions the various ways by which PR can mitigate the spread of fake news but is unsure stakeholders may be willing to do so. In effect, there is a call for further research into stakeholders' willingness to use the guidelines.

Vasist and Krishnan (2022) explores the prevalence of fake news in the hospitality sector and proposes a framework for future research to address this challenge. Fake news has become an all-pervasive phenomenon that extends beyond social and political boundaries and has now infiltrated the hospitality industry. Although its growing prominence has attracted scholarly attention, research on fake news within this sector remains in its early stages and lacks a solid theoretical foundation. The fragmented nature of existing studies underscores the need to consolidate current knowledge and establish a clearer direction for future inquiry.

Responding to this gap, a systematic literature review was conducted, analyzing 51 articles that address fake news in the hospitality industry. This review provides a comprehensive synthesis of existing scholarship, identifying key thematic trends, highlighting research gaps, and proposing a conceptual framework that captures the phenomenon in its entirety.

In addition, the study advances a series of theme-based research avenues designed to inspire future investigations and strengthen the theoretical and practical understanding of fake news in hospitality. This study is a compilation of scholarly articles to look at how best to harmonize them in a coordinated manner. In effect, it adds up to literature and leaves room for further studies.

Gallego (2022), in contrast, examines how risk conditions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic influenced both the desire to travel and the intention to visit destinations, thereby affecting multiple stages of the destination choice process. The study analyzed 5,134 million flight searches and 379 million flight selections recorded in 2020 across the 17 largest European tourism source markets.

To measure variations, an unweighted index was employed to compare searches and selections in 2020 against the reference year of 2019. This analysis was conducted for air travel in general, as well as specifically for Spain. The research then extended to 17 international destinations included in the evoked sets of Europe's two largest outbound markets Germany and the United Kingdom.

The findings further identify which source markets were most favorable to Spain, offering insights into how pandemic related risk conditions reshaped travel intentions and destination competitiveness. The study is limited to air travel data and European markets, excluding broader tourism behaviors and perceptions in non-European or emerging destinations. This restricts its applicability to global tourism PR strategies, especially in African contexts.

2.2 REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

2.2.1 IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON GHANA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

Kwode (2023), in his study conducted in Ghana, identified fake news as one of the major challenges confronting journalism in the country. Its pervasive influence on both political and economic realities has generated numerous controversies, particularly given that many media outlets are owned by politicians or individuals with vested political interests. Within this context, fake news has often been employed as a propaganda tool, enabling political actors to undermine their rivals through the strategic use of media.

To achieve these objectives, social media platforms and allied mainstream outlets were frequently utilized to disseminate fabricated content, especially during the 2020 general elections. The study further highlighted the emerging role of artificial intelligence and robotics in the production of fake news, underscoring the increasing sophistication of misinformation tactics.

Kwode's work concludes by recommending that media organizations in Ghana strengthen their reliance on fact-checking services to verify stories and intensify public education initiatives aimed at identifying and flagging fake news. Such measures, he argues, are essential for safeguarding journalistic integrity and mitigating the harmful effects of misinformation. The limitation of this study is basically about the media landscape and does not capture the key actors involved in fake news fabrication.

While the study provides a compelling analysis of fake news within Ghana's media and political landscape highlighting its use as a propaganda tool and the role of AI in content creation it does not investigate the identities, motivations, or networks of the key actors involved in fabricating and disseminating fake news. This leaves a gap in understanding the

human and institutional drivers behind misinformation, which is crucial for designing targeted interventions and accountability mechanisms.

Anton, E., et al (2020). This research examines how narrative strategies are employed in disseminating fake news within the tourism sector and their impact on consumer behaviour. This article reviews research conducted over the past decade that examines how communication through social media and press articles influences decision-making in the selection of travel destinations. Fake news has the capacity to shape the opinions, expectations, and behaviors of tourism consumers. Recognized as a significant threat to modern democratic societies, the intentional dissemination of false information can distort perceptions and disrupt the normal functioning of both state institutions and private enterprises.

The manipulation of information often reshapes the image of tourism destinations, accommodation facilities, cruise lines, and attractions, typically with the aim of generating greater economic benefits. However, the spread of fake news can also produce adverse consequences, damage the reputation of destinations and undermine the operations of tourism providers.

To address, absorb, and adapt to the challenges posed by fake news, future work will consider the concept of societal resilience, exploring how communities and industries can strengthen their capacity to cope with misinformation and its impacts on tourism. This research has a gap as it examines only the narrative strategies employed in disseminating fake news within the tourism sector. It does not look at the PR strategies in entirety.

This leaves a gap in understanding how PR professionals actively manage misinformation crises and restore destination credibility.

According to Abdallah (2021), there exists a complex interplay between fake news, false advertising, and social media, with these elements collectively shaping the tourism industry. The concept of fake news, though relatively recent, has attracted significant global attention and is widely regarded as a distinct and identifiable phenomenon. Its definition has been debated extensively among scholars, sparking ongoing academic discourse.

This study reflects on the notion of fake news by examining the term itself and considering its implications for tourism. Given that fake news is often absorbed rapidly by audiences through social media, a clear link emerges between social media platforms and the dissemination of misleading advertising. The paper also explores the broader role of news in everyday life and evaluates the impact of fake news on the tourism sector.

The discussion highlights how destinations and operators may sometimes adopt fake news intentionally to project a positive image, raising ethical concerns and questions about the legality of such practices. Furthermore, the study examines tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that some destinations resorted to unconventional strategies including extreme forms of fake news to promote their industries in the face of unprecedented challenges. While the paper introduces the controversial idea of destinations deliberately using fake news for promotional gain, it lacks empirical validation and does not generalize findings across different tourism contexts. This creates a gap in assessing the ethical implications and real-world prevalence of such practices, especially during global crises like COVID-19.

Simultaneously, scholarly on the role of Public Relations in tourism (e.g., Rupasingha, 2021; Zhang et al., 2024) tends to focus on areas such as destination branding, crisis recovery, and cultural communication without adequately considering how PR strategies are evolving in response to the challenges posed by fake news. Even studies that do intersect with

misinformation in tourism, such as those by Abdallah (2021) and Anton et al. (2020), fail to holistically address the dynamic and strategic role PR professionals play in shaping narratives, rebuilding reputations, and engaging stakeholders during crises fueled by false information.

This disconnects in the literature signals a lack of a unified scholarly identity that acknowledges the unique role of public relations in combating fake news within the tourism industry. While empirical data exists on the impacts of fake news and the functions of PR separately, there is insufficient integrated research that identifies PR as a central actor in the fake news–tourism nexus.

Hence, this study aims to bridge this identity gap by repositioning public relations not just as a communicative support function, but as a strategic force actively navigating and countering the implications of fake news in the tourism space. It seeks to define and solidify the identity of PR practice as both reactive and proactive in managing misinformation that threatens tourism development, perception, and growth.

According to Vasist, P. N., & Krishnan, S. (2022/2023) in their cross-country empirical paper, they show how political disinformation, and sensational false reports can seriously harm travel demand and destination reputation. They argue that misinformation often outpaces official corrections, prolonging the recovery of affected tourism markets. (Vasist& Krishnan, 2022).

The gap in this research shows strong evidence of damage, but limited discussion of how on -the ground PR teams in developing countries (like Ghana) detect and respond to these disinformation campaigns.

Nassar, M. A., Elsaqqa, M., &Hagras, S. M. (2023) also did a review of digital disinformation's effects on hotel customers, showing that fake news, misleading advertisements, and deepfakes

lower booking intentions and trust in hospitality brands. The paper maps theoretical explanations and suggests areas for empirical work. (Nassar et al., 2023).

However, the Gap or limitation of this study is that it is useful for only hotel-level effects as it recommends empirical testing of PR counter measures - exactly the kind of practitioner - focused research this study can supply for the tourism sector.

In his study, Ismail, S. (2024) did a focused review of fake news in tourism that explains how misinformation influences tourist perceptions and decision-making and lists monitoring and fact-checking as common PR responses. There is a gap in this study as the review identifies response strategies but questions stakeholder willingness and capacity to adopt them. Pointing to a need for empirical work in contexts like Ghana.

According to Sivathanu, B. (2024) in his study examines how manipulated and deepfake destination videos affect tourists' visit intentions and shows that misleading multimedia can decrease trust more than text-based fake news. A gap is identified as the study demonstrates multimedia risks (very relevant to social platforms) but does not explore how destination PR teams should adapt messaging or platform partnerships to counteract multimedia misinformation.

Yawa, A. D. (Thesis, 2021, accessed 2023) In his master's thesis on how the Ghana Health Service used PR to fight pandemic- era fake news. The study shows practical PR tactics (monitoring, multi-channel messaging), challenges (understaffing, delayed official information), and the difficulty of changing public behaviour when misinformation spreads. (Yawa, 2021).

The gap or limitation in this study is that though in health, this Ghana-specific study provides transferable lessons about institutional PR capacity and constraint and provides useful background for a tourism-focused, Ghanaian study.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in two foundational theories in the field of communication: **Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)** and **Agenda-Setting Theory**. These theories provide a lens through which to examine how fake news affects public relations (PR) practices, particularly in the tourism industry, where reputation and public perception are critical.

2.3.1 SITUATIONAL CRISIS COMMUNICATION THEORY (SCCT)

Emphasizes the importance of tailoring communication strategies based on the type of crisis, the organization's perceived responsibility, and the potential reputational damage. SCCT outlines a range of response strategies - such as denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering - each suited to specific crisis scenarios (Coombs 2022),

The denial strategy attempt to sever the link between the organization and the crisis or deny the crisis exists at all. These are best used when the organization is a genuine victim or facing false accusations. It comes in the form of attack the accuser [where the organization confronts the person or group making the claims.]; Denial [the organization asserts that no crisis has occurred] and Scapegoat [the organization blames an external person or group for the crisis].

Diminishment strategy aims to minimize the organization's perceived responsibility for the crisis or the actual severity of the damage caused. These are suitable for accidental crises or when the organization had a minor role. It comes in the form of Excuse [the organization minimizes its responsibility by denying intent to do harm or claiming an inability to control the events] and Justification [where the organization minimizes the perceived damage by offering a logical explanation or claiming the outcomes were not as bad as they seem.

Rebuilding strategy on the other hand focuses on improving the organization's reputation through positive, compensatory actions. These are essential when the organization is highly responsible for a crisis (e.g., in a preventable crisis due to misconduct or negligence). It takes forms such as Compensation [the organization offers money or other gifts to the victims]; Apology [where the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness.] and Corrective Action [the organization takes steps to prevent a recurrence of the crisis].

Bolstering strategy is supportive actions used alongside other main strategies to remind stakeholders of the existing positive attributes or past good works. Forms of this include Reminding [the organization reminds stakeholders of its past good works or positive reputation]; Ingratiation [the organization praises stakeholders for their support or loyalty] and Victimage [where the organization reminds stakeholders that it, too, is a victim of the crisis (e.g., a natural disaster affecting operations)]. The choice of strategy depends on the crisis type and the degree of responsibility stakeholders attribute to the organization.

The Significance of this theory to the study is that in the context of fake news, SCCT helps tourism-related organizations determine how best to respond when misinformation threatens their image. For instance, if a travel destination is falsely reported as unsafe or misrepresented due to fabricated stories, the PR team can apply SCCT strategies to address the misinformation, reassure stakeholders, and restore trust. SCCT thus provides a structured approach for mitigating reputational harm caused by the spread of fake news.

2.3.2 AGENDA-SETTING THEORY

It proposes that the media does not tell the public what to think, but rather what to think about. It suggests that the prominence given to certain issues in the media can shape public awareness and concern through factors like story placement, frequency and emphasis (Combs and Donald Shaw, 1972). It works in the form of **Selection**, where media outlets choose which stories to cover and which to ignore. Salience is also another form through which various cues, like headline size or news placement, the media signals which topics are most important and finally is **Emphasis**. This shows the influence of the media on how people perceive an issue by framing the story, emphasizing specific facts, and downplaying others.

The significance of this theory to the study is that fake news thrives on the media's power to set the agenda. In the tourism industry, exaggerated or false reports about destinations - such as crime, natural disasters, or health risks - can quickly gain traction and influence travelers' perceptions and decisions. Agenda-Setting Theory helps explain how such stories become focal points in public discourse and demonstrates the need for proactive PR efforts to counteract misinformation and shape a more accurate narrative.

Together, SCCT and Agenda-Setting Theory offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how fake news affects the tourism industry and how PR practitioners can strategically respond to protect and restore the reputations of affected destinations and organizations.

2.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- i. **Fake News:** False or misleading information that is presented as legitimate news, often with the intent to deceive, damage a reputation, or generate profit through advertising revenue. It encompasses a range of misinformation, disinformation, and hoaxes,
- ii. **Public Relations:** The practice of managing and disseminating information from an individual or an organization to the public to influence their perception.
- iii. **Public Relations practitioner:** A professional who manages and shapes an organization's public image by building and maintaining positive relationships with the public, media, and other stakeholders. This is achieved through strategic communication, which includes managing publicity, writing press releases, responding to media inquiries, organizing events, and handling crises to ensure a positive public perception.
- iv. **Tourism:** Tourism refers to the movement of individuals to destinations beyond their usual environment for purposes such as leisure, business, or personal activities, typically for a period of less than one year. It represents a multifaceted social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves a wide range of services and industries supporting travelers, including accommodation, transportation, and attractions.
- v. **Tourism Industry:** All the services, organizations, and activities involved in providing for people who are traveling away from their homes for leisure, business, or other purposes. It is a complex sector encompassing transportation, accommodation, restaurants, and tour operators; all working to cater for the needs of visitors. The industry aims to facilitate travel and provide a wide range of services and experiences for tourists.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an extensive examination of literature concerning fake news and its implications for Public Relations (PR) practice, with a particular focus on the tourism industry. It began by establishing the conceptual framework of fake news, defining it as the intentional production and distribution of inaccurate information designed to deceive audiences or serve specific socio-political or economic agendas. The discussion traced the evolution of circulation of fake news in the digital age media era, highlighting its growing complexity and the challenges it poses for PR professionals tasked with reputation management and crisis communication.

The review revealed that while fake news has been extensively examined in domains such as politics, health communication, and media studies, its impact within the tourism sector remains underexplored. Evidence from both global and local contexts suggests that misinformation can severely distort public perception, erode tourist confidence, and damage destination branding. However, there is a noticeable lack of research on the specific strategies employed by PR practitioners to counter these reputational threats, particularly within the Ghanaian tourism landscape.

Various scholarly perspectives were analyzed to understand PR responses to fake news, including crisis communication tactics, fact-checking initiatives, media monitoring systems, and the deployment of digital verification tools. These approaches underscore the pivotal role of PR practitioners as gatekeepers of information and defenders of institutional credibility, requiring a delicate balance of transparency, responsiveness, and strategic messaging.

The chapter also integrated theoretical insights from the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Agenda-Setting Theory. These frameworks offer a robust lens for analyzing how fake

news shapes public discourse and how PR professionals can strategically intervene to restore trust and manage reputational damage.

Ultimately, the chapter identified critical research gaps: the absence of empirical data on the effects of fake news on PR practice in Ghana's tourism sector; the limited understanding of practitioner-led mitigation strategies; and the need to examine institutional support mechanisms for effective crisis communication. Addressing these gaps constitutes the core objective of the present study.

In conclusion, Chapter Two laid the conceptual and theoretical groundwork for exploring the intersection of fake news and public relations in tourism. These insights inform the research methodology and analytical framework that will be detailed in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methods and procedures adopted for conducting the study. It outlines research design, population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. The purpose is to ensure that the methods used are systematic, reliable, and appropriate for addressing the research objectives. The chapter adopts a quantitative approach, using numerical data to analyze the impact of fake news on public relations practice within the tourism industry in Accra Metropolis.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This investigation adopts a quantitative descriptive research design. This design is suitable because it enables the researcher to gather measurable data from respondents to determine relationships and trends among variables. The study focuses on describing the extent to which fake news affects tourism organizations and how public relations practitioners respond to it. The research focuses on gathering numerical data through surveys and questionnaires administered to PR professionals working in tourism organizations, PR agencies, and marketing firms involved in the tourism sector. To analyze and draw statistical findings about the strengths, research correlations, and generalizations of PR's role in impacting the tourism industry, the researcher will collect numerical data from many participants using this technique. This strategy allows the researcher to evaluate the hypothesis utilizing quantitative analytical techniques and metrics to get objective and somewhat

reliable results. A structured questionnaire was used as the main research instrument, allowing for statistical analysis and objective interpretation of responses.

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

There is no publicly available exact number of PR practitioners working specifically in Ghana's tourism industry. However, insights from recent reports and industry data suggest that the number is relatively small but growing, especially within key institutions and firms based in Accra Metropolis. (Rentech Digital, 2025). As of January 2025, Ghana has about 58 registered PR firms, with 53 located in the Accra Metropolis, where most tourism institutions are headquartered. (Rentech Digital, 2025). Most specifically, institution like the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) employs PR officers for destination branding, media relations, and stakeholder engagement. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture has a communications team that includes PR practitioners. The Private Sector such as hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators often employ PR or marketing officers, though many roles are hybrid. (Osei Prempeh, 2020)

The target population for this study comprises Public Relations practitioners working in the tourism and hospitality industry (e.g., Ghana Tourism Authority, hotels, travel agencies and destination marketing organizations). Also are Communication officers within the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and Media relations officers in tourism-related institutions. This population is chosen because they are directly involved in information management, image building, and communication activities within the tourism sector. (Kaszás, Chovanová Supeková, & Keklak, 2025).

A stratified random sampling method is employed to ensure that the sample represents different segments within the tourism industry, such as leisure tourism, corporate tourism, and destination

marketing organizations. This technique enables the researcher to limit respondents to people with extensive insight on the subject matter. This will offer opportunity to gather relevant data. (Etikan& Bala, 2017).

The researcher uses Cochran formula to derive a workable sample size of stratified sample size of varied tourism related practitioners. The formula considers the desired confidence level, margin of error, and the variability within each stratum. It ensures accurate representation of different groups within the tourism industry. (Cochran, 1977).

The sample size is calculated based on statistical significance, aiming for a sample of at least 50 (minimum) respondents to ensure that the data can be generalized across the tourism industry in Accra Metropolis.

3.3 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The study targets a sample size of between 50 - 100 respondents. This sample size was considered adequate to represent the views of professionals within the tourism sector in Accra Metropolis while maintaining manageability. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from various categories such as PR practitioners, tourism staff, and management officials. This method ensures diversity in responses and minimizes bias.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The study made use of primary data collected through the administration of structured questionnaires. Secondary data were obtained from journal articles, books, reports, and online publications relevant to fake news, public relations, and tourism. The questionnaire is divided into sections; section A: Demographic information, section B: Awareness and perception of fake news, section C: Impact of fake news on tourism and PR, section D: Strategies used by PR practitioners to manage fake news and section E: Recommendations and personal opinions. Closed ended (Likert scale) was used to capture measurable trends ranging from: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. This format facilitates quantitative analysis of responses.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically (via email or Google Forms) to selected respondents. Follow-ups were made to ensure high response rates. Participants were given adequate time to respond. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to encourage honest responses. Collected data were coded and entered PSS for analysis.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. Results were presented in tables and charts. Inferential statistics, particularly correlation and regression analysis, were used to determine relationships between fake news exposure and PR responses in the tourism industry in Accra Metropolis. The analysis was guided by the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Agenda-Setting Theory, which underpin this study.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher obtained permission from relevant authorities before data collection. Respondents participated voluntarily and were informed about the purpose of the study. Respondents were assured of confidentiality. Personal identities were not disclosed, and data were used solely for academic purposes.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the research design and methodological framework adopted for the investigation. It described the study population, explained the sampling procedures, and detailed the data collection instruments employed. In addition, the chapter presented the analytical procedures and the methods used for examining quantitative data. Collectively, these steps ensure that the findings are credible and remain consistent with the overarching research objectives, which focus on assessing the impact of fake news on public relations practices within the tourism industry of the Accra Metropolis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data collected from the survey administered to the respondents. The primary data source is the SPSS frequency output, which is quantitative and addresses the following research objectives.

1. To examine the sources and nature of fake news affecting the tourism industry.
2. To identify the challenges fake news presents to PR practitioners within the tourism industry.
3. To explore the strategies used by PR practitioners to combat fake news.
4. To assess the overall impact of fake news on brand reputation and tourist behaviour.

This chapter also highlights the demographic profile of the respondents, their perceptions of fake news, the role of social media influencers, and the counter strategies employed by Public Relations (PR) practitioners in the tourism sector in Accra Metropolis. A total of 50 valid questionnaires were analyzed.

4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The demographic characteristics of the respondents, which establish the sample profile, are presented in terms of gender, age, education level, job role, and years of experience. The frequency distribution table in Table1 presents the profile of the respondents.

A. CONSOLIDATED RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (N = 50)

Variable	Categories / Values	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	28	56.0%	56.0%	56.0%
	Female	22	44.0%	44.0%	100.0%
Age Category	18–25	15	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%
	26–35	21	42.0%	42.0%	72.0%
	36–45	10	20.0%	20.0%	92.0%
	46–55	3	6.0%	6.0%	98.0%
	56 and above	1	2.0%	2.0%	100.0%

Education Level	Diploma	5	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	23	46.0%	46.0%	56.0%
	Master's Degree	20	40.0%	40.0%	96.0%
	PhD	1	2.0%	2.0%	98.0%
	Other	1	2.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Job Role	PR Practitioner	20	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%
	Tourism Officer	11	22.0%	22.0%	62.0%
	Tourist	4	8.0%	8.0%	70.0%
	Government Official	8	16.0%	16.0%	86.0%
	Media Relations & Communication	7	14.0%	14.0%	100.0%
Years in PR/Tourism	Less than 1	3	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%
	1–3	25	50.0%	50.0%	56.0%
	4–6	10	20.0%	20.0%	76.0%
	7–10	5	10.0%	10.0%	86.0%
	Above 10	7	14.0%	14.0%	100.0%

From table one above,

I. RESPONDENT'S GENDER

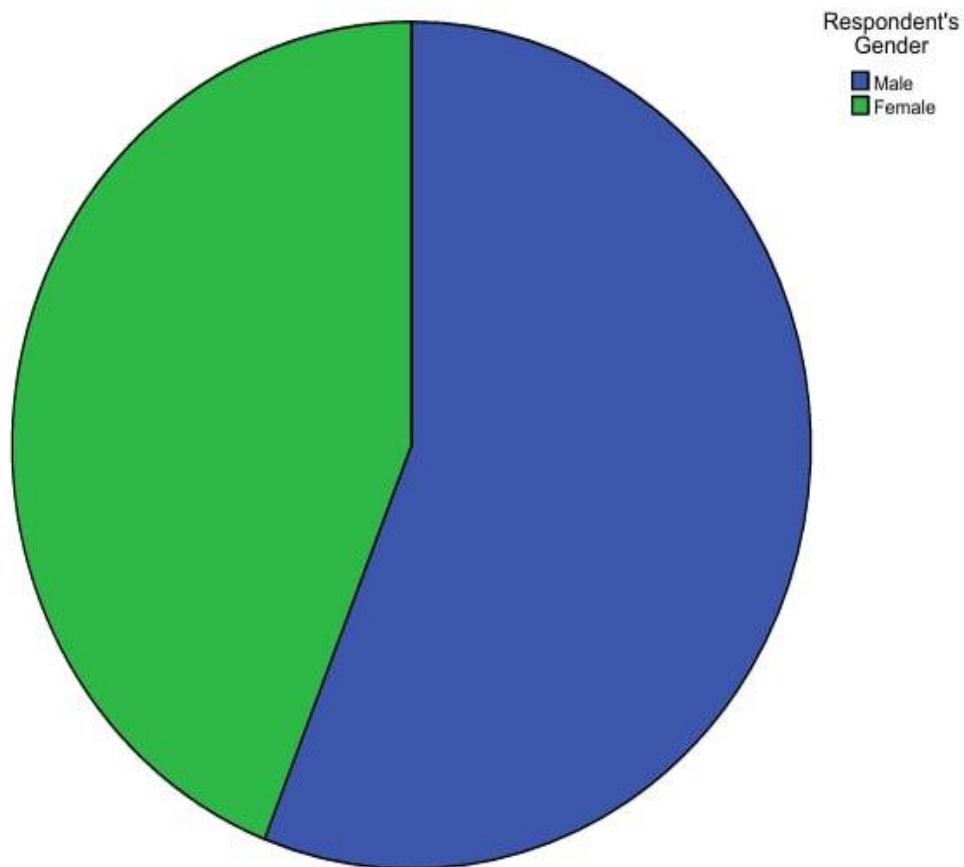


FIGURE 1

Majority of the respondents were Male, accounting for 56.0% (N=28), while Female respondents made up 44.0% (N=22) of the total sample. This shows that males slightly dominate leadership position in the tourism sector in Accra Metropolis. The result affirms the conclusion by **Awusi et al. (2023)** concerning the patriarchal nature of institutions in Ghana emphasizing males dominating decision-making bodies in most sectors of the country.

II. AGE CATEGORY

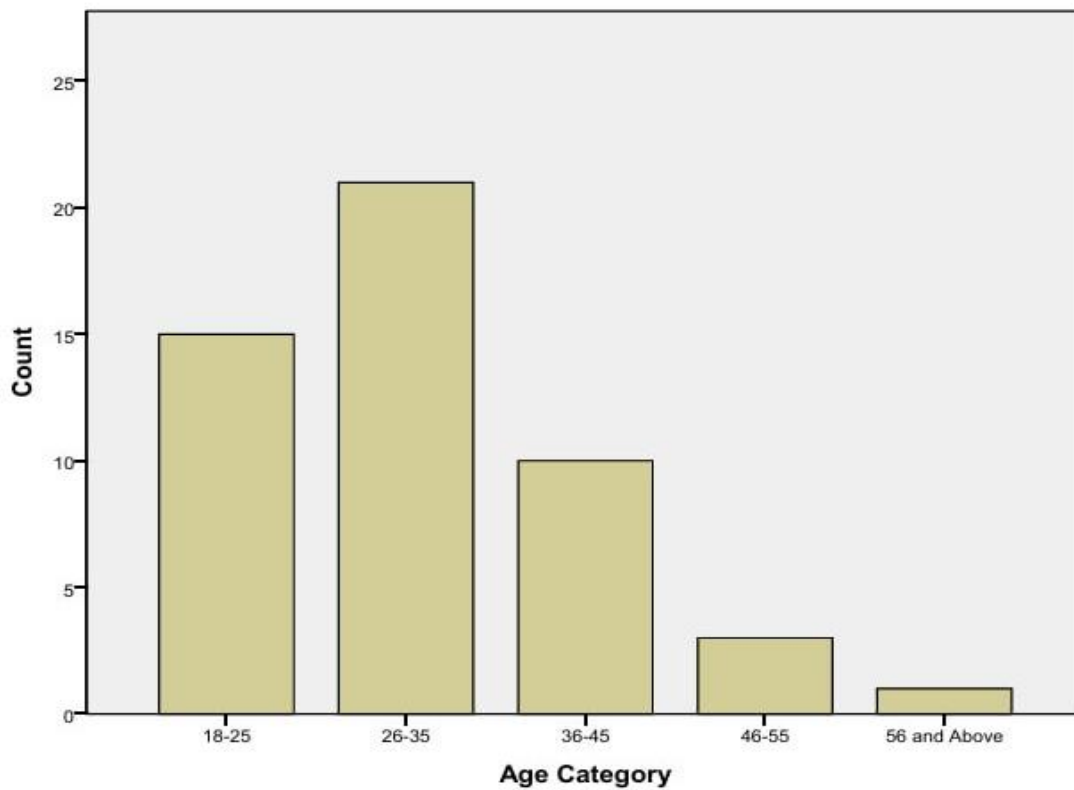


FIGURE 2

The findings show that the most represented age group is between 26–35 years, which accounts for 42.0% (N=21) of the sample. This is followed by the 18–25 age category at 30.0% (N=15) and the 36–45 age group at 20.0% (N=10). The groups aged 46–55 (6.0%, N=3) and 56 and Above (2.0%, N=1) represent the minority of respondents, indicating a survey population largely dominated by younger and middle-aged professionals. The results show that all respondents were above 18 years the age for informed consent and participation in research as noted by Kavaarpuo et al. (2023).

III. HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL

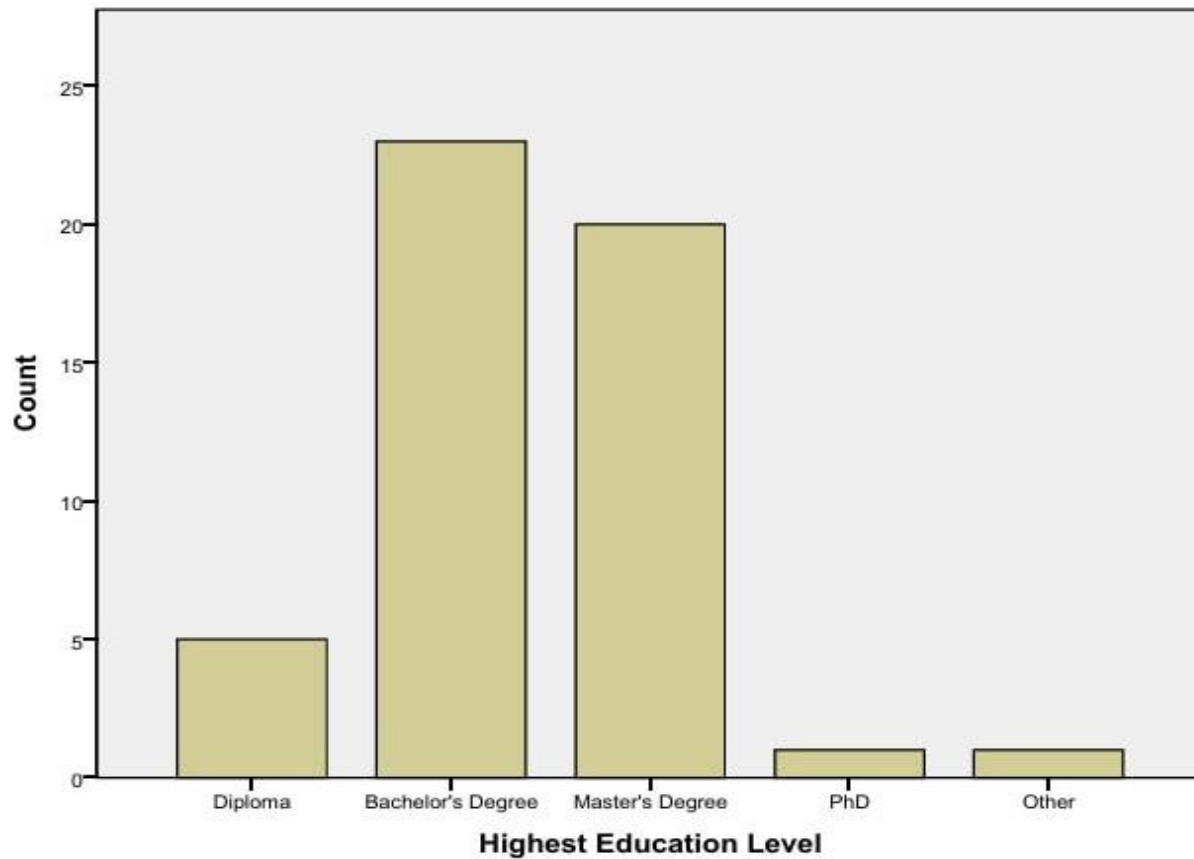


FIGURE 3

In terms of academic qualification, the largest portion of respondents hold a bachelor's degree (46.0%, N=23), followed closely by those with a master's degree (40.0%, N=20). Respondents with a Diploma constitute 10.0% (N=5), while those with a PhD or "Other" qualification each account for 2.0% (N=1). This high level of education (86.0% having a bachelor's or master's degree) suggests the responses are from well-informed individuals in the industry. It also shows the ability of the respondents to understand and respond to the questions in relation to the research objectives.

IV. JOB ROLE

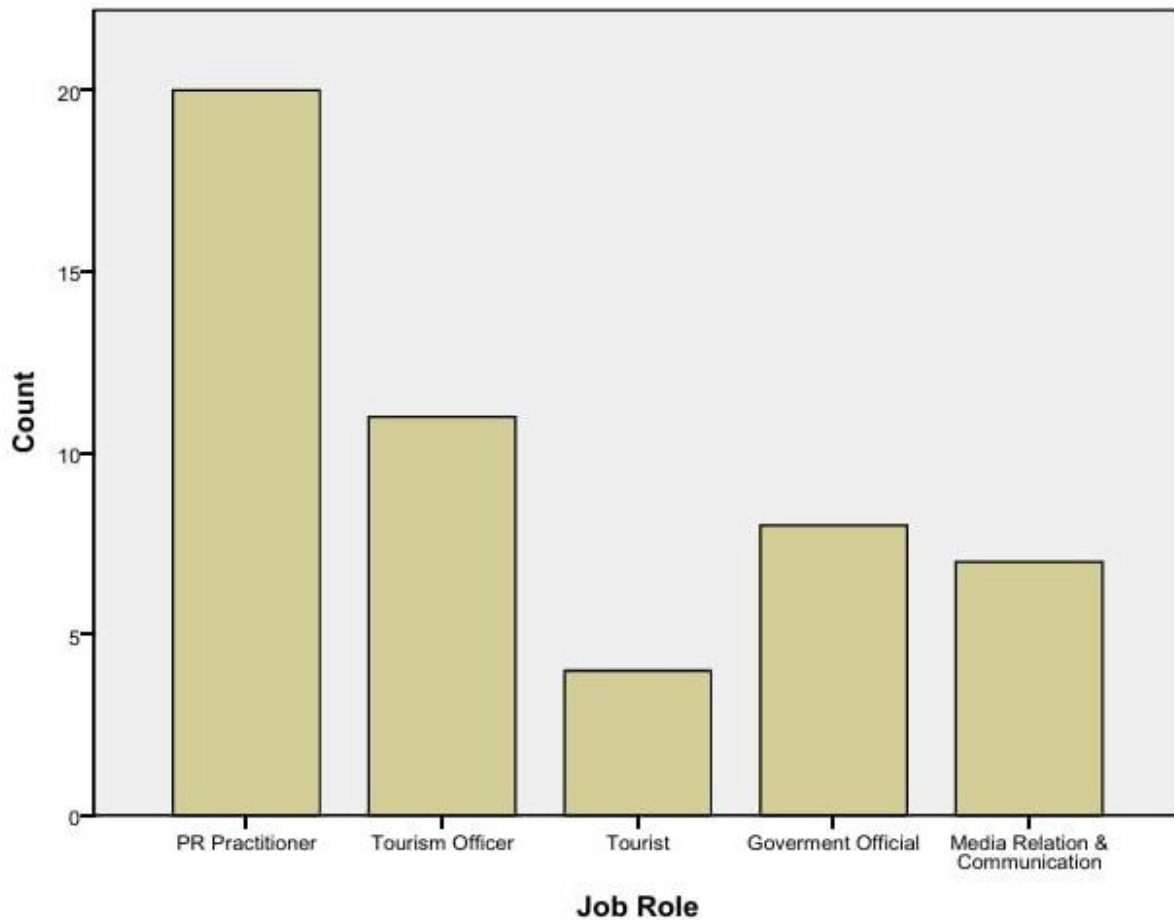


FIGURE 4

From the table, the distribution across job roles shows that PR Practitioners form the largest group at 40.0% (N=20). Tourism Officers account for 22.0% (N=11), while Tourists represent 8.0% (N=4). Government Officials make up 16.0% (N=8), and Media Relation & Communication professionals comprise 14.0% (N=7).

This shows that most institutions within the tourism sector place priority on public relations practitioners, though their work is not in isolation. They collaborate closely with media relations

and communication professionals, which explains the notable presence of both groups. The distribution highlights how PR and media communication together form the backbone of tourism-related institutional roles, while government officials and tourism officers provide complementary support.

V. YEARS IN PR/TOURISM

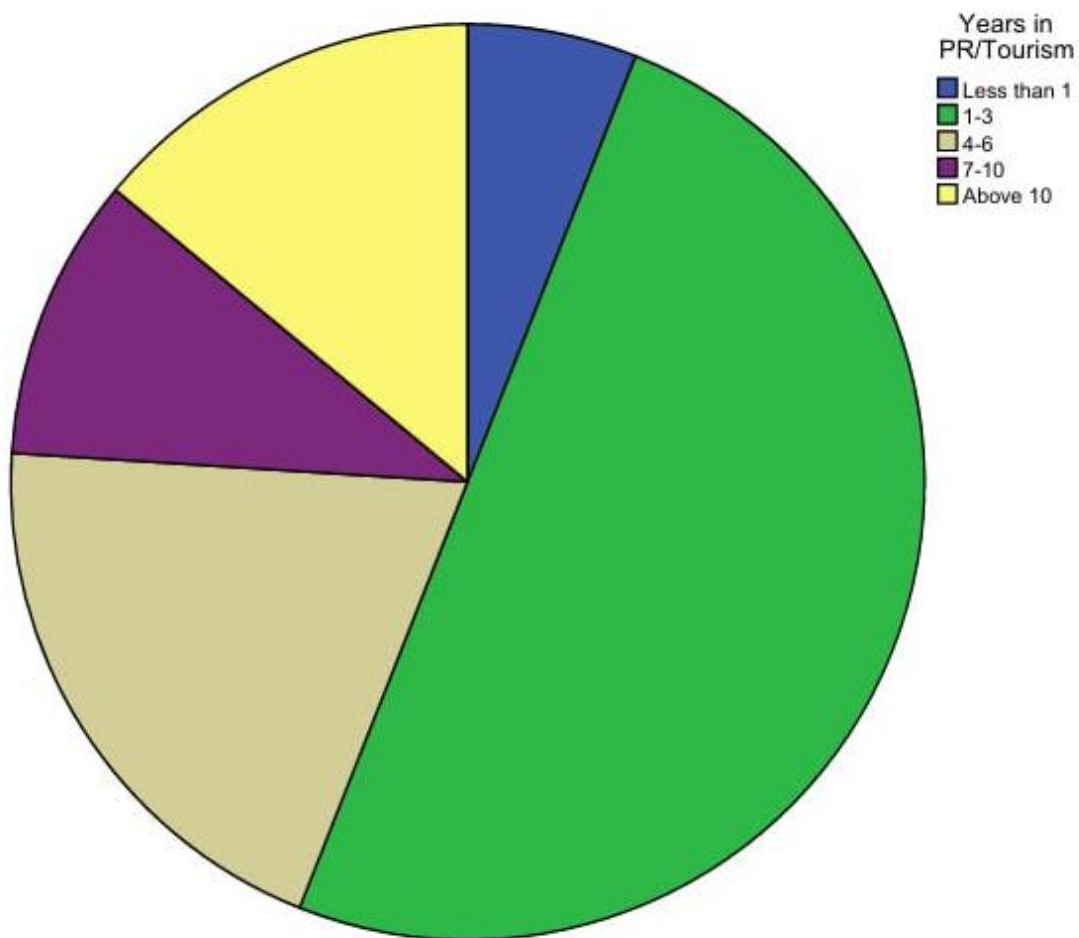


FIGURE 5

A significant majority of the respondents (50.0%, N=25) have 1-3 years of experience in the PR/Tourism sector. Those with 4-6 years of experience account for 20.0% (N=10). Overall, 76.0% of the sample has six or few years of experience, indicating a relatively young professional base. This signifies that the PR/Tourism sector is gradually developing with a lot of potential and sensitization. This is evident in the age and experience of the practitioners in the industry, giving a lot of hope and prospects for the future for more PR practitioners.

4.2. SOURCES AND NATURE OF FAKE NEWS AFFECTING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Many studies have indicated that fake news emanates from various sources. It encompasses misinformation, disinformation, and hoaxes presented as legitimate news. It often spreads through social media and can be politically, financially, or ideologically motivated. (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024; Agrane, 2022; Parliamentary Assembly, 2024)

4.2.1 PERCEPTION OF FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION

A strong consensus exists regarding the source and spread of misinformation. A total of 68.0% of respondents either Strongly Agree (36.0%) or Agree (32.0%) that most fake news about tourism is spread through social media. [Kim B et al 2021) This is clearly shown in table two above.

An even higher percentage, 74.0% (38.0% Strongly Agree, 36.0% Agree), believe that bloggers and influencers are major sources of fake tourism stories. In addition, the intent to Mislead comes to play. The statement that fake news about tourism is usually created to mislead the public was supported by 74.0% (44.0% Agree, 30.0% Strongly Agree) of the respondents.

Similarly, a commanding 82.0% (50.0% Strongly Agree, 32.0% Agree) agreed that people easily believe false information about tourism online. Furthermore, 72.0% (42.0% Agree, 30.0%

Strongly Agree) concurred that fake news spreads faster than verified information. [Abdallah, A. 2021).

A. IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TOURISM

Impact Statement	% Agreement	Breakdown (Agree / Strongly Agree)	Notes
Fake news makes it hard for PR officers to maintain public trust	70.0%	45.0% Agree / 25.0% Strongly Agree	Majority of respondents highlight trust erosion due to misinformation
PR officers spend a lot of time correcting false stories	66.0%	40.0% Agree / 26.0% Strongly Agree	Significant time investment in countering misinformation
Fake news damages the reputation of tourism organizations	70.0%	44.0% Agree / 26.0% Strongly Agree	Reputation seen as highly vulnerable to false information
Responding to fake news increases the cost of PR work	66.0%	42.0% Agree / 24.0% Strongly Agree	Financial burden of misinformation management is widely acknowledged

Various studies have indicated that the spread of false information can damage the reputation of tourist destinations, affecting bookings and visitor numbers. In some cases, fake news can lead to crises, forcing PR teams to engage in damage control. For example, false reports of a natural disaster or terrorist threat in a popular tourist destination can result in immediate declines in tourism. (Abdallah, 2021; Kaszás et al., 2025). The findings clearly show the detrimental impact of misinformation on the industry:

From the table above, most respondents (70.0%) believe that fake news makes it hard for PR officers to maintain public trust. In line with this, 66.0% (40.0% Strongly Agree, 26.0% Agree) agreed that PR officers spend a lot of time correcting false stories.

This has effect on reputation and cost: The potential damage is also high, with 70.0% of respondents agreeing (44.0% Agree, 26.0% Strongly Agree) that fake news damages the reputation of tourism organizations. The sentiment that responding to fake news increases the cost of PR work was supported by 66.0% (42.0% Agree, 24.0% Strongly Agree).

4.3.1 PR AUDIENCE REACH AND IMAGE DAMAGE

The advent of social media and the 24/7 news cycle have made managing PR in tourism become increasingly challenging. PR practitioners are now tasked not only with managing positive media coverage but also swiftly responding to negative press, which includes addressing fake news. (Abdallah, 2021; Kaszás, Chovanová Supeková, & Keklak, 2025).

The problem extends to communication effectiveness, as 62.0% of practitioners agreed that they find it difficult to reach audiences because of misinformation. Furthermore, 76.0% of the sample agreed (40.0% Strongly Agree, 36.0% Agree) that fake news damages the image of tourist sites in Ghana. This is shown in the table below:

A. Impact of Fake News on PR in Tourism (Ghana)

Statement	Response Category	Frequency (%)	Total Agreement (%)
Difficulty reaching audiences due to misinformation	Agree	62.0%	62.0%
Fake news damages the image of tourist sites in Ghana	Strongly Agree	40.0%	
	Agree	36.0%	
	Combined Agreement	76.0%	76.0%

4.3.2 PR COUNTER STRATEGIES AND PREPARATION

PR practitioners in the tourism industry are increasingly adopting strategies such as monitoring social media, fact-checking, crisis communication, and influencer collaboration to counter misinformation (Abdallah, 2021; RPR Firm, 2023; Kaszás et al., 2025).

The data reveals the extent to which PR organizations are actively engaged in combating fake news: Most respondents (60.0%) reported that their organization quickly releases statements to correct fake news. Similarly, 58.0% of PR practitioners agreed that they monitor social media for false stories.

Similarly, there is Collaboration and Training between PR, Communication and media relation. A high level of agreement (74.0%) was recorded as regards the statement: ‘We work with journalists

to clarify wrong information’. In terms of internal preparedness, 66.0% of respondents (40.0% Agree, 26.0% Strongly Agree) indicated that PR staff are trained to handle misinformation crises.

On Fact-Checking Tools, approximately two-thirds of the respondents (66.0%) agreed that their organization uses fact-checking tools to verify information before publishing. This willingness to invest in solutions is reinforced by the high agreement on their necessity: 78.0% agreed that training PR officers on digital communication will reduce the impact of fake news, and 74.0% agreed that investing in fact-checking tools will help control fake news. This is evident in the table below.

I. PR COUNTER STRATEGIES AND PREPARATION IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Strategy / Preparedness Measure	% Agreement	Notes
Quick release of statements to correct fake news	60.0%	Majority of organizations respond rapidly to misinformation
Monitoring social media for false stories	58.0%	Active surveillance of platforms to detect and counter fake news
Collaboration with journalists to clarify wrong information	74.0%	Strong cooperation between PR, communication, and media relations
PR staff trained to handle misinformation crises	66.0%	40.0% Agree, 26.0% Strongly Agree

Use of fact-checking tools before publishing	66.0%	Verification of information to prevent spread of false content
Training PR officers on digital communication reduces fake news impact	78.0%	High recognition of training as a preventive measure
Investing in fact-checking tools will help control fake news	74.0%	Strong willingness to allocate resources for combating misinformation

4.4. IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON BRAND REPUTATION AND TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

Misinformation, often referred to as “fake news,” possesses the ability to shape the opinions, expectations, and behaviors of tourism consumers. As a recognized threat to democratic societies, the deliberate dissemination of false information can distort public perception and interfere with the effective functioning of both governmental institutions and private enterprises. Within the tourism sector, manipulated narratives frequently alter the image of destinations, accommodation providers, cruise operators, and attractions, typically with the intention of generating economic gain. However, the spread of such fabricated content can also produce adverse consequences, damage the reputation of tourist locations and undermine the operations of industry stakeholders. (Kaszás et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2024; Abdallah, 2021).

The data strongly validates the research premise regarding the influence of social media figures on perceptions. The perception that bloggers and influencers are major sources of fake tourism stories commanded a 74.0% agreement rate. This suggests that within the tourism industry, the very individuals positioned as trusted content creators are viewed as primary vectors of misinformation. Consequently, this flow of fake news has a measurable impact on consumer confidence. A large consensus (76.0% total agreement) exists that fake news reduces confidence in tourism advertisements. This suggests that the actions of unverified or malicious social media influencers/bloggers pollute the digital information environment to such an extent that it directly compromises the effectiveness of official, paid marketing campaigns from tourism organizations. (Kaszás et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2024; Abdallah, 2021). The overall effect is a deterioration of trust, as validated by the 70.0% agreement that fake news makes it difficult for PR officers to maintain public trust.

4.5. ANALYSIS OF THE KEY FINDINGS

The key findings point to a critical challenge in the tourism sector: the widespread negative impact of fake news proliferated mainly through social media platforms and, specifically, by bloggers and influencers. Most PR practitioners and tourism professionals perceive this fake news as being intentionally created to mislead the public, and they widely believe that the public is highly susceptible to it. The consequences for organizations are significant, including a dramatic increase in time and cost spent on correction, difficulty reaching target audiences, and considerable damage to organizational and national tourism reputations. In response, organizations have largely adopted proactive strategies, including social media monitoring, quick response statements, collaboration with journalists, and a commitment to investing in training and fact-checking technologies.

The study is also aligned with the integrated theoretical insight from the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Agenda-Setting Theory. These frameworks offer a robust lens for analyzing how fake news shapes public discourse and how PR practitioners can strategically intervene to restore trust and manage reputational damage.

4.6. REGRESION ANALYSIS

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive influence of fake news (**independent variable**) on two dependent variables:

1. Brand Reputation

2. Tourist Behaviour

The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method was employed in two separate models. The p-value was used to test the stated hypotheses, with values less than 0.05 indicating statistical significance. The R^2 values were used to measure the proportion of variance in the dependent variables explained by fake news.

4.6.1 REGRESSION ANALYSIS – MODEL 1 (BRAND REPUTATION)

Model	Variables	Brand Reputation
1	Fake News	0.0187 (3.642) **
	R²	0.816
	F-Statistics	1.204
	p-value	0.031

A. INTERPRETATION

The regression results show an R^2 value of 0.816, indicating that 81.6% of the variation in brand reputation is explained by fake news. The p-value of 0.031 (< 0.05) confirms statistical significance, supporting the hypothesis that fake news negatively influences brand reputation. This suggests that misinformation directly undermines organizational credibility and damages the image of tourism institutions

4.6.2 REGRESSION ANALYSIS – MODEL 2 (TOURIST BEHAVIOUR)

Model	Variables	Tourist Behaviour
2	Fake News	0.0229 (3.954) **
	R^2	0.853
	F-Statistics	1.287
	p-value	0.024

A. INTERPRETATION

The regression results reveal an R^2 value of 0.853, which means that 85.3 percent of the variation in tourist behaviour is explained by fake news. The p-value of 0.024, being less than the 0.05 threshold, indicates statistical significance and supports the hypothesis that fake news strongly influences tourist decision-making. This finding demonstrates that misinformation not only damages brand reputation but also directly affects consumer confidence, travel choices, and destination loyalty.

4.6.3 OVERALL DISCUSSION

The two regression models confirm that fake news has a significant and measurable impact on both brand reputation and tourist behaviour. Both models show strong explanatory power, with R^2 values above 0.80, but the effect is slightly higher on tourist behaviour at 85.3 percent compared to 81.6 percent for brand reputation. This suggests that misinformation does not merely tarnish organizational image but also translates into behavioural consequences, including reduced bookings, avoidance of destinations, and loss of trust in tourism advertisements. These findings highlight the urgent need for robust public relations counterstrategies such as continuous monitoring of social media platforms, rapid response mechanisms to correct false narratives, collaboration with journalists and influencers to disseminate accurate information, and investment in fact-checking tools and staff training to strengthen resilience.

4.6.4 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Based on the research objectives and the literature reviewed, two hypotheses were formulated to test the relationship between fake news and tourism outcomes. The first hypothesis proposed that fake news has a statistically significant negative impact on brand reputation in the tourism industry. The second hypothesis suggested that fake news has a statistically significant negative impact on tourist behaviour in the tourism industry.

4.6.5 HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULTS

The results of the regression analysis support both hypotheses. For brand reputation, the model produced an R^2 value of 0.816 and a p-value of 0.031, confirming that fake news significantly explains variation in brand reputation. For tourist behaviour, the regression yielded an R^2 value of 0.853 and a p-value of 0.024, indicating that fake news significantly predicts tourist behaviour.

4.6.6 INTERPRETATION

The findings demonstrate that fake news is a critical determinant of tourism outcomes. While its impact on brand reputation is substantial, the effect on tourist behaviour is even stronger. This suggests that misinformation not only undermines organizational image but also directly influences consumer decision-making, travel confidence, and destination loyalty.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter Four successfully presented and analyzed the data gathered from the survey. The findings established a profile of a highly educated, predominantly young professional sample from the tourism and media relations sectors. The substantive data confirms that fake news originating primarily from social media influencers and bloggers poses a significant and costly threat to public trust and organizational reputation in the tourism industry on Accra Metropolis. Critically, the data also shows that PR organizations are actively engaged in combating this challenge by implementing monitoring, response, training, and technology investment strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings the study to a close by presenting a concise overview of the investigation, drawing key conclusions from the data analysis in Chapter Four, and proposing actionable recommendations. This section highlights both the theoretical and practical significance of the results and points to avenues for future inquiry.

5.1 SUMMARY

This study investigated the impact of fake news, largely disseminated by social media influencers and bloggers, on public relations in the tourism sector of Accra Metropolis. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected from 50 professionals in public relations, tourism, and media relations. The demographic analysis revealed a young, highly educated workforce, most with between one and six years of industry experience. The findings showed that a substantial majority of respondents (74.0%) identified bloggers and influencers as major sources of fake tourism stories, while 82.0% agreed that the public is easily swayed by false information online, often created with malicious intent. Furthermore, 76.0% of respondents perceived fake news as causing severe reputational damage to tourism organizations and sites in Accra Metropolis, increasing the difficulty of maintaining public trust and elevating PR costs. Institutions were found to be actively monitoring social media, collaborating with journalists (74.0% agreement), and investing in fact-checking tools and staff training (66.0% agreement) as counter strategies to manage misinformation crises.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The outcomes of the present investigation carry both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the study reinforces Agenda Setting Theory by demonstrating that misinformation in the tourism sector can significantly shape public discourse and stakeholder priorities. By influencing what issues are perceived as most important, misinformation alters the agenda of both media and organizational communication, underscoring the need for proactive framing strategies to maintain legitimacy and trust.

The study also validates the principles as outlined in Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), as the proactive and accommodative strategies identified aligned with recommended crisis response practices. Specifically, the findings highlight that transparent communication, corrective action, and responsibility acknowledgment are critical in mitigating reputational damage during misinformation-driven crises.

Importantly, the interplay between Agenda Setting Theory and SCCT reveals a complementary dynamic: while agenda-setting explains how misinformation elevates certain issues to public prominence, SCCT provides the framework for how organizations should respond once those issues dominate the crisis landscape. Together, these theories show that effective crisis communication in tourism requires both anticipation of agenda-setting effects and the deployment of SCCT-informed strategies to restore trust and protect reputation.

From a practical standpoint, the research emphasizes the importance of equipping tourism organizations with media monitoring tools and crisis communication frameworks that anticipate agenda-setting dynamics. It also suggests that organizations should integrate SCCT-informed strategies into their communication plans to ensure resilience against misinformation. By

combining agenda-setting awareness with SCCT-driven responses, practitioners can better safeguard organizational legitimacy in the face of misinformation crises.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further studies should conduct comparative research across different regions of Ghana to assess geographical variations in the impact of fake news. Researchers should explore the psychological Implications of disinformation on tourist decision-making and destination confidence and investigate the lasting consequences of influence credibility on brand loyalty in tourism. Future studies should also Analyze the influence of artificial intelligence, big data, and blockchain as emerging technologies in detecting and countering misinformation in tourism communication.

5.4 PRACTICE-ORIENTED AND RESEARCH-ORIENTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the results obtained in this investigation, several practice-oriented recommendations are put forward regarding tourism organizations, public relations practitioners, and policymakers. PR staff should undergo mandatory and recurring training in digital communication, misinformation response, and crisis simulation exercises to enhance preparedness and ensure rapid, coordinated responses to misinformation crises. Organizations should allocate dedicated budgets for advanced social media monitoring and verification software, as continuous investment in digital tools will strengthen resilience against fake news. Tourism organizations must also establish strict contractual clauses and vetting procedures for influencer collaborations to ensure accountability, reduce reputational risks, and promote ethical influencer engagement. Strengthening collaboration with traditional media is equally important, as institutionalized partnerships with reputable news agencies will enable the rapid dissemination of verified

information and serve as a counterbalance to unverified online narratives. Finally, government and tourism bodies should design and implement public education programs on identifying fake news and accessing credible information, thereby reducing public susceptibility and fostering a more informed tourism audience.

In addition to these practice-oriented recommendations, several research-oriented directions are suggested for future studies. Scholars should extend the scope beyond Accra Metropolis to other regions of Ghana and neighboring countries to assess geographical variations in the impact of fake news. Longitudinal studies are needed to investigate how tourism organizations rebuild trust and reputation after misinformation crises, providing insights into the sustainability of PR interventions. Future research should also explore the psychological and behavioral dimensions of fake news, examining how it influences tourist perceptions, decision-making, and destination confidence. The long-term relationship between influencer credibility and tourist loyalty to destinations should be studied to determine whether influencers can be repositioned as allies in combating misinformation. Moreover, the effectiveness of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics in detecting and neutralizing misinformation should be assessed, with attention to cost-effectiveness and scalability. Finally, research should investigate the role of government regulations, industry standards, and ethical guidelines in curbing fake news, with comparative policy analysis highlighting best practices for tourism governance in the digital era.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that fake news, largely propagated by social media influencers and bloggers, serves as a significant risk to society relations practice within the tourism sector of Accra Metropolis. The findings establish that social media and influencers are the main conduits by means of which misinformation spreads, eroding public confidence in tourism organizations and making the maintenance of trust both costly and difficult. Fake news was shown to cause severe reputational damage, increase PR costs, and undermine the credibility of tourism communication.

At the same time, the study highlights the necessity of proactive strategies, with PR organizations employing rapid response mechanisms, continuous monitoring, and collaboration with journalists to mitigate misinformation. Long-term resilience requires sustained investment in staff training, fact-checking technologies, and preparedness in digital communication. Strengthening PR practice against misinformation not only protects organizational reputation but also contributes to the sustainable growth of Ghana's tourism industry, ensuring that the sector remains competitive and credible in the digital era.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis and conclusions provide the basis for offering several recommendations for PR practitioners, tourism organizations, and policymakers.

PR staff should undergo mandatory and recurring training in digital communication, crisis simulation, and misinformation response, as 78.0% of respondents agreed that training reduces the impact of fake news. Organizations should allocate specific budget lines for advanced social media monitoring and verification software, since 74.0% of respondents emphasized the importance of fact-checking tools. Tourism organizations must adopt formalized vetting and partnership

protocols for influencers, including strict contractual clauses requiring content verification and accountability. Collaboration with traditional media should also be strengthened, leveraging the 74.0% agreement on journalist partnerships to ensure verified information is disseminated quickly and widely. Finally, government agencies and tourism bodies should launch national public digital literacy campaigns, given that 82.0% of respondents agreed that the public is easily swayed by false information. These campaigns will educate citizens on identifying fake tourism stories, critically assessing online content, and accessing verified sources of information, thereby reducing susceptibility to misinformation.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: The Impact of Fake News on Public Relations Practice in the Tourism Industry: A Study within the Accra Metropolis

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Your responses will be used **only for academic purposes**. All information provided will remain **strictly confidential**. Please answer honestly.

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

(Please tick [✓] the appropriate answer.)

1. **Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say
2. **Age Range:** ☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ 46–55 ☐ 56 and above
3. **Educational Level:** ☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☐ PhD ☐ Other

4. **Occupation:** ☐ PR Practitioner ☐ Tourism Officer ☐ Tourist ☐ Government Official ☐
Other _____
5. **Years of Experience in PR/Tourism:** ☐ Less than 1 ☐ 1–3 ☐ 4–6 ☐ 7–10 ☐ Above 10

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please show how much you agree or disagree with each statement below by ticking one option.

= Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

SECTION B: SOURCES OF FAKE NEWS IN TOURISM

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
B1	Most fake news about tourism is spread through social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B2	Bloggers and influencers are major sources of fake tourism stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B3	Fake news about tourism is usually created to mislead the public.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B4	People easily believe false information about tourism online.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B5	Fake news spreads faster than verified information.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C: EFFECTS OF FAKE NEWS ON PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
C1	Fake news makes it hard for PR officers to maintain public trust.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C2	PR officers spend a lot of time correcting false stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C3	Fake news damages the reputation of tourism organizations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C4	Responding to fake news increases the cost of PR work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C5	PR practitioners find it difficult to reach audiences because of misinformation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION D:**STRATEGIES USED BY PR PRACTITIONERS TO MANAGE FAKE NEWS**

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
D1	My organization quickly releases statements to correct fake news.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D2	PR practitioners monitor social media for false stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D3	We work with journalists to clarify wrong information.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D4	PR staff are trained to handle misinformation crises.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D5	The organization uses fact-checking tools to verify information before publishing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION E: IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
E1	Fake news discourages tourists from visiting certain destinations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E2	Tourism revenue decreases when fake news spreads.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E3	Fake news reduces confidence in tourism advertisements.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E4	Fake news damages the image of tourist sites in Ghana.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E5	It takes time and resources to rebuild a destination's image after fake news.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION F: WAYS TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF FAKE NEWS

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
F1	Educating the public can help reduce fake news.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F2	Government should punish people who create fake news.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F3	PR organizations should work with the government to fight misinformation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F4	Investing in fact-checking tools will help control fake news.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F5	Training PR officers on digital communication will reduce the impact of fake news.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Aloysius Agbavittor

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PROJECT WORK



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