

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Future Direction

This chapter summarises the entire study and came up with recommendations on the scope of the study. It also gave recommendations which can be ideal for future research based on the results obtained and conclusions. If there could be a serious 'buy in' on the adoption of digital technology, the researcher believes the tourism industry customer base will greatly improve. The rest of the other preceding chapters had different objectives, but all linked towards the main goal of this study which was to devise credible solutions towards absorption of digital technologies and its readiness. The research objectives are hereby restated to deduce if these were achieved. The objectives of the research are restated with a view to determine achievement of the same. The research's contribution to the body of knowledge is also highlighted below:

- 1) To determine the link between employees innovativeness towards digital media technology and consumer brand identification;
- 2) To examine the nexus between employee optimism towards digital media technology and brand absorption by consumers;
- 3) To analyse if employee innovativeness towards digital media technology influences consumer interaction with a brand.

Data collection instruments achieved a response rate of around 92.86% in comparison to the minimum acceptable of 70% for qualitative data. The overall objective of this research was to assess employee personality traits which influence the adoption of digital media by SME's in the hospitality sector. Factual and applied research methods were used to draw conclusions and were supported by the analysed results. Data were tested for sampling adequacy and sphericity using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test respectively, a condition which has to be fulfilled before factor analysis is conducted and all the conditions were met. Most variables pointed to positive relationships between

assessing employee personality traits that enable the adoption of digital media by SME's in the hospitality sector. The results show that in relation to socio demographic analysis, the younger the person the more optimist they become with digitisation. In addition, the socio demographic analysis found that people with fewer years on work experience were more innovative than their peers. Lastly, both young male and females employees strongly agreed that absorption of technology compared to the older age males of 31-40 who were neutral while the females of that age group disagreed with that fact. Innovativeness towards digital media technology and consumer brand identification was found to be significant, implying a strong correlation between the two variables. In other words, consumers are drawn to a product or service which resembles creativity and innovativeness. It was also found that there is no relationship between employee optimism towards digital media technology and brand absorption by consumers. Last but not least, there was a significant positive relationship between employee innovativeness towards digital media technology and consumer interaction. The following conclusions were made as per each research question.

Based on this study's findings, it can be concluded that employee innovativeness towards digital media technology enhances consumer brand identification. Digital media enables feedback from clients for improvement and even provide insight in what others in the same industry in the region and international markets are doing. Employees particularly those in ICT and marketing departments would take it upon themselves to continuously innovate on technology to promote brands through positive identifications. Digital media technology is very cheap to administer but cover a wide audience thus it has an effect of cutting advertising costs and improving on net revenues and reaching a wide audience.

In relation to this study's findings, it is worrisome to note that employees were pessimistic about digital media technology leading to

brand absorption by consumers. It could be that employees believe absorption of a brand is a function of many factors like their motivation, willingness of owners of the business to adopt technology and the general upkeep of the place. Digital media technology alone cannot really conclusively provide that brand will be adopted. It also includes issues to do with clientele service culture. Customers go to where they think they will be treated as important; hence the SME's sector total quality management initiatives should lead to consumers wanting to use their brands.

The analysis proved that employee innovations when using digital media technology led to consumer interaction with a brand. Employees ought to generate interest of the brand by being creative. On regular days, they can give motivational quotes on their sites to generate interest. Some companies have created positions of digital marketers who constantly innovate to invite consumers to their brands.

It is therefore recommended that a variety of recommendations be adopted that are aimed at further improving SME's in the tourism industry. Recommendations with respect to each objective are as discussed below.

The study recommends that the SME's explore on data mining and build on database for local customers to inspire interest before going far and beyond Zimbabwe. This is possible to companies who sell these databases and those that have bulk SMS text options. The next step will be to create innovative digital media technology ads which if clients visit their pages will inspire interest. While concluding this study, the researcher observed that players in Victoria Falls do not have airbnb.com feature on their sites. This function is being used by many in the industry to attract significant numbers. Only Harare had a little bit of this feature but mainly being used by lodges, conference centres and restaurants. This feature enables consumers to pre-order online and assesses the suitability of a place before visiting it. Employees should

take up digital marketing as a matter of urgency to stay relevant in the modern market place.

The study recommends that SME's should scaffold on daily and direct communication offered by digital media. This complements the business efforts to market and retain customers by keeping users and potential clients close to the brand name. Consequently, there are opportunities to turn mere users into fans and a loyal customer of the brand. In addition, owner managers or business owners should complete digital technology by offering stimulus packages like special discounts and competitions. Also the fan page can always be used as a direct selling channel which has the potential of increasing sales. There are also those fans that mostly frequent the page who need to be recognised and rewarded somehow and further encouraged to be more active to receive maximal relationship benefits from the community.

In the spirit of innovations employees have to put their energy in driving positive word of mouth among social media users. Thus, customers should be given opportunity to interact with the brand, connect and interact in positive ways. This has an effect of influencing other users in all their social networks. Hence, customers validate or repudiate the brand experiences of others. As high social media are attracting internet users, organisations must look at broadening their visibility and presence on various social networks. Furthermore, when more organisations make use of active social media platforms, company managers need to rise up the occasion and consider what actions they need to take to keep their step ahead of others.

The study recommended that it is crucial to train employees in the SMEs tourism sector on social media use. It is important to foster optimism for these employees for the purposes of improving brand absorption by consumers. SMEs in the tourism sector will be helped to broaden their coverage through enhanced connection on the global sphere through

social media adoption. This leads to a strategic application of the best social media forms which enable brand awareness, image.

This will ultimately result in the tourism industry having a huge influx of tourism clients. The study also recommends that the firms should be open to new technologies. This enables them to spread “word of mouth” and build social bondage with customers. The tourism product has seen marketers appreciating and adopting digital media technology as fundamental consumer engagement platforms. The study also recommends that employee optimism can be driven by the owners of the tourist facilities

The study recommends that tourism SME’s should promote energetic torch bearers and “likers” on their fan pages, in such a format that will encourage more positive comments and likes and leading to purchase behaviour. This is because customer engagement is a key enabler for a brand’s digital media identity. This should also be complemented by probable linkage of digital media with other online and offline systems which have to be properly examined and chronologically managed. Such linkages or synergies may for example increase firms’ web site. Another factor is the development of KPIs which will provide organisations with the power to examine their performance through the social media platforms.

Moreover, the study recommends that companies should design their own content which adds value for social media brand page users thereby encouraging them to engage in transactional behaviours on the platform. The study also recommends that the SME’s should identify and monitor that which inspires digital media users to be a member of a brand’s fan page. This should include among other things, the content they like more and the benefits they perceive. This will help add value for the consumers which may even exceed their expectations.

SME's in the tourism sector need to develop and create digital applications which relate to tourism attraction sites, hotels and lodges and all other related services and products. These applications should also include integrated concepts of augmented reality, virtual reality and artificial intelligence. It is however, important that the application and user guide should be easily available on the official tourism websites. These applications have to include non-disclosure contracts, guarantees of confidentiality and other best practices in human computer interface design for tourists.

The country is now highly informalised and money is circulating in the informal sectors. It has been observed that India and Bangladesh, among other countries, have grown their economies through SME's. As such, they are a vital cob in the economic gains of a country. Zimbabwe is a destination of choice for tourist coming from Europe, America and the Asia because of the friendly weather patterns which are opposite of their normal conditions. Likewise, the country should realise positive gains in the tourism industry.

There should be technological hubs training players in the SME's sector to adequately use digital media technology. Universities and colleges should offer compulsory specific modules on digital technology to those students pursuing Tourism and hospitality fields. The government need to closely work with stakeholders in the tourism and the telecommunication industry on areas like network coverage and connectivity. There is need for government formulation policies and guidelines in relation to the use of smart gadgets which helps travellers to feel a sense of trust in their destination.

Smart tourism has the potential to activate tourism in the rural communities which can be a vital tool for new destination developments. There is need for government to create and establish emergency tourism stations which provide 24-hour help facilities, give feedback and respond to complaints immediately. The respective

tourism ministry has to design discounts and award points for regular travellers or those law-abiding travellers as soon as they submit their individual reviews on their experiences. These points or discounts could be accumulated for a certain period of time, thus encouraging the traveller to visit again. The government can also use the collected data to improve future planning in smart tourism services for greater customer attraction.

The government should also influence the telecoms industry so that they can charge affordable roaming fees and design business strategy packages for travellers with suitable fees and promotions. Moreover, it should be mandatory that the telecom industry should positively manage the privacy and security concerns of travellers and build trust through proper marketing strategies. That would allow travellers to feel safe and secure enough to use their smart devices wherever they travel. More so, POTRAZ should establish and promote similar charges for tourism services. This will limit price wars and encourage fair trade that will help promote and increase smart tourism systems. Also non-disclosure contracts between tourists and service providers must be ensured.

There is need for the extension of this research through the pursuit of studies which focus on the applicability and implementation of digitisation in the entire tourism industry to resuscitate the economy of Zimbabwe.