'Like' us, tweet about it and don't forget to visit! – How Destination Marketing Organizations

use Social Media

By

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Abstract

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are using Social Media (SM) to promote their destinations, attract tourists and communicate with the destination stakeholders. This study sought to understand how DMOs use SM, how DMOs adopt SM, what the desired outcomes from SM use are and how SM outcomes are evaluated. Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory guided this study and a mixed-methods research design was used to address the research questions. The two major research questions were; Firstly, how do DMOs use SM? Secondly, what outcomes do DMOs hope will result from SM use?

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Introduction

Consumers are gaining more influence over how, when and why they purchase products and services. Social media (SM) and the internet allow consumers to find a wider variety of options that match their specific individual needs (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In addition, these new SM tools give consumers the ability to immediately let the world know if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with a product or service. This ability for consumers, to reach large numbers of people quickly, encourages organizations to be more accountable. With this newfound consumer power and because travel is a major segment of online shopping (Nielsen, 2013), tourism as a whole and specifically Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) need to have a solid understanding of the consumer needs and wants and how to use SM tools in order to maintain the best image of their destinations (Badawy, 2009).

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, with an estimated $1.5 trillion in receipts in 2014 (UNWTO, 2015). The job of selling tourism destinations and attracting new visitors, in this highly competitive market, is the responsibility of DMOs. DMOs serve many roles in their destinations but one of the tasks common to all, is the marketing designed to attract travelers (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica, & O'Leary, 2006). DMOs conduct a variety of marketing activities, including traditional print and television advertising, familiarization tours with writers and media producers and of course a variety of internet marketing and other promotional activities (Ford & Peeper, 2008). When the internet was developed and started to gain widespread acceptance DMOs embraced the innovation and built websites (Morosan, 2008). The first DMO websites were static pages, essentially an online copy of their printed promotional materials, with little interactivity. This meant that websites did not change very often and

everyone saw the same basic site (Ruzic & Bilos, 2010). As the internet grew in popularity, Web 2.0 started to emerge. Web 2.0 is a term used to describe the evolution of the internet from static webpages to interactive websites. Web 2.0 does not indicate any standards update to the internet; rather it is the use of new technologies to create a more interactive experience (Web 2.0, 2011). Since the adoption of Web 2.0, DMOs have begun to enhance their websites to be more interactive. This may include having more personalized experiences for users, providing the opportunity to make travel bookings directly on the website or post consumer reviews (Ruzic & Bilos, 2010). The idea behind enhancing these websites is to make the process of visiting a destination as easy as possible and provide more information that is of specific interest to each tourist. Now with the rise of SM, DMOs have a new avenue to engage potential tourists in conversations about their destinations and potentially attract more tourists. SM has quickly become popular globally, Facebook alone reports over 1 Billion members (Facebook INC, 2015), while Twitter reports over 289 million active users (Statistic Brain, 2015). With this popularity, marketers are looking for ways to use SM to better engage their audiences and capitalize on the marketing opportunities that SM represents (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

My interest in destination marketing and SM use has developed over time and has been influence by both my work and educational experiences. I have experience working with rural-tourism and agri-tourism operators and rural destination marketers. I have worked directly with operators to create marketing plans and SM often appealed to small operators because of the opportunity to reach large audiences on a minimal budget. I developed presentations and workshops to help educate people about how SM could benefit their organizations and during these workshops, I found that organizations had a poor understanding of SM and many were using SM poorly or paying large amounts of money to have someone else use SM. By furthering

my education, and undertaking this MA thesis, I feel that I can contribute to a better

understanding of this area of destination marketing and make a valuable contribution in my

chosen field.

What is Social Media?

There are many definitions of SM and because the subject is still new and expanding very

quickly, there is no formal universally agreed upon definition (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Ngai,

Moon, Lam, Chin, & Tao, 2015). Definitions of SM can be very broad and may include a variety

of terms and concepts.

Ruzic and Bilos (2010) describe SM as:

Social media on the Internet are free web applications (services) that provide one or more

channels of communication to their users for communication with other users in the form

of self-presentation and creation of audience (followers) or interactive communication

(friends). (p 178).

Wikipedia says SM is, ""interactive platforms via which individuals and communities

create and share user-generated content." Or "a group of Internet-based applications that build on

the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and

exchange of user-generated content." I.e. Social media are social software, which mediates

human communication. When the technologies are in place, social media is ubiquitously

accessible and enabled by scalable communication techniques. In the year 2012, social media

became one of the most powerful sources for news updates through platforms such as

Twitter and Facebook." (Social Media, 2012, para. 1).

SM continues to be a major force for communications as a whole. A recent report from We Are Social, a SM consultancy, found that more than 2.2 Billion people are active on SM networks and SM use has grown by 8.7% since 2014 (Kemp, 2015).

For this study, Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) definition was used. "Social Media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generate Content" (p. 61). This definition is broad, allows for a wide variety of potential SM applications and specifically mentions user generated content (UGC) making it a good choice for this research.

UGC is content created by visitors to a website or SM service (Greenfield, 2009). UGC has three basic requirements. UGC needs to be either publically accessible or accessible to a select group. UGC involves creative effort. A repost of existing content is not UGC. Thirdly, UGC should not be created by paid agents (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Although point three suggests UGC should not be created by a marketer, many marketers are initiating conversations through the creation of content that consumers and SM users may then discuss, change, add-to or co-opt for their own purposes.

What is Destination Marketing?

According to Destination Marketing Association International (2012), the general purpose of a DMO is to:

Promote the long-term development and marketing of a destination, focusing on convention sales, tourism marketing and service. DMO leaders are the masterminds behind campaigns marketing an "entire" destination to meeting professionals, business

travelers, tour operators and individual visitors. DMOs represent the hotels, facilities,

attractions, restaurants and other providers serving travelers. (para. 3)

While the above definition provides an overview of what a DMO can offer, DMOs may

provide other services in addition to the above. DMOs may also be responsible for managing

destination development, lobbying government on behalf of industry, creating new tourism

products, encouraging tourism businesses to cooperate with one another and almost any other

task related to the tourism industry (Buhalis, 2000; Pike, 2004).

As with SM, the definition and role of a DMO is constantly evolving. In the discussion of

Zach's (2011) study examining innovation among American DMOs, he concluded that DMOs

are "actively expanding their range of services that increase or improve visitor experience and to

assist stakeholders in their tourism activities." (Zach, 2011, p. 422).

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study was to examine how DMOs use SM in their

organizations. Part of understanding how DMOs use SM is by learning how DMOs decide to

adopt a specific technology. Rogers (2003) Innovation Process in Organizations model describes

a five-stage process that organizations go through while deciding which innovations to adopt.

This model will aid in understanding the adoption process of SM and through understanding

these processes, this research will help DMOs make better decisions about which SM tools to put

resources into to aid in achieving their goals.

The growing use of SM by DMOs leads to various questions about the state of SM

adoption and its use. How DMOs incorporate SM into their operations is unclear, the outcomes

DMOs hope to achieve by engaging with the public through SM is also unknown and whether or not the SM goals identified by organizations are being met has not been examined.

Travel consumers use SM for a variety of reasons. Consumers' use of SM is a relatively new issue and as such, research is just starting to take place. SM is important to study because it is an activity pursued by a massive number of users across a variety of SM platforms and has wide demographic appeal. Some estimates show that SM now has as much influence on consumers as television advertising and more than newspapers (O'Connor, 2008). With the increasing number of SM tools and users, users grew by 8.7% in 2015 (Kemp, 2015), it is important for DMOs to go where the customer is and develop a better understanding of SM in order to engage those customers. By understanding why DMOs use SM and what outcomes they hope to gain from SM, this research will help DMOs be better able to use their resources to reach their target audiences.

This research provides much-needed insight into the current state of the SM used by DMOs. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do DMOs use SM?

   o What types of SM do Canadian DMOs use and for what purpose?

   o How is SM adopted within DMOs?

   o How does SM use by Canadian DMOs use compare with international DMOs' SM use?

2. What outcomes do DMOs hope will result from SM use?

   o Why are these outcomes seen as an important result of SM use?

   o How do DMOs determine if outcomes are achieved through SM use?

o   How important is the successful use of SM to the DMO?

The scale of the tourism industry combined with user growth on SM platforms makes this a relevant time to study this topic. This will lead to an understanding of how DMOs choose which SM tools to use and how to incorporate those tools into DMO operations.

The research undertaken for this thesis will provide DMOs with information about current SM use by DMOs to help make decisions about SM adoption and the future use of SM by the organization. "To adopt the right combination of technologies, tourism marketing organizations require information regarding the current status of technology use as well as future technology development trends" (Wang, Hwang, & Fesenmaier, 2006, p. 158).

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the current research regarding SM use by DMOs', through an examination of the existing literature exploring Social Media, Destination Marketing and Diffusion of Innovation.

Social Media

SM is a new and growing area of research and so the ability to categorize different types of SM tools is useful. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) developed a SM classification system to describe SM types and help researchers understand the dynamic nature of SM. The typology has two dimensions, media richness and self-disclosure creating six categories of SM. These categories are:

- **Blogs** are one of the earliest forms of SM and blogs are essentially online web logs or diaries. Posts are in reverse chronological order and are the SM equivalent of personal web pages. Typically, blogs are mostly text based, but are expanding to include pictures and video (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

- **Collaborative projects** include SM that allows users to create content based on many users' ideas and opinions. The largest SM platform in this category is Wikipedia, which allows users to create encyclopedia type entries of any topic, place, or idea (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

- **Social Networking** applications allow users to create a personal profile and share that with friends and colleagues. This form of SM can contain almost any type of information including text, pictures, video, live text chats and even live video chats (Kaplan &

Haenlein, 2010). Facebook is the largest current social network with over 1 billion active users (Facebook, 2012).

- **Content Communities** allow users to share content with one another. Users of this type of SM typically do not need to create a full profile and usually only need an email address to create an account (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). YouTube is currently the largest content community allowing users to watch and post videos on any topic. YouTube reports that over 72 hours of video are uploaded every minute (YouTube, 2013).

- **Virtual Social Worlds** are created as a way for users to express themselves in a world without the usual social mores. Second Life is the largest of these social worlds. In Second Life, users create an avatar to interact with other users in the same way you might interact with someone in real life (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

- **Virtual Game Worlds** are similar to social worlds in that game worlds allow users to create an avatar to interact with the game world and other players. In game worlds however, users are usually more constrained in their behaviours and appearance in order to meet the rules of the game (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social Media Users

Users participate in SM for a variety of reasons. Some use SM to gather information from other peoples' experiences, while others use SM for entertainment or simply to socialize (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). SM users may also just want to voice their opinion or create/maintain relationships (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) created a model to help describe the needs SM users seek to fulfill through their participation in online communities. These needs fall into four categories:

psychological, functional, social and hedonistic. When SM users' needs are met, they tend to participate in the community more often. The study also found different needs between users and that different user groups will seek out different types of content to fulfill those needs (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). This is important information for DMOs to take note of because it highlights how consumers are looking for more personalized information. The one size fits all mass media approach is less effective when the consumer is looking for information that directly appeals to them and fits their specific needs.

"Consumers are turning more frequently to various types of social media to conduct their information searches and to make their purchasing decisions" (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 360). In a recent literature review of SM usage related to tourism, Leung, Law, Hoof and Buhalis (2013) found consumer use of SM relates to three areas of tourism: SM use during the initial planning of a trip, SM use during travel and finally post trip SM use. The study found the most extensive use of SM in the planning stages of travel, where SM is "equipping travelers with more comprehensive knowledge on a tourism product or destination than other information sources." (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013, p. 8). From this study, it appears that the SM use for the research phase of travel is a well-researched area of study. While SM use during and after the trip are areas that needs research and research to date suggests the post trip uses of SM are primarily for social interaction and sharing experiences. The impact of SM on tourism purchase decisions for each type of SM use have not been examined (Leung et al., 2013). These studies highlight the need for more research about SM use from the consumer standpoint. Consumers are using SM and DMOs need to understand how that relates to attracting tourists to their destinations.

One-reason consumers use SM for travel information is because of the perception that the information provided by marketers is not deemed trustworthy (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). SM is quickly turning into one of the main sources for travel information (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). Consumers view SM and UGC as more trustworthy than traditional media sponsored by marketers through mass media outlets (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). There is a perception that traditional marketing only shows the best parts of a destination and does not address the negative aspects, because of these perceptions consumers are seeking out the experiences of others before making a decision on travel (O'Connor, 2008). By considering the opinions of previous visitors, the consumer is hoping to limit their risk and ensure the travel purchase will be something they enjoy (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013; Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). Risk reduction is a behaviour that is common among consumers; SM just expands the pool of previous opinions to provide more options for consumers (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009).

While SM is gaining credibility, there is still the potential that UGC is unreliable. A paid party or someone with an interest in a specific area or alternatively someone who has a reason to discredit a certain destination or service may create unreliable UGC. Several factors can increase the perceived credibility of travel related UGC however. Perceived expertise of the topic area, travel frequency and the age of the content creator all increase the credibility of UGC (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). SM and the UGC that make SM work are important information sources to consumers, the UGC acts as an electronic word of mouth (eWOM) that helps the consumer make travel destination decisions (Akehurst, 2009).

Social Media Marketing

With the very fast adoption of SM by the public and a massive number of users, SM is changing the way industry is doing business. In 2015 Facebook had more than a billion daily users and an additional 894 million mobile users (Facebook INC, 2015) and more than 40 million businesses had already setup 'pages' to promote their organizations. Twitter has an estimated 289 million active users, creating an average of 58 million tweets every day (Statistic Brain, 2015). While Twitter does not release data on how many businesses are tweeting, major brands are using Twitter and one recent study found that 79% of the top 100 Fortune 500 companies use Twitter (Burson-Marsteller, 2013). Adoption of SM by consumers and businesses has been extremely fast, especially when you consider Facebook was not available to the general public until 2006 (Facebook, 2013) and Twitter did not even exist until March of 2006 (Twitter, 2012), meaning both services have added over 80 million users each year.

While SM marketing is growing, traditional marketing avenues are becoming less effective. Consumers are turning away from the traditional sources of advertising, radio, television, magazines and newspapers (Dimmick, Chen, & Li, 2009) and demanding more control over their media consumption. Consumer desire for immediate on-demand access to information at their own convenience has lead to new media tools and services to facilitate that desire (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Consumers are using technology to avoid traditional promotional efforts. For example, personal video recorders and services like Netflix allow television viewers to avoid commercials, web browsers have ad-block features and print media subscriptions are declining. Through SM, marketers hope to build relationships and provide relevant marketing content to consumers and ultimately increase tourism sales (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

SM is growing more important to both marketers and consumers. While the diffusion of SM has occurred quickly within the general public, marketers are still figuring out how to use this technology to reach and engage consumers. Hung, Chow and Dong (2011) found that marketers in industries that rely on a product or service innovation to stand out from the competition should consider engaging their users in the product development process. This suggests that DMOs should look to SM and feedback from users to help their destination stand out. SM could allow DMOs to engage visitors to help develop new products or services for the destination.

SM is changing the way that consumers and industry communicate. Prior to SM marketers have had a high-degree of control over their marketing message to the public. The marketer controlled when and how the consumer received the message and there was little feedback from consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). With SM, consumers are more involved. Consumers are able to interact with the marketing message in a variety of ways, times and places. The consumer is also able to communicate much more information with other consumers and the original marketer may lose control over the message.

There are hundreds of examples of the public using SM to get a company to respond to a complaint or bring attention to an issue. The video "United Breaks Guitars" posted on YouTube by Dave Carroll, in response to United Airlines breaking his guitar and refusing to repair the damage, has been viewed almost 13 million times (Sons of Maxwell, 2009). The video also led to Carroll's appearance on several news networks including CNN and the video was named by Time Magazine as one of YouTube's best videos (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silverstre, 2011). The video and the negative publicity it generated, eventually led to United

Airlines offering to fix the guitar. Mr. Carroll of course turned down the offer (United Breaks Guitars, 2013).

Wal-Mart is another company that lost control of their message due to SM. Wal-Mart launched a promotion where they planned to send Pitbull, a rap performer, to the Wal-Mart store that received the most likes on Facebook.

A writer with the Boston Phoenix got internet users to help exile Pitbull to Alaska, by voting for one of Wal-Mart's most remote locations:

I started a campaign to exile Pitbull to the Wal-Mart on Kodiak Island, an icy, bear-infested locale just south of Alaska. As of now, the Kodiak Wal-Mart has over 22,000 new "likes" on Facebook, putting it far ahead of any other Wal-Mart in the nation — far ahead of Kodiak's actual population, in fact (Thorpe, 2012).

In the end, Pitbull did visit the Wal-Mart in Kodiak, Alaska, while there received a key to the city and a bag of bear repellent. He also brought along the reporter who started the prank on the trip to Alaska (Berman, 2015).

These examples highlight the power of SM and demonstrate how SM can force companies to be accountable to consumers and how consumers can co-opt the organizations messaging. "Conventional marketing wisdom has long held that a dissatisfied customer tells ten people. But that is out of date. In the new age of social media, he or she has the tools to tell 10 million' consumers virtually overnight." (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 359).

SM is described as a hybrid of the traditional promotion mix, because SM marketing includes components and messaging from a traditional business to consumer standpoint but also

allows consumers the opportunity for very 'loud' consumer-to-consumer communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The marketer creates a promotion for the consumer using traditional promotion tools and releases it to the market. Once online and in the marketplace, consumers are able to discuss, re-create, praise or criticize the idea and communicate it back to the organization or other consumers. In the traditional model, consumers were less able to communicate among themselves and the organization had to solicit feedback from the marketplace (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). SM helps to create more communication through all levels. In the new marketing continuum described by Mangold and Faulds (2009) the key stage is social media, where consumers are now talking to other consumers directly and without the guidance of the marketer.

When consumers look online for information, two areas appear to have an influence on consumer decision-making. When looking for information regarding a technical product, like a car, users tend to seek out information from more professional sources such as recognized experts or media. When the product is interaction based, like tourism products, consumers look for peer reviews (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Tourism businesses and DMOs need to be aware of eWOM and should have strategies in place to maintain a positive image of their destinations.

SM has experienced exponential growth and this growth makes defining SM and understanding different components and uses of SM difficult for organizations including DMOs. The current practice for DMOs seems to be to try to adopt SM without a lot of planning beforehand, SM is not being utilized or funded effectively and DMOs are not being overly innovative in their SM strategies (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012). This study will help DMOs to understand SM by looking at how DMOs currently adopt and use SM and the outcomes DMOs wish to achieve through SM use.

Outcomes from SM Marketing

While SM is growing rapidly and more organizations from every industry are adding SM to their marketing processes, there is a general lack of consistent verified tools to measure the outcomes from SM marketing (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012; Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012).

Several studies have pointed out that DMOs readily acknowledge that it is hard to track outcomes through SM and that the information they do track is usually just the physical number of followers, likes or comments (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012; Kietzmann et al. 2011). While it is important to have a good-sized audience in order for the SM based message to spread, the number of followers is often not a good indication of an engaged audience. The fact that you can buy followers, 5000 Twitter followers for $32 or 1000 Facebook fans for $26, makes this base count method unreliable (Buy Facebook Likes, 2013). While the organization who buys followers is aware of that fact, not all levels of a DMO may know about that growth strategy. During the interview portion of Hays et al. (2012) study, that examined the SM usage and conducted interviews with 10 national DMOs, the German tourist board stated that the head office, partner organizations and the German government are primarily concerned with the number of SM followers and growth of that number. The fact that followers can be purchased creates a situation where comparison between DMOs' SM success based on followers is impossible. Without the ability to compare organizations within an industry, standardized and reliable metrics based on the total number of SM followers are not useful and organizations will be tempted to buy followers to meet their goals and show growth of their audience.

Without standard definitions and tools to assess the success of SM, tourism marketers may have a hard time justifying the resources they receive. At the same time, DMOs know that SM has huge potential and audiences can be highly targeted. DMOs have difficulty deciding

which SM tools to adopt and how to use those tools. A better understanding of what DMOs hope to achieve through SM use, what those outcomes are and how those outcomes are assessed will help DMOs in making decisions regarding SM.

DMOs and Social Media

SM allows communication to happen in a variety of ways that are not possible with traditional media. The DMO can speak directly to consumers in a business to consumer (B2C) relationship. Consumers can speak directly to other consumers (C2C) about the destination and its products, or consumers can communicate (C2B) back to the DMO (Davidson, 2011).

DMOs are already using SM to help expand their reach. Through the creation of Facebook pages, Twitter, blogs and content sharing communities, DMOs are encouraging B2C and C2B conversations about the destination (Lim, Chung, & Weaver, 2012). While SM is useful for communicating with the public, DMOs also use SM to connect with tourism suppliers and stakeholders within the destination in a B2B communication (Akehurst, 2009). Ultimately, SM allows two-way conversations to happen between DMOs, the tourist and destination stakeholders (Lim et al., 2012).

SM use by DMOs spans an array of services. A recent paper from Milwood, Marchiori and Zach (2013) compared SM adoption between 103 U.S.A. and 72 Swiss DMOs and found at least twelve different SM tools that DMOs use. The five most popular SM tools where Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Flicker. These tools represent social networking and content community tools (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The Milwood et al. (2013) study also found that nearly all U.S. DMOs have already adopted Facebook and most of the remaining non-adopters are planning to within the next year, while less than 1% of U.S. DMOs are not planning to adopt

Facebook. Overall U.S. DMOs were innovative in the adoption of SM, while Swiss DMOs were more reserved. Facebook was the only SM tool already adopted by more than half of the Swiss DMOs (Milwood, et al. 2013).

Blogs, content communities and social network sites are some of the most popular types of SM DMOs currently use (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). DMOs use blogs to 'brighten and enliven corporate websites' and to help drive traffic to the site (Akehurst, 2009). DMOs may hire professional bloggers to write destination blogs and invite tourists and locals for input and feedback. Destination blogs may be used to communicate with destination stakeholders and consumer generated blogs can be used as a form of market research in order to gauge public opinion (Akehurst, 2009). Again there is limited understanding of the outcomes DMOs hope to achieve by adopting blogs. Some research has been done on tourist-generated blogs and found that the DMOs image and the tourists' image of the destination are often different from one another (Banyai, 2012).

Content communities are picture, video or other media sharing sites and they have been used by DMOs for several very successful marketing campaigns. The best known of the content community, marketing campaigns is probably the "Best Job in the World" promotion by Queensland Tourism. Queensland Tourism offered the contest winner a one-year job, with a large salary, free lodging and free activities to act as the Queensland Tourism spokesperson (The Best Job In The World, 2013). To enter the contest participants had to submit a video that indicated why they deserved the job and then the public could vote for a video. The contest was successful, attracting thousands of entries and almost seven million unique visitors to the Queensland Tourism website (Macnamara, 2010). Other DMOs have used content communities to run photo contests and the Canada Tourism Commission ran a campaign called "LOCALS

KNOW" to encourage Canadians to share their favourite Canadian destination. This campaign was very successful with over 4800 locations shared and the website for this promotion was the CTC's highest-ever-performing site (Canada Tourism Commission, 2013). Content communities can be a powerful marketing tool for DMOs. Both of these campaigns were successful based on the number of visitors to websites, ad-recall questionnaires and both won major marketing awards. While neither campaign would have been able to happen without SM, it is hard to determine if the success of these campaigns resulted from SM or from the traditional mass media that accompanied them.

The recent study by Hays et al. (2012) found that only two destinations out of the ten in their study did not have a SM presence. Only the Chinese and Italian DMOs did not have a Facebook or Twitter account. The authors conjectured that China's reason was likely because both sites are blocked in China and Italy did not respond with an explanation. This study found three main themes for successful DMO SM use, post frequency, interaction and additional content (Hays et al., 2012). Frequent posts are both a benefit and a drawback. Some DMOs felt posting on SM sites too often was annoying to the consumer. While others thought frequent posts on Twitter were important because Twitter only displays recent information to the user and so remaining active is important. Interaction with the consumer was another area where DMOs had differing opinions. Many of the DMOs simply posted their current advertising or listed upcoming events, these posts garnered little interaction with consumers. Whereas a post that was very successful "What's your favourite German sausage?" (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012, p.13) specifically asked the audience for a response. Additional content was included in most of the postings in the form of pictures, links to other sites, audio, or video. Over 80% of all postings examined in the study included additional content. Content was deemed an important aspect of

SM marketing because with the short nature of social network posts additional content allowed for more communication. Additional content was the hook to learn more, click a 'like' button, or sign up for a contest (Hays et al., 2012). Overall, the DMOs seemed to be happy with their SM use although they still had a limited understanding of how to measure the impact SM had on visitors to the destination.

One reason DMOs may decide to use SM, as a marketing tool is the perceived lower cost compared to traditional television or print advertising (Davidson, 2011). While SM may be less expensive to implement than traditional media, it is not free. There are specific costs associated with SM that may include; training staff to use the new tools, developing SM tools or programs and the time involved to conduct and monitor SM (Davidson, 2011). Time commitments are important to consider because of the immediate nature of the internet and the consumer expectation of a response to questions or comments quickly (Davidson, 2011). A third issue DMOs may have with adoption of SM is the lack of standardized reporting tools (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011; Davidson, 2011).

Organizations send different types of messages through SM than individuals tend to send. Organizations are more likely to send informational type messages rather than the 'me' messages individuals send (Lovejoy & Sazton, 2012). Organizations are also more likely to send messages that engage the audience in dialogue. This engagement message is important to marketers. A message that engages the audience is a key component of SM, as the audience engages with a posting their friends and followers are also engaged. This helps spread the message the marketer is trying to send. Hays et al. (2012) looked specifically at interactive messages as part of their study. One example Hays et al. (2012) highlighted was the German DMO asking 'What's your favourite German sausage?' as part of an Oktoberfest promotion. This resulted in thousands of

replies with consumers posting 'my favourite ...' or 'I like ...' types of messages. The study

found that Facebook proved a more interactive medium than Twitter, although the authors

cautioned that Twitter is a harder medium to track because replies to a tweet are only viewable

by the original user and not the general public (Hays et al., 2012). Overall, Hays et al. (2012)

concluded that Facebook is a better tool to build audiences and interact with them, while Twitter

is a better tool to provide immediate information to the public.

DMOs may be able to increase overall tourism in a destination by incorporating SM into

their marketing efforts. A recent study found the weakest strategy to promote a destination was

television advertising alone. A web presence along with traditional advertising increased the

destinations appeal to tourists (Loda, Coleman, & Backman, 2010). Early adoption of SM by

corporations is linked to better financial returns (Hung, Chow, & Dong, 2011). SM also appeals

to a wide variety of demographic groups, Gen X and baby boomers are increasingly using SM,

making SM a good choice for DMOs with varied target markets (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). SM

is one option that could help DMOs strengthen their marketing message to consumers. SM could

allow potential tourists to communicate with past tourists about the destination and their

experiences, ideally reinforcing the brand and increasing the likelihood of a tourist visiting the

destination.

While the use of SM by DMOs appears to be widespread and growing, DMOs need better

understanding why they use SM, how SM tools are adopted and what the desired outcomes of

SM adoption are. Increased knowledge regarding SM use and implementation will help DMOs

effectively use SM to reach their goals.

DMOs Innovation and Adoption

Several studies have pointed out that DMOs need to be innovative in order to maintain and grow tourism at a destination (Buhalis D. , 2000). The study by Zach (2011) of 247 DMOs in the United States, found that DMOs are innovative. The finding that more than two thirds of DMOs introduced at least one new tourism service between 2006 and 2009 proved their innovativeness. These services are for both visitors to the destination and destination tourism businesses. Zach also pointed out that partner involvement and innovative managers were important to successful adoption of innovations. This finding from Zach (2011) confirms Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory, which also shows leadership and system openness as characteristics that increase an organizations' innovativeness. DOI theory helps explain how an idea or product gains momentum or diffuses throughout a social system (Boston University School of Public Health, 2015).

While DMOs are innovative, adopting new technology seems to be a challenging area. A lack of resources, both financial and human, were one major factor cited by DMO executives in a Gretzel et al. (2006) study as a reason for not doing more with technology. The lack of resources means that DMOs must be strategic when adopting new technology into the organization. This same group of executives from Gretzel et al. (2006) study found that when DMOs do adopt internet technologies the internet often generates more traffic for their traditional marketing, creating an increased demand for mail out and printed information, increasing costs to the DMO (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica, & O'Leary, 2006). The adoption of the internet can cause additional strain on the limited resources of DMOs. DMOs need more information to make good decisions about which technologies to adopt and how SM tools will help DMOs reach their goals.

Even if there are potential costs to adopting technology, there are also definite benefits from adoption. Wang, Hwang and Fesenmaier (2006) found that DMOs who incorporate technology into their organizations are more likely to be competitive and satisfy tourism demand. Morosan (2008) found that DMO websites have a high conversion rate of turning website visitors into actual tourists when compared to people who do not use the DMO website. UGC posted to DMOs' websites are a highly trusted source of information for potential tourists (Yoo, Lee, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2009) and highly trusted information will influence consumers. SM could help DMOs contribute to their destination's competitiveness by creating ongoing relationships with the tourists and by adding trusted UGC. While SM adoption may benefit DMOs, adoption should be a planned and implemented process to meet specific goals.

Technology adoption by DMOs may often be the result of social pressure rather than to address a specific need (Schegg, Liebrich, Scaglione, & Ahmad, 2008). This social pressure comes from the desire to meet tourists need for destination information. As well as government stakeholders and destination tourism operators' need for sales, marketing and development supports. To satisfy these stakeholder groups DMOs may adopt innovations before research and planning are undertaken (Zach, 2011; Schegg et al., 2008). Fuller, Hardin and Scott (2007) also identified social pressure as an issue. Fuller et al. (2007) discuss the role of isomorphism as a driver of innovation in organizations meaning that organizations adopt innovations when others in their industry adopt them.

While DMOs have adopted SM, they appear to do so ad hoc without a solid understanding or plan for adoption (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). DMOs who adopt SM typically do not know how to measure the success from using SM (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013) and the outcomes sought are ill defined (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012).

Diffusion of Innovations

DOI is the process by which an innovation is shared through different channels over time to members of a social system. The innovation itself can be an idea, object, practice or process that is perceived as new by an individual or organization (Buhalis & Deimezi, 2004). DOI theory helps explain how information spreads throughout a system. An understanding of DOI will help explain how and why SM is adopted by DMOs and will help to guide the research.

Rogers (2003) created a model to help categorize adopters within a system. The model identifies five adopter categories. Each category has specific traits and represents a percentage of the population for the system:

- **Innovators** are the leading edge adopters of innovations. They typically have financial resources, understand complex technical information, have a high tolerance for risk and are in communication with other innovators. The innovator plays a gatekeeper role, introducing new ideas to a system. Innovators are 2.5% of the system (Rogers, 2003).

- **Early Adopters** are the second stage of adopters and are typically more involved in their local community than innovators. They are opinion leaders and role models for innovativeness in their communities. Early adopters make up 13.5% of the system (Rogers, 2003).

- **Early Majority** are the innovation adopters whom adopt new ideas just before the average member of a system. They are not opinion leaders but do interact frequently with others in their community. "They follow with deliberate willingness in adopting innovations but seldom lead." (Rogers, 2003, p. 265). The early majority make up 33% of the population (Rogers, 2003).

- **Late Majority** adopters adopt an innovation just after the average member of a system. This group adopts because of economic necessity and peer pressure. They are skeptical and cautious of innovation. They have scarce resources and need confirmation to feel safe about adoption. This group also makes up 33% of the population (Rogers, 2003).

- **Laggards** are the last group to adopt an innovation. They have very limited resources to adopt innovations and typically look to the past for guidance. They may be isolated from others in the system and focused on their immediate surroundings. This category makes up 16% of the system (Rogers, 2003).

The rate of innovation adoption was studied by Rogers (2003) and while many factors influence the rate of adoption, five perceived innovation attributes explain 49 – 87% of the variance in adoption (Rogers, 2003). These are relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trailability and observability. Each of these five attributes contributes to adoption, although there are no established measures to determine which attributes are the biggest contributors (Rogers, 2003). SM appears to possess the five attributes that are likely to lead to an innovation's adoption. SM may or may not have a relative advantage over other forms of marketing, but it is compatible with existing technologies, not complex, can be tried with little effort and it is easy to observe how others use SM. These attributes should make SM an easily adoptable innovation.

Innovation in Organizations

Innovation adoption is different for organizations and individuals. Rogers (2003) created a model to describe adoption in organizations because organizations often have more people involved and may require support for the innovation from several levels within the organization.

The organization model of adoption has five steps, divided into two stages, initiation and implementation. The initiation section is where organizations identify problems, search for solutions, find innovations that will benefit the organization and make the actual adoption decisions. Implementation involves reinvention of the innovation to fit the organization, putting the innovation into widespread use and finally routinizing the use of the innovation within the organization (Rogers, 2003). It is important to remember that organizations can be at several places in this model at the same time, as organizations are often complex and deal with a variety of problems, solutions and technology adoptions simultaneously. This model provides a tool to help chart where a particular innovation is in the adoption process.

There are eight independent variables identified by Rogers (2003) that relate to organizational innovativeness. These variables can be divided into three categories: leader characteristics, internal characteristics of the organization and external characteristics of the organization.

The organization's leadership is the first variable where a positive attitude towards change or a positive view of innovation by a leader within the organization relates to a more innovative organization. Strong leadership drives innovation in organizations (Rogers, 2003). Studies looking at adoption of SM by DMOs often find supportive leadership aids the adoption process (Zach, 2011; Davidson, 2011) and supportive leadership appears to be a strong driver of SM adoption by international DMOs (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012).

The second broad category is the internal characteristics of an organization. The internal characteristics that relate to less innovative organizations are strongly centralized power structures and formalization or bureaucracy (Rogers, 2003). Complexity (expertise across a

variety of subjects), interconnectedness (interpersonal networks) and slack (available resources) are all connected to more innovative organizations (Rogers, 2003).

While all of the above variables do correlate with innovativeness, none of them has a strong correlation. There is also a concern that these variables may have the opposite effect once the organization reaches the implementation phases (Rogers, 2003). Internal characteristics also include the size of an organization. Rogers specifically highlights size of an organization as a factor in innovativeness. Whether measured by number of staff, size of budgets, locations served or any other measure larger organizations are typically more innovative. Innovation adoption studies examine size because size is an easy variable for researchers to measure. A larger organization may also increase several of the other internal characteristics. Larger organizations tend to have more slack in the organization, more technical expertise and more resources in general to research and implement innovations (Rogers, 2003).

System openness is an external characteristic, which is positively related to innovativeness. System openness refers to the degree to which members of an organization are connected to others outside of the organization. This connection helps innovations to spread between organizations (Rogers, 2003). Collaboration between DMOs and tourism partners is one area of system openness that has been researched and is a positive influence on DMOs innovation (Zach, 2011).

Wang and Fesenmaier (2006) conducted a survey with 260 DMOs in the United States, looking at the current use and success of web-based marketing. They identified organization size, innovativeness and support for technology as factors that influence successful web-based marketing adoption. Size and support for technology confirm the information from Rogers

(2003) that organization size and leader support positively relate to organizational innovativeness. However, the Wang and Fesenmaier (2006) study also found that DMOs need to develop more innovative capabilities to respond to a changing environment and DMOs should move into a destination management role, rather than a strictly marketing role. This means that to be successful, DMOs need to be more active in planning for and managing change.

Fuller, Hardin and Scott (2007) identify several factors that influence organization innovation, technical compatibility, technical complexity and relative advantage. Compatibility refers to how well the technology solves the problem. Complexity is how difficult the new technology is to use or adopt. Advantage recognizes that the technology has some benefit over competing technologies. Again, these findings support Rogers (2003) DOI theory by confirming innovation attributes.

Looking at organizations' DOI suggests that larger, well-funded organizations with supportive leadership and outside partners should be more innovative. This is partly because larger organizations have more resources to actually adopt and implement innovations (Rogers, 2003) and innovation within an organization requires support from leadership (Zach, 2011; Davidson, 2011). There is a lack of research regarding how the SM adoption process happens, how specific SM tools are adopted and if outcomes for these tools are being met. This study helps to fill some of these gaps in order to provide DMOs with current knowledge about the utility of SM for marketing destinations and to enhance our understanding of the diffusion of SM.

Limits to Diffusion of Innovations

While DOI has been a well-used theory in a range of contexts since its inception (Lillie, 2008; Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010; MacKay & Vogt, 2012), there are several limitations, shortcomings and critiques of the theory. Rogers (2003) identified four areas where innovation research has demonstrated shortcomings:

- **Pro Innovation Bias** happens when innovation is seen as a universally good thing for everyone in the system. Care should be taken during diffusion attempts to ensure the innovations are looked at from multiple perspectives for pros and cons (Rogers, 2003).

- **Individual-Blame Bias** is when individuals are seen as the source of the problem for innovations not being adopted, rather than the system they are part of as a possible cause (Rogers, 2003).

- **Recall Problem** happens when study subjects misremember when they adopted innovations, causing inaccuracies in innovation studies (Rogers, 2003).

- **Equality** has been identified as an issue because innovations often require resources to implement. Encouraging DOI may result in a widening of socio-economic status among system members where less well off system members fall further behind their peers because they do not have the resources for innovation (Rogers, 2003).

Other authors have also commented on DOI theory. Lillie (2008) argues that the original DOI theory was only based on two types of communication channels, mass media and interpersonal, because the internet is considered a hybrid of these (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) DOI is not able to adequately address internet communications. Rogers (2003) does address the

internet as a communication medium but says that it is an interpersonal communication. Lillie (2008) suggests that more research is needed to understand how modern internet based communications can work with the established communication theories such as DOI.

The study by Minghetti and Buhalis (2010) highlights the equality bias pointing out that the DOI model does not take into account personal characteristics, environmental conditions and politics that may prevent users from adopting a technology. These include education, social, technological or government rules that may prevent innovation adoption. The Chinese DMOs lack of adoption for Twitter and Facebook in the Hays, et al. (2012) study was probably due to political considerations. Along with the equality bias, the Minghetti and Buhalis (2010) study also points out that the individual blame bias, where the researcher blames non-adoption on the individual rather than the system, as a limitation of diffusion studies.

All of the above are valid critiques of the DOI theory and need to be taken into account when conducting diffusion research. Rogers (2003) suggests that by making themselves aware of potential biases researchers can reduce limitations with diffusion research. The internet communication models brought up by Lille (2008) needs more research to reach a conclusion on the applicability of DOI, although many other scholars have used DOI to study internet communications (Shea, Enghagen, & Khullar, 2008; Milwood, Marchiori, & Zach, 2013).

Literature Review Summary

SM is a growing and important aspect of the modern internet. With more users sharing more information through SM. Marketers, especially in the highly competitive tourism industry, need to have a solid understanding of how SM works and how SM influences the consumer. UGC has the ability to be a powerful marketing tool and is increasingly popular among

consumers as an information source (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Increased use of SM coupled with the decreasing consumer confidence in traditional marketing channels means that the influence of friends, acquaintances and even total strangers is becoming important for destinations to consider (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). A solid plan for SM implementation, SM outcomes and an understanding of the role of SM will help DMOs to create the best possible image of their destination.

DMOs currently use SM in a variety of ways, including marketing, communication with stakeholders and human resources. The wide range of uses shows the flexibility of SM as a communication and marketing tool. One of the drawbacks of SM use may actually be this wide range of uses for the technology. With so many uses for SM, DMOs may lack the resources to properly plan how they will use each tool, decide what tools will be best for their organization and how to best accomplish their goals by adopting SM. This study will help to provide direction for DMOs and their SM use.

Miguens, Baggio and Costa (2008) study highlights the importance of planning and understanding SM. Their research findings reveal that SM, specifically Trip Advisor, is an important factor in promoting single tourism operators and the destination as a whole. They also conclude that tourism suppliers and marketers need to acknowledge the importance of SM and develop their online presence to increase the destinations position in the market.

SM is a broad category of information and communication technology that is changing extremely fast and organizations cannot expect to keep pace with every development and new platform. By better understanding the destination's target markets, how those markets use SM and what the DMO wants to achieve by adopting SM, the DMO can make better decisions

regarding their own SM use. DMOs will save time and resources by choosing to adopt and implement appropriate technologies. Baker and Cameron (2008) identify strategic planning as one aspect of a successful destination marketing strategy. With the growth of SM and the need for DMOs to adopt current technologies, a better understanding of SM in a destination marketing context will help DMOs to make better decisions regarding SM adoption.

DMOs have lacked strategies to establish, maintain and enhance customer relationships (Wang, Hwang, & Fesenmaier, 2006). Using SM effectively could be one way to help DMOs create relationships that are more meaningful with tourists and potential tourists. Wang et al. (2006) also conclude that DMOs see the benefit of relationship building with customers and should implement systems to encourage relationship building. Schegg et al. (2008) found that DMOs could be innovative by empowering travelers during the planning and buying process and creating services that consumers see as value added. With SM ultimately being about relationships, it is an ideal tool to build relationships, be innovative and deliver what the consumer is seeking.

Research into SM marketing is still developing and our understanding is limited, there are no established metrics to measure SM. How to measure return on investment (ROI) or how followers and likes influence actual purchase decisions is unknown. (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). The rate of change in the SM realm makes it difficult for to determine what SM platforms deserve attention and which ones will become obsolete (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). Research needs to be applicable to a broad range of potential SM applications to be useful. This study uses DOI theory as a guide to help better understand the SM adoption process by DMOs and examine the outcomes DMOs seek from SM use and how to evaluate those outcomes.

Knowledge of today's internet savvy tourist is key to the long term success of tourism destinations and marketing organizations and it is imperative that DMOs have the necessary information available to them to make the best decisions with regard to SM adoption (Schegg, Liebrich, Scaglione, & Ahmad, 2008). Determining whether to adopt a specific SM innovation will help DMOs to make the best use of their limited resources and attract more tourists. This study addresses the following questions to advance our understanding of the role of SM in marketing tourism destinations:

1. How do DMOs use SM?

   o What types of SM do Canadian DMOs use and for what purpose?

   o How is SM adopted within Canadian DMOs?

   o How does Canadian DMO SM use compare with international DMO SM use?

2. What outcomes do DMOs hope will result from SM use?

   o Why are these outcomes seen as an important result of SM use?

   o How do DMOs determine if outcomes are achieved through SM usage?

   o How important is the successful use of SM to the DMO?

Lange-Faria and Elliot (2012) said:

The power of tourism product is more than ever driven by consumers. Consumers can demand what they want from tourism destinations: their expectations are higher and subsequently they are much more difficult to impress. Better communications technologies, at the same time, empower suppliers and destinations, allowing for more efficiencies, collaboration and flexibility. What is required is strategic and tactical

management to ensure that future opportunities can drive innovation and competitiveness

of tourism organizations. (p.197)

The literature reveals that more information is needed regarding destination marketing,

social media and innovation adoption. DMOs need more information regarding how to use SM

effectively, in order to create better experiences for all consumers and tourism stakeholders. To

enhance our knowledge of how SM can affect destination-marketing efforts SM as a marketing

tool requires more research. The knowledge gained from this research will help DMOs make

better use of SM, which will lead them to become better and more strategic destination

marketers.

Method

The design of this study is based on exploratory research conducted by Hays, Page and

Buhalis (2012) that looked at SM use by the ten largest DMOs worldwide. Their work sought to

compare SM use between those DMOs. The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study that

focused on a content analysis of actual SM postings and semi-structured interviews with

executives to gain a deeper understanding of the DMOs SM use.

This study builds on the research conducted by Hays et al. (2012), by examining a longer

timeline of SM postings and looking at a sample of DMOs specific to Canada. Additionally, this

study examines the outcomes desired from SM adoption as well as how DMOs assess these

outcomes.

Design

A mixed-method approach is appropriate for this study as the combination of quantitative and qualitative data will provide a more complete understanding of the research questions than either method alone would be able to provide (Azorín & Cameron, 2010). For this research, the mixed-methods consist of qualitative semi-structured interviews with DMOs and a quantitative content analysis of the DMOs SM posts.

The mixed-methods sequential exploratory design (Creswell J. , 2009) consists of two separate phases, a qualitative phase, involving semi-structured interviews followed by the quantitative phase, consisting of SM content analysis. In this design, the first phase is qualitative interviews and given higher priority. Conducting the interviews first allowed the researcher to identify SM tools that DMOs use in their operations. The second phase, quantitative content analysis, provided information about the actual use of SM by DMOs. The findings from the two phases were integrated during the interpretation of findings in order to answer the research questions. The sequential exploratory design was used because it is useful in research trying to explore a phenomenon and also as a method to expand on qualitative findings (Creswell J. , 2009).

With this research design the qualitative information is weighted more heavily. This differs from the Hays et al. (2012) study that emphasised the quantitative data. Where Hays et al. (2012) sought to compare SM use between the DMOs this study is looking to better understand how and why DMOs use and adopt SM into the organization. With this in mind, favouring the qualitative interviews makes sense and will provide a deeper understanding of the DMOs reasons for using SM.

Data Collection

The first stage of the research involved semi-structured interviews with Canadian DMO senior staff. The person from a DMO responsible for the organization's SM applications was asked to participate on behalf of the organization. The interviews were conducted via telephone and were recorded and transcribed. The semi-structured interview questions were based on the interview questions from Hays et al. (2012) but were modified to help better understand aspects of DOI and answer this studies' research questions. The interview protocol can be found in appendix A. The interview questions included the original questions from Hays et al. (2012) regarding SM use, implementation dates, organization size and successes or failures and SM strategies. The added questions focused on SM adoption and specifically asked about the organizations characteristics identified by Rogers (2003) as important to innovation adoption. The characteristics included the organization size, partnerships, and supportive leadership, the additional questions were included based on Rogers (2003). This aids in understanding the SM adoption process and will help provide insight into why these outcomes are important to the DMOs success.

The second stage of research was the examination of SM posts by DMOs over a one-year period, examined through content analysis. Hays et al. (2012) only looked at one-month, posting period whereas this study examined postings from a full year timeframe to provide a more comprehensive examination

To collect the actual information from the various SM platforms, data collection happened over a one-year period (June 2013 – June 2014). The SM platforms included were based on the interview portion of the research and a review of DMO websites. The researcher

reviewed each SM tool identified during the interviews for user interactivity, either comments or

users sharing the SM content and how frequent the DMO posted to the SM tool. This

examination was to determine if each tool had enough user interaction to be included in the

study. Each SM tools recent 20 posts were examined and judged for interaction. SM tools with

few followers and infrequent SM posts were excluded. In the case of blogs, the previous month's

posts were examined and the number of user comments was used to determine interaction.

Facebook and Twitter were the two platforms where the DMOs and consumers were seen to

interact. All postings on these platforms from the data collection period were captured using data

mining and analytics software from NEXT Analytics (Version 2.21.28; NEXTanalytics Corp.,

2014). A sample was drawn from the data by using a sample size calculator to determine how

many postings to include from each DMO for a representative sample. The samples ranged from

73 to 98 posts for Facebook and 92 to 96 Twitter postings, the specific posts were selected by

selecting every 'n' post from the posting period. Each posting was then coded using the content

analysis tool. The content analysis tool was modified from the instrument Hays et al. (2012) used

in their study. The modifications are discussed in the analysis section and the content analysis

tool is available in appendix B. The entire SM posting was considered one piece of information

for the purpose of content analysis; this is because SM posts are typically short and usually

convey only one message (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012).

Participants

To understand the adoption, use and evaluation of SM by Canadian DMOs, large DMOs

were included in this study. A list of potential participants including, the 10 Canadian provincial

marketing organizations and the DMOs for Canada's 10 largest cities was created. The

combination of provincial and municipal organizations allowed the researcher to gain insight into

SM use by DMOs across the country. Both city and provincial representation was included to increase the likelihood that major regions across Canada were represented.

This study used large organizations for the same reasons Hays et al. (2012) choose large DMOs, large DMOs are well established, have experience in destination marketing and are likely to be using digital marketing. For the present study large organizations are also more likely to be innovative based on the DOI model (Rogers, 2003). For this study large organizations make sense to study because the large DMOs are more likely to be well established, have already adopted SM and are using SM in their marketing efforts.

A list of the provincial DMOs and the DMOs for Canada's ten largest urban areas is below (Statistics Canada, 2013).An internet search for the DMO for each province and city was conducted and the following list of DMOs was compiled for the study.

1. British Columbia – Hello BC, http://www.hellobc.com/
2. Alberta – Travel Alberta, http://travelalberta.com/
3. Saskatchewan – Tourism Saskatchewan, http://www.sasktourism.com/
4. Manitoba – Travel Manitoba, http://www.travelmanitoba.com/
5. Ontario – Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, http://www.tourismpartners.com/home.xhtml?language=en
6. Quebec – Bonjour Quebec, http://www.bonjourquebec.com/qc-en/accueil0.html
7. New Brunswick – Tourism New Brunswick, http://www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca/
8. Nova Scotia – Nova Scotia government, http://www.novascotia.com/en/home/default.aspx
9. Prince Edward Island – Tourism PEI, http://www.tourismpei.com/index.php3#
10. Newfoundland – Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism, http://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/
11. Toronto, Ontario – Tourism Toronto, http://www.seetorontonow.com/
12. Montreal, Quebec – Tourisme Montreal, http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/
13. Vancouver, B.C. – Tourism Vancouver, http://www.tourismvancouver.com/
14. Calgary, Alberta – Tourism Calgary, http://www.visitcalgary.com/
15. Edmonton, Alberta – Edmonton Tourism, http://www.edmonton.com/for-visitors/tourism-industry.aspx

16. Ottawa, Ontario – Ottawa Tourism, http://www.ottawatourism.ca/en/
17. Quebec City, Quebec – Quebec City Tourism, http://www.quebecregion.com/en
18. Winnipeg, Manitoba – Tourism Winnipeg, http://www.tourismwinnipeg.com/
19. Hamilton, Ontario – Tourism Hamilton, http://www.tourismhamilton.com/
20. Kitchener, Ontario – Waterloo Region, http://www.explorewaterlooregion.com/

The researcher used a random number generator to select the five DMOs for participation. DMOs were assigned an identifying number, between 1 and 20. The first five numbers provided by the generator were used to select the participants. Each of the selected DMOs was sent an email and the most relevant person to speak to regarding the DMOs SM was sought out and asked to participate in the interview. Phone calls to the non-responding DMOs were necessary to gain participation from all the selected DMOs. All of the selected DMOs agreed to participate in the study. A summary of the research will be provided to participants upon completion of the study.

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

Analysis for the qualitative interview portion of the data used a content analysis technique where qualitative data is re-presented as a descriptive summary organized in a way that best fits the data (Sandelowski, 2000). In this case the descriptive summary was organized by combining similar ideas from across the interviews into one paragraph, the DMOs included in those situations were identified. Single source data individual DMOs provided was also included as a written summary for each interview question. In the discussion section the interview summary and SM posts were used to answer the research questions. This method is useful when a straight description of phenomena is desired. For the purposes of this study a straight forward description of the who, what and where of DMO SM use is useful and will aid in the researchers understanding of the subject.

The quantitative analysis portion of this research examined the Canadian DMOs SM posts by using the content analysis tool. SM posts were evaluated using the content analysis tool and coded according to categories based on Hays et al. (2012). Categories of the content analysis were not mutually exclusive and one piece of content could fit several categories. The content analysis data was compiled to create tables representing post interactivity, consumer interaction with SM posts and basic descriptive statistics for Facebook and Twitter. These tables were the same ones that Hays et al. (2012) presented in their study and allowed for some comparison between the Canadian and International DMOs.

Findings

This section presents the findings of this research. The research involved two components interviews with the DMO staff responsible for SM and a content analysis of the SM posting data for each DMO.

To select DMOs for this study, a list of the twenty large, Canadian DMOs was created. A random number generator was used to draw a random sample of five DMOs for the study. The five DMOs were contacted via email. Three DMOs agreed to participate from the initial email and a follow up email was sent to the non-responders. The follow up email generated a response from one more DMO. A third email was sent to the non-responding DMO and finally a phone call to the DMO, after which they agreed to participate. Once the five DMO's were identified, Facebook posts and Twitter tweets for a one-year period were collected.

The study only examined Facebook and Twitter because a review of the other tools identified during the interviews found little to no interaction with consumers. The researcher reviewed these other SM tools identified by the DMOs for interactivity in May of 2014. The last

month of blog posts for each DMO revealed that blogs had very limited interactivity. Although a

blog post related to a contest was heavily commented on, the comments were strictly for the

prize entry. The content sharing sites, such as YouTube and Flickr, again had little interaction.

Media warehousing and not engagement is the primary use of these tools by DMOs.

Software from Next Analytics (Version 2.21.28; NEXTanalytics Corp., 2014), was used

to capture the entire year of Facebook and Twitter posts. From this, a sample was drawn using a

sample size calculator set to 95% confidence level and a 0.10 confidence interval. This provided

the number of posts from each SM tool to include. Spreadsheet software was then used to extract

every 'nth' post for coding. This method provided a sample from regular intervals throughout the

year. The researcher conducted interviews with representatives from each DMO between Dec

2013 and Jan 2014.

SM Data

DMOs identified many SM tools during the interviews, tools included Facebook, Twitter,

YouTube, Flickr, Blogs, Mobile Apps, Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr. These tools were

reviewed for social interaction, in May 2014, to determine if further analysis of the posts should

be undertaken. All of the study DMOs identified Facebook and Twitter as their primary

engagement platforms. These two SM tools had tens and hundreds of thousands of followers,

while the other tools had thousands, hundreds and often fewer followers.

While all of the DMOs use blogs, a review of the prior month's postings of each DMO

blog revealed there was almost no interaction with the public on them. DMO #5 had only two

comments and DMO #3s, top commenter in history was an employee. DMO #4's blog did not

allow comments or interaction with readers. There was only one blog posting that appeared to

have significant interaction with the public and that posting was a 'giveaway' promotion where

commenting on the post entered you into the contest. Because of the limited interaction on the

blog sites, they were not included in further analysis. The interview process did reveal that users

are probably interacting with blog content through other SM tools such as Facebook and Twitter,

both of which are major traffic drivers to DMO blogs.

Three DMOs use Flickr, although DMO #4 had no postings for over a year. The other

two DMOs had very little interaction in the form of favorites or comments. DMO #5 did indicate

that Flickr is used as a media warehouse for their organization and they would use Flickr even if

it had no social aspects to the service.

All study DMOs use YouTube, but again there was limited interaction with users. The

larger DMOs did have significant video views but one DMO had videos with fewer than ten total

views. DMOs indicated they used YouTube as a media warehouse and users interacted with the

content on other platforms.

Apps were not considered for inclusion in this study but three DMOs have developed

Apps for the destination. Only DMO #4 discussed their app as part of their SM plans, they

indicated the app was a significant investment and provided location-based services to users. The

DMO did not report the number of App users and the researcher was unable to access any

information about the apps regarding users or downloads.

Pinterest is used by two DMOs, this tool did appear to have interaction with the public,

but the design of the site does not allow for chronological tracking or publicly available metrics

making it difficult to use in research. Pinterest is an area that requires additional research because there appears to be engaged audiences on the service.

Instagram is another tool that appeared to have user interaction and is used by four DMOs. Technical challenges related to collecting publicly available Instagram posts and comments resulting in its exclusion from this study.

The combination of low user numbers, lack of interaction and the inability to retrieve posting data for some services lead to the decision to only use Facebook and Twitter for this study. At least one other study had similar findings, using only Facebook and Twitter while excluded other SM tools based on limited interaction (Buhalis & Mamalakis, 2015). Hays et al. (2012) also identify Facebook and Twitter as the most popular platforms and used those SM tools in order to DMOs on similar platforms.

Social Media Posting Data

The SM data sample was collected from June 2013 – June 2014, from Facebook and Twitter and analysed using the content analysis tool. For each selected DMO the entire year worth of Facebook and Twitter posts were captured using software from Next Analytics. This resulted in a large amount of data and a sample was taken for each DMO to get a manageable amount of information. The sample size was calculated using a 95% confidence level and 0.1 confidence interval.

A sample allowed the researcher to reduce the data to a more manageable amount. Once the sample size was known, the total population was divided by the sample size to determine which posts to include. This resulted in every 'n[th]' post being included. For Facebook this ranged between every 2 – 6 postings and for Twitter, ranged between 12 – 47 posts.

SM posts were coded using content analysis. "Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text." (Weber, 1990, p. 10). The goal of content analysis is "to reduce the total content of a communication ... to a set of categories that represent some characteristic of research interest." (Singleton & Straits, 2005, p. 371). Content analysis has many uses including comparing levels of communication, to code open-ended questions, search for propaganda and to describe trends (Weber, 1990). Content analysis works by coding information into specific categories, which helps to analyze the ideas within the original content (Weber, 1990). Content analysis was the primary analysis tool used for this research project and used to code all of the SM data collected. Content analysis was chosen for this study because this study reviewed a large body of information, from the SM posting data and content analysis helps make the data manageable.

Three areas affect the reliability of content analysis, stability, reproducibility and accuracy. "Stability refers to the extent to which the results of content classification are invariant over time." (Weber, 1990, p. 17), meaning that data is consistently coded. Inconsistencies may occur when text or coding rules are ambiguous; the coder has cognitive changes and basic errors in recording. Reproducibility refers to the extent which similar content can be reproduced by multiple coders. The coding tools should allow data to be coded the same way by multiple people. High reproducibility is the minimum standard of content analysis (Weber, 1990). The last area is accuracy, which refers to the extent which coded information corresponds to a developed standard. Accuracy is seldom used in research because there are very few established standards for coding information (Weber, 1990).

These areas of concern were addressed in several ways. By building, the coding tool from the previously established elements of the Hays et al. (2012) study, accuracy is more likely and

the research can build on existing research contributing to the body of literature. Stability was established through practice coding portions of the data, prior to coding the entire dataset to check for consistent coding by the researcher. Reproducibility is an area that may present problems in that only one researcher did the coding, which may be unreliable, the practice coding does help address reproducibility.

Content analysis is an appropriate analysis method for this study because content analysis is a rule based procedure to reduce large amounts of data and aids in the comparison of different data (Flick, 2006). Content analysis also creates a system for summarizing and classifying data to create themes and allow linking to other variables (Flick, 2006). Content analysis allowed for the reduction of the amount of data collected to a manageable amount and provided a method for creating data categorization in order to answer the research questions. Content analysis looks directly at communication to get to the central aspects of social interaction (Palmquist, 2013) and SM is after all, social interaction.

The content analysis tool developed by Hays et al. (2012) has been modified for this study to focus on the three components Hays et al. (2012) deemed most relevant for SM research. The three important categories were post interactivity, frequency and content (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012). Users interact with a post anytime they like, comment or share something and richer interaction is more valued. Frequency refers to how often posts are made to SM. Content refers to the content of the actual posting typically text, picture or video. Reducing the number of categories used to describe the data is done for two reasons, the first is to focus more on the areas identified by Hays et al. (2012) as important and the second is to reduce the total amount of coding required given a longer collection period. This study is looking at five DMOs but over a yearlong timeline. The coded data was used to create summary tables and

charts of the three 'important' categories. A comparison between these findings and the findings

of Hays et al. (2012) is discussed in the next chapter.

Table 1

Facebook Use by DMOs

DMO	# of Likes (Aug 28, 2014)	Member Since	# of Posts (June 2013 – 2014)
1	67369	2009	805
2	211192	2006	344
3	31633	2009	375
4	2298	2011	151
5	80325	2008	255

Table 1

Twitter Use by DMOs

DMO	# of Followers (Aug 28, 2014)	Following	Member Since	Total # of Tweets	Tweets (June 2013 – 2014)
1	58916	610	Oct 2008	9691	2572
2	125821	906	July 2008	14607	4445
3	13229	2467	Feb 2010	6722	2797
4	11133	143	Jan 2011	18256	2236
5	24137	17946	May 2009	5772	1098

SM postings were analyzed for interactivity and the criteria for determining an interactive

post was the same criteria that Hays, et al. (2012) used "a post that directly asked a question or

requested some form of response" (pg. 223). The researcher read all of the SM postings in the

sample to determine if the posting was interactive.

Table 2

Summary of interactive/non-interactive posts

	Facebook				Twitter		
DMO	Sample	Interactive	Interactive %		Sample	Interactive	Interactive %
1	93	0	0		97	4	4.1
2	86	16	18.6		95	5	5.3
3	80	12	15.0		94	4	4.3
4	77	2	2.6		94	3	3.2
5	73	10	13.7		92	3	3.3

Consumer interaction with the SM data was compiled by calculating the mean number of

likes, shares, comments and retweets for the sample data. This information was included in the

SM data capture and was presented as a column in excel.

Table 3

Consumer interaction with SM posts

DMO	Average # of Likes	Average # of Shares	Average # of Comments	Average # of Retweets
1	401.3	15.3	84.7	3.9
2	955.9	42.4	177.3	2.9
3	169.8	10.2	50.9	1.7
4	15.2	1.1	7.8	3.7
5	592.0	162.6	215.2	1.4
Average	426.8	46.3	107.2	2.7

Interview Data

The interviews with five DMO representatives took place between December 2013 and

January 2014. The participants for the interviews were the people responsible for SM in the

organization. The job titles for the five interviewees were Manager - Digital Marketing, Social

Media Specialist, Digital Operations Marketing Manager, Marketing and Media Relations

Coordinator and Internet Marketing Specialist – Social Media. These participants all described

SM marketing as a main component of their job.

The researcher analyzed data from the five interviews using the data re-presentation

method described by Sandelowski (2000), which describes a method for writing a descriptive

summary of the information in a way that best fits the data. Interview transcripts were printed

and the researcher read each one several times to aid in understanding before analysis started.

The researcher then summarized the concepts and ideas for each question within each interview

and then compared the interviews for similar concepts. Similar ideas from each DMOs interview

were combined and a descriptive summary of the entire set of interviews was created for each

interview question. This method provided a through description of the entirety of the interview

data. More information is beneficial to this research at this stage because additional data will aid

during interpretation of the data to answer the research questions.

Interview data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis strategy described earlier and

the interviews took approximately 45 minutes to complete. A summary of the interview data is

below and the interview questions are available in Appendix A:

1. Does your organization use SM? (If NO why not?)

    All of the DMOs interviewed for this study use SM in their organizations.

2. Does your organization have a SM strategy and if so what is the strategy?

    Most of the DMOs (4 of 5) indicated their organization has a SM strategy. The

    one DMO that did not have a strategy is in the process of developing one. While the

DMOs did indicate that they have SM strategies, those strategies were not all well defined. Two DMOs indicated they did not have written strategies related to SM but included SM in the overall business planning for the organization. One DMO was specifically using a visual SM strategy of posting images. Only one DMO indicated they have a specific written SM strategy and that an outside marketing agency developed the strategy for the DMO. The written strategy focused on having a strong presence on a small number of SM sites, to increase engagement and build brand awareness.

DMOs are using SM to grow brand awareness and communicate directly with the consumer. Twitter was a conversation driver. "We find that's where the back and forth with potential travelers takes place on Twitter." (DMO #2). One DMO also mentioned that SM is a good way to build search engine and web optimization. Another DMO described the use of Champions for SM. Champions were described as "Someone who regularly engage with us and speaks positively with us and what we can offer as a province." (DMO #3). These champions engage through a variety of platforms.

3. When did your organization begin implementing a social media strategy?

The DMOs had a variety of responses about when they started to implement a SM strategy. "It was actually before my time.... I'm pretty sure they got on Facebook 2007." (DMO #5) At least three of the DMOs stated they had SM accounts prior to having any sort of strategy. "I guess it depends how you define social media.... Whenever they started, about 7 years roughly." (DMO #1) Between 2010 and 2011 was the official start date for three DMOs. One DMO did not have a strategy to implement but thought they had started using SM in 2010.

4. What social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are used by your organization?

All of the DMOs are active on Facebook and YouTube. DMOs also identified YouTube, Flickr, Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+ and blogs. Four DMOs stated they are only active on a few of these sites, primarily Facebook and Twitter.

One DMO identified a mobile app as part of their SM. The app was primarily focused on location mapping and services at the destination. The app was a large investment for the DMO and now the challenge was to keep the content fresh.

Three of the DMOs also employ blogs with varying degrees of social interaction. Blogs are primarily used to create content for other SM platforms such as an article about the 'top 10 restaurants' or to highlight upcoming events and activities.

5. Do specific SM tools have specific uses?

Four of the DMOs state they use Facebook less often. Facebook was typically used for larger announcements, whereas Twitter was used more frequently to answer questions, for trip planning and real time news.

Only one DMO indicated they used specific SM to reach specific audiences. This separate usage was only on Twitter, "We have three Twitter accounts. Consumer, Media and Industry. We used to do the same on Facebook, but it was killing the brand." (DMO #3). The DMO had tried a similar approach with Facebook but had issues with engaging the correct audience on the appropriate pages. The DMO now only has a consumer Facebook page.

One DMO uses Flickr and YouTube as a content management system for hosting their organization photos and videos. " Our website uses the images from Flickr API so we don't have to have our own content management system." (DMO #5).

6. Is the management and development of social media a separate role from other marketing employees?

   While SM is a standalone job in some of the DMOs it is still a part of the overall marketing department. The larger DMOs had dedicated full time people to SM marketing and the smaller ones may have a shared position or one part of a job description. The time commitment for SM tasks ranged from 25% to 100% depending on the organization. "SM (sic) was someone's full time job before the secondment. He managed the contents and delivery of SM." (DMO #4). The larger DMOs all stated that part of their SM job is to explain/encourage/promote SM use throughout the organization and make sure SM is incorporated into traditional media campaigns and vice versa. "We work cross-functionally with a lot of different departments in the company. We are sitting in a hub with media and communications." (DMO #2)

7. How many people are responsible for maintaining a social media presence, developing strategies/campaigns, etc.?

   Four of five DMOs interviewed had at least one full time person looking after SM. The fifth DMO did have a full time SM person but recently lost the position to another department. Counting people who contribute to SM accounts at least some of the time two DMOs had 3+ people who help with the SM accounts. DMOs also use outside marketing consultants to develop marketing plans, content etc.

8. What is the total budget dedicated towards social media? What percentage of the total marketing budget is this? How much is spent on traditional marketing (TV, print, etc.) and how does this compare to previous years?

DMOs were reluctant to say how much they spent on SM overall. DMOs set their budgets in various ways and none of them has a specific dollar amount tied to SM. One DMO spends $0 on SM (not counting staff time), although they are looking in SM ads and Pay Per Click advertising. One DMO, which provided an actual number, thought they would spend about $50,000 per year on SM advertising, developing content, etc.

They said their budget fluctuates based on the years plans, for example if they are planning on a guest blogger the budget will increase. Other DMOs indicated their SM budget would be less than $100,000/year, another about 25% of the digital marketing department budget. SM as a budget figure is planned to grow larger however with at least two DMOs stating they are increasing the budget towards SM this coming year.

ROI on SM is seen as very good by at least one DMO because of the ability to track consumers through SM. "The ROI related to SM is good because there is no upfront costs.... I can track how many people, where they came from and what they clicked on." (DMO #3).

9. How large is your organization budget/ # staff? How much is allocated to marketing?

The number of staff in an organization varied greatly, from a low of six to over 70 employees. Actual budget figures varied widely as well from less than $100,000 to over $13 million. Four of five of the DMOs have annual budgets in the millions of dollars' range. The one DMO with a smaller budget had a recent structural change and was no longer a standalone organization. That DMO indicated they lost several hundred thousand dollars in direct funding due to the structural change.

10. How do social media and traditional media reinforce each other? Is one valued more than the other by your organization?

Most of the DMOs are using SM in a complementary fashion to traditional media. Many of the SM people interviewed said they work hard to ensure that different departments are not working in Silos and SM is included in the planning stages of projects." Say if we run a print campaign in the Globe and Mail. We will try to link that to our SM.... Our TV advertisements are not on YouTube." (DMO #5). One DMO pointed out that while the marketing people develop the ads. Most of the travelling public use SM as the first point of contact to the DMO, so it is important that everyone be on the same page. DMOs still view SM as a distribution channel and TV and print are still the most important channels to DMOs but SM is gaining ground. "I think the organization recognized that there is a place for both and we find that we get probably a better ROI on digital versus traditional." (DMO #3). SM is gaining ground partly because of the traceability of the SM user. One DMO sees Print as the valued focus of the organization. That DMOs unfilled SM staff position is seen as evidence of those values.

One DMO notes that their primary SM users are locals and that when trying to reach outside their region it is difficult to fight through the 'noise' using only SM. "Our greatest SM efforts reach local. The real challenge is trying to reach outside our region is to fight through the noise." (DMO #3). The example given was that a destination 'A' tries to reach potential tourists at location 'B', the people in location 'B' have their own local SM pages and tools that have no connection to 'A's. Whereas if the DMO airs a TV commercial in location 'B', the message is guaranteed to reach residents of 'B'.

11. What have been the biggest struggles related to incorporating social media into the marketing strategy?

All of the DMOs identified different areas of struggle incorporating SM into their DMOs. Getting buy-in from the traditional media people was a challenge for one DMO. The feeling is that there is not a great understanding of SM and how SM works. "I don't know if everyone here understands what we do every day but I'm always happy to show them if they ask." (DMO #2). So incorporating SM into marketing plans can be challenging when the people you work with do not understand why they need to bother with SM.

Lack of resources is the primary struggle at another DMO. SM has been something that added to people's job titles without much thought or planning. That DMO sees lack of financial, human and planning resources as their biggest challenge.

Another struggle identified is proving the value of SM over traditional media. One DMO SM person said they spend many extra hours building the SM strategy, compiling data and running test campaigns in order to prove the value of SM. Their numbers suggest a two-three times less expensive to achieve the same results via SM than traditional media. It is also difficult to prove the value of SM when the DMO does not sell any products or services to the consumer. That makes it hard to prove increase sales or visitation.

A specific marketing plan that included SM was the biggest struggle for another DMO. The DMO without a plan was working to create a plan. They thought that once the plan was complete, it would help address their struggles.

The last DMO identified getting leadership on-board was a struggle in their organization. They felt the leadership was not necessarily aware of SM or understood

how SM works. The concerns cited were around the ROI of SM and that it was difficult

to prove SMs value to the organization.

12. What have been the biggest successes and the biggest failures social media use?

Successes;

A special SM project where the DMO hired a guest blogger was very successful

for one DMO. The DMO identified the guest blogger as successful because they created

over a million SM impressions and added thousands of new followers. The DMO noted

the guest blogger created a lot of engagement and interaction with SM users throughout

the campaign. "We ran a campaign over the summer where we had a blogger come in....

We gained a lot of SM followers." (DMO #3).

The passionate community of SM users was the biggest success at another DMO.

The DMO felt their followers are especially engaged with the destination and the SM

staff is defensive of their community. "They are passionate and very involved.... At

times, we are getting pushed to push sales type messaging. It's not what our audience is

looking for." (DMO #2).

SM is the biggest driver of traffic for another DMO. Their SM tools direct people

to their website, trip planning tools and other information about the destination. The

interviewee feels that SM works very complimentary with the more traditional media.

"Without the blog we wouldn't have content for the SM and without SM we wouldn't

have traffic for the blog. So they kinda work hand in hand." (DMO #1).

The biggest success at another DMO relates to content and the monitoring that

SM is able to provide. They had a distinctive 'goat' video that was in their media

warehouse. The analytics noted that goats were trending in SM and they were able to

release the video to coincide with the trend. This resulted in international news coverage

and hundreds of thousands of video hits. "We noticed that goats were trending online

earlier this year. So we had this video asset and we pushed it out. Within just a couple of

days it had 300,000 views." (DMO #5)

The last DMO felt their biggest success was jumping into SM early. They were

among the first to have a SM staff person and received industry awards for their SM

activity. The DMO really felt they were ahead of the curve adopting SM.

Failures;

Two DMOs identified trying to do much as their biggest failure. Setting up

accounts and not using them and trying to be on too many services both caused issues for

DMOs. For one of the DMOs several SM platforms that work in similar ways are

mirrored to one another. Tumblr and Instagram for example both carry the same visual

content because they are similar platforms. SM services were also dropped in order to

focus more time on tools where there were large followings. "At first we jumped on a

bunch of things just to be on them and I think what we've learned is, we want to be on

the platforms that our communities are on." (DMO #2)

Two DMOs also agreed that they tend to experiment on SM a lot. With

experimentation comes failure. SM is an excellent platform to try the new ideas out and

discover what is going to work." Can't be afraid to do some experimenting and can't be

afraid to fail a bit." (DMO #1)

The overall speed of SM was a concern for another DMO; they had issues with

maintaining SM pages and developing new content every time a SM service changed its

home page. At the same time, it is difficult too quickly convince management to do

something in time to take advantage of trends online. The trend is often faded away before the bureaucracy can make a decision. "To convince people that goats are trending and that you need to push out this goat video is not an easy task." (DMO #5).

The last DMO sees their biggest failure as the lack of strategy and continuity. If the current SM person left, the organization there would be a very steep learning curve when they DMO got a new SM person. They felt that without a formal SM plan it was difficult to know what to do and where to go with SM. "It's tough to demonstrate success if we're not investing in measurements." (DMO #4).

13. How do you plan to develop social media in the future?

One DMO is planning to complete their SM strategy document as their development plan. The others are planning to monitor the SM networks, watch for changes and continue to grow the audience by staying on top of trends and supply high quality content. There are plans to expand SM with more one-off SM specific campaigns and into non-local markets.

14. How do you measure successful social media efforts? ROI?

The lack of an actual product to sell is a concern among all of the DMOs interviewed when it comes to tracking and monitoring SM. Outside of very specific consumer marketing campaigns where the DMO actually sells the product or is involved with the sale they do not know if SM is increasing tourism in anyway. "It's not always easy to calculate ROI.... because we're promoting a destination not selling a product." (DMO #1).

Four of the DMOs are measuring engagement across their SM platforms (any point the audience interacts with content) and increasing the engagement numbers is the

current focus. A richer engagement process is of more value to the DMO. (New fans or a share is more valuable than just liking a post). One DMO has an 'external facing scorecard' they are scored against each year. This year's scorecard based solely on engagement.

15. What makes marketing your destination different from other tourism boards?

Two DMOs feel they are among the leaders in SM use and that is what makes them different from other tourism destinations. Their reasons are different, one related to budget cuts and the need to be creative. "There's not a lot of other DMO's who use SM as much as we do. We had huge budget cuts and needed to make do with as little as possible. Budget restraint makes you creative." (DMO #3). The other felt they were a SM leader because they have been recognized and awarded for their SM promotions. "We've won international awards. In particular, with our SM we have been recognized as a leader in Canada." (DMO #5).

One DMO feels the destination sells itself. The natural beauty of the destination and being a well-known international destination allows simply promoting strong visuals to their followers and in marketing. "It's such a beautiful city it's just easy to market visually. If it were a very bland non-descript city elsewhere we'd have to take a totally different approach to marketing." (DMO #1).

Another DMO feel there are vastly different opportunities across the territory and the hidden gems that make their destination unique. "There's a lot of hidden gems within the province that people don't know about and when we're able to make them aware it's very exciting for us." (DMO #2).

One DMO feels that nothing instantly stands out about their destination. "Nothing that instantly stands out. I think we were early adopters and because of that we have a large following and have done well." (DMO #4).

16. To whom are most of the social media efforts directed? Are you using social media for specific markets?

Three DMOs all mention that they have a large group of local followers on their SM accounts. Only one of the three specifically targets locals in their marketing plans however, the other two both feel that locals are very important to their overall marketing. Locals help with the 'Visiting Friends and Relatives' travel segment and tend to want to stay informed about what is happening in their community. "If locals aren't interested in what we're putting out chances are it's not good content and the tourists wouldn't be interested either." (DMO #1).

Only two DMOs had specific target markets in mind for their destinations. One of those DMOs uses more traditional metrics of age and location to target potential travelers and does gear SM postings towards the target. "We primarily target individuals 45+. Ontario is our primary market." (DMO #5). The other DMO uses the Explorer Quotient tool to segment their target. (Explorer Quotient is a tool developed by the Canadian Tourism Commission to segment market using people's social values and worldview (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2015).) They are trying to attract 'Free Spirits' and 'Cultural Explorers' traveller segments. Both of these DMOs feel that their target markets can be targeted the same through Facebook and Twitter.

Only one DMO indicated that they used different SM accounts to target different groups. They used specific Twitter accounts to communicate with consumers, industry and media. Each group received their own targeted message through this SM platform.

17. What sorts of posts do you think are most effective? (E.g., do you think it helps to have a contest, ask a question, request photos, something general, advertising an event, etc.?)

All of the DMOs indicated pictures are very successful in generating 'likes' and shares. One DMO noted that they notice less interaction with video compared to static pictures, which they thought was due to the amount of time required to interact with a video. "Video, you'd think people would be all over that but it takes too long. A photo only needs a couple of seconds, whereas video needs 30+ seconds." (DMO #3). Three DMOs noted that Facebook was a better tool for pictures and visual media, while Twitter was better for text and links to other sites. "Facebook it's all about the images.... Through Twitter it's mostly communications about a story." (DMO #1).

Four of the studies DMOs are using contests and giveaways. The last DMO has been directed to stop offering any contests on their SM. Two DMOs run regular weekly contests as part of their overall marketing programs. "As part of our consumer campaign, if people spot one of our jeeps we are sending them quick prizes on Twitter and Instagram." (DMO #2). DMO's report using Twitter for contests more often than Facebook. The other three DMOs view contests as an idea past its' time. "Survey's, contests all of that, in the old days they used to generate a lot of engagement. I think some people are getting a little burnt out from it." (DMO #1). Another issue noted with the use of contests to build and audience was that users who joined for the contest did not engage with the destination in any other ways, they were only interested in the contest.

"What you tend to get is, a lot of people who want to win prizes and are not at all interested in your destination." (DMO #1).

Only one DMO mentioned that they tried using location-based promotions. They had users post about where DMO staff was at different events and activities. They noted that there was a large learning curve with the location-based promotion and that their SM usage improved throughout the campaigns as the DMO staff figured out what to do to drive engagement. "We've had a lot of learning from it and it could have been better.... We've seen a lot of success over the past couple of months but it was a slow start at the beginning. "(DMO #2).

18. Do you have any particular strategies to gain social media followers? (Facebook likes, Twitter followers, etc.)

Four of the DMOs are following an organic growth strategy. Trying to engage followers and add new ones by creating and sharing engaging content, being responsive to questions and comments and staying consistent throughout their SM. One DMO talked about creating content that was inherently shareable as their primary way to gain followers. Another DMO has tried using the location-targeting feature of SM advertising to try to reach a more international audience. "We're trying to grow an international audience mostly in the US.... It also helps to classify different types of content because we can segment the post based on location." (DMO #2).

Three of the DMOs have tried paid advertising on both Twitter and Facebook. Although two stated they have only used Facebook ads and the other only Twitter ads. One DMO said they try to target ads to friends of people who already follow them or like their page. They feel those people are more likely to engage with the destination since

their friends already have. One DMO that has not purchased any advertising said, "I've looked at and considered running different sorts of paid opportunities to build up our following. Each time I've hesitated and ended up not doing it. I think I'm comfortable with our strategy now of building organically." (DMO #1).

One DMO said that the contests they run on their SM are used to reward their existing followers rather to try to gain new followers. "Often event organizers will give us tickets to promote an event and we'll give those away on the blog. But they're meant more as a reward for our followers, not to gain followers." (DMO #1). None of the other DMOs mentioned using contests to gain SM numbers.

19. How does senior leadership feel about social media?

All of the DMOs feel that Senior Leadership is supportive of SM, but with varying levels and a wide range of understanding about SM. Two DMOs feel that leadership probably does not understand what SM does for the organization and what the SM people do. "They understand the value, because people keep telling them that. But they don't necessarily understand." (DMO #3). Two other DMOs feel that leadership has been supportive, that they are keen to learn more about SM and understand that SM is not a fad that will disappear next week. The last DMO feels that while leadership has generally accepted SM as something they have to do, they are asking for proof "There's a push to develop measurement we didn't have.... They might be questioning the support we've received in the absence of numbers and facts." (DMO #4).

20. What drove adoption of SM? Where partners involved?

Three DMOs indicated that the driver for SM adoption was primarily internally motivated by the need to stay ahead of the competition. One DMO reported that the staff

in the organization drove SM to the leadership. "SM came up at a staff level and was embraced whole heartedly... it was something that the marketing team recognized and jumped on." (DMO #5). That same DMO also reported that leadership was interested in SM and actively attending conferences and training trying to better understand SM and its' uses. "They were going to conferences and webinars and trying to understand how it fit in the marketing mix rather than just passing it off." (DMO #5).

Four DMOs all believe they were early adopters of SM and that there was very little or no external influence on adoption. "It's been something right from the beginning we were on. I don't think there was any hesitation in the organization about that at all." (DMO #1). Two DMOs identify the inexpensive cost of SM as aiding adoption of SM. "Recognized the need, the price point was attractive; basically someone said we should do this and they said we should hire someone. I was able to expand the department and now there's two of us." (DMO #3).

The Canadian Tourism Commission was identified by one DMO as an influencer to adopt SM. That DMO thought the CTC had a very strong SM program and that CTC was an early adopter to spread SM across the country. "The CTC is strong in SM and was quick to adopt. They've got a strong platform." (DMO #3).

21. What goals do you hope to achieve from using SM?

Four of the DMOs all share the same goal of attracting visitors and the fifth DMO had mentioned that previously. Creating compelling content and getting that content out to potential visitors was specifically stated by two DMOs. "It all comes back to the main goal of creating compelling content and getting it out to as many qualified people as possible. SM helps us do that." (DMO #3). For another DMO their Twitter audience is a

younger demographic and they tried to specifically target that younger audience and impress them with what is available at the destination. "The younger group we try to impress with all of the great stuff you can do in *******." (DMO #2).

One DMO wants to use SM in two stages of the travel process, to inspire visitation in the dream stage and to assist during the planning stages by answering questions through SM or providing guidance to travellers. "We also answer trip planning questions on all of our SM websites." (DMO #5).

Another DMO uses SM to help research and crowd source ideas from their followers. They use SM to help write a '10 best' things type articles or to stay up to date on new developments in the destination. "We're writing an article on the best whatever in ******* and we'll reach out on Twitter and Facebook." (DMO #1). Lastly, one DMO reported that SM helps them build their SEO program and content for their main websites and other online properties.

Why are these goals important?

All of the DMOs reported that these are important goals because they are the goals of destination marketing, to attract visitors to the destination. "They are important because that's what our function as DMO is. To promote the products and services of our members and promote ******** as a destination." (DMO #1). "Getting the message out to as many people as possible helps to attract new visitors and SM is a cost effective way to reach a large number of people. ******* is not an accidental tourist destination, it takes deliberate planning to get here. There are barriers to travel in getting here. Things like TV and print are becoming more expensive. SM is a way to reach our audience and

achieve our overall marketing goals in a digital world with more competition than ever."

(DMO #5).

Discussion

All of the DMOs in this study use a variety of SM tools to build a relationship with their target audiences. The adoption of SM has been influenced by partner organizations and senior management, but the driving force behind adoption of SM is still unknown. Tracking the success of SM is difficult because of the limited ability to track and quantify the ROI of DMOs SM use. The current measures of success for the study DMOs focuses on audience engagement with SM content.

Addressing the Research Questions

Research questions were addressed by writing a detailed description using the information from the data analysis section. Individual research questions are listed below on the left with possible data sources listed on the right. It is possible that any data sources would be applicable to several of the research questions however.

Table 4

Research Questions and Potential Data Sources

Research Question	Potential Data Sources (not limited to)
How do DMOs use SM?	Interview questions #1, 2, 10, 13, 16
What types of SM do DMOs use and for what?	Interview question #4 and SM content data
How is SM adopted within DMOs	Interview questions #7, 8, 9, 11, 19
Canadian DMOs vs. International DMOs	SM content data
What outcomes do DMOs hope result from SM	Interview questions #14, 18, 20
Why are these outcomes important	Interview question #22
How do DMOs determine is outcomes are met	Interview question #12, 14, 18
How important is the successful use of SM	Interview question #10, 12, 13

How do DMOs use SM?

DMOs use SM in a variety of ways throughout their organization including; marketing, engaging audiences, disseminating information to both consumer and industry, recruiting staff and to build brand awareness. The study DMOs use SM to interact with tourists, destination residents and with destination businesses. Study DMOs are primarily using two types of SM tools, content communities and social networks. Other studies (Yang & Wang, 2015; Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012) have found DMOs tend to use these two SM types as well. However, the use of content communities by study DMOs was primarily as a media warehouse for destination pictures, videos and other media, not as an interactive social platform for visitor engagement. One study DMO specifically indicated that they use content communities for storing their images and videos and not for social interaction. This type of use for content community tools makes sense because of their ease of use and integration options for populating content on DMO websites.

The use of social networks included several different platforms but the primary tools used by all study DMOs are Facebook and Twitter. These two SM tools were also identified by other studies as the most common SM tools DMOs use (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012; Buhalis & Mamalakis, 2015). The study DMOs do have a presence on other SM tools but the interviewees indicated these other services were secondary and after reviewing these other networks very little interaction with consumers was found on these other SM sites. There might be a few reasons for this:

1. There were no clear reasons DMOs have these accounts except that they allowed the DMOs to ensure a presence on each SM tool and to control user names and account information. A defined SM strategy could assist DMOs with deciding which SM to use in their operations and how to best use those tools (Kiralova & Pavliceka, 2015). Many of the study DMOs listed all of these additional SM tools on their websites but gave no indication or intention of using them to interact with the public. It may be a better tactic for DMOs to continue to secure user names and accounts but not publicise these other tools until there is a need to.

2. Another possible reason these other SM tools had little interaction with the public could be that while the SM content might be hosted on a blog or content community, the content could be accessed through another SM tool such as Facebook. For example, "ABC DMO Blog" might post updates automatically to the "ABC DMO Facebook page". In this case, the blog would be the content but the public would find out about and interact with that content on the Facebook page.

Another area of DMO SM use that stood out from the interviews was many SM fans of DMO pages are local residents. The DMOs had no specific theories as to why most of their audience is locals but generally felt that if the locals were interested in content that was a good indication that tourists would be interested as well. In a 2008 (Park, Lehto, & Morrison, 2008) study looking at collaboration between DMOs and locals, the authors found that local groups and residents were mostly excluded from the destination marketing process. The study authors interviewed DMO executives and found there were minimal efforts to include residents anywhere in the tourism marketing process. There were many reasons for this including DMOs limited budgets, lack of human resources and limited interest or understanding of tourism by the

residents. In the same study, the authors warn that traditional funding for tourism marketing is being funneled into competing non-tourism activities. Without engaging local residents in the tourism process there is little reason for residents to support tourism investment. As DMOs appear to have a strong local following on SM, additional uses of SM tools become apparent. Engaging local residents in the tourism process, increasing the knowledge of the tourism industry and its importance or to highlight the successes of the local DMO are all legitimate ways to engage locals through SM. Engaging the local audience through SM could be an effective way to build support and promote the successes of the local DMO.

Another study looking at SM use and corporate reputation seems to confirm that SM is an excellent tool to engage with non-customers (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015). In the world of destination marketing, residents seem to fit the idea of a non-customer. The authors of this study suggest three areas where SM was useful to engage non-customers. First, there are more non-customers then customers so it makes sense to have a relationship with potential future customers. Secondly, market changes will be easier to observe in the larger group of non-customers and the larger group may be useful in bringing new ideas forward. Lastly, engaging non-customers through SM will leave them with a positive perception, which is ultimately the goal of the DMO (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015).

The majority of the study DMOs do have a strategy for SM use, although strategies are not well defined and each DMO strategy differs widely in implementation and complexity. The one DMO does not have a strategy is in the process of developing one. The DMO with the most formal written strategy had an outside marketing agency develop and write the SM strategy. The formal written strategy focused on a strong presence on a small number of SM platforms with the goal to increase audience engagement and to build brand awareness.

Even though strategies are in place for four study DMOS, only two DMOs provided specific target audiences, one of which used the Canadian Tourism Commission's Explorer Quotient system (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2015). The other DMO targeted more traditional geographic and age segments. Other DMOs reported generic targeting of neighboring jurisdictions and the visiting friends and relatives market. Typically, SM tools and marketing are not being targeted to specific markets. Although some DMOs were using multiple Twitter accounts to differentiate between visitors and industry and one DMO was using paid SM ads to reach an international audience.

All of the study DMOs use SM in conjunction with traditional media. While SM is used by all DMOs in the study, the interviewees stated that SM needed buy-in from the entire organization to be successful. Several of the interviewees said they had to ensure all departments were onboard with SM and SM plans were included at the start of projects and marketing campaigns. Not everyone in destination marketing has adopted SM as of yet. Meetings and incentive travel is one DMO area still resisting SM adoption. During the interviews, it was stated that those types of travelers are very traditional and more reluctant to try new things. The tracking ability SM provides marketers was identified as a major benefit when the DMO SM staff promotes SM use to other departments. Even with the advantages, SM provides and support from DMO leadership there is still a feeling that SM is an add-on to the DMO marketing effort and not as valued as traditional print or television.

SM will continue to be developed organically in the near future. The DMO without a formal strategy planned to complete the strategy, but otherwise DMOs plan to continue to monitor SM trends and create compelling content for their audiences. None of the DMOs interviewed indicated they were looking into additional SM tools or services at this point.

What types of SM do Canadian DMOs use and for what purpose?

As stated earlier, DMOs primarily use Social Networks to connect with their audience. Most study DMOs reported that Facebook is favoured for bigger announcements and ongoing events whereas Twitter was used to push out information that was happening 'now' or for single purpose posts. There was mixed use of other SM tools by DMOs, these included Pinterest, Flickr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+ and Tumblr. A review of these other SM tools found very little interaction on them. With the exception, being when a prize was offered for interacting with the content. During the interviews, however DMOs indicated they are moving away from prizes and contests to attract followers. This move appears to be an evolution of SM use by DMOs, one DMO described contests as a poor way to attract followers because they are typically only there for the reward not because they care about the destination. Comments from several of the interviewees indicated that SM tools were signed up for in the past and then never used and this caused issues. Initially interviewee's felt there was a push to try to be on every SM platform and site available without planning for how to use each tool effectively. One interviewee even indicated they had a Pinterest button on the homepage that they had never clicked on before.

Interviewees' were unable to state what initially drove adoption of SM in their DMO. In all study DMOs, a previous employee initially signed up for the DMO SM. This leaves a lot of information regarding the adoption of SM unknown. The initial adoption of SM seemed to be ad hoc by the DMOs with no plans regarding how these new SM tools should be used. Later on, SM plans were developed and implemented by most of the DMOs. The DMOs recognized the need to develop marketing plans and measurements around SM to justify the investments required and better direct their SM efforts.

The interviewed DMOs reported that there is no real targeting of specific SM tools to specific audiences. The primary purpose of all their SM efforts was to increase awareness of the destination and attract more visitation. None of the DMOs indicated that they host multiple SM accounts to target specific geographic areas or market segments and DMOs seem to be using SM tools independently for the most part. One DMO reported using multiple Twitter accounts to target different audiences of the destination (consumer, industry and media) and one DMO is just starting with geographic targeting of paid SM promotions. While all of the DMOs are using SM in their operations, it is difficult to determine where in the innovation adoption cycle each DMO is with their use of SM. When examining their rate of adoption, only DMO #2 signed up for Facebook in 2006, the initial year it was available for the public making them an innovator according to the DOI adoption model. For Twitter, none of the DMOs started using the service until 2008, even though it became available in 2006. It is interesting to see that DMO #2 was the first adopter of both of these services and has the largest followings on both as well. During the interviews, the DMOs all indicated that they felt their organization was innovative in the use of SM and some of them have even been awarded for it. However, all of the DMOs plans for development and growth are to let SM grow organically. None of the DMOs felt that outside factors influenced their decision to adopt SM, rather it was something that happened internally to the organization, although only DMO #5 explained that SM was initially brought from the staff level to the management.

Overall, the study DMOs appeared to fit into the early or late majority categories of adoption, DMO #2 however may be considered an innovator or early adopter (Rogers, 2003). DMO #2 was the first to adopt Facebook and Twitter and actually started using Facebook the first year that it was open to the public. Table 5 below lists the adoption dates of SM, size of the

DMO and support from leadership. The general principals of DOI appear to hold true for DMOs. The larger organizations and organizations with support from leadership do appear to be more innovative (Rogers, 2003; Zach, 2011).

Table 5

Adoption Characteristics of DMOs

DMO	DMO Size (Budget)	Facebook Adoption	Twitter Adoption	Supportive Leadership
1	$12 Million	2009	Oct 2008	Supportive but limited understanding of SM.
2	$50+ Million	2006	July 2008	Invested and keen on SM.
3	$8.5 Million	2009	Feb 2010	Supportive but limited understanding of SM.
4	> $100,000	2011	Jan 2011	Cautious support of SM.
5	$9 – 10 Million	2008	May 2009	Very supportive of SM.

While the study DMOs appear to fit the DOI model for innovation there seeems to be issues with the implementation phase of SM. The internal characteristics of the organization, bureaucracy, complexity, interconectedness and organizational slack, have been noted by Rogers (2003) as having a possible negative effect on the implementation of innovations. With all of the DMOs reporting that SM was established by someone else or before their time, along with the interview findings that accounts were setup and never used, there appears to be a definate issue with the implementation of SM within the DMOs.

The second category of SM that DMOs reported using was Content Communities. The attraction to these services though was not because of the social aspects of them rather that they offer a convenient way to store, catalogue and retrieve information on the social network tools and for the DMO websites. This allows pictures, videos and other content to be tagged, cataloged

and retrieved by the DMO for use on the main website, Facebook page or other SM. The DMOs that use these systems indicated they would still use them even if there were no social factor attached to the service. Essentially, they are not using these SM tools to interact with potential visitors even though that capability is there and they will and do respond to users through those tools when needed.

Several of the study DMOs also host a variety of blogs. These blogs are important for creating content but had little interaction from users on the blogs themselves. The only blog postings that appeared to be commented on or liked were the ones that gave away a prize. Study DMOs indicated that blogs are important for their organizations as a content creator for both SM and their websites. One of the study DMOs has employed guest bloggers as a major part of their SM strategy to create new content and has plans to hire guest bloggers in the future as well. The guest blogger program helped this DMO create content, which is important for SM success because additional content allows more chances for communication with the consumer (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012). The creation of content was mentioned during the interviews as an area DMOs struggle with. DMO #5 specifically mentioned content development is an issue, while DMO #2 said they recently mirrored two SM sites to one another to post the same content on each to address the problem of content creation. The constant need for engaging new content for SM will continue to be a challenge for DMOs limited resources.

Overall DMOs prefer pictures to drive engagement. This was especially true for Facebook and the trend toward pictures over video was explained by one DMO as it only takes a few seconds to look at a great picture but will take 30+ seconds to watch even a short video. Facebook is also posted to less frequently but with the bigger announcements, whereas Twitter is used more frequently but for less important news. While most DMOs are not automatically

posting the same information to all SM platforms, there was definitely overlap between SM tools and no specific targeting of a SM tool at a certain target market. The study DMOs all appear to use SM for the general purpose of communicating with visitors and potential visitors. Only DMO #3 indicated that they also use SM for interacting with the tourism industry and media in addition to consumers. It is interesting that the interviewees did not discuss other uses for SM. Other Canadian DMOs use SM for a variety of purposes, for example Tourism Saskatchewan hosts a tourism human resources page for the province (Tourism Saskatchewan, 2016) and other uses for SM could include industry discussion, wiki pages of information or UGC tips for both industry and travelers.

DMOs are combining SM with traditional advertising and stated as much throughout the interview process. The research from Loda, et al (2010) found that a web presence along with traditional advertising increased a destinations appeal to tourists. All of the interviewees talked about incorporating SM throughout the organization as one of the job duties they were responsible for. To accomplish this some DMOs are making sure their Twitter handle was included in all of the advertising and for others it was ensuring that SM was considered during the planning stages of new marketing projects because SM will probably be the first point of contact with visitors and potential visitors.

How is SM adopted within Canadian DMOs?

SM has been adopted by all of the study DMOs although how the original adoption took place was unclear. Many of the study interviewees were unsure why their DMO adopted SM because the adoption happened before they were hired. There were some anecdotal reports of

senior management encouraging SM, as well as pressure from the destination partners to adopt, but none of the interviewees were sure what drove adoption.

The DMOs all seem to have adopted Facebook within a few years of each other but had varying reports about when they actually started using SM routinely. There may have been influence from the CTC or other outside group to adopt SM, but this is unconfirmed. Official SM strategies and plans were developed for most of the DMOs after someone was hired in a dedicated SM position. Only one DMO reported that they had yet to develop an official SM strategy, although they were in the process of completing a strategy.

Overall, the SM adoption process is still unclear. In a recent journal review article on the progress of information and communication technology in tourism, the standard influences of technology adoption appear to be relevant in the tourism industry (Law, Buhalis, & Cobanoglu, 2014). Managers who were found to be good leaders had a higher level of technology adoption, indicating that leadership plays an important role in adoption. There were also findings that partnerships between DMOs and students were able to create mutual benefits for everyone involved. Partnerships were also critical to increasing eWOM by working with information sharers online. Another area that the study found influenced technology adoption was that hotels with steering committees related to technology adoption had higher levels of adoption as well as a strategic advantage over rivals without steering committees (Law, Buhalis, & Cobanoglu, 2014). Another study found adoption of SM by small tourism enterprises (STE) in Australia to be commonly driven by the need to find a lower cost advertising opportunity (Mizrachi & Sellitto, 2015). This conflicts with DOI theory that smaller organizations should be less innovative, although these STEs in Australia may be late adopters of SM technology but the study does not offer a comparison to larger organizations.

A driver for adoption of SM by DMOs is hard to pinpoint. From reviewing SM account data, it appears that most of the DMOs signed up for Facebook in 2008/09 but the signup dates for SM services does not seem to coincide with the dates reported during the interviews. Only DMO #2 actually has accounts from close to the beginning of Facebook and Twitter. This may be because the person who was interviewed was not necessarily the same person who started SM within the DMO. There may have been change over in staff between when SM was initially adopted and when the SM strategies were implemented. According to the interviews, SM strategies were adopted mostly in 2010/11. A quote from DMO #2 provides some insight, "At first we jumped on a bunch of things just to be on them and I think what we learned is, we want to be on the platforms that our communities are on." With SMs low cost of entry, DMOs may have adopted SM without plans for what to do with or how to effectively use SM. DMO #3 mentioned that one of the challenges their DMO faced was that accounts where created but not used in the initial SM adoption. The DMOs appear to fit the early and late majority adopter categories, with the exception that DMO #2 may be an early adopter of SM. From the interviews, it does seem like DMOs initially created SM accounts without having plans of how to best use these tools to achieve DMO goals.

DMOs do appear to follow DOI theory in several areas, notably, leadership and organization size. While partner organizations influence is suspected, none of the interviews were able to confirm outside organizations influencing SM adoption within DMOs.

Senior leadership within DMOs typically are supportive of SM even if they do not really understand the whole concept. There seems to be acceptance of SM and that SM is here to stay. Interviewees reported that leadership within DMOs are looking for measurement, accountability and reporting tools to justify SM use and expense.

The budget allocated to SM is hard to track. SM spending has typically happened as part of a broader campaign, which might include things like video production that would also be used for a television commercial. This made it hard to judge how much is spent on SM. Overall, marketing budget spending is a difficult way to track SM because most of the SM tools are free to use. Content is also hard to track because it is often not specifically developed for SM but as part of an overall marketing campaign. Another common message that came from the DMOs was the fact that because DMOs do not typically sell the actual product it is very hard to track the impact of SM in a fiscal sense. Spending is probably a poor way to track innovation in SM. With that in mind, it is interesting to note that the large organizations in this study all have SM strategies in place. This corresponds to DOI theory that larger organizations are able to be more innovative.

One of the common struggles identified when adopting SM seems to be the lack of planning around the process. Interviewees indicated SM was often added to someone's job title with no resources or supports. There have also been struggles getting buy in from other departments and staff that were not familiar with SM tools and practices. Proving the value of SM and encouraging adoption of SM throughout the organization became part of the job for the early adopters within the DMO.

While some information about how DMOs initially adopted SM was gained through the interviews, the adoption process remains unclear. The current situation appears to be that the designated SM person is responsible for getting the rest of the organization to adopt and incorporate SM into the overall operations of the DMO. More research is needed to understand the process, speaking to the people involved with the original adoption process of SM would be beneficial to understanding the adoption within DMOs.

How do Canadian DMOs' use SM compared with international DMOs'?

The study DMOs' and sample of SM postings appear to be overall less interactive than the international DMOs' postings. The international DMOs had interactive postings make up 11.7% of their total Twitter and Facebook posts whereas the Canadian DMOs only had 6.7% deemed interactive. There are many possible causes for this discrepancy including different interpretation of the criteria for determining what constitutes an interactive post. The longer timeframe this study had compared the Hays, et al (2012) study may indicate that the time of year influences interactivity. Alternatively, even something as simple as SM being very new to many people during the Hay, et al (2012) study and that novelty may have increased interaction. The SM posts of Canadian DMOs do support the findings from Hays, et al. (2012) that shows Facebook is a much more interactive tool than Twitter. (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012)

It is hard to judge whether the Canadian DMOs have a higher degree of interaction than the International DMOs. The average number of likes and retweets is quite a bit higher for the Canadian DMOs but the number of comments is significantly higher for the International DMOs. The interviews of Canadian DMOs suggested that a higher level of interaction is more valuable and that a comment is more interactive than a like or share, meaning that the Canadian DMOs have less interaction with consumers. The difference in the number of comments may relate to the audience numbers of the International DMOs, which when combined together are well over 1 million users, whereas the Canadian DMOs total user base is a little less than 400,000. There is also a large difference in the number of posts between the Canadian and International DMOs, with the Canadian DMOs posting a little more than once per day (1.05 Facebook/day) and the International DMOs posting less than once per day (0.73 Facebook/day). The dates of the studies

probably play the largest factor in this difference however, with so much growth in the use of

SM between 2011 and 2013, there may just be that much more noise on SM now than in 2011.

The Canadian DMOs have moved into more advanced analysis and tracking metrics

compared to Hays, et al. (2013) study. While the international DMOs were mainly looking for

likes or followers, the Canadian DMOs are looking for interaction as a measure of success. The

number of likes or followers does not necessarily relate to the number of visitors (Kiralova &

Pavliceka, 2015) this probably means that looking at SM engagement, as a measure of success

could be better than pure volume of likes. Other studies have reported user engagement being

used to measure success as well (Mizrachi & Sellitto, 2015)

Overall, the Canadian DMOs seem to be happy with their level of SM use and user

engagement. While none of the DMOs was willing to share their metrics for determining SM

success, the general feeling from the interviews was that SM was a positive aspect of their

organization.

What outcomes do DMOs hope will result from SM use?

The ultimate outcome every DMO hopes to achieve is to attract visitors and raise

awareness of the destination. All of the DMOs interviewed have similar goals. The DMOs see

SM as something that is too big to ignore, cost effective and has the potential to reach audiences

that would not be feasible to reach with traditional marketing.

There are no hard guidelines for the DMOs as to what constitutes successful outcomes,

but many of the DMOs said that increasing engagement with website and SM visitors is an

important measurement for their organizations. This differs from the findings of Hays, et al.

(2012) where they report that the national tourism boards were mostly measuring success by the number of followers and how quickly those numbers grew.

Measuring the outcomes from SM however, is a hard thing to do. The standard measures traditionally used such as return on investment, profit or other financial measures cannot be applied to DMOs because they do not sell the actual product and usually are not involved in the sales process. The study DMOs all indicated that the goal of SM use was to grow their online audience or community using the engaging content mentioned earlier. This goal is not to be misunderstood simply as a larger audience is good for the organization, rather it is to create a larger audience that will engage with the DMO content. Typically, the richer the engagement the more valued it is. Therefore, a share is valued more than a like and a new follower more valuable than the number of impressions. There are no specific industry standards identified by the DMOs related to measuring engagement. DMOs seemed to be looking for an improvement from the previous year's numbers as the primary measure of SM success. By having, an engaged audience the viral nature of SM will help grow awareness of the destination and the destinations attributes.

While growing the audience is an outcome DMOs hope to achieve, none of the DMOs had any real set strategies to achieve this. There were some reports of using paid advertising to reach specific groups the DMO was trying to target, such as Twitter ads to reach an international audience. There was also a general feeling that over doing the paid options would burn out the audience and ultimately hurt the DMOs efforts. There was also a mixed response on using contests and rewards to attract an audience. It seems that contests and giveaways were used in the initial SM push to gain followers and then quickly dropped. The interviewees indicated that rewards and prizes did attract new 'likes' but people joined for the prize and then were not engaged with the destination in any other way. Munar (2012) also reported similar findings, the

researcher described this as a mismatch between SM and traditional corporate values. This author also points out that many of the SM review sites prohibit paying for or rewarding people for writing reviews. The interviewees indicated that prizes are now used more as a reward for existing community members rather than to grow the audience.

Why are these outcomes seen as an important result of SM use?

SM use will help DMOs achieve their ultimate goals of attracting more visitors and building awareness of the destination. The use of SM provides a new opportunity to connect with tourists or potential tourists and increase the knowledge of the destination as a whole. SM is an excellent tool for DMOs to build relationships with a group of people, both residents and tourists, who are interested in the destination.

User engagement with DMO content through SM is important because the engagement by one SM user creates the opportunity for the content to be seen by all of the other SM users that first user is connected with. In this way, content is quickly shared and seen by many more people than traditional marketing approaches could provide and at a much lower cost. SM provides an opportunity for DMOs to stand out in a noisy marketing world and provide rich engaging content that will help the audience start the dream stage of the travel process.

How do DMOs determine if outcomes are achieved through SM usage?

While SM offers huge advantages in tracking there is a definite lack of big picture "is this actually helping" measurement strategies. SM is the main driver of traffic to websites and blogs for one DMO, but whether or not that traffic leads to more visitors is unknown.

Most of the studies DMOs were reluctant to share specifics about how their organizations measure the success of SM, although there was a consensus around engagement as an important indicator for SM. A recent study from Buhalis and Mamalakis (2015) looked at financial and engagement metrics to analysis SM use by hotels. The standard ROI equation is ROI = (Gains – Cost of gains) / Cost of gains. The study was able to report on ROI because the hotel allowed the researchers full access to the hotels financial data and SM accounts. This method of ROI is not applicable to DMOs however, because the DMOs do not have sales data or financial information from their destination suppliers. The DMO is unable to know if their SM efforts resulted in more tourism spending at the destination. The second non-financial measure Buhalis and Mamalakis (2015) used is engagement rate, where engagement rate = (likes + comments + shares) / total fans. Measuring engagement is how the study DMOs measure success. While this method may not be exactly how individual DMOs are measuring it is a good benchmark. A good engagement rate is about 1% for pages with fewer than 10,000 fans and engagement rates drop as the number of fans increases (Leander, 2016). Some of the DMOs indicated that there was more importance placed on deeper engagement with content, such as writing a comment versus simply liking content, while others viewed all engagement equally.

Table 6

Average engagement of DMO Facebook posts

DMO	Average # of Likes	Average # of Shares	Average # of Comments	Total Likes	Engagement
1	401.3	15.3	84.7	67369	0.74%
2	955.9	42.4	177.3	211192	0.56%
3	169.8	10.2	50.9	31633	0.73%
4	15.2	1.1	7.8	2298	1.05%
5	592.0	162.6	215.2	80325	1.21%
Average	426.84	46.32	107.18	78563.4	0.74%

The study DMOs appear to have very engaging Facebook content when compared to the Leander (2016) benchmarks. The lowest engagement of 0.56% was for DMO #2, which has the largest audience, the benchmark for an audience that size is 0.13% (Leander, 2016). The benchmarks were created from analytics of more than 500,000 active Facebook pages and used by Buhalis and Mamalakis (2015) for their study. The Buhalis and Mamalakis (2015) study recommends that "Marketers should not hesitate to invest on SM channels for their online campaign. Successful marketing campaigns must not underestimate the power of SM" (pg. 252).

Guest blogging was a particularly successful venture for at least one DMO to create content and attract new followers. Monitoring trends to determine when to launch content has been successful for another DMO and resulted in getting international recognition. Almost all of the DMOs indicated they no longer do special prize promotions on their SM platforms and treat the prizes they do award as a reward rather than an attempt to add new connections.

DMOs did state that they would be judged on how many new likes, followers, or subscribers they have added in a year. The simple numbers judgement of success is probably the least informative measure because of the ability to add followers by buying them outright or with offering some type of large prize. Ultimately, how the DMO decides to measure success is self-determined and there appear to be no industry standards for SM as of yet. DMOs are able to measure engagement however and increasing engagement seems to be the current benchmark for the industry. Increasing engagement may not result in increased visitation however and even in cases with visitation does increase, it is very difficult to attribute that increase to SM engagement.

How important is the successful use of SM to the DMO?

How to define success with SM use is still a major question yet to be answered. All of the DMO's report that SM use is increasing and SM is being used more in every aspect of the organization. SM tends to be the first point of contact with visitors, meaning SM is growing increasingly important to DMOs. It is important for DMOs to have everyone on the same page and incorporating SM into the planning and implementation of every marketing campaign. Television and print are still reported as the most important channels for DMOs but SM is gaining ground. The traceability of SM helps provide great insight into how consumers interact with content and eventually visit the destination. This allows for greater targeting of marketing to consumers who are most likely to visit a destination.

All of the studies DMOs feel that SM is an important tool in achieving the DMO goal of attracting visitors. This is supported by the fact that all of the interviewees indicated that SM use across their organizations is expanding. At least one DMO reported that their own internal measurements have indicated that SM is a more cost effective way to reach target audiences. Interviewees were consistent in stating the need to continually monitor SM tools and networks, create better content and stay on top of the current trends. Even though there is no push to expand SM into new networks, tools, or applications, the study DMOs all seemed to agree that more resources would be put towards SM in the future. This will likely include both staff time and direct advertising dollars.

Ultimately, it is important for DMOs to be successful in using SM because mass advertising is becoming both more expensive and less effective. SM presents one avenue for

DMOs to continue to be successful in marketing their destinations and connecting to the consumer.

Implications

The implications from this study are both practical and theoretical. The practical applications of this study will benefit the tourism industry as a whole and specifically DMOs by providing insight into current SM practices and uses. The ideas listed below will help DMOs to make better decisions about which SM tools will benefit their organization and which SM platforms to spend their resources adopting. A better understanding of the adoption process may also benefit DMOs in the planning stages of SM adoption and implementation. More information about how adoption occurs and what the drivers of adoption are should make it easier to plan for new technology adoptions. Ultimately, better understanding will result in better use of SM by DMOs and increase tourism to a destination.

The theoretical implications of this study apply to DOI theory, specifically the adoption of innovations by organizations. This research does seem to correspond with the general concepts of DOI. Larger organizations appear to me more innovative and the smallest DMO in this study appears to be the least innovative. Several of the study DMOs indicated that the organizations leadership was important in driving adoption and supporting SM, even in cases where the leadership was not especially well informed on the topic. It was interesting to note that none of the study DMOs thought partnerships were a driving force in their adoption of SM. This may be because none of the staff people who originally setup the SM accounts and programs for the study DMOs could be interviewed, all of the interviewees joined their organizations after the SM adoption process had started.

It is still unknown whether DOI is relevant with regard to SM, because SM has evolved at an unprecedented pace and is a very adoptable innovation. The disagreement over what form of communication SM represents, one-to-one or one-to-many, also needs to be determined.

Practical Implications

Part of this research project tried to identify practical ideas that DMOs could use in their adoption and implementation of SM. The following six suggestions combine information gained from the data collection and the literature review that may provide DMOs with some direction about how to use SM to benefit their destination:

1. Pictures are the preferred medium for DMO SM posts. All of the interviewees indicated pictures were the type of posting that got the most interaction and performed the best. One DMO attributed this to the fact that you can engage with a picture in a couple of seconds, whereas a video typically takes at least 30 seconds. Pictures are also easily shared and a great way to start the online conversation. DMOs should be continually adding to their media libraries and there are several options to gather new rich media including hiring professionals, user submitted pictures and historic photos.

2. Frequency of postings was discussed in the literature (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2012) (Yang & Wang, 2015) as well as by the interviewees. All of the DMOs indicated they used Twitter more frequently than Facebook but that the information they posted to Facebook was more important. Twitter is primarily used for quick messages about something 'now' whereas Facebook was for bigger announcements and things you would plan for. The ideal frequency for posting is unknown however and probably greatly depends on the audience and the capacity of the DMO involved.

3. Interesting original content is very important to SM. While pictures were identified by many as the first choice in content, a variety of content is required to make the most of SM. The interviewees identified several strategies for developing content, including user submission contests, monitoring online trends or hiring 'guest bloggers' to visit the destination, write stories, take pictures and video for the DMO to share. The DMO that recently did this indicated their SM followers and interaction grew significantly from this promotion. Other DMOs have employed professional media producers to develop video content about their destinations unique culture and heritage. Some DMOs are using contests and on-site representatives to get user submitted content. Interesting original content is inherently shareable and likeable by the DMOs audience.

4. Timing for SM is important as well. DMOs need to be aware of when their audience is active and interested in engaging with content. This will require some knowledge of what times of day or days of the week to target but attention should also be on what topics are currently trending in the marketplace. One study DMO was able to parlay a video of a goat into international media coverage by monitoring keywords and trends online.

5. Smartphone's and mobile data are becoming the primary way to access social media (Kiralova & Pavliceka, 2015). Recent research from Google (2015) found that Smart Phones are a hugely important for daily life with 59% of respondents saying they use their phone for information search on restaurants, pubs and bars. While 44% say, they use their phones for travel information and search. Smart phone users are also avid SM users with 78% using a phone to check on SM and over half using SM on their phone every day (Google.com, 2015). DMOs should work with local partners to ensure businesses and attractions are aware of how their online information and rankings can attract both, tourist

and local, smart phone users. DMOs may also work in a destination management role to increase access to Wi-Fi and other mobile data so visitors are able to use their phones.

6. Partnerships are going to be required in order for DMOs to be successful. The DMO's did not recognize the role of partnerships and yet the literature shows that DMOs should be actively creating and developing partnerships with other players within the destination and DMOs should seek to create working relationships with other destinations. One area where this could be beneficial would be to attract the local residents from another destination. All of the study DMOs indicated that a large percentage of their SM followers are destination residents. It may work for DMOs to work with one another to cross promote each other's destinations on their SM. For example, city DMOs may want to collaborate to promote their destinations to the partner cities residents. This would potentially be much more cost effective, than a traditional advertising approach with TV, radio and other mass media advertising.

Limitations to the study

This study had limitations in several areas. This study attempted to build on the study from Hays, et al (2012) looking at International DMOs use of SM. This study attempted to expand on that study by looking at a longer timeline of postings, researching Canadian DMOs and trying to understand why DMOs adopt SM using DOI as a guiding theory.

While the selection of DMO's was random, the findings are not necessarily representative of all Canadian DMOs. The findings provide insight into the experiences of five DMOs that can be considered by other DMOs developing SM strategies.

Collecting the SM posting data also proved to be challenging. The program used to collect posting data for this study worked well but did leave some room for improvement. The software was able to collect all of the postings for both Twitter and Facebook for each DMO, but the text description it output was limited. Sometimes this, limit on text, lead to the software capturing only part of a posting. The issues surrounding posting data collection should be resolved with newer software that will be able to capture the entirety of the posting data and data from additional SM sources.

The content analysis of the SM posting data has potential limitations because of inter coder reliability. This project only had one content coder, which may lead to issues with reproducibility. It would be valuable for future research to have multiple coders reviewing data and comparing data periodically to ensure that the data is consistently coded.

Some interview questions created confusion for participants that could have influenced the findings. Specifically, questions #15 and #22 seemed to cause confusion with the interviewees.

   #15 – What makes marketing your destination different from other tourism boards? This question was often met with I do not know because I have never worked for another DMO, or a general description of destination geography or attributes that other destinations may not have.

   #22 - Why are these goals important? This question should have been worded differently. The common response received to this question was confusion and that is because those goals are the purpose of the DMO. Reviewing the questions with a selection of DMO

staff to test the questions could have helped with clarifying this question prior to the study.

There would have been a benefit during the development of the interview questions to have someone who works for a DMO review and provide feedback on these questions looking for relevance, language and understanding.

Future Directions of research

This study sought to improve our understanding of DMOs and how DMOs use SM in their organizations. Several of the research questions have been answered but there are still major areas of the topic that need to be addressed.

An industry standard for measuring performance of online SM marketing needs to be developed. DMOs are not typically involved in the actual sale of the travel product and because they are not involved with the sale and have very little input into the actual tourism product it is extremely difficult to track what SM attracts or encourages visitation. Many DMOs have a difficult time developing meaningful performance measures because of this (Page & Pike, 2014), research should be undertaken to develop an industry standard measurement and benchmarks for DMOs to be able to measure how they are doing compared to their peers.

Additional research should be conducted regarding the adoption process of new technology by DMOs, with the aim to reduce risks associated with new technology (Yang & Wang, 2015). With the rapid pace of change in technology, organizations that commit resources to a technology or SM platform that may only last a few years can have huge negative consequences on the organization. This is especially true of smaller organizations that do not have the resources to cover the risk.

Lastly, research specifically looking at how SM influences consumer-buying decisions would benefit DMOs by creating a better understanding of whom, how and when to reach out to potential travelers. This would greatly benefit long-tail destinations in their efforts, because they are likely to be 'drowned' out by more popular mainstream destinations on SM platforms (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Local Residents are an area that was mentioned repeatedly during the interview process. All of the study DMOs indicated that a large portion of their SM followers were local residents. This seemed to be accepted as common occurrence for DMOs. None of the interviewees mentioned any plans to turn residents into tourists or otherwise encourage tourist spending and engagement from the local market. The DMOs did discuss using locals to help create 'top 10' lists and other crowd-sourced data about a destination but that was as far as the DMOs pursued local input. The local resident's aspect of SM followers should be further researched specifically looking at engaging locals in DMO marketing and to build support for tourism initiatives. There is also the potential for partnerships between DMOs to share one another's messaging between destinations targeted at residents. The local residents could also be important for destinations with lots of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourist traffic. These VFR travellers will need information once at the destination and the friends and relatives are a likely source of tourism info. There is also opportunity for more research about using local insight in tourism product development. If these local people already engage with the DMO, via SM, they may be interested in supporting the DMO in other ways as well.

Conclusion

Social media will continue to grow in importance; nearly 25% of the world's population uses SM (Kiralova & Pavliceka, 2015). This level of use makes it imperative that DMOs understand SM and how SM can be used throughout their operations. DMOs are still figuring out SM and while the studies DMOs seem to have become more sophisticated in their use of SM compared to the Hays et al. (2012) studies International DMOs, there is still a lot to be learned.

The Canadian DMOs seem to be using more advanced tracking and measurement of their SM efforts. Although there was, little information shared about what those measurements actually are, the study DMOs did indicate that the total number of followers or likes was not a very useful measurement to them for a variety of reasons. One of the study DMOs pointed out that it was relatively easy to get a large following by offering prizes and rewards for membership, but typically, the followers that joined for a prize did not interact with the destination beyond what was required for the prize. There is also the issue of being able to buy followers for most of the major SM tools. There are still issues with how to quantify the impact of social media on overall tourism to the destination but measurement is an overall problem with all DMO marketing activities. Four of the five study DMOs did indicate they had their own internal tracking measures for gauging the success of their SM but some of the interviewees seemed to indicate that those measurement statistics have changed from year to year. The trend in the study DMOs was to measure engagement with content. Overall, the DMOs seem content with using Facebook and Twitter as their primary SM tools. DMOs indicated they would continue to monitor the SM world for change and develop as necessary.

DMOs tend to use SM to engage with visitors and potential visitors and while local residents make up a large portion of followers they were typically not directly engaged by the DMOs. There was only one example of using SM to engage other tourism stakeholders, which was by using Twitter to engage with media and industry stakeholders. There are examples from other Canadian DMOs however using SM for human resources or blogs for destination partners. The interviewees did indicate that part of their role, as the SM person in the organization was to promote the use of SM throughout the DMO operations so these expanded uses for SM may develop in the future.

The SM adoption process for DMOs seems to follow Rogers (2003) DOI theory. Clearly, support form leadership has been important for organizations to get into SM. The DMOs said throughout the interviews that: leadership is engaged, they let us try things out, they are actively learning, attending conferences about the topic and ensuring that SM is incorporated throughout the DMO. However, leadership's knowledge level and actual understanding of SM as a marketing tool still tends to be low. The DMOs that appear to be more innovative gave the impression that DMO leaders are still hesitant to fully embrace SM throughout the organization. The leadership understands that SM is here to stay but they are still reluctant to be fully involved. Throughout the interview process and across the study subjects there was always a slight hesitation with questions about how management felt about SM. The sense the researcher got from the interviewees was that leadership has not entirely committed to SM at this time. This may just be the result of SM being a new disruptive technology and making an entrance into a crowded traditional marketing arena, but it may mean that SM still needs to prove itself as an effective marketing tool. The DMO SM media staff who identified that part of their job was

getting SM incorporated across the organization seemed to be more successful in getting the buy-in from the leadership.

While none of the study DMOs explicitly indicated partners as drivers of SM adoption, the researcher suspects that an outside agent, possible a larger DMO such as the Canadian Tourism Commission, influenced the adoption and implementation of SM. The DMOs reported they signed up for SM tools and never used them. SM strategies and plans were not developed until well after most DMOs had signed up for SM. Two DMOs reported their eventual SM plans were to have a strong presence on a small number of tools. The sense the researcher got from the interviewees was that individual people within the DMO adopted SM but the organization was not ready for the innovation. The suspicion is that whether a DMO leader or employee initially signed the DMO up for SM, they did so without the full support and understanding of the organization's leadership. This resulted in difficulty implementing the innovation. SM was likely implemented ad hoc as a standalone service to other offers from the DMO. During the interviews, SM was described as something that the entire organization needed to do, not something, that only one component of the DMO could accomplish successfully on its own. This left DMOs, or perhaps parts of the DMO, attempting to incorporate SM with too few resources and without the necessary buy-in from the organization's leadership. This resulted in SM efforts that were often poorly executed and eventually abandoned.

The adoption and implementation of SM seems to be a topic of consideration among the DMOs. Overall they are currently trying to be strategic in their decision to adopt SM, evidenced by the development of formal strategies. Although one study DMO still did not have a plan and was promoting SM tools on their DMO website that were essentially abandoned, they were trying to get a SM plan created and implemented. Even with the current situation where DMOs

are taking more active and planned routes in the implementation of their SM efforts, it is difficult

to determine what is working. DMOs are experimenting with SM in order to be successful. Two

study DMOs clearly said they are allowed to try things with SM that they wouldn't be able to do

with traditional media. Staff can experiment and see what works for their organization on SM.

The DMOs who are confident in their level of SM expertise seemed to be the organizations more

willing to try new things with their SM efforts. Experimenting with SM may be a good indicator

of SM innovation in the tourism industry.

The modern world is teeming with new disruptive ideas revolving around the sharing

economy. The sharing economy involves regular people providing services that had been

traditionally provided by a profession of some type. The sharing economy can be defined as "the

use of an object (a physical good or a service) whose consumption is split-up into single parts.

These parts are collaboratively consumed in C2C networks coordinated through community-

based online services or through intermediaries" (Puschmann & Alt, 2016, p. 95). The most

known examples of this new economy are services like Uber, which matches people with cars

willing to take passengers with passengers. Uber has changed transportation in many cities by

connecting people. In a similar way, DMOs may be able to build on their large local followings

to enhance their ability to deliver destination-marketing services to the traveler through the

sharing economy. There are opportunities for DMOs to engage residents in the actual travel

process, to empower locals with the knowledge and training and make their local followers

ambassadors for the destination. SM makes this opportunity possible and SM provides the safety

net of having professional tourism staff just a tweet away.

SM is an important area for DMOs and tourism as a whole. Travel and tourism continue

to be major online activities. A recent study found online spending for summer 2015 travel was

to grow to $65 Billion in 2015, just in the U.S.A., up over 7% from the previous year. The same

report also found that smart phones and tablets account for 20% of online travel bookings,

showing the increased importance of mobile internet (Adobe Digital Index, 2015). Destinations

cannot be on the outside looking in. In order to be successful in attracting more visitors DMOs

need to have knowledge of SM and how to use SM to interact with consumers. This study has

attempted to help answer how DMOs can achieve this. While there is still much about SM and

destination marketing that is poorly understood, this research has helped find some answers and

confirm findings from other research. SM allows DMOs, to know exactly who is, paying

attention to the message and interacting with DMO content. This makes SM an extremely

valuable tool for DMOs to help achieve their destination goals and a topic worthy of more

research.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Questions for semi-structured interviews.

1. Does your organization use SM? (If NO why not?)

2. Does your organization have a SM strategy and if so what is the strategy?

3. When did your organization begin implementing a social media strategy?

4. What social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are used by your organization?

5. Do specific SM tools have specific uses?

6. Is the management and development of social media a separate role from other marketing employees?

7. How many people are responsible for maintaining a social media presence, developing strategies/campaigns, etc.?

8. What is the total budget dedicated towards social media? What percentage of the total marketing budget is this? How much is spent on traditional marketing (TV, print, etc.) and how does this compare to previous years?

9. How large is your organization budget/ # staff? How much is allocated to marketing?

10. How do social media and traditional media reinforce each other? Is one valued more than the other by your organization?

11. What have been the biggest struggles related to incorporating social media into the marketing strategy?

12. What have been the biggest successes and the biggest failures social media use?

13. How do you plan to develop social media in the future?

14. How do you measure successful social media efforts? ROI?

15. What makes marketing your destination different from other tourism boards?

16. To whom are most of the social media efforts directed? Are you using social media for specific markets?

17. What sorts of posts do you think are most effective? (e.g. do you think it helps to have a contest, ask a question, request photos, something general, advertising an event, etc.)

18. Do you have any particular strategies to gain social media followers? (Facebook likes, Twitter followers, etc.)

19. How does senior leadership feel about social media?

20. What drove adoption of SM? Where partners involved?

21. What goals do you hope to achieve from using SM?

22. Why are these goals important?
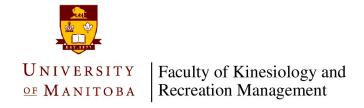
Appendix B

Categories for SM Content Analysis

- DMO Name

- Date

- Social Media Tool

    o Handle for SM tool

- Are there Retweets, Likes, etc?

    o How many?

- Is the post interactive?

- Does that post include other content?

    o A link to a website?

    o A photo?

    o A Video?

    o An audio clip?

- Is the post customer service related?

- Is the post promotion related?

- Is the post contest related?

- Does the post request user generated content?

    o Photos?

    o Videos?

    o Audio?

- Does the post provide information?

    o Does it provide factual information? (event dates, location, etc.)

- o   Does it provide opinion or review? (top 10 restaurant, review of a play)

- Is the post responding to something?

- Is the post a repost?

- General – the post does not fit any particular category? (e.g. Good Morning!)

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Kinesiology and
Recreation Management

CONSENT FORM – TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Research Project Title: "Like" Us, Tweet about it and don't forget to actually visit – How Destination
Marketing Organizations use Social Media"

Researchers: Chris Hornby - Master's Student
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This consent agreement, a copy of which will be emailed to you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve.   If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to provide insight into factors affecting DMO adoption and use of Social Media tools. If you agree to be a part of this study you will participate in an approximate 30 min long telephone interview. This is a student Master's thesis research project being undertaken in completion of program requirements. The interview will include questions about a) Your DMOs Social Media use b) how your DMO decided which tools to adopt and c)how your organization measures success. You will be sent a summary of the findings, which will provide an overview of the research and the findings of the study, including a listing of best practices for Social Media use by DMOs.

Risks of participating in this study are not expected to be greater that those experienced in the normal conduct of your everyday life. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the interview you will have the option of withdrawing all of your responses.

Your participation in this study will remain confidential and your responses will not be connected to you or your organization. Your contact information will be stored electronically in a password-protected folder; a hard copy will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. The interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken during the interview. The final public thesis will not contain any personal identifying information about you or your organization, and your participation in the study will only be known to the researcher. Data will only be accessible to the lead researcher but maybe viewed by the research advisor or graduate research committee.

After data collection is finished and the thesis has been completed, the list of participants', contact information and your individual responses will be destroyed. The data will only be available to the lead researcher Chris Hornby. Taking part in the study is voluntary; you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate.To withdraw from the study you may indicate the wish to withdraw during any point during the interview or by emailing the researcher at umhornby@myumanitoba.ca with a written request to withdraw. There is no penalty to withdraw from the study.

Dissemination of the research will happen througha public presentation of the final thesis, a research summary being sent to research participants, and possibly by submission of the final research to scholarly journals. The summary of the research will be sent by email to the study participants.

Your verbal consent is required to participate in this telephone interview and by responding to the interview questions you will be indicating your consent to participate. The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board, University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122 or e-mail Margaret_Bowman@umanitoba.ca.

Participant Name: _____   Date of Interview: _____

Researcher Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix D

Research Ethics Board Approval

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | **Research Ethics and Compliance**
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

October 21, 2013

TO: Chris Hornby   (Advisor C. Van Winkle)
         Principal Investigator

FROM: ██████████████
         Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: Protocol #E2013:106
         "Like' us, tweet about it and don't forget to visit! – How Destination
         Marketing Organizations use Social Media"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). **This approval is valid for one year only.**

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, please mail/e-mail/fax (261-0325) a copy of this Approval (identifying the related UM Project Number) to the Research Grants Officer in ORS in order to initiate fund setup.   (How to find your UM Project Number: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/mrt-faq.html#pr0)

- If you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval;   otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) In order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

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umanitoba.ca/research