

# Improving business performance: Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in SMTEs



 *Siyabonga Mxunyelwa* <sup>(a)\*</sup>

<sup>(a)</sup> Professor, Faculty of Management and Public Administration Sciences, Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Management, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 22 July 2024

Received in rev. form 12 Sept 2024

Accepted 09 October 2024

### Keywords:

Information Communication Technology (ICT), Small to Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs), The Great-Kei Municipality

### JEL Classification:

L83, L96, O00, Z39

## ABSTRACT

*In light of the globalisation of businesses and the competitive expansion drive, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has become essential. The purpose of this study was to explore how ICT could improve business performance in the context of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises in the Great Kei Municipality. Descriptive and qualitative research approach was employed in this study. A survey questionnaire was used as the main tool for data collection. The findings elucidate that 94.9% of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) concur that the use of ICT as a tool helps to achieve company goals. The findings further indicate that 46.2% of companies surveyed operate accommodation facilities. The study's conclusions highlight that 25.6% of entrepreneurs indicated that expensive ICTs appear to be a barrier, while 23.1% reported that access to technology was a barrier. It is recommended that small and medium-sized tourism enterprises utilise ICT as a tool to enhance business performance. In addition, the study suggests that managers and owners make technological investments to ensure the overall success of SMTEs. Moreover, the study provides a foundation for further research.*

© 2024 by the authors. Licensee Bussecon International, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and is considered a modern-day engine of growth. It is a labour-intensive sector that has the potential to boost export revenues (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2023). Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has played a pivotal role in this context by enabling businesses to attract tourists electronically.

Extensive research has been conducted on the importance of ICT adoption in the small-scale tourism sector and its impact on economic and commercial activities (Fairlie, 2020). Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in the tourism industry include businesses that heavily rely on e-commerce, among other things (Henama & Apleni, 2020; Mbatha & Ngwenya, 2018). Due to travel restrictions and laws governing social distancing, SMMEs have augmented their use of digital technologies since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019, allowing for remote working and contactless service provision. The pandemic compelled tourism businesses located in both urban and rural settings to heighten their level of ICT usage; for example, e-commerce and the utilisation of website communication have been game changers.

ICT implementation enables efficient data processing and communication, provides organisational support, and offers significant opportunities for customers. In modern times, ICT provides a channel for the development of small tourism businesses to interact with customers across the global spectrum (Fairlie, 2020). The accessibility of online tourism products and services has been made easier through ICT tools. Small tourism businesses can be located in the deepest rural areas of any country or continent, yet ICT connects businesses and customers electronically.

ICT has also provided new tools and enabled new distribution channels, creating a new business environment. These ICT tools have facilitated business operations in the industry by connecting with trading partners, distributing products and services, and providing

\* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6465-2097

data to customers worldwide (Sadr, 2013). Consequently, customers increasingly use the internet to obtain information and plan their trips.

Mxunyelwa (2016) argues that in Africa, ICT is intended to represent the technology required for information processing and transmission: innovative tools that form an integrated system of software and networked equipment, enabling data processing, information exchange, communication, searching, and selection, which facilitates the existing diversity of products and services for the benefit of an organisation.

According to Bethapudi (2013), SMTEs worldwide have been transformed by ICT. The IT-driven redesign of SMTEs has increasingly created a new paradigm that has led to changes in the industry structure and the emergence of various opportunities and risks. ICT is crucial for the growth of SMTEs in both developed and developing countries. As such, it is an essential component of the tourism sector's growth, especially in the context of rural economies. In this regard, it is imperative that the majority of hotels, resorts, tour operators, travel agencies, and other tourism-related organisations upgrade to reflect the latest ICT trends (Bethapudi, 2013). Tourism businesses across the globe have almost universally adopted ICT as a strategy to drive business performance.

Upgrading ICT tools enables companies to engage users more effectively and explore new markets. The use of ICT as a management tool by rural tourism enterprises must be understood within the context of the industry's evolution, keeping pace with technological developments. For instance, in the past, travellers would often carry guidebooks, maps, compasses, and other navigation aids with them. However, given the speed at which technology is evolving today, all sectors of the economy are embracing smartphone apps, like Airbnb, to expand their customer base (Fatoki, 2018). Airbnb is an online marketplace that allows people to rent out their properties or spare rooms to guests. Airbnb takes a 3% commission on every booking from hosts and between 6% and 12% from guests.

Mxunyelwa (2016) argues that the implementation of ICT by SMTEs in developing countries, particularly in rural parts of Africa, is not yet sufficiently researched. SMTEs can utilise ICT to raise awareness, promote their services and products, and open up potential global markets. ICT has increasingly become an enabler, playing a crucial role in the competitiveness of small tourism businesses. The level of participation of rural tourism enterprises has increased due to the use of ICT, thus enabling these enterprises to potentially perform better with the technologies at their disposal.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine how the use of ICT can enhance business performance in SMTEs in the Great Kei Municipality.

## **Literature Review**

### **Overview of information and communication technology for small and medium tourism enterprises**

Bethapudi (2013) emphasises how ICTs have changed SMTEs around the world. The ICT-driven re-engineering of SMTEs has generated a new paradigm shift, characterised by an alteration in industry structure and the development of a wide range of opportunities and threats. ICT plays a major role in the development of SMTEs in both developing and developed countries, making it an inevitable part of the tourism industry's expansion. In this context, the vast majority of hotels, resorts, travel agents, tour operators, and tourism organisations must upgrade in line with the latest ICT trends (Bethapudi, 2013).

These upgrades help organisations reach the next level of user engagement and market penetration. The use of ICT as a management tool by both urban and rural enterprises must be understood as part of the ICT evolution in the industry, requiring businesses to stay abreast of developments. For example, in the past, people carried guidebooks, maps, compasses, and other items to navigate. Today, with rapid changes in technology, all industries are adopting mobile apps such as Airbnb to expand their businesses. Airbnb is an online marketplace that allows people to rent out their properties or spare rooms to guests. Airbnb takes a 3% commission on every booking from hosts and charges between 6% and 12% from guests. Tourism businesses located in remote rural areas are likely to perform better with the adoption of ICT.

Mxunyelwa (2016) contends that little consistent information is publicly available on the state of the ICT industry in South Africa. He further states that the implementation of ICT by SMTEs in developing countries, notably Africa, has not yet been sufficiently researched. However, for the smooth running of their businesses, managers of small and medium tourism enterprises are well poised to utilise ICT as a tool to enhance business performance.

Modimogale (2013) highlights that South African SMTEs contribute positively to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and help decrease unemployment levels. Constantly, the South African government is encouraging SMTEs to adopt ICT to continue their positive impact.

South Africa faces challenges similar to those of several developing countries, such as Botswana, Afghanistan, and Samoa, resulting in analogous motivations for adopting ICT. These motivations include the promise of solutions for economic and social problems, the reduction of the digital divide between third-world (poor and developing) countries and first-world countries, and the integration of ICT with the delivery systems of foreign aid investments (Faye, McArthur, Sachs, & Snow, 2004).

Fink and Kenny (2003) caution against the belief that the digital divide is widening between developed and developing countries. The rate of network development in developing countries is increasing faster than in developed countries. For example, between 2013 and 2014, a median of 42% of respondents in these countries reported that they accessed the internet at least occasionally or owned a smartphone.

In contrast, internet use among the 17 advanced economies surveyed has remained relatively flat, with a median of 87% of these nations utilising the internet at least occasionally in 2017. This figure is comparable to the 86% who reported the same in 2015 or 2016 (Poushter, Bishop, & Chwe, 2018). Fink and Kenny (2003) further argue that the methods of measuring the division need to be reviewed. This suggests that the drivers of ICT should be considered carefully, as many governments' efforts to promote the adoption of ICT are based on this assumption. South Africa faces unique challenges in terms of ICT utilisation due to issues ranging from accessibility and infrastructure to pricing, particularly for rural tourism businesses.

### **Theoretical and conceptual background**

Information technology adoption and use can benefit individuals and organisations in the short and long term by improving performance, saving money, saving time, and providing convenience (Foley Curley, 1984; Sharda, Barr and McDonnell, 1988). In the 1980s, as the number of personal computers increased, research on technology adoption gained significant attention. However, the absence of empirical data on users' reactions to information system performance posed a significant barrier to the advancement of research on the adoption of personal computers. To forecast technology's behaviour and offer a theoretical justification for its successful application, TAM's main goal was to illuminate the mechanisms underlying technology acceptance.

TAM's practical goal was to enlighten practitioners about potential precautions to take before implementing systems. To accomplish the goals of the theory, multiple actions were taken (Davis, 1989; Davis, 1993). According to TAM, the process of technology acceptance consists of three stages: external factors, such as system design features, initiate cognitive responses, such as perceived ease of use and usefulness, which form an affective response, such as attitude towards using technology/intention, influencing use behaviour (Davis, 1989; Davis, 1993).

TAM represents behaviour as the outcome predicted by perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and behavioural intention. Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness capture the expectations of positive behavioural outcomes and the belief that behaviour will not be labour-consuming (Davis, 1989). TAM is accepted by academic research and has been widely used in different fields and contexts. It has been employed in several studies conducted in South Africa to examine how SMTEs are utilising digital technologies (Abou-Shouk et al., 2016; Lebambo, 2014). Like any theoretical or conceptual model, TAM has its limitations.

### **The relationship between information and communication technology and small and medium-sized tourism enterprises**

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2023) underscores that tourism remains a major foreign exchange earner and support industry for numerous countries across the globe. In terms of a holistic approach, it is a strongly intertwined discipline with ties to other sectors of the economy. Chen, Lin, and Kuo (2013) view tourism as a potent vehicle for socioeconomic advancement and development; thus, SMTEs are seen as creating opportunities for people to participate in the industry. ICT is well poised to play a catalytic role in the further development of SMTEs and contribute meaningfully to the growth of rural tourism economies. The increased level of ICT utilisation has brought about innovations such as blockchain, which provides data integrity with a single source of truth, eliminating data duplication and increasing security. In a blockchain system, fraud and data tampering are prevented because data cannot be altered without the permission of a quorum of the parties involved.

The production, marketing, and supply of goods in the tourism and hospitality sectors have been greatly enhanced by the development of ICT and social media, with their use undoubtedly becoming an essential tool and strategy (Pawloska-Legwand, 2019). The implementation of ICT must be an integral part of the business strategy for tourism enterprises. The national government, through a collaborative approach, must develop an ICT strategy that provides a blueprint for the tourism business sector in order to encourage a uniform approach.

Karimidizboni (2013) states that the accelerated intersection of technology and tourism in recent years has brought about indispensable variations in the understanding of the nature of tourism, along with all its economic ramifications, within the entire tourism industry as a whole. Therefore, the use of ICT as a tool to enhance the business performance of SMTEs is crucial.

Werthner and Klein (1999) demonstrate the correlation between overall ICT, using the Internet as an example, and the variables related to it from a tourism perspective. Consequently, a sequence of communication is created. The overall structure of the industry has been transformed since ICT and the Internet have become vital communication tools for the tourism sector. Bughin et al. (2011) argue that the significance of the Internet and online presence is reflected in the high levels of Internet penetration.

The travel and tourism sector can now offer a broader range of customers more individualised, in-depth, and affordable services through the accessibility of online resources and the internet itself. This can be achieved without significantly compromising the quality of the information provided and by fostering active relationships at a fair price (Buhalis, 2002). Furthermore, businesses are likely to reach a larger cohort of customers via ICT at an affordable price compared to traditional methods.

Shanker (2008) argues that the modern information society has made tourism a highly information-rich and intensively structured sector, as the dispersion of ICT has enormous potential impacts for tourism businesses. Alam (2009) states that the business world has been greatly influenced by ICT, with the application of ICT among businesses being widespread. The effect of ICT on businesses relates to the facilitation of communication among organisational stakeholders, serving as an effective sales channel and providing a valuable platform for engaging in marketing and other related pursuits (Wang & Xiang, 2012).

In light of the above, ICTs have become important tools in an organisation's ability to endure and to expand to a position of advanced competition in the global economy and, furthermore, the digitalised economy (Munar, 2012; Parsons & Oja, 2013). A link between tourism and ICT cannot be established without recognising that ICT has provided organisations with new managerial methods for retrieving information (Alam, 2009).

The growth of ICT over the last decade, particularly in social media, has undeniably reinvented how the tourism and hospitality industries produce, market, and deliver their offerings, as well as how they communicate both internally and externally (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). Lee and Wicks (2010), Buhalis and Law (2008), and Munar (2012) argue that ICT has become an invaluable business tool and strategy that can be used efficiently within the travel sector. Travel agencies and physical bookings are now almost outdated. Rural tourism businesses often lag behind in adopting new technological methods of conducting business due to a lack of resources, as indicated in the previous section of the article.

A recent survey by eMarketer shows that travel-based mobile apps are the seventh most downloaded category and that 60% of smartphone users prefer travel apps for planning their leisure tours. However, their use requires up-to-date awareness of the latest technological trends. The role of emerging trends has thrown a spanner in the works, with these trends ranging from Artificial Intelligence (AI) to big data, which can potentially enhance SMTE operations.

### **The Impact of information communication technology in SMTEs**

Software applications and an efficient, fast-paced ICT infrastructure are essential for the growth of the tourism and hospitality sectors. Supply chain management and customer relations can be integrated with ICTs to create a single source that streamlines various processes, including product selection, ordering, fulfilment, tracking, payment, and reporting, all through a single, user-friendly tool. By putting the provider in direct contact with the customer, ICTs ultimately reduce costs. However, they also impact employment due to the need for ICT equipment maintenance. Online reservations are one of the many tasks that management in tourism organisations uses ICTs for to increase worker productivity (Bethapudi, 2013). Most industrial sectors around the world have seen rapid development due to the process of digitalisation. In most developing nations, the ICT-based tourism platform is still underdeveloped (Rahman, 2021).

The evolution of ICTs has also led to changes in demand and supply. There is a higher demand for flexible, individualised options and quality data, which has personalised leisure and tourism behaviour as a consequence of increased ICT use. Through new technology and social and financial ratings (e.g., social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs), customers can share information and research ratings on destinations, the quality of service in hotels and restaurants, and environmental and social conditions. Several hotels (e.g., Premier Hotels & Resorts; Sun International; Protea Hotels by Marriott) have strengthened their brand image and communicated directly with their customers by posting links to press releases or promoting new packages via social media (Bethapudi, 2013).

Donath and Boyd (2004) and Madden and Zickuhr (2011) believe that social networking is on an ascending trajectory. Therefore, sites generally feature requests for assistance, which can be attributed to the new phenomenon of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication. Word of mouth is a powerful tool that has the potential to provide momentum to small tourism businesses.

The aforementioned sites provide an interesting scope for businesses to disseminate information to their clients in their catchment areas. As such, some businesses have recognised the potential benefits of social networking services (SNSs), including increased networking, opportunities for better presentation to clients and customers, and the provision of closer individual attention to all parties concerned (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

Technology has reshaped travel worldwide and opened up new avenues for its growth. According to Panasiuk (2015) and Neidhardt and Werthner (2018), e-tourism is the term used to describe the interaction between information technologies and the tourism industry. It is thought that one of the most important innovations in tourism, particularly in tourism marketing, is its visualisation, or the partial replacement of physical assets, actual marketing procedures, and interpersonal connections with virtual counterparts (Rapacz and Jermen, 2015).

### **Barriers to implementing information and communication technology in small and medium-sized tourism enterprises**

#### **Internal challenges**

The term "internal challenges" describes the problems that SMTEs encounter, which originate within the organisations themselves. These issues are typically within the purview of the SMTEs to manage and regulate. One of the most frequent obstacles to the adoption of social media by SMTEs is manpower compatibility issues. This includes the shortage of trained workers with a

foundational understanding of social media and internet usage (Calli and Clark, 2015). Rural tourism businesses often suffer from a lack of information technology skills and access to technology.

A significant portion of SMTEs, particularly those located in rural and suburban areas, are family-run enterprises. Consequently, they may have very little experience in handling and using technology. Business owners nevertheless encounter difficulties when managing social media communication, even though it is often easier than handling blogs and websites. According to Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) and Aboushouk, Lim, and Megicks (2013), their limited language skills also hinder their ability to produce content for public consumption. As a result, they struggle to communicate with each other or with the wider public in the universal language of English regarding their business.

SMTEs also face financial challenges (He, Wang, Chen, and Zha, 2015; Calli & Clark, 2015). Some SMTEs find it difficult to invest in technology because doing so requires incurring additional costs for acquiring technology-related tools, such as computers and internet connection devices. Given the additional costs involved, these SMTEs also find it challenging to maintain a monthly internet subscription. South Africa is one of the countries with the highest costs of accessing technology on the African continent.

**External challenges**

Factors outside the organisation can also cause harm in the adoption of social media by SMTEs. These problems are commonly out of the organisation’s control, and they must be able to manage these challenges well. One of the most common external challenges is the accessibility of internet connections in the area of operation (Shemi & Procter, 2013). SMTEs, especially in less developed countries and rural areas, are generally faced with internet-related problems where the speed is slower compared to other areas of the city and developed nations.

The non-existence of internet coverage and slow internet speed will delay the adoption of e-commerce or any internet-related activities by the SMTEs (Abou-Shouk, M. et al., 2013). Due to the lack of internet access, businesses will be reluctant to use social media. Furthermore, some rural communities must rely on solar or diesel-generated energy due to a lack of electricity supply. Since all technological devices require electricity to function, this presents them with yet another significant challenge (Shemi and Procter, 2013).

**Research and Methodology**

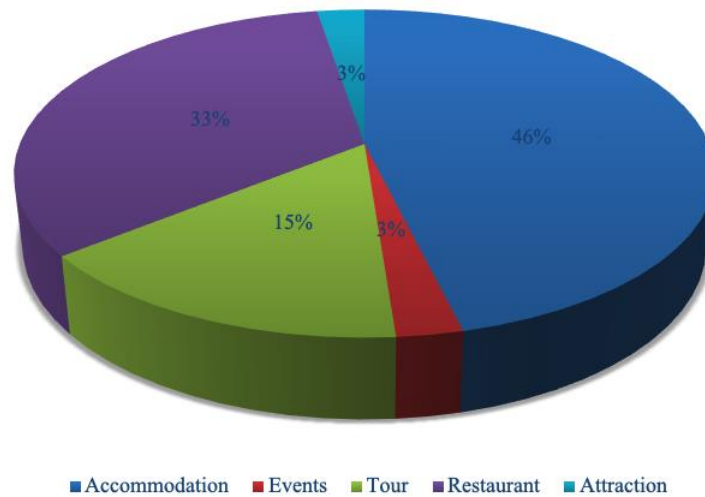
The objective of this study was to investigate how ICT can enhance the business performance of SMTEs within the Great Kei Municipality’s small tourism business sector. The study aimed to examine the factors that can potentially contribute to improving business performance and the role of ICT in this process. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to analyse the factors that are perceived as strategic within the ICT domain, as well as the role of ICT itself. The survey research strategy was deemed appropriate for the context of this study. In other words, respondents in the survey may be asked a variety of questions pertaining to their ways of running their businesses and the description of those businesses. Furthermore, a qualitative approach was utilised to gain an in-depth understanding from managers on how ICT could improve the business performance of SMTEs. The study explored ICT tools used to communicate with suppliers, the barriers to the implementation of ICT, the dependency of SMTEs on technology, and demographic characteristics (Blumberg et al., 2011).

**Findings and Discussions**

**Table 1:** Age Group of Respondents

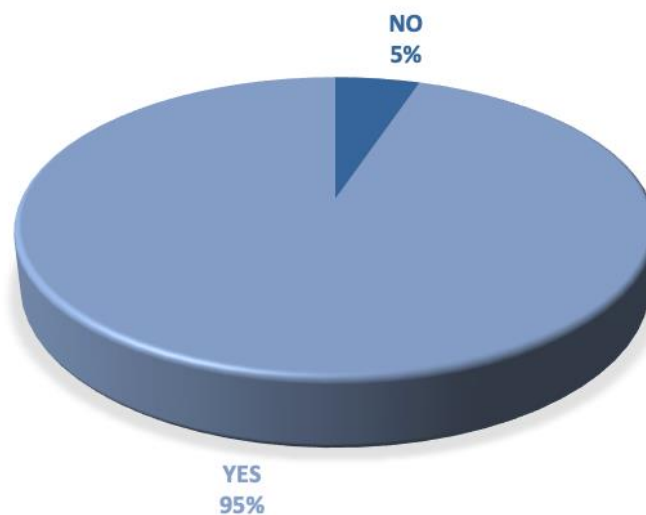
Age Group of Respondents	Total (n=39, in %)
<b>18-30</b>	7.7
<b>30-40</b>	41.0
<b>40-50</b>	38.5
<b>50-60</b>	7.7
<b>Above 60</b>	5.1

Table 1 shows that 41.0% of the respondents were in the age category of 30-40 years, while those aged between 40 and 50 years constituted 38.5%. This was followed by respondents aged between 18 and 30 years, who made up 7.7%. Additionally, 7.7% were between the ages of 50 and 60 years, and those over 60 years constituted 5.1%. These findings indicate that the owner/managers of these enterprises are youthful, suggesting that the implementation of ICT tools to enhance business performance should occur without impediment. However, there are challenges regarding the accessibility of ICT for rural-based tourism businesses.



**Figure 1:** Business Description

Figure 1 shows that 46.2% of the businesses operated in the accommodation sector, followed by 33.2% in restaurants, 15.4% in tour operators, and 2.6% each in events and attractions. It is evident that business respondents were predominantly in the accommodation sector and restaurants. The business owners were further questioned about the challenges related to the types of businesses they managed. The findings indicate that the ICT infrastructure poses a threat to the sustainability of their businesses.



**Figure 2:** The utilization of ICT to enhance business performance

Figure 2 depicts that 95% of businesses utilise ICT as a tool to enhance performance, while 5% do not use ICT. In recent times, technology has proven to be one of the most highly utilised tools by businesses. Therefore, it is imperative to invest in ICT tools to improve business performance. On the other hand, the price of data is another constraint that rural tourism businesses consider to be a limitation.

**Table 2:** Number of Businesses utilising ICT as a tool to enhance performance

Dependency of SMTEs on ICT	
Yes	87.2
No	12.8

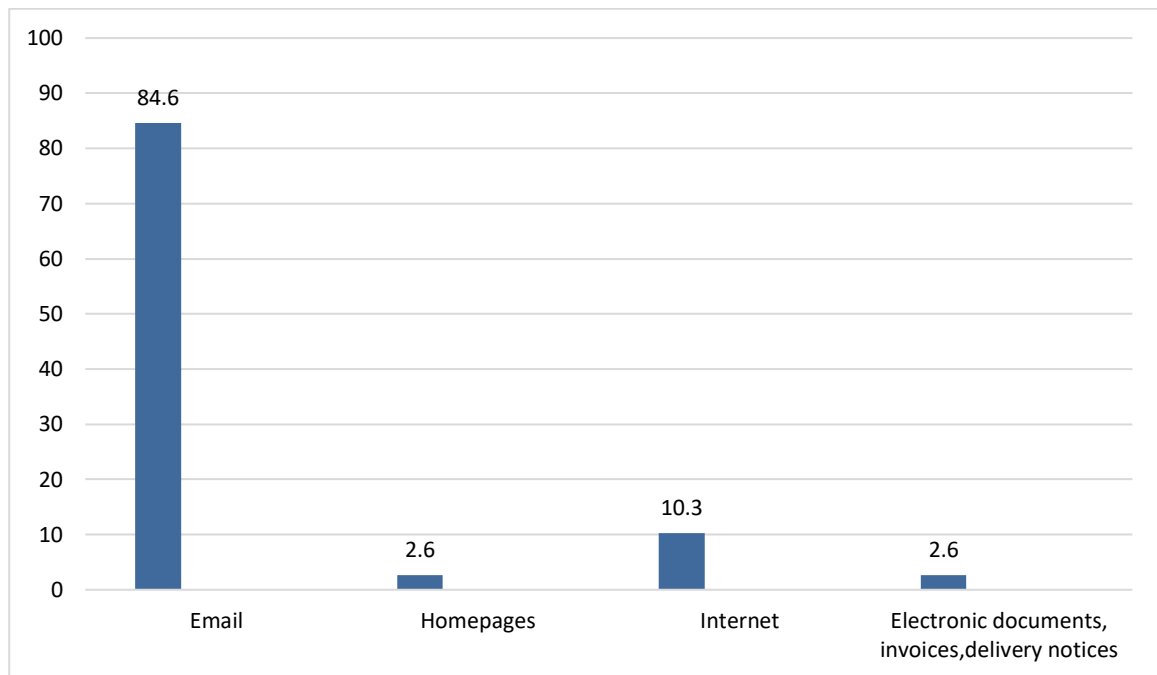
Table 2 shows that 87.2% of businesses depend on technology, while 12.8% highlighted that they do not depend on technology. Seemingly, most businesses depend on ICT in order to make their business operations more effective. Therefore, the lack of ICT

infrastructure can pose a challenge to the success of these businesses, as the findings elucidate that businesses depend on ICT in the modern era.



**Figure 3:** Barriers to implementing ICT as a tool to enhance business performance

Figure 3 illustrates that 25.6% of businesses indicated that high costs were the barrier, while 23.1% cited accessing technology as the barrier. On the other hand, 10.3% stated that they did not experience any barriers. These results further reveal that 7.7% identified crime as a barrier, while another 7.7% noted that errors or mistakes appeared to be a barrier, and 2.6% indicated that frequently updating software was an issue. Additionally, the findings show that 2.6% highlighted the difficulty in measuring benefits. Furthermore, 7.7% pointed out a lack of trained staff as a barrier. These results also indicate that 2.6% identified information misinterpretation as a barrier, and 2.6% highlighted loss of sales as a barrier.



**Figure 4:** Forms of ICT used to communicate with suppliers

Figure 4 shows that 84.6% use email, 10.3% use the internet, 2.6% use homepages, and 2.6% use electronic documents, invoices, delivery notices, etc.

## Conclusions

The current study's literature review indicates that the last ten years have seen a significant improvement in the production, marketing, and supply of goods by the tourism and hospitality sectors, with social media and ICT usage having undeniably become essential tools and strategies. Most respondents reported using ICT as a tool in the Great Kei Municipality to enhance business performance.

However, despite the majority indicating they utilise ICT to improve their businesses, the study's findings revealed an alarming trend: most respondents expressed concern about certain employees who lack ICT training. Much of the existing literature has focused on analysing contexts; generally speaking, less attention has been given to the potential obstacles to ICT implementation as a management tool for small, medium, and micro-enterprises (SMTEs) in small rural towns. This article is well poised to make a meaningful contribution as the South African government, through the ICT Small, Medium, and Micro-Enterprise (SMME) Development Strategy, seeks to accelerate growth and development in the SMME sector. Government support is provided for partnerships aimed at incubation, networking, and capacity building.

Information and Communication Technology has revolutionised the way small to medium enterprises operate and interact with clients. ICT impacts every part of the business, from production and supply chains to marketing, sales, and business communication. Despite the positive benefits that accrue from the utilisation of ICT in small to medium enterprises, there are also negative impacts that emanate from it. Of critical importance is the fact that managers and owners pursuing the implementation of ICT as a tool to enhance business performance for small to medium enterprises must meet objectives for business operations as well as improve the competence of these enterprises. The tourism business sector must be cognisant of the South African population and recognise that digital exclusion reinforces and deepens existing social exclusion, which is reflected in low income, unemployment, poor education, and social isolation. South Africa, a society with more pronounced income and educational inequalities, means that small tourism businesses in rural settings suffer due to historical economic inequalities.

### Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to acknowledge the contribution of Professor Dinesh Vallabh for his technical advice on the paper. Furthermore, the researcher expresses gratitude to the field workers for their data collection efforts. Lastly, thanks are due to the language editing team for their contribution.

### Acknowledgement

**Author Contributions:** The author contributed in all aspects of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was partly funded by Walter Sisulu University.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to that the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### References

- Abou-Shouk, M., Lim, W. M., & Megicks, P. (2013). E-commerce and small tourism businesses in developing countries: Drivers versus boundaries of adoption. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 10(3), 249-266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2012.747983>
- Alam, S. S. (2009). ICT adoption in small and medium enterprises: An empirical evidence of service sectors in Malaysia. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 4(2), 112-125.
- Apleni, L., & Henama, U. (2020). The impact of events in boosting local economic development: A case study of Port St Johns, South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 9(1), 1-12.
- Bethapudi, A. (2013). The role of ICT in the tourism industry. *Journal of Applied Economics and Business*, 1(4), 67-79.
- Blumberg, B., Cooper, D. R., & Schindler, P. S. (2011). *Business research methods* (3rd European ed.). McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Bughin, J., Corb, L., Manyika, J., Nottebohm, O., Chui, M., Barbat, B., & Said, R. (2011). The impact of Internet technologies. Search.
- Buhalis, D. (2002). Information technology and tourism: Trends and developments. *Tourism Studies of Catalonia*, 6(10), 21-26.
- Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in tourism management: Twenty years on and 10 years after Internet: The state of e-tourism research. *Tourism Management*, 29, 609-623.
- Calli, L., & Clark, L. (2015). Overcoming SME barriers to gaining competitive advantage through social media. In *Proceedings of the 2nd European Conference Social Media (ECSM)*. Retrieved from <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/280093246>
- Chen, L. C., Lin, S., & Kuo, C. M. (2013). Rural tourism: Marketing strategies for the bed and breakfast industry in Taiwan. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 32, 278-286.
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319.
- Davis, F. D. (1993). User acceptance of information technology: System characteristics, user perceptions and behavioural impacts. *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies*, 38(3), 475-487.
- Fatoki, O. (2018). The impact of entrepreneurial resilience on the success of small and medium enterprises in South Africa. *Sustainability*, 10(7), 2527. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072527>



- Fairlie, R. W. (2020). The challenges faced by small business owners: Evidence of early-stage losses from the April 2020 Current Population Survey (No. w27309). *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jems.12400>
- He, W., Wang, F. K., Chen, Y., & Zha, S. (2015). An exploratory investigation of social media adoption by small businesses. *Information Technology and Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10799-015-0243-3>
- Karimidizboni, R. (2013). The impact of ICT on the tourism industry in Iran. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(11), 680-685.
- Lee, B. C., & Wicks, B. (2010). Podcasts for tourism marketing: University and DMO collaboration. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sports and Tourism Education*, 9(2), 102-114.
- Leung, D., Law, R., Hoof, H., & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media in tourism and hospitality: A literature review. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 30(1-2), 3-22.
- Matlala, R., Shambare, R., & Lebambo, M. (2014). How South African spaza shop owners utilise mobile communication technologies to run their businesses. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(25).
- Mbatha, B., & Ngwenya, B. (2018). Obstacles to the adoption of e-commerce by tourism SME service providers in South Africa: The case of selected SMEs in Pretoria. *African Journal of Business and Economic Research*, 13(3), 153-173.
- Michael, L. Faye, McArthur, J. W., Sachs, J. D., & Snow, T. (2004). The challenges facing landlocked developing countries. *Journal of Human Development*, 5(1), 31-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649880310001660201>
- Munar, A. M. (2012). Social media strategies and destination management. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 12(2), 101-120.
- Neidhardt, J., & Werthner, H. (2018). IT and tourism: Still a hot topic, but do not forget IT. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 20(1), 1-7.
- Poushter, J., Bishop, C., & Chwe, H. (2018). Social media use continues to rise in developing countries but plateaus across developed ones: Digital divides remain, both within and across countries. *Global Attitudes & Trends*. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/06/19/3-social-network-adoption-varies-widely-by-country/>.
- Shanker, D. (2008). ICT and tourism: Challenges and opportunities. In *Conference on Tourism in India – Challenges Ahead* (pp. 15–170). IIMK, India.
- Werthner, H., & Klein, S. (1999). *Information technology and tourism: A challenging relationship*. New York: Springer.
- Wills, T. (2012). Sustainable development in geographic perspective. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 84, 541–556.
- World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). (2023). *Travel and tourism economic impact 2019*. London: World Travel and Tourism Council.
- Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R. (2014). What do we know about social media in tourism? A review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 10, 27–31.

**Publisher's Note:** Bussecon International stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



International Journal of Business Ecosystem and Strategy by [Bussecon International Academy](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).