

**Information Technology and Destination Marketing:  
Present and Future Challenges of the Prospects of  
the Tourism Industry in Ghana**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research used a conceptual research model to discover and inspire local and international tourists to visit Kumasi as tourists' destination market. The economic capital of Ghana is the Ashanti region and the regional capital is Kumasi. Information technology based on the development of websites provides reliable information about Kumasi, Ghana as tourism destination marketing.

Though tourism in Ghana started many decades ago but due to lack of information technology platform as a strategy to market tourism products and services was an obstacle. People had to travel to Ghana and travel back to their respective countries to spread the news through conventional word of mouth about tourism attraction in the country. However, in September 2009 the USA government sent a fiber optic cable through the sea to provide internet for the whole of Africa. Based on this, Ghana profited by making her tourism products and services available online through the constructions of websites, images, postcards and the building of reputation as a reliable and peaceful destination to visit.

A probability Cluster sampling data collection technique was utilized for the study. Questionnaire was distributed to three 4 star hotels, six 3 star hotels and 38 guest houses. A total of 396 local and international visitors took part in the research as participants. A confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis was employed to assess the reliability and validity of the research model measurement. The analysis and outcome of the research proposes that online destination image, online word of mouth, online security vulnerability test significant to tourists' satisfaction. The

results also provided well founded reference for tourism and hospitality managers and academic researchers interested in online destination marketing.

**Keywords:** Ghana, tourism, destination, satisfaction, internet, marketing

## ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Gana'nın Ashanti bölgesinde bulunan Kumasi'deki tarihi mekanları ve kültürel tesisleri ziyaret etmek amacı ile, yerli ve yabancı turistleri belirlemek ve teşvik etmek için kavramsal bir araştırma modeli geliştirmektedir. Web siteleri, turistik pazarlama ve turizm ürünleri hakkında ziyaretçiler için değerli bilgiler sağlar ve turistlerin satın alma niyetlerini artırır. Araştırma için olasılık kümesi örnekleme tekniği verileri kullanılmıştır. 36 seyahat acentesinden tam zamanlı ön büro çalışanları, 396 yerel ve uluslararası turist araştırmaya katkıda bulunmuştur. Doğrulayıcı faktör analizi, model ölçümlerinin güvenilirliğini ve geçerliliğini değerlendirmek için kullanıldı. Analitik sonuçlar, çevrimiçi hedef görüntüsü, çevrimiçi ağızdan ağızdan sözcük, çevrimiçi güvenlik açıklık testi, turistlerin memnuniyeti açısından önem taşıdığını göstermektedir. Sonuçlar aynı zamanda çevrimiçi hedef pazarlamayla ilgilenen turizm yöneticileri ve araştırmacılar için güvenilir referanslar sağlamak ve turistlerin çevrimiçi güvenlik açıklarını toplum için bir tehlike olarak algıladıklarını, önlenmesi gerektiğini önermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Gana, turizm, varış yeri, memnuniyet, internet, pazarlama

# **DEDICATION**

## **To My Family**

I will like to thank my family for all the support I received from them during the period of my study in Eastern Mediterranean University. My thanks to my mother for always being there for me during hard times and good times. I appreciate all that you have done for me as your son since from my childhood to the present day. I thank you for all the good training you gave me and thank you for teaching me to be honest and dependable in the society.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DOTV: Degree of interest to visit

GDP: Gross domestic product

IT: Information technology

ODI: Online destination image

OTS: Online tourists' satisfaction

OVS: Online vulnerability security

OWM: Online word of Mouth

PBT: Planned behavior theory

TRA: The theory of reaction and action

WTTC: The world travel and Tourism council

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Various empirical studies such as journal articles, conference papers, books and other different sources of information have been written and published about tourism destination marketing (Braunhofer & Ricci, 2017; Wöber, 2005; Book Reviews. 2009). The use of online destination image, word of mouth and online vulnerability as independent variables and a mediator based on the influence of degree of interest to visit for the present and future marketing of Kumasi as tourism destination marketing is a gap that has not been completely researched by the academic scholars in Ghana. The role of information technology and tourism destination marketing in Ghana is a huge non-research destination marketing gap that needs careful evaluation and profound comprehension to conduct a meaningful research (Kim & Lee, 2017; Papathanasiouzuhrt, 2005; Milosevic, Mihalič & Sever, 2016). The use of information technology has proved beyond reasonable doubts as an architect to destination marketing on the internet. Information technology is the pillar of the internet on which websites are built to promote tourism and destination marketing worldwide.

Obtaining of valuable information on the internet about tourism destination marketing with interest to visit has become paramount important to tourism and tourists around the world. Information technology has made tourism easy by making

available useful information search via search engines on the internet for tourists to access before physically travelling to the intended destinations (Díaz & Rodríguez, 2017). Information technology has therefore empowered tourists to recognize, modify and buy tourism products on the internet. The IT industry provides important tools to develop and distribute tourism products on the internet to customers. The role of information technology has also been identified as an influence on competition among tourism organizations and various destinations through online promotions and word of mouth advertisements. Buhalis (2003) revealed that information technology has become a vital determinant of tourism institutions to compete, develop and present their reputations for visitors to review.

The research of Amor (2002) and Styliadis et al. (2017) reveal that online destination image via information search has various deep implications for online tourism such online word of mouth and degree of interest to travel. Online tourism allows tourism institutions to manage their operations and deal with online sales of tourism products and service via word of mouth and destination image (Pike & Page, 2014). Online word of mouth based on information technology and web application is a huge revolution in business process on strategic schemes and relationships with stakeholders.

Tourism organizations take advantages of intranet to deal with internal related tourism business process and the use of extranet to deal with trusted organizational partners. The internet is basically used to deal with customers and potential customers (Mariani et al., 2016) and to interact with stakeholders. The development of information technology has created opportunities for the tourism institutions to increase tourists' numbers. IT provided vital information about destination to

potential tourists and help organizations to attend to their customer needs while generating profits and development of partnerships.

Tourism is a profit-making industry and with the help of information technology profit can be contributed to generate revenue and reduce the cost of operations can be realized. IT can increase awareness among people and promotion through the internet. The airlines can use information technology to predict demand, plan and monitor routes capacities and decide on operations (Mejia et al., 2017; Dickinger & Bauernfeind, 2009). Aside the tourism industry, other institutions can use similar information technology tools to enlarge their markets and direct distribution of their goods and services. Engagement with tourists can lead to the satisfaction of their personal needs and the better understanding of tourists' preference (Tseng, 2017; Akai, Yamashita & Nishino, 2016; Sangpikul, Chieochankitkan & Suwanchai, 2017). Online sales of tourism products to direct customers can lead to tourists' loyalty and reduce leakages to compete with other organizations.

## **1.2 The Purpose of this Study**

The main objective of this study is to use a conceptual research model and information technology tools such as the internet, online word of mouth and online destination image to promote Kumasi in Ghana as online destination market. Based on information technology tools, unique features of tourism products and services can be displayed on the internet for promotion purpose to tourists around the world. A conceptual research model was therefore designed as a full or a partial mediator to promote tourism in the destination. The model investigated the relationships between the use of online destination image, online word of mouth and security vulnerabilities as a central point to tourists' satisfaction and degree of interest to visit. The attraction



of more visitors to Ghana and identifying the weakness in the Ghana tourism industry and the basic attributes of Kumasi as a tourist's destination will be a guide through this study.

Kumasi has been in the tourism sector for the past decades and the destination is well known among tourists in Europe and other parts of the world. Despite the fact that Kumasi is known for tourism, online destination marketing through the word of mouth was not available until when the fiber optic cable from the United States recently brought the internet into Africa of which Ghana is currently benefiting to market her tourism products and services on the internet. Because of lack of previous online information regarding tourism products in the state, destination image marketing was not properly represented to the public and hence tourist's attractions were not reviewed. The availability of the internet has made it possible to practice online image marketing in the country (Fabricius, Koch, Turner & Magome, 2013; Sigala, 2017; Bolan & Williams, 2008; Law, 2009). This research is therefore based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) that has the theoretical footing for online destination marketing and the concept of the destination reputation in a state like Ghana full of potentials for tourism destination marketing.

### **1.3 Contribution/Gap**

The conceptual research model was tested via online destination image, online word of mouth based on tourists' satisfaction and degree of interest to visit. The setting was selected as an online destination market for various reasons. Firstly, the research on reputation in Ghana is limited and Kumasi is a key destination market in Ghana because of its location, affordable accommodation and a huge central market noted for tourism cheap goods and services in the country (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2016).

The destination also enjoys high rate of repeat visitations by tourists across the country (Tussyadiah et al. 2017). Based on the in-depth comprehension of the destination image the local and international tourists have on the setting, tourists maintain high visitation rate in the state (Briassoulis, 2017). Tourism is also a strong contributor to the local economy due to this reason Kumasi faces extreme force of competition from the other nearby towns such as Accra, Cape Coast and Tema which have golden beaches and tourists' resorts available for tourism (Önder & Marchiori, 2017). It is therefore significant to examine how important stakeholders such as the local people and the tourists overall image of Kumasi as a tourists' destination market is formulated and plan for future improvement in the competitive position of the destination market (Vanhove,2011; Souiden et al. 2017; Mutinda & Mayaka,2012). Finally, the renovation of the Kumasi city airport is expected to increase or double tourism numbers in the area over the next 20 years.

The research model is therefore posited and tested to investigate online tourists' satisfaction. In contrast to the recent literature of TPB and tourism, this study collected data from various hotels and guest houses in Ghana. Due to this methodology of data collection, different contributions to the research were also observed (Mohamad et al., 2012; Claveria & Poluzzi, 2017; Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2017). From this study perspective, it was noted that online security vulnerability has impact in online visitors' satisfaction when there are concerns about a website tourism products being sold on the site (Sigala, 2017; Law, 2009). Additionally, the results of the meta-analysis propose that the online destination images and online security vulnerability appear to be more connected to online tourists' satisfaction than offline tourists' satisfaction.

It is also observed that immeasurable academic scholars examined the relations between destination images, online word of mouth, online security vulnerability and customer satisfaction with the intentions to visit in tourism destination marketing (Alkharabsheh et al., 2011). The experience of negative effects and internet security issues, such as internet trickery practices, deception, hacking and other related internet violations, affect tourists' intentions to purchase tourism products online. Nonetheless, online tourists' satisfaction may mediate tourists' dissatisfaction. Tourists may not wish to use personal data on the internet to purchase tourism products when perceiving endangerment related to illegitimate use of personal detail information (Otto, Sanford & Chuang, 2009; Lin & Fu, 2016; Wehrli et al., 2014). Furthermore, a little study has been conducted on tourists' perception on risk of internet security problems in Ghana. There is also little research on internet security vulnerability and online tourists' satisfaction in the Ghanaian tourism destination marketing literature (Li, 2017; Calgaro, Lloyd & Dominey-Howes, 2013). For these reasons, testing the mediator which is online tourists' satisfaction with online destination images, online word of mouth and online security vulnerability may show a full or partial mediating mechanism.

Majority of the empirical studies instrumented on issues regarding online tourists' satisfaction and internet security focused on Europe and other western nations (Liu & Park, 2015). The extension of these empirical studies about online destination image, online word of mouth and online tourist satisfaction in Ghana as a developing nation is important for gaining more insight into these phenomena. A new study established on collecting data from a developing country like Ghana, has proposed that little empirical study has been conducted on online marketing services in this region (Beritelli & Schegg 2016). In this research, the abovementioned relations were tested

using data obtained from three 4 star hotels, six 3 star hotels and 38 guest houses in Ghana. The empirical studies conducted about online destination image, internet security issues and online tourists' satisfaction obtained data at one point in time, or self-reported data. This type of data-gathering practice leads to common methods bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Harman's single factor test was conducted to reduce common method bias problems and the total variance explained was less than 50 percent. This proposes that no common method bias is present in the data. Additionally, a temporal separation mechanism with a time lag of three months was used to measure the relations between the dependent and independent variables.

### 1.4 Conceptual Research Model

As shown in figure 1 the conceptual research model is made up of many relationships. Tourists' satisfaction impacts information searching, via online word of mouth based on information technology. Tourists' satisfaction has full mediation with the above mentioned variables through the intention to visit. Age, gender, marital status, education and job tenure are regarded as control variables in this research work. They may have significant influence on the study variables and the relationships.

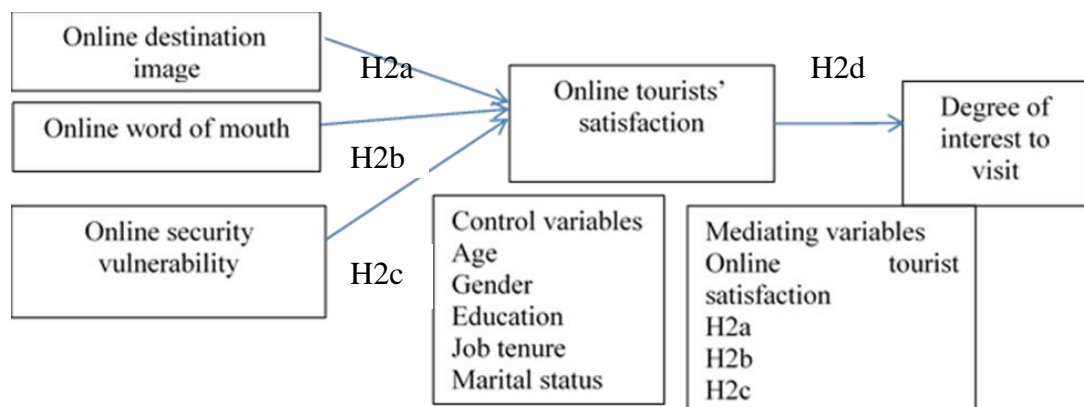


Figure 1. Conceptual research model

## **1.5 Online Destination image**

The most significant difficulty in the Ghanaian tourism industry is associated with the issues of online destination reputation and maintaining of tourists already visiting the setting (Mak, 2017). The retaining of visitors to keep the tourism destination markets is an important phenomenon. It is significant to engage tourists when they visit face to face by satisfying their expectations and influencing their loyalty to create citizenship behavior. Online destination image plays a predominant role in the tourism industry around the world (Azmi, 2017). The theory of planned behavior provides useful suggestions relating to development of the online reputation image and tourists visitations intentions. For the past several decades, the tourism and hospitality industry scholars around the world made online destination image a focal point for research (Liu, Li & Fu, 2016). The impact of positive behavior with the objective to visit is based on online image that causes business growth, and influence the economy of the destination market to increasingly developed (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016)

Similarly, online destination image has a very important effect on tourists' loyalty, which also impacts the profitability of the tourism industry in the destination (Chang, Gibson & Sisson, 2014). Comparably, a positive online destination image impacts tourists' satisfaction has an influence on tourists' loyalty. Tourists' satisfaction influences the degree of interest to visit that further leads to the yields of financial gain. The tourism industry worldwide based on the theme of online visitors' loyalty has presently gain popularity among academic scholars (Wan & Chan, 2011; Grigaliūnaitė & Pilelienė, 2014).

It has been noted that there has been a huge high percentage of affectivities associated with photo data otherwise known as images among tourists than in the textual materials (Tegegne et al., 2016; Pang et al., 2011). This indicates that images /photos are a better and more effective way of presenting tourism organizations and destination marketing when intending to convey successful online destination image distribution. It is also obvious that images or photos have the capacity to show a variety of affective destination images that can be perceived by potential visitor's intending to visit the destination. The study of Hem et al.(2003) and Lu et al.(2010) propound that images have the capabilities to reflect complicated dimensions of social and cultural identity based on psychological expression in tourism destination marketing. The research of Cao et al.(2010) also suggested that travel images or photos can influence interest in friends to affect a visitation and to select the same destination to visit. It is therefore important to note that photos or images on the internet about destinations can be used as powerful tools to communicate with tourists and affect their feelings to select the marketed destination to visit.

The use of Web 2.0 technology has increased the phenomenon of a high level of social interaction and exchange of information between tourists on the Internet (Wenger, 2008). For instance, the tourism industry through the influence of the tourism organizations has invited visitors to share their memories such as photos and other images of interest on the internet about their trips and experiences of the trips in Ghana (Boo & Busser, 2005). It is suggested that this is to help tourism organizations in the country to improve on their services (Ekinici, Sirakaya-Turk & Baloglu, 2007). The tourism organization in the nation wants to see how travelers' images or photos can have impact on tourism destination and influence potential tourists to visit. This research has conceptually outlined online destination image and

how it has been steadily acknowledged as a significant element of a strong reputation and success of online destination marketing (Zhou, 2014).

The current research of Buhalis & Amaranggana (2015) and Kim, Woo & Uysal (2015) similarly demonstrate that tourists that travel to destination markets may have obtained memorable experience with tour guides and a great sense of adventure and unexpected satisfaction. Based on these reasons, online word of mouth reports has encouraged and increased the number of visitors to the tourism destination marketing. Tourists' satisfaction constitutes a proposed post utilization evaluation that tourists should use products to examine their satisfaction (Eusébio & Vieira, 2013) and Chen, Huang & Petrick (2016). Likewise, the research of Lu, Chi & Liu (2015) indicates that tourists develop expectation of products before they decide to actually buy them for consumption. Based on these points and the theory of planned behavior, the following hypothesis is proposed

H2a: The online destination image has a positive relationship with online tourists' satisfaction

## **1.6 Online Word of mouth**

The relations between online word of mouth and online tourists' satisfaction are unfolded through the use of the principles of the theory of planned behavior (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Kozinets et al.,2010). These principles also relate to online tourists' beliefs and behavior towards intention to visit psychologically. TPB has been involved in various studies based on the prediction of reasoning and action that include perceived behavioral control. Tourism and hospitality organizations maintain universal strategies that facilitate online word of mouth and the displaying

of flashy images of destinations on the internet to attract visitors and persuade their intentions to travel (Kim & Perdue, 2011).

Travelers intending to visit a tourism destination particularly use search engines on the internet to explore valuable information before deciding to travel. Positive online word of mouth motivates visitors' decision to travel to destination markets of their choice while negative word of mouth repel tourists to other competitive destination marketing (Phillips et al. 2013). Past empirical researches conducted on destination marketing proposed that images and reputation of destinations markets have various dimensions that can energize travelers' perceptions and behavior towards destination marketing. Studies coordinated on the promotions of tourism destinations marketing using photographs, travel brochures and postcards with beautiful graphical images show that such items influenced tourists' decisions making process towards the intention to visit (Dedeke, 2016).

It is also noted that online word of mouth positively affects tourists' online behavior and motivates the selection of holiday destinations and that in recent times tourist trust messages from previous visitors on the internet than advertisements (Crouch, 2011; Whang, Yong & Ko, 2016). Tourists are also knowledgeable and are aware that online images can be deceptive and exaggerated to profit the destination tourism organization in order to attract more visitors. In such situations, online word of mouth can be useful for tourists. The study of Prayag and Ryan, (2011) suggests that the use of information technology together with online word of mouth to market online tourism destinations can be a strong motivational tool to attract potential tourists and create a sense of attachment to the destination in their minds. Due to these revelations, the following hypothesis is formulated:



H2b: Online word of mouth has positive relations with tourists' decision to visit.

### **1.7 Online Security Vulnerability**

Trust is a very important concept and must not be gambled with on the internet. It is significant to note that security of information on the internet is a serious issue for tourists wishing to purchase tourism products to visit a destination (Danidou & Schafer, 2009; Jøsang, 2012; Rudolph, 2012). Online word of mouth enables tourists to safeguard against fraud on the internet. This also serves as strategic tool that offers service providers and consumers to communicate effectively without any fear of vulnerability (Liang, Choi & Joppe, 2017; Tham, Croy & Mair, 2013). Security and privacy on the internet encourage customers to carry out safe transactions with less fear of identity theft and internet fraud. Web 2.0 is the current World Wide Web technology with new expanded features that allow tourists to get access to cheap flight tickets, cheap hotel reservations and viewing of attractive destination images online that influence travelers purchasing decision process.

Positive word of mouth and social media are important to the tourism and the hospitality industry as well as the service providers of websites on the internet. Websites help to promote destinations and influence travelers' decision-making processes in selecting the destinations of their desire (Law, Qi, & Buhalis, 2010). The internet and its associate technologies have become the central point of developing businesses and social networks that sells directly to customers. Tourism and the hospitality organizations in Ghana have therefore taken the advantage of the availability of the internet in the destination to market their products directly to target potential tourists (Chen & Wang, 2017). Online tourists' satisfaction largely depends on the destination images and its' strong reputation by meeting tourists' expectations,

needs and making the setting a memorable place to visit. When these conditions are met and offered in a tourism destination to tourists it may impact tourists consider the destination for a revisit and to offer positive recommendation on the internet for potential visitors to the location (Chaloupsky, 2017).

Destination images and destination reputation influence tourists' selection behavior on online recommendations and impact the desire to visit. Tourists surf on the websites related with various destinations to guarantee security, privacy in order to visit or conduct meaningful business transactions. Reliable and secure websites are sources of encouragement to travelers during purchasing behavior of tourism products. It is accepted that trickery and double-dealing websites are unsafe and can cause financial loss to users. The study of Lien and Cao (2014) indicates that secure websites positively impact tourist to transact business such as buying tourism products and traveling to a destination. Due to these reasons, the following hypothesis is posited:

H2c: Online security vulnerability has a negative relationship with online tourist satisfaction.

## **1.8 Online Tourist Satisfaction**

The major issues confronting tourism and hospitality industry in Ghana presently are the provision of online tourist's satisfaction and the retention of visitors'. The research of Gkritzali (2017) and Dorcic & Komsic (2017) proposed that the assessment of online destination image by tourists depend on destinations' motivational factors. It is further contended that online destination products and service, product category, experiences and perception stimulate visitors to visit.

Travelers satisfaction and degree of interest to visit are the main factors of online tourist satisfaction (Lima, Eusebio, & Kastenholz, 2012; Cárdenas-García, Pulido-Fernández & Pulido-Fernández, 2016).

Online tourists' satisfaction measurement depends on website security and the desirability of previous visitors encouraging positive online word of mouth and destination images (Reichelt, 2013; Reichelt, 2013). Online security vulnerabilities problems are being addressed by the information Technology tools daily. Satisfaction with the aforementioned determinants provides degree of interest to select the target destination. Online tourists' satisfaction impact tourists' determination to visit the setting. Online tourists' satisfaction with reference to customer satisfaction theory presents the direction of relationships in the mediation hypothesis (Konar, Mothiravally & Kumar, 2016). Tourists' satisfaction is a complete psychological state of tourists' mind that reflects the examination of the relations between the visitors and the tourism organizations in the destination marketing (Liu, Li & Fu, 2016). This includes the products and services offered by the destination markets. Tourists intending to visit tourism and hospitality destination have some expectation and beliefs that they expect to meet. These expectations by tourists on destinations can be products or services that should have certain features or qualities that should benefit the visitors through their values (Guszkiewicz & Nessel, 2017). Travelers always anticipate that tourism products and services should be excellent and should meet their needs and expectations (Wang, Chen & Prebensen, 2017). Expectations are often noted as something related to satisfaction that are measured through travelers' psychology, cognitive and affectivity experience (Breitsohl & Garrod, 2016). The psychological effects of visitors refer to the

elements in the tourists mind about the destination, the cognitive relates to the thinking and evaluations of the tourism products and services and lastly the affectivity that relates to the emotions and feeling as a behavior towards the destination products and services.

The evidence of online tourists' satisfaction is a measurement of online tourism products and services provided by the tourism and hospital organizations. Destination markets that exceed tourists' expectations are perceived by tourists as reliable and viable. Relevant literature from the tourism and hospitality industry proposes that traveler's satisfaction affects their' loyalty (Egresi,2015). It is therefore important to engaged tourists after promotions on the internet to make them visit. This influence profitability and personal relationships that can impact online citizenship behavior and royalty.

Tourism attractions in Ghana are many but the most important ones are the national parks, Accra central Market, the Kumasi shopping centers and the huge market, the castles and the huge shopping malls that motivate visitors to visit one tourist destination to another (Mckercher, 2016; Zieba, 2017). Tourism attractions represent the most significant ingredients that captivate tourists to travel to distinct destination based on exciting, thrilling and unforgettable experiences (Abam,2016). Poor and non-quality services provided by tourism organizations overwhelm online tourists' satisfaction and has negative impacts on the quality of a destination products and standards (Buhalis & Michopoulou, 2011). This goes a long way to influence travelers' decision-making process towards destination marketing (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017; Čorak & Živoder, 2016). In order for destination marketing to be

effectively attractive and competitive to affect tourism destination, the provision of entertainments, sightseeing, irresistible shopping centers, recreational activities and affordable accommodation facilities should be a formidable strategy to capture potential visitors (Yin, Poon & Su, 2017; Ramires, Brandão & Sousa, 2017). Online tourists' satisfaction becomes more effective when the local people in the destination market receive them with warm feeling. This will engineer travelers' desire to consume more tourism products after perceiving and using them. This kind of strategy can also lead to the development of interest for specific tourism services or products and re-purchase intentions among tourists. The online interaction between travelers and online destination images or photos brings about a two-way communication method that can affect online tourists' satisfaction and prompt decisions to travel (Spilková & Fialova, 2013).

The strategic use of online word of mouth to earmark online tourists' satisfaction may be inspire by tourism and hospitality managers through positive motivation of past tourist that travelled to the destination and shared their positive experience through word of mouth on the internet. It is noted that tourism is the only fastest growing economy in the world and destination organizations depend on visitors to support the economy (Lehto et al., 2017; Sulhaini. Saufi & Rusdan, 2016). The hospitality industry involves the creation of good impression towards online tourists by providing services that exceed their expectations to influence revisiting intention behavior (Wu et al., 2017; Al-Shboul & Anwar, 2017). Based on above factors, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2d: Online tourists' satisfaction has positive relations with degree of interest to visit.

## **1.9 Mediation Effects**

The assessment of important tourism literature shows that the impact of online destination image or reputation on intention to visit fully mediates online tourist satisfaction and impacts future behavior intention to visit. The researches of (Sirgy, Kruger, Lee et al., 2011; Rivera, roes & Lee, 2016) identified visitors' motivation and destination satisfaction based on online reputation affects behavior in terms of motivation to visit. Other current studies related to tourist stimulation to visit link to destination image in Australia indicates that viewing destination online has direct or indirect impact on tourists' incitement to visit (Oppewal, Huybers & Crouch, 2015; Wu & Pearce, 2014).

This study focal point is about online tourists' satisfaction for diverse justification although other elements also have the prospective or feasibility to be fully mediated. Firstly, it is well observed in this study that tourists' online satisfaction associated to destination marketing is determined via the internet as a current concept in the Ghanaian tourism and hospitality industry that depends on inducement to visit link to online word of mouth (Ahrens, Coyle & Strahilevitz, 2013). Verifiable studies on the impact of online word of mouth on online tourists' satisfaction based on tourism products and services influence online tourists' satisfaction and motivate visitation and footprints relevant tourism and hospitality literature in Ghana. Secondly, the government of Ghana considers tourism and hospitality as the dominant contributor to the economy in both foreign exchange and general income. Tourism influences job creation in the local communities and generates tax revenue for the government to foster development (Erkuş-Öztürk, & Eraydın 2010).

Due to the outcome of these attributes, there is huge competition among tourism destination marketing at various tourism locations globally. Online destination markets compete with each other to attract more potential travelers through the internet because of lack of barriers and limitations. The internet has become the easiest platform to target potential tourists to sell tourism memorable products and services (Calver & page, 2013). However, it is important to make the internet free from fraudulent activities and risk free to tourists wishing to purchase products. Third, from the theory of planned behavior, it can be concluded that the consequence of online security vulnerability on degree of interest to visit has full mediation with online tourists' satisfaction. This suggests that when tourists perceive online vulnerability as a problem, they avoid putting personal information online to purchase tourism products and services (Mermod, 2012). This manner of online dishonest behavior affects tourists trust to purchases products and service on the internet. Based on these theories, the hypothesis H2a, H2b and H2c are proposed.

### **1.10.1 The Research Approach**

Making decisions to travel to tourism destinations are complex issues and processes that may be risky and uncertain (Kapuściński & Richards, 2016). This risk may involve financial risk, physical risk, social risk, health risk, destination risk and travel risk (Froese & Orenstein, 2010; Fuchs & Reichel, 2011) which have all been describe and suggested as important effects and averts to travelling. Statistics indicate that much attention has been thrown on travel averts than on the motivation factor taking into consideration the world today based on constant terrorism alerts.

The deep comprehension of the aforementioned constraints to travel is therefore important to researchers and tourism practitioners. Based on these limitations, consternation of the negative impact of travel to unsafe destinations can be averted

through tourists' choice to travel to certain destinations. Based on the decision of customers to make choices towards travelling to destinations of risk free zones the theory of reason and action (TRA) or the theory of planned behavior (TPB) have been deployed in this study. The concept of intentions and attitude based on the theory of reason and action originated from the research of Ajzen (1985). This described how individuals' motivations in a plan and decision to put up an effort in carrying out plans are attributed to a specific attitude or behavior. The theory of reason and action demonstrate that human behavior can be prognosticated based on intentions because such attitudes are acts of making decisions or choices which can be controlled by intentions (Ajzen, 1991). This further explains that tourists in the process of making decision to travel to a destination have high degree of making reasonable choices among other alternatives.

Due to the strong forecast power of the theory reason and action (TRA), it has been used by many researchers as a conceptual research model to predict behavior intentions and attitudes in the area of the destination marketing and consumer attitudes (Iacobucci, 2011; Martin & Woodside, 2017). In this regard, the theory of reason and action behavior intentions are regarded as behavior towards performance of the behavior and predictability of its' intentions link to attitude and beliefs of tourists.

The theory of planned behavior is the extension part of the theory of reason and action (Ajzen, 1991). The only distinction between these two models is that the theory of planned behavior is assimilated or integrated into the additional features of perceived behavior control as the factor of behavior intentions. The factor relates to control beliefs and the theory of planned behavior that expands its' boundaries to the



theory of planned behavior as a control of the volition that include belief factors such as the possessions of essential required resources and the opportunity to execute a specific behavior (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen,1992; )

The application of the theory reason and action has also been questioned on certain situations where tourists do not have the volition such as resources to make a journey. It is noted that some tourists' behavior is based on their ability and desire to select a destination of their choice (Martin & Woodside, 2017; Manrai, 2017). In circumstances of this nature, the theory of reason and action will not be adequate to predict the tourists' intentions and behavior. Taking for example, tourists may have all the wishes to stay in a five-star hotel in a destination, but if he has no sufficient resources may not be able to afford the price involved in staying in a five-star hotel (Caldeira & Kastenholz, 2017). Another example could be if a tourist is working for an organization and it is the organization that pays for the trip and asked him to stay in a specific hotel and if the hotel is in an inconvenient location.

Under circumstances of the two examples above, the theory of reason and action cannot be utilized in place of the theory of planned behavior and must be used as an appropriate to predict the tourist behavior intentions. It is vivid that tourists' decision-making process may be comprise of different types of power of using one's willing factors that can possibly reduce the ability to make a five-star hotel lodging decision(Prayag,2009). It is therefore clear that the theory of planned behavior formulates the conceptual research framework of this thesis. This provides a clear structure that allows detailed examination of the formation of tourists' housing, hotel lodging behavior and the buying intentions by taking into consideration the online

destination image, online word of mouth, online vulnerability security and online tourist's satisfaction towards destinations with the aim to visit (Shikov, 2017; Wei & Xie, 2008).

The definition and expression of a research problem is the most significant requirement for the development of a research plan. In order to conduct a good research, selecting a strategy with a time frame, available data, facilities, a good supervisor, methods to analyze data and the researchers' skills play an important role in the success of the research. It is recalled that Silverman (2013) discovered three important simple purpose of research. (i) The testing of the common characteristics of research specific samples (ii) solution to real-life problems and (iii) the examination of the study. The studies of Nguyen & Wang (2011) and Shenton (2004) explained that forecasting the exact result of a research scope was difficult and encouraged the use of already existing theories together with methods as the necessary ingredients to perform a required research.

During the process of orchestrating this study, it was noticed that researching about online destination marketing through the social media in tourism, via online destination images, security vulnerabilities and online visitor satisfaction with the with a degree of interest to visit motivate tourists (Dorcic & Komsic, 2017; Thai & Yuksel, 2017). It was also obviously perceived that similar research was done in Europe and other parts of the advance countries. Based on this reason, the existing theory is used to explore the gap in the online destination marketing in the county.

The study of Willman (2005) demonstrated that there are five main kinds of research methods. He names them as experimental, survey, archival analysis, historical and

case study. The case study of visitghana.com is the official website for Ghana tourists' board that can be used for research purposes.

### **1.10.2 The Choice of Case Study**

The studies of Daymon & Holloway, (2010) explained that a case study is an in-depth investigation that is different or a process of research into the development of a particular situation or group over a period of time. It can be conducted as qualitative, quantitative or both the quantitative and qualitative combined as a single research bound by place and time. A case study can be about an institution, a group of people like a working group or a social one in a community. It can also be an event, problem or campaign being examined in a research as a case study strategy. Using case studies for research can be a hard work and very challenging in social science.

The case study visitghana.com is an official website for Ghana tourists' board used to contribute to knowledge about institutions in Ghana and current information about online destination marketing through the use of social media. This research is not going to be based on a case study on Visitghana.com but it is mentioned to create awareness about the possibility of case study as a selection topic for a thesis. Visitghana.com is used to promote Ghana as online tourism destination marketing through social media such as press rooms, videos, consular services for visas to Ghana and various types of online information about the country. My research is based on surveys or setting questions to collect data.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chapter 2 is a literature review of which important representation of the successful studies and various experimentations with the purpose of building a body of knowledge for enveloping the research complications. This chapter of literature therefore covers the online marketing and the future prospects of online destination image and the components and effects of degree of interest to visit that can have impact on potential tourists. By this process tourists' behavior, perceptions towards destination images can be evaluated based on the availability of information made through the internet about destination markets. The research of Marchiori & Cantoni (2016) and Wang, Chen & Prebensen (2017) revealed that internet makes it easy for goods and services to be bought and sold on easily.

This was similarly supported by Xu and McGehee (2012) on the notion that businesses are transacted online by using computer networks and no barriers to trading. Internet marketing and web technologies support all types of business. The studies of Thuy, (2011) and Lammenett (2017) propose that the use of internet to transact business reduce cost and increases sales considerably. It was further suggested that websites, promotional posting and advertisement on the internet can be reached by tourists across the world and even to the smallest village in a remote area (Shiau & Luo 2012).

Information on the internet about tourism destinations is searchable because of the availability of internet. Knowledge of the internet based on information technology has an important impact on the buying of tourism products and services. The tourism industries around the globe have experienced the significant influence of information technology as a platform for search engines that impact the general performance of tourism activities online (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014). Smartphones are used for the payment of bills through the internet that include mobile payment systems for tourism products and services at various tourism destination markets

The purchasing of tourism products and services through internet includes wireless handsets, personal digital assistants, and smartphones. Smartphones are gaining popularity in the tourism industry because of the advantage of using them wirelessly anywhere (Lu et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014). Various tourism researchers designed conceptual research models and used theories related with intention to buy and visit behavior. The theory includes the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the technology acceptance model and the theory of planned behavior (Pelling et al., 2009; Yang, 2012). The theory of reasoned action was hypothesized to explore the relationship between point of views and behavior intentions (Ajzen & Fischbein, 2005). The influence of behavior intention is noticed in tourists when planning to purchase tourism products and service. Attitude toward tourism destination marketing can occur through social influence and online word of mouth.

This can either impact the tourists' thinking capacity to purchase the products or decline based on their belief and evaluations (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Asparouhov & Muthén, 2015; Westland, 2015; Ryu, 2014). In the present world of internet and

semiotic society, destination images impact tourists' intention to visit tourism destinations. Researchers in the hospitality industry propose that signs, images, and symbols present fetishistic qualities that inspire tourists' psychological response to destination marketing on the internet. Tourism academicians reveal that online word of mouth is a communication channel that has influence on the online destination marketing (Luo & Zhong, 2015; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). Online word of mouth has more credibility than conventional word of mouth because tourists perceive it as unbiased. The broader use of internet has made it easier for online word of mouth and circulation of information among potential customers. Tourists review websites, discussion forums, weblogs and social network websites as a platform for online word of mouth to be experienced among millions of customers. It has been revealed that the relevant literature about online word of mouth is focused on communication (Xie et al., 2014; Liu & Zhang, 2014). This further suggests that the extent to which research studies have been published on online word of mouth, is cross-disciplinary and has no any formal conclusion. The research on the online word of mouth phenomenon is classified into two categories. a) Marketing analysis and b) individual analysis (Jennings et al., 2009).

The marketing systematic investigation is based on the sales of products and services while the individual examination is focused on online word of mouth as an influence on personal level. The marketing procedure permits senders of messages as online word of mouth to influence the receivers of the messages (Baber et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2016) and impact their behavior towards visiting the destination marketing. The individual analysis through online word of mouth is a communication between a sender and a receiver. The sender sends messages on the internet about products and services (Gupta & Harris, 2010; Jin et al., 2009) based on his experience as a process

of personal influence to change the minds of the receivers of the messages towards buying or visiting the tourism destinations.

The use of internet has completely reformed the way tourism products and services are being sold and distributed at various tourism destination markets across the globe (Buhalis & Law 2008). Many websites of tourism destination marketing furnish reliable information about the destinations to tourists through promotions. The provision of this kind of reliable information to visitors is through social media, electronic word of mouth, blogs, virtual communities on the internet, social networks and file shared on YouTube. These websites and information sites on the internet are popular among tourists to look for information about tourism destination markets with the intention to visit (Hwang et al., 2013; Xiang et al., 2015). Most of the social media platforms allow tourists to post messages of their experiences of previous visits to destinations and share comments as a communication medium for potential tourists wishing to visit similar destination markets.

The internet has provided empowerment to travelers where they can determine the distribution of tourism products and services through tourism destinations websites to view and interact in order to make decisions to visit (Na et al., 2016). Travelers make decision to visit based on the information obtained from social media and well-informed website to visit destination markets (Sun et al., 2016). Electronic word of mouth also known as online word of mouth is a strong virtual communication tool used by many tourists when deciding on a trip to destinations. It is commonly used to transport message to travelers to influence their decision-making processes towards visiting destinations of their choices. Online word of mouth has become a strong influential to travelers wishing to visit tourism destinations. Electronic word of

mouth has also become an interesting field of study among academic scholars. For visitors to decide on intention to visit, information related to the destination should be explored to avoid the risk of travelling to wrong destinations (Cahyanto et al.2016; Chetthamrongchai, 2017). The search of information to travel to tourism destinations has become a common practice among tourist.

The most significant part of online destination marketing that majority of tourists are engrossed is the information search and online tourists satisfaction. Online satisfaction at various destination markets entices tourism and tourists to visit based on the experience of previous visitors. It is also generally accepted among tourists that online satisfaction is a strong strategy that enhance tourism and profit making among various destination organizations. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction that meets the expectation of tourists and lead to retaining is based on the relationship between the visitors and the destination marketing organizations (Damijanić & Luk, 2017). The provision of outstanding products and service to visitors brings about competitive advantages for some destinations over others. Travelers consider information provided through word of mouth more reliable and trust worthy when they have anxiety about the buying process of products and services to vacate (Scott et al., 2016). In the procedure of decision making with the intention to visit, tourist rely more on online word of mouth messages from other tourists who have visited the intended destination as a source of encouragement and error prevention strategy.

The internet has unique features that help travelers to buy tourism products and service when intending to travel to a destination. The website of tourism organization in a destination country provides visitors with virtual tours, videos, and images to entice travelers to visit the destination. However, internet security related to websites



of tourism organizations and promotions through the internet remains a big challenge to visitor's due to internet fraud and online identity theft (Pavlicek, 2015). Various tourism destination markets sell online affordable tourism products and services such as hotel accommodations and flight tickets (Inversini & Masiero 2014). The study of Orel and Kara (2014) proposes that positive word of mouth and online messages from other tourists on the internet about a destination market has a huge impact on tourists' behavior with intention to visit. The features of tourism websites allow users to surf easily and web developers use many strategies to attract tourists to view tourism products and services on the internet. The web developers use graphical and animated images of tourism products, services including social media variables to entice visitors to visit destinations (Avraham & Ketter, 2016). Majority of tourism destination marketing websites permits users to engage and experience products and services in order to conduct research on international tourism demands and to predict tourists' arrivals. However, in the case of Ghana, there is no much research published in the academic journals where destination organization engage tourists with products and services based on intention to predict tourist's arrivals (Ma et al., 2016). The current most literature about social media and tourism was published by (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014).

## **2.1 The Role of Information Technology in Tourism**

The introduction of information technology in the tourism industry in Ghana has accorded hopes and possibilities as a platform for sales of tourism products and services (Ricci, 2010; Schegg & Stangl, 2017). This has led to the amendment of attitudes of customers and their manner of dealing with business issues, before the liberation of the internet in Africa and Ghana as a whole the interaction between customers and service providers such as the travel agents were the usual manner of

doing business. These significant characteristics of face to face marketing have been replaced by the internet known as self-service information technologies (Melián-González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). Most customers now prefer to interact with tourists online to buy products on the internet than to deal with travel agents who charge commissions.

The availability of the internet has kept travel companies on their toes daily trying to find solutions to keep their customers in order to stay on top of their businesses. Travel companies are becoming more innovative to keep up with the new and fast-growing IT development in the tourism industry around the world. Staying awake of new technologies in the IT field enhances the gaining of insight on the IT programs that can help grow customer and travel companies' relations in the tourism industry. The use of information technology in the tourism industry has amended the strategy of tourist attraction, hotel reservation and flight reservation which has reformed the cardinality of the tourism industry globally. Similar studies conducted by Horner & Swarbrooke (2016) and Bilgihan & Bujisic (2015) revealed that Information technology is in the process of metamorphosing tourism products and services. It was further suggested that as information technology progresses, new technology tools are developed to guide and manage business activities to compete intensively among tourism destination markets around the globe.

Comparatively, Ghana is a small country and has a population of 27 million people. The country has 10 regions and each region differs in culture, food, festivals and customs. The use of information technology has made it easy for tourist destination to be accessed in all the regions (Braunhofer & Ricci, 2017). Although Ghana has no special tourist attractions like Macaw in China, London eye at the United Kingdom

and Eiffel tower in France, the country has a the unique beauty of castles, beaches, lakes, museums and a rich history that attracts tourism every year Bruner (1996). Keller and Mckercher, (2016) explained that in order for tourism products and services to be effectively marketed through the use of IT, it is important to recognize and profile a target group of buyers who are different in their preferred needs. By this way more can be first-rated as a segment to target profitability.

In the presence of information technology and the facility availability, Ghana tourism industry has used the IT technologies to spread information about the nations' tourist destination sites on the internet. The investment of information technology in Ghana tourism has played a significant role in the industry (Schegg & Stangl, 2017). Tourists with the interest to visit Ghana can get all the rightful information on the internet before deciding on their trips. The internet has made Ghana preferable tourist destination in Africa. The expectation of tourists around the world depends on information and how the destination is marketed to target tourists. In the case of Ghana, most of the tourist destinations are sold on the internet as a modern method of attracting tourists. It is therefore very important to fulfil tourists' expectation and motivation in order to stay in business (Ye, 2011; Su, Hsu & Swanson, 2017). The tourism industry in Ghana monitor websites to make certain accurate information is available for tourists. Correct information and satisfaction of tourists' expectation are the dominant factors that lead to business prosperity in the tourism industry in every country.

## **2.2 Online Destination Marketing**

In our present modern world, the competition in the tourism business domain indicates that tourism and information technology need to work together to maintain

the development of business accomplishment (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2014). The success of tourism business therefore relies on information technology to manage destination marketing around the world. It is also no secret that tourism organization needs the help of information technology to manage data, competition and to take important decisions on investment. The development of quality of services in the tourism industry by managers to customers has enhanced efficiency in the tourism operations and lower cost which has impacted the positive experience and behavior of tourism customers (Loureiro, 2014; Torres et al., 2014).

The frequent use of information technology tools in the tourism destination marketing has reformed the underlying structure of the tourism industry and future tourism products and competitions can be transformed in nature to suit customer needs. Because the internet is noted as the major source of information search, it is very important to comprehend tourists' behavior. Information technology plays a leading role in the tourism industry by providing valuable resources for the benefit of tourists worldwide.

### **2.3 Definition of Online Marketing Destination**

There are other names of online marketing. Examples of such names are digital marketing; internet marketing or website marketing further proposed that online marketing is a way of obtaining marketing targets through the use of information technology in digital format. The research of (Kavoura & Stavrianea; 2014; Dolnicar & Ring; 2014; Xiang et al.2015) suggested that online marketing involves the use of tourism organizations websites in connection with internet promotions as a procedure to attract customers to purchase tourism products.

The research conducted by Borrás et al., (2014) and Fernández-Cavia et al., (2014) demonstrated that the use of the internet has been exploited in various ways to deal with different forms of electronic communications so tourism products sold online can be cost effective or cheaper than tourism products sold traditionally. The use of the internet to sell tourism products is a procedure used to reach potential tourists by making available, reliable, information about products sold on the internet. This is believed to have an enormous influence on tourists' decision-making process on online destinations and towards the buying of tourism products electronically (Bangwayo-Skeete et al., 2015; Xiao & Smith, 2007). However, due to the great increase in the use of the internet to market goods, services, tourism products and the fraudulent problems related to the internet that keeps surfacing has become a major concern for tourists. Because tourism products are virtual and the transaction is done on faceless and storeless tourists depend completely on reliable information of products on the internet to make decisions as whether to buy or not.

These types of decisions boil down to trust of the websites where these products are being sold. The internet vulnerability security issues have affected many tourists in the past, people are much concern about trust and putting of personal information on electronic website that could get into the wrong hands and be used against them. It is therefore important to make certain websites that are used to sell tourism products are genuine and have no vulnerability, piracy and security concerns for customers.

Empirical research from (Friedrich et al., 2009) further revealed that online marketing is a promotional activity conducted on the internet. In our modern age, a large number of customers resolved to the advantage of electronic marketing to purchase items of their choice. Online tourism destination products and tourism

diversifiable products and services on various search engines are rudimentary change as a concept of traditional commercial transaction. Online marketing is also extended to include online marketing using emails, online advertisement, and the use of the social media.

## **2.4 Advantage of Online Destination Marketing**

The present day of modern society and globalization network plays important role in all parts of life and industries most especially in the tourism destination marketing worldwide. Information technology is the internet's major tool that impacts tourism satisfaction because of its several relevant fields used for distinct purposes. Internet is very famous among tourists for marketing of tourism products without any borders governing its operations (Ferrer-Rosell, Coenders & Marine-Roig, 2017). Online marketing which is also popularly known as internet marketing has several advantages that involve the use of attractive and virtual attributes for promoting sales and services. The internet became a better tool for online marketing because of its flexibility, cost effectiveness and its unprecedented global usage.

Online marketing has impact on different businesses and traditional marketing has undergone new changes due to the use of internet which connects computers together around the world as a physical network. The introduction of online marketing via the internet has therefore reshaped the form and performance of the tourism industry in various ways, such as marketing destinations, educations, hotels, travels, and several other tourism events (Law, 2007). The traditional way of marketing has been forced by information technology to amend their way of doing business to revolutionize by using the internet innovation, technology.

## **2.5 Destination Marketing Distribution**

In our present modern world, the competition in the tourism business domain indicates that tourism and information technology need to work together to maintain the development of business accomplishment (Buonincontri & Micera, 2016). The success of tourism business therefore relies on information technology to manage destination marketing around the world. It is also no secret that tourism organizations need the help of information technology to manage data, competition and to take important decisions on investment.

The development of high quality of services in the tourism industry by managers to customers has enhanced efficiency in the tourism operations and lower cost which has impacted the positive experience and behavior of tourism customers. The frequent use of information technology tools in the tourism destination marketing has reformed the underlying structure of the tourism industry and future tourism products and competitions can be transformed in nature to suit customer needs (Vansteenwegen & Souffriau, 2010). Because the internet is noted as the major source of information search, it is very important to comprehend tourists' behavior. Information technology plays a leading role in the tourism industry by providing valuable resources for the benefit of tourists worldwide (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2015).

## **2.6 History of Tourism**

The history of tourism started from conventional tourism that was dominated by the history of western culture and experience (Foley, 2011; Bremner & Wikitera, 2016). The rich people in the western countries started touring distinguished destinations with mineral springs that were considered to have health healing properties such as medication in the Victorian spa town of Buxton (Walton, 2009). People travelled to

those tourism destinations to bath in aerated hot water that was also considered as medication and healthy for the body (Briassoulis, 2017). There were visits to seaside resorts and grand tours mixed with business activities and entrepreneurship such as Thomas Cooks (Yoon, 2017). The rich were the only people enjoying tourism before it trickled down to the poor.

Summer has always been a hot period in the olden days and people were looking for good things to do for themselves. Travelling to different destinations to swim and have a different experience was always an option in the olden days among visitors (Tussyadiah, Wang & Jia, 2017). However, tourism and travelling started from a little girl of 11 years and her brother of nine who decided to walk eight kilometers from Oxfordshire to another town to spend one month holidays with their aunt and uncle (August 1887; Rosa, Bocci & Dryjanska, 2017). The journey was full of long experience and a new world with small towns with different traditions and customs were discovered. At those times even visiting a local shop was a memorable experience. The holidays that were not formally organized became a very important experience in the lives of those two poor young children. Their visit became the strongest history of tourism. Today in the modern world people can organize trips to visit other destinations and resorts across the world (Tolkach, 2017). Even though the rich enjoyed tourism those periods by taking trips to the Spa, organizing seaside resorts and grand tours, the image of the two poor children dominated peoples' mind about the history of tourism today.

There are many reasons why conventional tourism prevailed in the version of tourism's history (Bærenholdt, 2016). There were resources available, particularly for social groups and various activities. There were tourists' letters, diaries and trips



that represented the rich and the powerful people in the society (Guthrie & Anderson, 2007). These records were remarkably kept for others to see. The diaries and journals were concerned with travel events in peoples' lives. The grand tours were much researched and only on a few occasions have the documents mentioned about visiting friends and relatives. It was all about organizing tourism development such as spas, seaside resorts or mass entertainment for the tourists at those destinations. The statistical measurement of tourism started only in the 1920s and there was no international tourism at those times.

## **2.7 History of Tourism Background and Development**

The history of online tourism started from the 1970s. It was a period when the major airlines in the world developed a centralized system to distribute their products worldwide (Kracht & Wang, 2010). The systems were later extended to cover travel agents and tourism organizations that dealt with various types of tourism services and supplies. Intermediaries were able to get access to flexible and customized information related to travels and other types of tourism activities. The centralized systems were also used to implement online business models that were linked to the tourism industry.

The suppliers of tourism products designed websites and sold tourism products directly to customers during those ages, so the system reduced the used of intermediaries between producers and customers. The explorers of the centralized systems developed online tourism as a tool to formerly launch designed websites (Newman et al., 2003). The first intermediary to use the systems was Pegasus, which had links with chains of hotels across the globe. Pegasus launched travelweb.com as a portal for the general public (Aktaş & Mutlu, 2015). American airlines and IBM

formed alliance and opened a Travelocity, this company is owned by an online travel agency and was owned by the Sabre Company (Cohen, 2012) but today this company is owned by Expedia. Travelocity is in Dallas in the United States of America (Grubestic & Zook, 2007). The present lastminute.com in Europe was a related website of Travelocity that was sold to a company in Switzerland called Bravofly Rumbo (Anderson & Earl, 2000)

The internet has completely changed the form of tourism information distribution and how customers plan to travel (Lund, Cohen & Scarles, 2017; Vas, 2017). The development of information technology for the past decade has a deeper implication for the whole of the tourism industry not only by the assimilation of the software, network and hardware, but enhancing data management and communication systems (Buhalis, 2003). Online tourism is about bringing business opportunities to the world travel and tourism industry.

Tourism organization and internet companies joined to create effective marketing strategies for tourism products. Tourism has therefore become a multinational business and the most important business in the world that creates temporal jobs, grows the destinations economy through the help of the worldwide web (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015). Taking the TripAdvisor for instance trusted by tourists due to the studies of Filieri et al., (2015). The TripAdvisor is a reliable research engine for travelers and a directory that helps potential tourists to search for information through the internet. There is information about different types of important destination such as hotels and activities, user comment on destination cities and well-informed articles that makes it easy for tourists to book and vacate in places of their choice destination (Alcazar et al., 2014).

## **2.8 Tourism Arrival in Africa**

Tourists' arrival in West Africa from December, 2009 to December, 2010 was a big economic boom despite the world economic difficulties. West Africa noted an increase of 9.40 percent of economic growth between December, 2009 and December, 2010 respectively. It was also noted that West Africa was the second largest international tourist destination aside Asia Pacific (WTTC, 2010). Apart from tourism growth in West Africa between 2009 to 2010, the (WTTC,2010) also indicated that, countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania and Turkey experienced sharp growth in their tourism activities. Egypt and Mauritius were also among the countries that saw enormous development and proactive support from governments that boosted the tourism growth in the destination marketing.

The empirical studies of Bergh and Nilsson (2014) demonstrated that tourism alleviates poverty, promotes economic development, and improves the infrastructure of nations. The studies further explained that with good managerial skills, tourism can completely eradicate poverty and improve quality of lives across the globe. The study of Brouder and Eriksson (2013) seconded the study of Alam & Paramati (2016) by demonstrating in his empirical studies that practical and constructive developments in tourism activities have influence on direct and indirect ballooning of incomes and generation of revenue for governments in the form of multiplier effects and balance of payment. There are many other nations in West Africa that succeed in tourism. Studies from (Spenceley, 2010) indicate that direct job creation due to tourism activities in West African countries was 2.70 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). It was also noted that one in every twenty jobs were tourism based

and 12.80 million dollars were accumulated in the settings of tourism job related creation.

West Africa is well known for her abundant tourism resources. The destination has beautiful extensive golden beaches, wildlife infrastructure, nature, culture, and opportunities for adventure. People have huge disposable incomes so they indulge in domestic tourism for leisure. More than ten million people travel each year to West Africa to shop, medical issues, sports, religious purposes, business conference and visiting friends or relatives (Wong et al., 2009). Various empirical studies such as the amalgamation of tourism and poverty reduction to eradicate poverty in the West African states are also in progress.

The study of Goodwin (2011) and Hummel & Duim (2012) elucidated that the relations between tourism and the expansion of economy and poverty elimination are hand in hand. Information from the (WTTC, 2015) on the West African country of Mali revealed that the country was rated 9th in international tourism arrivals among the most tourist destination in the diaspora. It was also noted that between the years of September 1997 and September, 2007 Mali received more than 200,000 international tourists. The economic growth and job creation through tourism in Mali has vastly increased. The GDP of Mali went up to roughly \$224 million and the value of direct economic development was estimated at \$33,000, as an increase of 2.1 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). The GDP of Mali as in January, 2010 was predicted to increase by 4.90 percent thus roughly \$524 million and by 2020 it is hope to hit a record high of 3.90 percent and create more than 80,000 employments in the setting.

The prices of goods and services including tourism products affect tourist's decision process to travel to a destination. West Africa in general is cheap in terms of transportation for travelling through the countries (Negi & Furman,2010; Chowdhry & Kone, 2012). Flights to West Africa are not also very expensive, so the destination is becoming a tourist attraction in the world. Travelling to tourism destinations by air, land or water plays major factors in tourists' decisions when planning a visit. Low prices are very important determinants of tourists demand to international destinations (Bærenholdt, Haldrup & Urry,2017). The cost of living in a destination country for a short period of time plays an important role in tourists' attractions. Accommodation, drinks, food, cost of touring the destination, cost of souvenirs and nightlife such as entertainments can influence tourists' decision to visit the setting if affordable. Though prices play an important role in the selection of a location to visit budgets for destinations differ from one location to another.

## **2.9 International Tourism Arrival in Ghana**

Tourism started in Ghana around the 14th century (Bargeman, Richards & Govers, 2016). The British came to Ghana from 1807-1957 (Bruner,1996). The Portuguese were the first Europeans to come to Ghana in 1482 and in 1482 they build a castle and name it Elmina which means the mine. The Danish were the last Europeans to come to Ghana in 1650. The Danish built a fort called the Christiansburg Castel but it has been renamed as Osu Castle in Ghana. The Christiansburg castle became the home of the Danish governor and later it became a slave trade center for the Danish government. The purpose of these people coming to Ghana was to trade in Gold and other minerals. Denmark was one of the countries that benefited hugely by trading with Ghana. However, the British succeeded in sending all Europeans out of Ghana and colonized the country in 1808.

The country was named as Gold Coast when the Europeans first came to Ghana. It was called the Gold Coast because the first Europeans who entered the country through the sea port saw much gold on the beaches and gave her the name Gold Coast based on the reason that they found gold in large quantities at the coast of the sea in Ghana. The name was changed to Ghana when the country got her independence on the 6th of March, 1957. The purpose of the Europeans coming to Ghana was for trade in mineral resources but not tourism (Dumett, 1974; Alpern, 1995; Hilson, 2002). Ghana has large deposits of gold and many natural resources till today (Panford, 2017; Dzigbodi-Adjimah & Asamoah, 2010). These minerals attracted the Europeans to visit Ghana to trade with the people. The raw materials and mineral resources are bought at 20 percent and 80 percent to the Europeans, Americans and Chinese involved in the trade. It is obvious that tourism is a very important tool for economic growth and the creation of temporal jobs globally (Sreejesh & Ponnampal, 2016). It is also noted from the statistics that tourism in African countries is growing gradually though its potential has not yet been completely realized as a strong source of economic growth for majority of African countries. Based on the fact that though Africa is a huge continent and has the vast potential for tourism growth and development, the strategy to implement the full potential of tourism on the continent is yet to be maximized (Albrecht, 2017; Mol, Stadler & Ariño, 2017; Dwyer, Ateljević & Tomljenović, 2016).

The Portuguese became the first Europeans to settle in Ghana (Daaku, 1970; van Dantzig, 1980; Yankholmes & McKercher, 2015). They traded with the people of Ghana in gold, knives, beads, gun powder and guns (Anquandah, 1999). Because the trade was very successful the news spread around Europe and other parts of Europe and traders such as the British, Swedish and the Prussians also came to Ghana to

trade in the mineral resources. People from the Netherlands, Germany from the town of Brandenburg also came to Ghana to trade and built their houses in the country that still exist till today as tourist centers. The houses are called forts, castles and lodges and were later converted to slave trade centers used to carry many people to work in the US plantations. Ghana became a center for slave trade because millions of people were sold to Europeans and Americans.

There are many tourists that visit the forts and the castle around the world and the numbers continue to increase in large quantities (Apter, 2017; Agyeiwaah, 2013; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014). In the past three decades, the castle at Elmina alone had 17,092 tourists' arrivals and 68 percent of these tourists were local people trying to understand the history of the country and the white rule implications to Ghana in terms of slave trade (Boakye, 2012; Martinez, 2012; Pakenham, 2015). In the same year, the number of tourists from the United States to Ghana recorded as high as 13.0 percent and 12.0 percent from Europe. The statistics from (Deichmann & Frempong, 2016; WTTC, 2016) indicated that tourists' arrival in Ghana increased from 3.0 percent to 4.0 percent respectively. According to similar revelation in 2012 based on tourists' arrival in Ghana revealed that revenue of 1.035.00 billion dollars was realized and several jobs created. Tourism and travelling has contributed to gross domestic product (GDP) of Ghana in a big way (Braithwaite, Kesse & Bulley, 2012; WTTC, 2014). The tourism industry contributed to the economy of the country immensely. It is observed that the GDP of Ghana, mainly from tourism was \$1.34 billion that represents 2.80 percent of the gross domestic products. The direct spending of both local and international tourists measured the direct contributions. The available tourism services in Ghana were accommodation for tourists, food, transportation system, beverages, cultural programs, sports activities, and retail

trading availabilities. The guest houses accommodation facilities were in line with the international standards.

The hotel industry in Ghana has become the most important sector for development. The Ghana tourism industry as at September, 2010 had 256 tourism operator's license issued by the Ghana tourism authority to practice the profession. There were also 99 car rental companies with good rating and 462 restaurants operating in the city and 352 night clubs. The businesses that were not related to the tourism industry have also started getting involved in the tourism business activities because of the manner the tourism operations directly affect their businesses. The overall benefit of tourism to the economy is much greater based on the industry disbursement on investments, taxes from the local government, the energy and labor combined with other resources. The overall spending from tourism showed a slow growth from 2008 to 2013. This generated an income of \$1,983 to \$2,373 million dollars respectively. Majority of tourists coming to Ghana on large scales are Nigerians. About 19 percent of tourists from Nigeria arrival in Ghana almost every August 2016, Tourists from the United States at the same period were 13 percent, United Kingdom was 9 percent, Ivory Coast was 5 percent and 3 percent each from Germany, India, Canada, Netherlands and South Africa. The WTTC, 2015 statistics from the Ghana tourist board also revealed that the majority of the tourists that came to Ghana, 50 percent of them came for educational purpose while the others were either in the country for conference or training. 10 percent were holiday makers and while some were in the country to visit relatives



## **2.10 Domestic Tourism in Ghana**

A focus on domestic tourism marketing is encouraged and supported (Timothy, 2017; Teye, 2008). The products and services are developed and expanded to meet both the international markets for a short-term strategy and a long-term concentration on creating awareness of tourism potentials as a destination that can be sold abroad to countries such as North American countries (Ali,2011; Bohler-Muller & Van der Merwe, 2011). This can initially be started as travel and trade to influence stakeholders to develop special tours to Ghana. Creating awareness about tourism in Ghana such as supporting tour operators, promotions, engaging with customers one on one and building a good reputation will encourage international tourists to visit the destination and stakeholders to organize sample trips to the destination market (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001; Asiedu, 2008). Tour operators can be organized to target a desire markets by providing the required materials needed to develop the tourism market segment. This may include pictures, proper designed websites and the social media influence.

The Ghana tourism industry encourages both the private and public-sector marketing groups to put more effort on the sales of tourism products and services. The combination of both the private and public institutions can be used as spring boards to market Ghana as a tourism destination market (Boakye, 2012). This scheme can be developed to share responsibilities to both the private and public sectors. A special budget can be allocated to the promotion of the brand name and a master plan can be designed to market the destination. Based on the marketing plan, tourism products and service together with the tourism resources can be made available on the internet for potential tourists wishing to visit the destination to view and interact (Dedeke, 2016; Gcaba & Dlodlo, 2016). The general diversification of resources that include

world heritage sites such as the forts and the castles, natural lakes, the Ashanti kingdom traditional houses, the crocodile pond at Paga, the game reserves, the national parks, beaches, the wildlife reserves, the mole national park, Aburi gardens and the Ghana museums and monument can be very influential to tourism (Tanle, Essaw & Titigah, 2016).

## **2.11 The transportation System in Ghana**

The transportation system in Ghana is made up of the road, Air travel and railways. Before the construction of roads, air and sea transport people travel on animals' backs from one place to the other. The road transport is the most important in Ghana. It is estimated that about 98 percent of Ghanaians travel on road and it generates a huge income for the economy (Osei-Owusu, 2004; Sharov & Mikhailov, 2017). The road transport in Ghana is grouped into four categories. Urban transport, express service, rural urban transport, and the rural type of transport are the main groups. People going to work demand the urban transport system to enable them get fast to work. This involves mainly the people residing in the urban areas and need to go to work on time. This group includes school workers, government workers, journalist, bankers and other economic activities such as social or some other leisure activities. Much of the urban transport in Ghana includes taxis, min buses and the state transport facilities (Obeng-Odoom, 2009; Tefe & Jones, 2013). Buses are the main source of transport and account for a total of 61 percent of people moving from one place to another. The taxis accounts for 15 percent of the public transportation and the rest are buses across the country (Agyemang,2015; Vicente & Reis, 2016). One of the most important changes in the transportation system in Ghana is the shift from the mini buses to medium and big cars with capacities between 30-70 seats. The growing of public preference for quality buses and the sector continues to provide

options to travelers or tourists (Arata, Petrangeli & Longo, 2017; Vollpracht, 2016). Statistics from Ghana road and transport reveal that the road infrastructure is made up of 63,123 km of good roads network across the country. The trunk roads in the country are 12,787 km, 40,672 feeder roads and 9,765 km urban roads that all combined to form the road infrastructure (Jones et al., 2013; Nketiah-Amponsah & Aidam, 2017).



Figure 2. The road networks in Ghana

In May, 2011, there was a huge increased in the road network infrastructure in Ghana that rose to 13,368 km of trunk roads, 42,120 km of feeder roads and 12,601 km of urban roads throughout the country. This has created less traffic density in the country most especially in the large cities such as Accra, Tema, and Kumasi where there is always a traffic jam (Ray & Bhattacharyya, 2006; Cox, Beanland & Filtness, 2017). The road transport in Ghana is like in any other country in the world and the government is putting more effort to increase road networks.



Figure 3. Transport system by road in Ghana

## 2.12 Railways Transport System in Ghana

The railways in Ghana is a triangular type that runs up to 950 km and connected only to three towns namely Kumasi, which is the economic capital in Ghana, Takoradi in the western part of Ghana and Accra-Tema in the eastern part of the country (Dutta & Agarwal, 2017). These make tourists to move freely and easily from one destination to another. Transportation plays a major role in tourism (Hofman, 2014; Mulla et al., 2017). A destination with poor transportation system is not conducive for tourism. The transportation infrastructure was therefore built to accommodate tourism as new destination marketing (Vlasov, 2017; Adu-Ampong, 2015). The train transportation is also used to carry goods and services from one destination to another within the country. The trains connect the agriculture and mining areas to the sea ports of Tema and Takoradi. These types of trains are used for trailing minerals, cocoa and timber to right location of the sea ports to be exported. The government is still developing more rails ways so the whole country can be connected by train transportation.



Figure 4. Train transport in Ghana

### **2.13 The Air travel transport in Ghana**

Many international flights fly to Ghana, Accra and connect to other countries in Africa and other parts of the world (Moomen, 2012; Forsyth, 2017). Majority of international airlines fly directly and regularly to the Kotoka international airport in Accra which is the main international airport in Ghana. Presently Ghana is one of the 5 countries in West Africa that have large amount of flights from all over the world landing in the country as a destination (Wensveen, 2016; Shaw, 2016). The other countries that also experience similar large number of flights into their air space are Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria and Morocco. The Kotoka international airport runway has been enlarged to provide the right space for all kinds of aircrafts to land safely. Presently there are 23 international airlines flying to Ghana. Within the country, there are three more local airports (Otiso et al., 2011). There are about 8 cargo airlines working in the country and from Europe, China and the US while 4 local airlines working within the African continent (Chalfin, 2008). The statistics from the Kotoka International Airport suggest that in April 2014, shows 32,000 international aircraft travelled to Ghana and more than 1.69 million tourists landed in Ghana that includes arrival and departure. It was also revealed that 6 airlines served more than three domestic Airports from the Kotoka International Airport. 18,600 domestic airlines travelling from one location to another in the domestic destinations and 985,000 visitors were noticed in the period (Kawasaki, 2016).



Figure 5. Air transport in Ghana

## 2.14 Water Transport

The Volta Lake in the Volta region of Ghana was constructed in the 1960s as a lake to fuel the Akosombo dam that provides electricity for the whole Ghana (Hodgson, 2008; Obeng & Fiagbe, 2006). The Volta lake is the largest man-made lake in the world starting from 415 km that form the Akosombo 101 km North of Accra to a town called Buipe in the Northern part of Ghana (Darko, Akoto & Oppong, 2008). This water transport system in Ghana is used to transport to the north (Codjoe, 2007). The lake also stretches to Burkina Faso 200 km from the border between Ghana and Burkina Faso.

The water transport system of the Volta Lake plays an important role in the Ghana transportation system (Menshutkin, Filatov & Potakhin, 2009). It is an alternative to road and rail transport that provides a valuable low-cost water transport between the Northern part of Ghana and the South. The position of Ghana in West Africa has given her a big advantage. The country has a seaport and inland a big lake for transport system. Ghana is lucky it is not a land locked nation in Africa. The Volta

lake transport organization (VLTO) provides regular North and South cargo transport through the lake to either North or South as a destination.

## **2.15 Tourism Destination Distribution**

The position of Ghana in tourism activities moved from 17th in 1985 to number 8 in 1998 as one of the best countries in Africa for tourism destination and revenue earning nations. However the regional conference to enhance brand Africa that fostered tourism development in Accra, Ghana demonstrated that she was one of the best growing countries in Africa for tourism development (Christie et al., 2014; UNWTO, 2015). New policies are being designed regularly by the government to further develop and distribute tourism across the country. The reason is to attract quality tourists, meet their expectations and experiences while they are touring the country. It is not a secret that Ghana is struggling like any other country in Africa under endemic economic slowdown, debt from the IMF and high inflation rates (Reinhart & Rogoff, 2011; Cecchetti, Mohanty & Zampolli, 2010). Tourism has been identified as an option to alleviate the economic depression that has been recognized by the government to promote the region and engage the tourists' one on one while they are in the country. This is to make tourists feel comfortable to sell Ghana as a brand abroad. Engaging tourists in this manner make them royal and royalty can influence citizenship behavior and tourism in various positive ways.

As we all know high quality tourists do not only bring profits and job creation to the nation, but also ensures that the destination compromises in terms of the culture of the local people, their integrity, social and the bilateral relations as a whole. The generation of foreign exchange earnings and development of infrastructure to increase government revenue is also another important ideology behind the

governments' complete plan to support tourism development and distribution in the nation (Mowforth & Munt 2015). Tourism can reduce inflation, high governmental debt, reduce serious poverty and influence high economic development. Based on these reasons the government is keen to develop and distribute tourism around the entire country as a strategy for better tourism development.

## **2.16 Present Challenges of Tourism Prospects in Ghana**

It is true that the internet in the form of online destination marketing provides the possibility destination organizations to reach wider tourists worldwide (Edgell Sr, 2016). However, the starting cost of website development may not be cheap as it may require software application development, hardware and maintenance cost. There are many individual tourists who use the internet to search for prices of tourism products and service but prefer to pay for these services in person through travel agents (Bigné et al., 2010). If we consider the tourism products and services online, for instance, customers in Ghana use the internet marketing facilities to check for prices available in the tourism organizations such as hotels, museums, national parks and historical places (Kim, Chung & Lee, 2011). However, when it comes to the question of payments, customers do not have the will to pay online due to the fear of risk instead prefer to pay in person for the products and services. Meanwhile, in the European countries all hotel payments and bookings are paid through the internet (Magnini, 2016)

Another example is the mobile phone sales on the online. Customers wishing to purchase a particular type of item to use such as a mobile phone or a ticket to travel can go on the internet use the search engines to view all the features of the mobile phone or the ticket, but will prefer to go to the shop to examine the physicality of the mobile phone or to a travel agent to ask more about the destination before deciding to



buy in person (Carr,Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016; Chen, 2014; Rovai, 2016). The second problem is the efficiency of the use of the internet among customers. There are many people who still do not know how to use the internet properly in Ghana. It is therefore difficult to use the internet for online marketing activities that can lead to losses (Rasty,Chou & Feiz, 2013). Because the regulations of trade changes regularly and rapidly in the online marketing platform, frequent orientation are critically needed to upgrade and enhance customers understanding of changes to avoid errors and loses on the internet.

The biggest problem with online marketing in Ghana is the problem of vulnerabilities and fraudulent activities by criminals on the internet (Liska, 2016; Svensson, 2016). Criminals have taken the time to build fake websites to cause financial losses to customers. They design fake websites to look like original websites of tourism organizations to lure customers to put their personal details into those websites to get robbed of their financial resources (Ćurguz, 2016; Dong, 2016; Silva, 2017). This has become a difficult challenge for online marketing most especially the creating of spams. People can easily lose important confidential data to hackers through spamming. Because the internet is storeless and sales representative cannot be seen as a true face to face interactions.

Online marketing deficiency is a true lack of human touch requirements when tourism products and services are bought through a third party instead of direct from real time traditional tourism organizations which are the source (Sigala, 2011; Hasan & Morris, 2017). These challenges in the online destination markets have created no prospects for future relationship constructs that would have played a better role in repeating online shopping and future word of mouth exposure (Kumar & Kaushik,

2017; Shen et al.2017). Apart from these problems we also know that online destination marketing depends on information technology to design websites and these websites that tourists depend on to buy tourism products and services can develop faults (Buonincontri & Micera, 2016). However, online marketing has brought about transparency and ease of purchasing tourism products and service on the internet.

### **2.17 Future Challenges of Tourism Prospects in Ghana**

The challenges facing Ghana today is how to increase visitors' arrival and how to encourage transit arrivals from nearby West African countries (Walton, 2009). In order for Ghana to widen her online marketing, it is necessary for the country to properly manage online image or present a good reputation in foreign nations through the media and online word of mouth based on undoubtable websites (Frempong & Deichmann, 2015). Tourism in the African continent is on the rise and Ghana can benefit by making the best use of (WTTC, 2016) and through effective managerial barometers. The use of travel agents as strong method to market the setting should be encouraged. Ghana has a vast problem of high price hotel rates, and crime rate on the increase in the cities. Most of the crimes are believed to be coming from visitors from nearby countries (Owusu et al.,2015; Tankebe, 2010). The government of Ghana as from July 2016 required foreigners coming into Ghana to obtain visas and pay fees for resident. Crime rate from a specific country has been identified and the government has decided to find a solution to the problem by stopping visa free to a country that is noted for bank robbery, arm robbery, rape, and prostitution in the streets and other type of uncultured behavior (Ellis, 2009; Mazzitelli,;2007; Vigh, 2012). This kind of negative behavior drives tourists to other destinations of less hotel expenses and less crime.

Despite the fact that Ghana has a huge tourist attraction, the hotel industry in Ghana is one of the most dynamic industries in the nation and it continues to develop and grow every day. The (WTTC, 2016) forecasted that the hotel industry in Ghana is likely to double in size by the year 2020 and likely to become the largest industry in West Africa. The hotel growth and development in Ghana will provide employment opportunities for the youth with the right degrees or qualifications (Morrison, 2013; Lisitzina et al., 2015). It is noticed that when the world economy is on the verge of collapsing, a fast growth of the tourist industry in the country is still well noted to be progressing and prosperous. Indicators about tourism growth reveal that even when the whole world economy is inactive with many uncertainties on the prospects of employment, tourism still shows a great amount of growth (Adu-Ampong, 2017; Holden, Sonne & Novelli, 2011). Tourism can provide career choices and by improving the scope and future prospects of the tourism industry in Ghana. The tourism industry contributed to 2.4 percent to the GDP of Ghana. It is estimated that by 2026 tourism will contribute to the GDP of Ghana by 5.3 percent indicating Ghana as one of the fast growing economy in the tourism destination market in West Africa. Ghanas' visitors' exports in 2015 were valued at 8.1 percent that was about 3.700 million Ghana cedis. Tourism in the country is expected to expand more in the next few years to come because of the different changes taking place in the tourism sector. The supply and demand of tourism in Africa are on the large increase, which is affecting Ghana gradually (Shambare & Mvula, 2011). By the growth of tourism in the Ghana destination market, standard of living, education, disposable income and leisure times will increase, making a way for development through job creation for the local people, expansion of the infrastructure, new products will enter the destination market and services will be provided to customers around the settings.

## **2.18 The Prospects of Tourism in Ghana**

Online marketing has unfolded as one of the most important innovative methods used for promoting products and services on the internet (Adu-Ampong, 2015). The worth of online marketing is very popular around the world. Many businesses and organizations today use online marketing to sell their products online (Robinson et al., 2007). Online tourism destination similarly uses online marketing to target potential customers. Even though online sales have increased and many organizations are involved in the internet trade, fraud and insecurity makes online marketing vulnerable to many customers around the world (Parkinson et al. 2017; Kirwan & Power, 2016). Selling a business on the internet provides wide access to potential customers. It has been suggested that billions of people worldwide participate in the internet trade and many more people are becoming aware of the online marketing each day.

The sales of tourism products online to a large group of customers are a great target for many profits to the tourism business. Since the internet has no boundaries, people can sell tourism products to many geographical locations without any restrictions. The cost of promotions and advertising online is cheaper as compared to the traditional marketing (Rappaport, 2007). Based on the fact that tourism organizations benefit by advertising their products and services on the internet, the capability gives the tourism organizations the power to freely interact and connect with customers online to market their products (Ortega, Rodríguez & Such-Devesa, 2015). The internet has also made it possible to email discount related products directly to tourists. The use of the multi messaging system through the internet is advantageous to both tourism organization and their customers. Online marketers can use the

capability to send one email to several customers at one time and several feedbacks can also be received at the same time (Tankard, 2017).

Feedbacks on tourism products and services permit customers to make the organization know their experience while dwelling in the destination so destinations managers can improve on their products and services to attract more customers. It can also be noted that online marketing saves time and effort. The idea of employing customer service representative to answer questions from customers, all the information about the destination products are written on the internet for customers to read for themselves (Lin & Fu, 2016). A space can also be provided for frequently ask questions (FAQ) about the destination and the availability of services. The biggest advantage of the online marketing is that the goods and services, including the online destination tourism products are available where customers can go any time of their choice to view and purchase.

The evolution and growth of IT in the tourism and hospitality industry is a contemporary organizational strategy that plays a pivotal role in business success. The information-intensity of tourism and hospitality indicates that there is no area in the tourism industry that will not be touched by the use of information technology (Park & Chen, 2017). It is also noted that there is plenty of relevant literature on destination planning and development on the internet. However, few books about tourism destination examine the destination marketing in Ghana (Avraham & Ketter, 2016). This is also reflected in the academic research journals and the scientific research publications. The insufficiency of destination marketing literature in the destination embellishes the interest of researching in the setting to impact tourism on

the destination. It is noticed that destination marketing in Ghana is one of the most difficult entities to manage and market because of the complex nature of the relationship between the local stakeholders and management of the tourism products and services in the setting (Yan,2013; Dubey, 2017). The Ghana tourism destinations market experience involves the regions, various resources and the mixture of the tourism sites and services. Tourism products in Ghana do not belong to one person. They represent a group of professional and personal interest of many people who dwell and work in the locations. Management that conflict with stakeholder's interest makes it difficult to manage and control the destination market. A vibrant strategy is therefore required to take into consideration the wishes of the indigenous people, the business community and the interest group as a whole regarded as the stakeholders. It is only through this strategy tourism future prospects can be realized (Roy Roy,2015).

The development of destination typology is not an easy task because different travelers use destinations for different reasons. However, majority of tourism destinations can be documented in many categories which may represent the main attractiveness. The development of infrastructure that includes medium and small businesses, family own business, resorts, good hotels and international investment can bring about tourism prosperity to a destination (Xie & Meng, 2017). The government responsibility in general towards tourism promotions, policies, transportation, crime control and morality needs further consideration to attract tourists. By the comprehension and appreciation of the destination professionals in Ghana enhance development of suitable marketing schemes to market the setting in the right target to pull tourist into the setting.

Kumasi is naturally beautiful and has a magnificent landscape that set the destination to look naturally alluring. There are many tourist places such as lakes, rivers, hills, waterfalls; gardens game reserves and sea coast in the state. The slave trade centers are the most popular places in the country and each year millions of tourists from abroad and domestic visit the site. The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in Ghana was 2.7 percent in 2016 there was an increase of 5.0 percent. This means the future prospects of Ghana; particularly Kumasi in tourism is growing fast and will continue to grow if the destination market is properly managed with the right strategy (WTTC, 2016; Ochwang & Oduma, 2017).

Electronic marketing is very broad in the sense that it makes business transaction easy and organizational operations online appropriate to market based on a strong strategy. Online marketing can be used to prey on tourists and to make favorable decisions to purchase tourism products from the internet without any fear of fraud and other negative disadvantages online transactions (Cantalops & Salvi, 2014). The fast development of the internet has a big impact on the travel industry around the world. Tourism and travel has become a single biggest tourism kind of products sold largely on the internet. It is due to this reason, a large number of tourism operators on the web have increased considerably. The research of Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, (2013) revealed that destination marketing institutions provide information for potential tourists' wishing to vacate on destinations. The internet is used as a tool to promote and sell tourism product online.

Tourists use various tools to search for information related to services such as air travel, car rent, accommodation, and other types of tour services. It is therefore important to have a well-designed website to provide the required services for

tourists to make the right selections. With positive strategies and strong online word of mouth destinations can help travelers to enjoy memorable experience (Loureiro, 2014). Tourism destination marketing institution need to develop proper interaction with potential tourists to identify niche markets to promote the destination (Jones et al., 2014).

## 2.19 Internet Usage in Africa

Internet has been in the world for some time now and has a certain impact on business settings around the globe. The number of internet users has therefore greatly increased and the rise in customers buying behavior on the internet in Africa is observed enormous. The survey by Ebeling-Witte et al., (2007) published that customers' behavior and attitude towards internet marketing demonstrated was 88% of respondents involved in online buying activities. It is also revealed that travelers spend a lot of time using the internet to search for information and chatting up people in the social media (Tung & Huang, 2017; Kang, 2012). Research conducted by world internet users and population statistics suggests that there was a dramatic increase in internet usage in Africa (Porter & Donthu, 2006).The table 1 below explains the statistics of internet usage in the West African countries.

**Table 1. Internet usage in Africa 2016 statistics**

West Africa population from 2017 and the users of the internet statistics in the destination marketing						
Country Names	Population from 2017	Internet users from December, 2000	Internet users from December, 2016	Population % usage of the internet	Population % of usage in Africa	The use of social media From June 2016
Ghana	28,656,724	30,000	7,958,680	28 percent	2.4 percent	3,500,000
Nigeria	191,835,937,	200, 000	91,880,033	48 percent	27.4 percent	16,000,000
Benin	11,458,610	15,000	1,232,941	11 percent	0.4 percent	800,000
Togo	7,691,916	100,000	430,483	6 percent	0.1 percent	340,000
Burkina Faso	19, 173,323	10,000	1,894,499	10 percent	0.6 percent	600, 000
Cote d'Ivoire	23,815,887	40,000	5,230,000	22 percent	2 percent	2,400,000
Mali	18,689,967	18,800	2,212,450	12 percent	0.7percent	1000,000
Chad	14,965,483	1000	387,064	3 percent	0.1percent	170,000



## **2.20 Internet Usage in Ghana**

The use of internet among ordinary people is positive and using the internet to buy tourism products is on the rise around the world. Smartphones, laptops, and desktop computers have become indispensable components of tourists' day to day activities to chat, review messages and interact with goods and services around the world (Wok & Mohamed, 2017; Shah, 2017). The growth of computers among travelers has increased the consumption of internet and marketing channels for many customers and tourism institutions around the world (Friedrich et al., 2009; Su, Hsu & Swanson, 2017). Communications and promotions using internet have enormously increased (Shankar et al., 2010) due to the popularity of the technology.

The features in smartphones, laptops and desktop computers enable customers to purchase tourism products from various destinations, access and share information freely (Sultan et al.,2009). With the help of internet, customers can visit designed websites to interact and view tourism products. Attractive websites include graphical images, shapes, animations, fonts, and complete layout of destinations (Cyr,& Bonanni, 2005; Lee et al., 2010). Quality websites impact customers experience while interacting and using the website (Hwang et al., 2011). Design websites should be easy to use, easy to navigate and user friendly. Previous empirical research revealed that internet purchasing behavior of customers differ based on the user friendliness of the website and the perceptions of online buying behavior of tourism products (Cantalops & Salvi, 2014)

Recommendation from Luna-Nevarez & Hyman (2012) proposes that well-designed websites with irresistible features appeal to customers. It was further suggested that proper designed characteristics of good websites adds excitement, emotional satisfaction and attract customers to visit with the intention to purchase tourism products. One of the important thing tourists look for on a website is the user friendliness of the design hallmarks, logical navigations, and logical buttons dropdown (Chen, Hsu & Lin, 2010; Liu et al., 2013). Internet purchasing behavior and transaction requires commitment and formal assurance. These include searching for special target tourism services and valuable tourism products that satisfies customers' selection needs, evaluation requirement, ordering focus, payment and delivering among different available options (Tomazos, Ogorman & Maclaren, 2017). Due to severe competition among various destination markets around the globe, it will be proficient to maintain an attractive and efficient websites with a guarantee to provide prevention of vulnerability security problems and risk free to attract and retain more customers. In West Africa however, the most two populated countries are Nigeria and Ghana and internet is more used in these two countries in West Africa than any of the other countries.

**Table 2. Internet usage in Ghana and Nigeria 2016 statistics**

West Africa population from 2017 and the users of the internet statistics in the destination marketing						
Country Names	Population from 2017	Internet users from December, 2000	Internet users from December, 2016	Population percent usage of the internet	Population percent of usage in Africa	The use of social media From June 2016
Ghana	28,656,724	30,000	7,958,680	28 percent	2.4 percent	3,500,000
Nigeria	191,835,937,	200, 000	91,880,033	48 percent	27.4 percent	16,000,000

## **2.21 Website marketing through the internet**

In recent times internet marketing has been of great effect on many tourists' decision-making process. The number of internet users dramatically increased to 368 million worldwide (Giglia & Binns, 2014). This has influenced the increment in technology and social media users among tourists. The technological impact of the internet usage, therefore affected destination marketing, promotions of tourism organizations and various tourism attractions including products and services. Many tourism customers depend on the web based marketing to make decisions to travel to destinations of their choices (Gitto & Mancuso, 2017; Leung & Dickinger, 2017). Online destination marketing has been growing in Ghana with almost 90 percent of tourists have been using the internet to search destination to visit. The increase in the destination marketing through the internet has the full potential and opportunities to market Ghana as a tourism destination to various populations which will increase temporal job opportunities for the youth.

The destination marketing can also be improved by good strategies such as travel promotions where more temporal jobs can be created, investment can be increased and more tourists may intend to visit the destination (Khan et al.,2017; Leung, Dickinger & Nixon, 2017). Increasing destination marketing through the use of websites can have a great impact on the location by growing the economy. Many organizations in Ghana have started acting as sources for online destination marketing by using effect social media to contact their potential customers. Based on the fact that there is an increase in knowledge of how the internet marketing and social media affects tourists' decision-making behavior.

## **2.22 Government Websites**

The government websites are categorized into two layers. One providing interaction and added value characteristics like currency converters, contact form in web based format, online postcards, interactive maps showing directions to locations, downloading of materials; special offers web camera functionalities that can give a minute or two update information about Ghana' famous attractions (Doolin,2002; Bilgihan & Bujisic 2015). Ghanaweb.com ([www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com)) is a website where visitors can see images and information about Ghana and this online experience can be useful to attract potential tourists to the destination.

The websites are designed to have online support systems that include frequently ask questions (FAQs) and various types of search engines to help tourists look for the information they want. The searching of a database can provide information about tourism activities, attractions of different types, accommodation communications, shopping information and various events. Some websites have pop ups or pop under for advertising to pull customers to the destination. The government websites provide useful information about Ghana. The government websites are completely different from the business websites in that the government website does not include online booking of accommodation and tours. They do not also have classifications of online transactions such as travel products and services.

## **2.23 Business Websites**

The business websites are designed broadly to deal with business activities. They have a broader range of functions and often complex. Most of the business websites are private ownership (Abeysekera, 2017). Some of the websites use android application on google play that can be used to download much information and

applications for all types of computers including mobile phones. The websites may also include emails, online search, online booking of different types of accommodations, travels and tours (Panigrahi, 2012; Sigala, 2011). Business websites have features that support multi- languages, multimedia and animation functions and membership registration form on the internet. Based on the features of the business websites online transactions can be supported such as selling and buying of tourism products directly from the websites to customers or potential tourists without the involvement of a third party.

Business websites also have secured websites function to protect customers and potential tourists from fraudulent activities. The websites provide secured systems for online payment of tourism products and services that ensure tourists confidentiality throughout the process of transactions of the business on the internet. Business websites go further to assure their clients of protection and refund in case of attack on credit cards by internet criminals (Credit Cards and Debit Cards, 2015; Dorey, 2017). Most business websites are properly integrated into the business organizations value chains.

The business organization website creates one stop platform for tourists and allocates resources such as online reservation of accommodations and buying of air tickets to the destination of visitors' choice. One stop platform is a situation where tourism organizations offer multiple tourism products and service on the internet to customers that are convenient and efficient, but to also create the opportunity for the organization to sell more products and service to customers (Chung, 2015;Zhang, 2016). Many tourism organizations across the world are taking advantage of tourism business websites to promote and sell products and services.

## **2.24 Search Engines**

As we all know search engines are programs that allows document search to be conducted using specific words (Chetthamrongchai, 2017). Search engines can be divided into three categories. The first category is the primary search engine, the second one is called the secondary search engine and the last is called the target search engine (Xiang et. Al., 2015; Ho, 2012) many customers, tourists and ordinary people on the daily bases use the internet to look for information to various tourism destinations. Search engines associated with the World Wide Web are the only source of reliable information search that can provide accurate data to customers through websites and this can sometimes cause traffic in search engines. Search engines have been created to specialize in the provision of valuable information to people who need it.

Customers are therefore advised to use the keywords they are looking for in search engines. The idea behind the development of search engines was to market products on the internet. Customers use search engines to look for goods and service, tourism products and other types of items on the internet for purchasing purposes. Search engines revealed that there are difference between methodologies and the evaluation of research papers (Chu & Rosenthal, 1996; Yang, 2010; Ward & Peppered, 2016). Search engines furnish basic tools for scholars to conduct research on the internet. A research conducted by Griesbaum (2004) compared google, ALvista and Lycos revealed that google was the best search engine among all. The research about search engines compare with different characteristics of other search engines demonstrated that there are contradictions in the results (Robinson & Wusteman, 2007; Hochstotter & Koch, 2009) based on different point of views. A Greek researcher Lazarinis

(2005) requested 10 research engine users to conduct a search on 6 international search engines such as Google, msn, AOL, AltaVista and ask.com compare with Greek search engines such as in.gr, pathfinder.gr, plantis.gr. The results revealed that AOL and ask.com could not recover results using Greek queries, but the remaining of the 6 international research engines retrieved more items in the Greek language.

Search engines are very important in the sense that millions of people use them every day to look for data or information needed for various purposes. Search engines are many but the most common ones are the google, yahoo, Bing and many more. Search engines provide services such as searching, matching of search results and outcomes of assessments. Search engines are websites or multiple of websites relevant to the information on their search. Search engines have two kinds of results in searching of information processes. One search result may show the organic outcome of the search engines where the results are freely selected by visitor's statistics. The trust worthiness of the websites are connected to the payments sponsored by hotels, tourism organizations to promote tourism destinations, tourism products, tourism destination images and many more. These types of search results mostly depend on keywords selection mechanism. This is purposely designed to attract tourists' attention and entice the use of websites to look tourism products and services (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016)

## **2.25 Social Media Network**

Social media was not available decades ago so tourism was never as popular as it is today on social media. The platform for social media has become part of peoples' everyday lives. Web 2.0 has played a huge success in the advancement of social media and making it the best platform to sell tourism products considering the large

number of people using it and its' networks at this modern time and making it encouraging to implement social media marketing. Social media has common tourism tools to facilitate and enhance performance. Such tools are blogs, public videos, social forums and social network (Ignatova, Ivichev & Khusnoiarov, 2017; Li, 2011). The studies of Blair (2017) revealed that social media as a tool for online marketing has become competitive because several reasons. He stated that using social media to reach customers on the internet saves time and cost. He further suggested that social media as an internet marketing tool completely has brought about a big change from the ways customers get information and learn about tourism products and services to influence their decision processes. It has also become clear that customer relations show more closeness using social media. By this strong synergy between social media and the world population using the internet on daily bases has brought tourism products and services to the door steps of customers.

The characteristics of social media allow two way communications between the customers and online tourism destinations service providers (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2017; Briassoulis, 2017). It has also come to the notice service providers that tourists are no longer interested in posters, brochures, billboards, and other forms of traditional advertisement. Customers believe these traditional methods of reaching consumers do not provide enough information about the products and trust. This type of target marketing is dying off among customers. People believe that social media travel forums provide more useful update information and experience from previous passengers to the same destination. Trips are more information oriented about online destinations than just billboards and brochures.



## **2.26 Social Media Marketing**

The synergy between social media and the traditional procedure of marketing through advertising has created much impact in the views of many visitors and travelers. It is vivid that social media strengthened tourism online marketing strategy in various forms. It is also noted that the advantages of social media as a brand strategy can be used to market tourism products and service. Social media quickly spread destination image through information sharing (Leung, Dickinger & Nixon, 2017; Kim et al., 2017).

## **2.27 Social Media E-Mail Marketing Strategy**

E-mail marketing is a strategy that has been around for some years now, but on a rise in recent times. It is a process where people are being targeted as sources to share products and service information. E-mails are sent to such parties to advertise tourism destination products and services. This is the reason people see uncontrollable emails daily in their e-mail accounts. Customers and potential partners' experience email floods in their inboxes every day from companies, organization and individuals trying to sell something. E-mails are used to improve business, create expansion and update new information about products and service. E-mails are categorized into two groups-mails for sending messages to customers and e-mail as a tool to market products and services to potential partners and customers (Charlesworth, 2009). E-mails can be used as a direct source to market products through subscription and announcements where messages are sent periodically to specific customers. Junks and spam e-mails have been troubling customers and making it difficult for people to trust what is coming into their e-mail accounts. This has reduced the direct effects of business images to customers. Most junk and spam e-mails seem to have become popular with scam related issues. It is

therefore important to seek the permission of an e-mail owner before sending any messages to the person (Walden, 2017; Deliano & Oelert, 2001) to avoid the idea of being scammed.

The programmers of opt-in and opt-out are used to filter messages by online marketing managers to make certain the right messages meant for the right people are sent directly to them. Opt-in is a procedure where an e-mail recipient selects receiving e-mails options but opt-out acts as to whether to accept the e-mail messages or not (Charlesworth, 2009). E-mails are used for both direct and indirect online marketing messages. E-mail marketing strategy is faster and time saving. It is also regarded as cost effective and widely used among millions of potential customers for messaging and selling products online.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Chapter 3 provides detail information about how data is obtained via self-administered prepared questionnaire to interview local and international tourists from various countries on visit to Ghana. The analytic approach through the study of Tan (2016) involves descriptive statistics which reveals that the reliability analysis such as confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis based on SPSS/AMOS software are important to analyze data. The research of Chen & Lu, (2015) inferred that internet communication plays a strong role in targeting potential tourists to visit online destination markets such as Kumasi in Ghana.

#### **3.1 Sampling Technique**

A Cluster sampling technique was used in this study. The target respondents were local and international tourists from hotels and guests houses in Kumasi. The cluster sampling procedure was used in the study because of the information that was obtained from Ghana tourists' board in Kumasi in the period of this research. It was disclosed that Kumasi has four 5 star hotels, three 4-star hotel, six 3 star hotels, nine 2 star hotels and 38 guests' houses. The authorities of the above-mentioned hotels and guests houses were therefore approached through emails to inform them about the purpose of the study and to obtain their endorsement for data collection. Only the management of the 4 star hotels, 3star hotels and the guest houses permitted the data collection for the research. The total number of the hotels was 9 and the guest houses

were 38 making a total of 47 both hotels and guest houses were involved in the research selected supervisors to collect the data from the respondent.

The hotel management did not allow the researchers to directly contact the tourists to collect data. These types of restrictions are recognized in similar studies at the central African region of Cameroon (Karatepe & Agbaim, 2012; Aleshinloye & Karatepe, 2009). The hotels and the guests' houses selected senior supervisors to share the questionnaire to the respondents and collected the outcome. The questionnaires were distributed with a time lag of three months to diminish the risk of potential method of common bias problems based on the studies of Podsakoff et al., (2003) and the research of Karatepe (2013). Each respondent that completed the questionnaire was given an envelope to seal them and put in a special allocated box to assure confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents involved in the study.

A total of one hundred and forty-three (143) questionnaires were distributed to the local tourists and one hundred and eighteen (118) were retrieved indicating eighty-three (83%) percent successes in the first sample. One hundred and thirty-five (135) questionnaires were distributed to the international tourists and one hundred and ten (110) questionnaires were collected back specifying eighty one percent (81%) successes in the second sampling. In table 1 the same sample indicates that 32 respondents representing twenty-seven percent (27%) had ages ranging from 18 to 25. Twenty-seven respondents out of twenty three percent (23%) had ages ranging from 28 to 35. Twenty-eight respondents with ages ranging from 38 to 45 had twenty-four percent (24%). Fifteen respondents with ages ranging from 48-55 were observed to be fourteen percent (14%) while the rest was more than 55. With particular reference to the educational background of the respondents, it is noted that 32 respondents representing twenty-seven percent (27%) were junior secondary

school graduates. 14 respondents with secondary school certificates represent twelve percent (12%). 16 respondents graduated from training college that represent fourteen percent (14%) and 20 respondents showed seventeen percent (17%) that have associate degrees from the University. Respondents with University degrees were just 28 that represent twenty-four percent (24%). Tourists with master degrees were only 8 indicating seven percent (7%) and were international tourists. The male respondents 52 represent fifty-three percent (53%).

The female respondents 45 show forty-seven percent (47%). 57 respondents were single, divorce or widows representing forty-three percent (43%). 61 respondents are married that represent fifty-two percent (42%). Majority of the respondents 38 had job tenure of 7 to 10 years representing thirty-two percent (32%). Respondents with job tenure of 15 to 16 years were 33 which represent twenty-eight percent (28%). 26 respondents had job tenure of 1 to 6 years that were twenty-two percent (22%) while 21 respondents have job tenure of 1 to 14 years showing eighteen percent (18%) in the sample.

### **3.1.2 Questionnaire structure**

There are total of 32 questions in the research questionnaire. There will utilized to engage visitors at Kumasi as an online destination market to find out tourists visit intentions. It is important to engage travelers with questionnaire as research instrument consisting of many questions to understand travelers visit intentions. This will enable researchers to gather information from respondents related to the study. The questionnaire is structured to collect primary data in an online destination marketing survey to impact respondents to furnish complete and correct information for the research.

### **3.1.3 Data Collection**

This research is based on quantitative tourism destination marketing that includes the survey of customers through the use of questionnaires. This type of research can also be conducted face to face with tourists or over the telephone, through the post or even e-mails. It can also be conducted through online on a website where the survey questions are carefully considered so that the outcome of the study will produce meaning data.

Sample questions that can possibly be posed to local and international tourists

- Have you used the internet recently to purchase tourism products? Yes/no
- Did you travel to a destination by buying your ticket online recently? Yes/no
- Did you use the travel agents? Yes/no
- Did you buy the ticket yourself? yes/no
- Did you take some time to get information online about the destination?  
Yes/no
- Were the messages positive? Yes/ no
- Were the messages negative? Yes/no

### **3.1.4 Back translation**

The questionnaire were prepared in English because Ghana is a major English speaking country, as a result, there was no need for back translation (McGory, 2000).However, the questionnaires were used for a pilot study on a group of local tourists at a beach resort in Accra. The questionnaire were found to be understandable and there was no need to change the variables

### **3.1.5 Measurement**

This study uses cluster sampling technique. Cluster sampling is a process by which a sample is chosen to represent a target population. Cluster sampling is popular in

marketing studies. Williams (2000) revealed that cluster sampling is an approach by which sample objects are chosen because they are recommended for a specific target population of interest. In this research, the participants use various networks and website to buy and sell tourism products to travel to destinations of their selections in the Ghanaian tourism destination. Cluster sampling is deemed appropriate to conduct the research within this study because the data is collected from hotels and guest houses at different geographical locations in the destination. Due to the fact that users on the internet purchases tourism products online may be regarded as a representation for the sociodemographic group of the population in Ghana to be targeted. Cluster sampling is popular with conducting online destination marketing studies. The respondents who will answer yes to the above questions will be labelled as: Online-message-posters (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Barreto, 2014) and those who will answer no to these questions will be regarded as: Online-message-readers (Liu & Park, 2015; Doh & Hwang, 2009; Tseng, 2017). The survey was conducted during the drying season of 2015 in Ghana which is winter season in Europe where people travel to warmer destinations to avoid the harsh cold temperatures. The climate conditions vary between Europe and Africa. When it is winter in Europe it is a complete summer in the whole of Africa and as people want to have the sun, they travel to various destinations in Africa.

### **3.1.6 The Theory**

The approach of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been used for various studies in tourism destination marketing using quantitative research methods. For instance, March & Woodside (2005) used the theory of planned behavior to study tourists' decision-making process in deciding to travel to a destination of a choice. Getz & Page (2016) used the theory of planned behavior to study research policies

and planned events. The events include meetings, festivals, exhibitions, and various ranges of other events. This has made important contribution to business and tourism destination marketing literature. The research of Gössling et al. (2012) used the theory of planned behavior to examine natural tourism destinations, personal safety issues and travel cost among tourists travelling to destinations based on motivational factors. In recent times, the research of Spencer (2013) used the theory of planned behavior to conduct studies on a decision-making process towards accommodation in hotel facilities, shopping, attending entertainments, outdoor recreation and activities that are not planned prior to tourists' departure. Zhang et al., (2007) used the extended version of the theory to study internet shopping behavior Zheng, Lee & Cheung, (2017) and examine the online shopping behavior. Similarly, Mosteller et al. (2014) and Hsu, Chang & Chen, (2011) utilized TPB to present the focus on tourism online products and services that influence the selected aspect of online shopping experience among travelers. This research also highlights the influence of information technology as the most important factor that impacts tourists' perception based on cognitive behavior, positive affectivity and choice of judgment based on digital shopping context. More recently, Xiang et al. (2015) employed the TPB to study how the internet continues to evolve and influence the way tourists acquire access to travel related information regarding destinations and making decisions to visit. Lee, Cerreto, & Lee (2010) employed TPB to investigate lecturers' intentions to use computers to create and teach courses. This reflects the successful application of the theory of planned behavior and the reinforcement of its utility for research involving tourism destination marketing. This study, therefore expands upon the growing body of literature specifically for this discipline with a new focus on intention to visit based on tourists' satisfaction and the destination reputation.



## Chapter 4

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Multiple item scales obtained from suitable tourism literature were used to measure information searching, online word of mouth, tourists' satisfaction, and intention to visit. Information searching was defined using four items from the studies of (Bragazzi, 2014). Similarly the study of Weitzl (2017) was used to measure online word of mouth information searching, intention to visit and the control variables (Sun et al.,(2017). Tourists' satisfaction was measured using four scales items and the scale was adapted from the studies of Hung & Petrick (2012) and Prayag et al.(2017). Gender was coded as a dichotomous variable where male =0 and female was =1 while age and education were not measured as they appeared insignificant in the analysis. The overall measurement quality was evaluated by applying succession and a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor detailed examinations through the study of (Acock, 2013; Marsh, Nagengast, & Morin, 2012). The internal reliability estimations were analyzed through the accepted cutoff level of 0.70. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis was utilized to evaluate the hypothesis. The recommendation of Baron and Kenny (1986) was used as a guide to test the mediating effects of the hypothesis. This type of approach is vastly applied in the tourism literature (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Kim, 2008). The control variables (age, gender, marital status, education, and job tenure) were entered into the first step in addition to online destination image as independent variables and degree of interest to visit as the dependent variable to predict online tourists' satisfaction. In

the second step online tourist satisfaction as independent variables and degree of interest to visit was entered as the dependent variable to predict online tourists' satisfaction. In the third step, online destination image was entered as dependent variable and degree of interest to visit was entered as dependent variable. The process continued for in the same manner for all the other variables. The mediator variable (Tourists' satisfaction) was introduced into the relationships between the independent and the dependent variable to determine the mediation effects of each relationship. The process was repeated for the entire mediator hypothesis. The Sobel test was conducted to investigate the important effects of the mediating when the results were noticed to be a full mediation.

Table 3. The standardized coefficients

Scale	Factor loading	Eigen Value	P% Variance	Alpha Value	AVE Value
<b>Online tourists' satisfaction</b>		1.87	26.04	0.90	0.68
I will purchase online tourism products if the website is safe	0.83				
Tourists are very concerned about the security of a website to purchase tourism products on the internet	0.88				
Tourists should avoid putting personal details online to purchase tourism products if the website is not secure	0.75				
<b>Online word of mouth</b>		1.92	22.08	0.91	0.71
Online information search about Ghana as a tourism destination was very valuable to me	0.69				
I gained a new knowledge about Ghana as a tourism destination on the internet	0.73				
The online information before arriving to the destination was useful	0.81				
Online information as electronic word of mouth about the destination was helpful	0.68				
<b>Online vulnerability security</b>		2.41	13.42	0.93	0.66
Making an online booking by myself to visit the tourist destination was easy	0.81				
I bought the ticket online with my own credit card	0.84				
Buying the ticket online was cheaper than buying from a travel agent who charge commission	0.79				
Travelling to a destination after an online information search was useful	-				
<b>Online destination image</b>		2.26	18.11	0.90	0.73
Most people have positive opinions about the online destination image	-				
The online destination image website is user friendly	0.72				
The online destination images are update frequently	0.81				
Online images show previous entertainment pictures of happy tourists	0.88				
Online destination images can deceptive	0.85				
<b>Degree of interest to visit</b>		2.64	12.52	0.92	0.70
Online destination images of night life and entertainment was nice to watch	0.91				
Online images of the opportunity to get enough rest	-				
Online images showing the cleanliness of the destination	0.86				
Tourist decision to visit the destination depends on the online images viewed	0.90				

## **4.1 Results of Measures**

The importance of reputation/image formation is based on the decision making process of visitors that concerns the beliefs, emotions and behavior intentions of tourists to visit. The online destination image, online word of mouth and online security vulnerability consequently measures the behavior intention of tourists wishing to visit that serves as independent variables. These in turn have strong influence on the behavioral impact through the dependent variable degree of interest to visit. The mediator variable which is the tourists' satisfaction plays the role of the mediation between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Rucker et al.,2011). According to the theory of Baron and Kenny (1996), mediation is categorized into two parts namely full or partial mediation. The partial indicates significant relations between the mediator and the independent and dependent variables. The mediator variables in simple terms explains the relationships between the independent and dependent variables (Zhao et al. 2010)

The procedure of the full mediation is regarded as the complete intervention or full explanation of the link between the independent and dependent variables based on the hypothesis. These were obtained from empirical studies and a literature reviews (Zhao et al., 2010; Rucker et al., 2011). The literature demonstrates several online destination image measurement concepts that can be utilized in data collection. Questionnaire was set to investigate the impact of online destination image on tourists wishing to visit.

Online word of mouth affects tourists decision to visit either in a positively or negatively (Reichelt, 2013; Westby, 2017; Weitzl, 2017). The manipulation of user

generated content (UGC) to delete tourists' negative messages on websites of tourism organizations is not the only way to deal with negative destination image or reputation. There are more ethical measures that can be used to deal with such problems that will not damage the destination reputation. For instance, tourism organization at destinations should make it their goals to respond to all generated feedbacks whether there are negative or positive. They should also thank the tourists who wrote the comments by explaining that they thank them for taking the time to express their views on their experience in the destination organization and that you will address the complaint so it does not occur next time.

In the situation that the feedback is negative based on the word of mouth message on the destination organization website, the organization should show surprise first upon learning about the negative experience so that the tourists may perceived that it was an accidental and exceptional case. The organization should render apology to the tourists for well-founded complaints and explain to tourists what action they intend to take to correct the problem. The problem should be acknowledged publicly as an error to create a good image. This will further create trust among potential tourists wishing to visit. These types of response will make tourists feel like the organization listens to them.

Hackers are on the lookout for security vulnerability on the web applications to take advantages of travelers based on less secured website (Harwood & Harwood, 2015). The purchasing of tourism products and services on the internet can also be a major concern to tourists (Laudon & Laudon, 2017). Tourism organizations need to protect tourism products and services against cyber-attacks and data breaching. The security control for cyber defense is very significant that includes Tripwire solutions to

protect web infrastructure in tourism institutions against fraud on the internet (Tripwire solutions, 2017; Luke et al. 2004, April; Agrafiotis et al., 2017).

The overall measurement was evaluated by using a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 suggests that online tourists' satisfaction internal validity was fit and valid. Online word of mouth was measured with a four-item scale originally developed by Chen and Tsai (2007) in China. The response to each of the items of online destination image, online word of mouth, online tourists' satisfaction towards tourism destinations and degree of interest to visit were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The same scale was utilized by Perdue and Kim (2011).

The Cronbach's alpha value for online word of mouth was 0.91, demonstrating strong internal validity of the research model. Online security vulnerability was measured on a four-item scale that originated from Goode and Harris (2007). Similar research conducted by Hu et al (2010) measured online security vulnerability and the development of social network security. Travelers use social media to share experience, read reviews, watch videos and photographs. Tourism and hospitality organizations and hotel managers in Kumasi should therefore provide information to visitors on the internet and expect feedbacks (Wan & Law, 2017). Tourists are more confidence and trust messages from other tourists more than any advertisements source. The scale options were from 1 to 5 and the Cronbach's alpha was valued at 0.90, which indicates that the internal validity evaluation was strong. Online destination image used a five-item scale that originated from Kotler and Gartner (2002) and a similar scale was used by Groves and Timothy (2001) to measure online destination image. The Cronbach's alpha was valued at 0.90, indicating strong

internal validity. The degree of interest to visit was measured on a 1–5-item scale originating from (Jang et al., 2015; Law & Wong, 2010; Li et al., 2013). A similar scale was used by (Tang, 2014; Wang et al.2016) and Zhang et al., (2016). The Cronbach's alpha for this measurement was 0.90 for internal validity. As shown in Table 3, the items used in the questionnaire were viable. Note: Each item was measured on 5-item Likert scale and the total variance explained by all the factors was 68.07. This measurement dropped due to the loading problems of some items. The Cronbach's alpha was computed to measure internal reliability and consistency. The acceptable cut-off level was 0.75 (Hair et. al., 1998). Since the entire alpha values are between 0.90 and 0.93, the results indicate that the internal reliability and consistency were very high.

For a more detail assessment, the confirmatory factor analysis was performed by using a software application known as AMOS 22. Table 3 shows a good fit of the five-factor model fit statistics where (Chi square)  $X^2 = 248.07$  and (degree of freedom)  $df=153$ . The GFI (goodness of fit index)=0.84; the AGFI (Adjusted goodness of fit index)= 0.89; NFI (Non-Normed fit index)= 0.91; NNFI (Non normed fit index)=0.90 CFI (Comparative fit index)=0.90; IFI (Incremental fit index) = 0.09; RMSEA( Root square error of approximation)= 0.07 and SRMR (standardized root mean square residual)= 0.06. The discriminant validity is estimated through the theory of Fornell and Larcker (1981) for the AVE (average variance extracted). Harman's single factor was also used on the model to reduce common methods bias. The variance were subjected to a fix single factor where the variance explained were 34.08 % indicating more variance are not explained

**Table 4. Mean, STD, correlations of the study variables**

No	Variables	Mean	STD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Age	3.26	1.96	-									
2	Gender	3.45	1.55	0.22	-								
3	Education	2.76	1.15	0.20	0.24	-							
4	Job tenure	4.20	1.93	0.15	0.17	0.21	-						
5	Marital status	3.06	2.52	0.20	0.29	0.04	0.02	-					
6	Online destination image	2.52	2.98	0.02	0.19	0.18	0.21	0.24	-				
7	Online word of mouth	3.51	2.91	0.18	0.16	0.14	0.22	0.20	0.41**	-			
8	Online vulnerability security	4.72	2.85	0.10	0.13	0.17	0.16	0.23	0.48**	0.52**	-		
9	Online tourist's satisfaction	3.04	1.79	0.23	0.15	0.19	0.11	0.39*	0.44**	0.47**	0.45**	-	
10	Degree of interest to visit	3.22	2.26	0.24	0.13	0.15	0.2	0.19	0.37*	0.38*	0.37*	0.42*	-

The correlation table indicates that the control variables, including age, gender, education, job tenure and marital status, were all not significant. The items similar in characteristics or those that corresponded to each other were averaged and the median was calculated to obtain the composite results representing the constructs. The correlations, means, standard deviations and alpha values are shown in Table 4.

**Table 5. Hierarchical Regression Model analysis for the value of the standardized coefficients of the relationship between dependent and independent variables.**

Variables	Step 1	Step2	Step3	Step1	Step2	Step3	Step1	Step 2	Step 3
Age	0.11	0.13	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.17	0.19	0.14	0.11
Gender	0.15	0.10	0.06	0.19	0.04	0.17	0.13	0.18	0.03
Education	0.13	0.12	0.18	0.15	0.12	0.08	0.12	0.16	0.07
Marital status	0.04	0.08	0.13	0.14	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.01
Degree of interest to visit	-	0.35***	0.09	-	0.28**	0.10	-	0.25**	0.11
Online tourists' satisfaction	-	-	0.45***	-	-	0.34**	-	-	0.27**
F- statistics	16.52***	13.81***	21.15***	5.09*	6.51*	8.02**	3.91*	10.00**	9.05**
R <sup>2</sup> at every step	0.12	0.17	0.41	0.14	0.20	0.45	0.15	0.25	0.35
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	-	0.05	0.24	-	0.06	0.25	-	0.10	0.13

Note: The outcome of this analysis does not indicate issues of multicollinearity.  $\beta$  stands for better values of the standardized coefficients results. The control variables did not indicate any significance as shown on the table without asterisk. Marital status was coded as a dichotomous variable where married =1 and non-married =0. Age was coded as data and the gender was coded as female= 1 and male=0. The correlation significance was shown as \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$  and \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Online destination image (ODI), Online word of mouth (OWM), Online vulnerability security = (OVS), online tourists' satisfaction (OTS) and degree of interest to visit (DOTV).

As indicated in Table 3, online tourists' satisfaction positively related to online destination image,  $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; online tourists' satisfaction has a positive relationship with online word of mouth  $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; and online tourists' satisfaction has positive relations with online security vulnerability,  $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . This indicates that hypotheses H2a, H2b and H2c are all supported. The results of the mediation effects are presented in Table 3. The online destination image had a positive relationship with degree of interest to visit,  $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; this showed that when the mediator of online tourists' satisfaction to visit tourism destinations was introduced into the model, the magnitude of the online destination image on the degree of interest to visit was reduced in the relationship. Thus, the result was no longer outstanding in the relations, while an increase in the  $R^2$  of the model was indicated as  $R^2 = 0.24$ ,  $P < 0.01$ . Online word of mouth also had a positive relationship with degree of interest to visit,  $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The results demonstrated that when the mediator was introduced into the model, the size of the relationship was minimized, and the result was no longer significant; however, an increase was evident in the  $R^2$  of the model,  $R^2 = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Finally, the relationship between



online security vulnerability and degree of interest to visit revealed positivity,  $\beta=0.25$ ,  $p<0.05$ . The result showed that when the online tourists' satisfaction as a mediator was included in the model, the effects were no longer significant, indicating full mediation. This also further demonstrated an increase in the  $R^2$  of the model,  $R^2=0.13$ ,  $P<0.05$  the outcome of the Sobel test on online tourists' satisfaction as a mediator in Table 3, the Sobel test results between online destination image and degree of interest to visit was  $t=5.01$ ,  $p<0.001$ . This suggests that online tourists' satisfaction exhibits full mediation with degree of interest to visit tourism destinations, thereby supporting hypothesis H2c. Similarly, a Sobel test of the role of online tourists' satisfaction as a mediator between online word of mouth and degree of interest to visit suggested full mediation with degree of interest to visit,  $t=4.10$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; thus, hypothesis H2b in Table 3 was supported.

A Sobel test performed on online tourists' satisfaction as a mediator was placed between online security vulnerability and degree of interest to visit, and the results indicated full mediation,  $t=3.26$ ,  $p<0.05$ . Thus, H2c was supported.

## **Chapter 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

This research has made a significant contribution to the tourism and hospitality management literature in different ways. The most important contribution is the testing of the mediating effects of the online tourists' satisfaction on the relations between (i) Online destination image and the degree of interest to visit, (ii) Online word of mouth, and degree of interest to visit and (iii) online security vulnerability and degree of interest to visit. The second most significant contribution is the bridging of the gap in the tourism literature where little or no empirical research has been conducted on these mediation effects in Ghana, which is a developing country in western Africa. The final most important contribution is the way data is retrieved from the front desk employees with a time lag of three months. Significant findings developed from the investigation of the empirical results shows that results related to online destination image and online tourist's satisfaction are in accordance with the research of Funk et al., (2007) and Bai et al., (2008).

The theory of planned behavior in relations to the conceptual research model combined with the study of Bagozzi (1992) were utilized to conclude that online destination image has a strong credibility which has a dynamic influence in online tourist's satisfaction. Degree of interest to visit therefore depends on the impact of online destination image through tourists' perception. When travelers visit destination marketing, temporal employments based on tourism activities are created

that leads to income generations for the tourism destination organizations and the employees working in the organizations. When tourists visit destinations, temporal jobs are created and incomes are generated for the tourism institutions and the employees working in them which lead to tourist satisfaction. The findings of the online word of mouth and online security vulnerability in relation to online tourists' satisfaction influence visitation according to the current research of Liu (2015). The outcome of the study suggests that online destination image on degree of interest to visit was impacted by superior performance. Based on this, the online destination image affects the desire of interest to visit by large number of tourists. Destination image has huge effect on the visitors and a target population to influence to degree of intention to visit (Dorcic & Komsic, 2017)

Destination image has a deep mutual effect on the actual visitation of tourists (Zhou, 2014; Dewi, 2017). Furthermore, the outcome of the research proposes that online satisfaction has mediating effects with online destination image, online word of mouth, online security vulnerability and the degree of interest to visit. The findings indicate that online tourists' satisfaction mediate between online security vulnerability and the degree of interest to visit, conformity in accordance with a previous study by (Gatignon, 2013). Based on the reference to TPB, it is important to notice that visitors with a strong perception of online destination image are extremely captivated to the relevant tourism destination. When tourism products and services are displayed and marketed online, managers from tourism organizational without realizing. When tourism products are displayed and sold on the internet, managers of tourism organizations consider the rules of TPB without knowing. The employees at the tourism destinations should engage in good customer services and good behavior toward effective performance that will eventually benefit the tourism and hospitality

organization (Mele & Cantoni, 2017). This contributes practically to the tourism management literature and bridge the existing gap. This provides information that relies on the empirical studies relating to online tourists' satisfaction as full mediation effects of degree of interest to visit. The researchers tested the model relationships through data collected from hotels and guest houses in Ghana. This was important because Ghana has attracted little research attention on tourism destination marketing (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). This study therefore closed the gaps in the tourism management literature in this destination marketing and contributed to knowledge to the tourism literature. Comparing the results with those of other studies based on data collection in Europe and other developed countries, various similarities and difference were observed. Firstly, the findings related to the full mediation role of online tourists' satisfaction and online security vulnerability is in line with the study of Kim, Chung and Lee (2011) in South Korea. Similarly, the main findings regarding the effects of online tourists' satisfaction on degree of interest to visit agreed with the empirical research of Devesa, Laguna and Palacios (2010) in Spain.

Additionally, the results related to the impact of online tourists' satisfaction on intention to visit were comparable to the outcomes noted by the study of Allameh et al. (2015) in Singapore and Iran respectively. However, the findings affiliated with the effects of online word of mouth on online tourists' satisfaction were not associated with the research conducted by Rojas and Camarero (2008) in Spain. The overall results suggested that though there are differences between the miscellaneous empirical research findings, the empirical studies and findings associated to European countries as destination markets that can be widely applicable to different cultures. Lastly, a large number of previous researches are focused on data collection

at one point in time or self-reported data which are link to the studies of Chang, Witteloostuijn and Eden (2010). This study on the other hand used data collected from front desk employees in the travel agents and their regular customers 3 months apart with the intention to reduce common bias problems.

Africans must know African so as to bring prosperity and development into the continent from tourism and destination marketing. This powerful statement was stated by the minister of tourism and culture at FetAfrik celebration in Seychellers (Alain St. Agnne, 2016). The development of tourism in Ghana is a means upon which the local people depend on for prosperity (Nam, Kim & Hwang, 2016; Rutelione & Hopeniene, 2016). This depends on the kind of education that comes with it, the intensity of the education and its' viability as a whole to the setting (Lundberg, 2017). The education that comes with the tourism can also be relied on the science, information and technology changes that can be experienced in the destination. Tourism is important for Ghana development for many reasons. First, tourism is a global experience and not only related to Ghana but to Africa and the world. Tourism is among the fastest growing industries globally (Sulh, Saufi & Rus, 2016; Zhou, 2014). Tourism is one sector that contributes vastly to the world economy and the only industry in the world that grows at the rate of four percent yearly for the past twenty years (Ivandić & Marušić, 2016). It was only 2001 during the September 11 incident in the USA that tourism declined worldwide to one percent growth. After three years later in 2004 tourism regained its momentum according to the records of the world tourism organization (Riley, 2014; Sigala & Chalkiti, 2014).

On the African continent, particularly in South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Ghana tourism has been growing at a faster rate. The September 11 problem in the world did not affect tourism in Africa and Ghana was one of the countries tourism boomed in that year. The international tourists' arrival in Africa was 29.14 million in 2002 with a record of 3 percent increase from both local and international visitors. However, Africa still needs to work harder to develop tourism that will improve people's life. There is no any country in the world that can be single out that her economy does not depend on or impacted by tourism development (Tsiftelidou, Kourkouridis & Xanthopoulou-Tsitsoni, 2017). Taking for instance Kenya, Egypt, Tanzania, South Africa, Ghana and the rest of the African continent such as Mauritius and Seychelles all depend on tourism to build their economies by creating temporal jobs for the youth (Turgarini & Sari, 2017; Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi, 2017). Tourism in Ghana is supposed to be supported by the government, travelers and the businesses but just a few organizations in Ghana are involved in tourism promotions (Wozniak et al., 2017).

The government should play a better role to encourage other organizations to get involved in tourism promotions and development of new attractions (Scheidegger, 2006). Ghana needs to identify new tourism attractions and upgrade the present existing ones in other to improve the method of communication to reach tourism businesses. Ghana should re-exam the country's vision and mission by re-looking into the new trend in tourism development such as building more hotels at different locations and grading them according to the international tourism standards for tourism purpose.

Despite the fact that there is no any uniform method of ranking hotels, Ghana needs to follow the international standard of hotels ranking to ranks her hotels (Högberg, 2017). The country needs to evolve a standard that is common globally for hotel ranking and creating tourists understanding. The practice of putting a structure and giving it a rank by hotel owners is not acceptable in Ghana (Manky, 2016). Apart from the fact the large number of tourists to Ghana come from Nigeria, there are also tourists from various countries that visit Ghana from Europe and North America. The statistics of (WTO, 2017) shows that by 2020 China will become the world number destination market for tourism based on this Ghana is looking forward to diversify a target area where by formulating a strategy to target tourist from Asia and South America.

The present challenges of the most difficult issues that set back tourism in Ghana are the elimination of poverty, diversification of the economy, creating jobs, income redistribution and the preservation of the destination as a whole. It is obvious that tourism is one of the most growing sectors in Africa and the world at large but poverty reduction is still a huge challenge in Ghana.

Tourism challenges in Ghana are very obvious and the opportunities to the local people across the country are yet to be realized (Khodadadi, 2016; Aynalem, Birhanu & Tesefay, 2016). The establishment of tourism in Kumasi as a tourism destination market has led to displacement of people from certain locations to create roads, shopping malls, entertainment centers and proper infrastructure to carter for tourism and this has brought problems between the government and the local people in the affected areas.

For Ghana to fully engage in tourism, the local people need training to deal with the image that exist in the country as a Ghanaian culture for the coming visitors to experience (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2016). A proper strategy is also required to build a good reputation in tourism in the destination successful to make it work for the poor. There are various reasons to associate tourism with poverty elimination in Ghana as an African country. It is well known that the tourism industry in Ghana is huge and has the potential to decrease poverty if properly managed (Carr, Ruhanen, & Whitford, 2016). With the proper development and management of tourism, jobs can be created for the youth and redistribution of income can be noted to include poverty reduction in the destination market.

The future challenges of tourism in Ghana depend on the various scenarios, campaigns, and policies the Ghana government intends to implement to make tourism work in the country. The government can use scenarios to recognize the present problems to demonstrate how those problems can play out in the near future. The building of scenarios by governments is therefore a valuable instrument to learn from tourism destinations past mistakes and explore the possibility for the future solutions of such related problems. It is not all tourism events that have follow ups that can be predicted because the future is not already predetermined (Mariam, 2015). The future of tourism is opened to several possible future effects.

The revelation of the world travel and Tourism council (WTTC, 2013) explains that the tourism sector in Ghana contributes directly to the Ghana economy by 2.63 billion cedis which is about (\$727 million dollars) in 2013 to the GDP of Ghana through tourism activities. This was a growth of three percent in total. This was more of the global average of tourism growth and development 2.9 percent worldwide.



However Ghana was lacking behind Gambia in the tourism benefits by 9 percent, Senegal by 5.3 percent and Kenya 4.3 percent in 2013. Tourism has a huge impact in the Ghanaian economy. The government of Ghana should attached positive attitude to tourism. Over the next 3 years, thus by 2020 the government of Ghana should be ambitious to increase tourists numbers in the destination by promoting the destination through the social media. The intention to market the natural beauty of Ghana on the internet, the cultural heritage, Ghanaian hospitality, safety and security in the online destination market to both international and local tourists will make Ghana a suitable destination to visit.

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The role of information technology as a tool for searching through search engines represents an implication for online destination marketing. The growing significance of online word of mouth and tourism information search is a major concern for this study (Chetthamrongchai, 2017; Ukpabi & Karjaluo, 2017). Websites should provide different types of tools and marketing channels to facilitate communication and engagement of potential tourists and their information needs (Bastida & Huan, 2014). Simple website does not longer have a place in the online destination marketing because of the advance in technology. Hotels websites should include business functions of distributed information, videos, relationship building, booking, transactions and the overall marketing of the hotel. For destination markets to understand effective use of websites from the hotel context, it will be important for the managers to examine the latest use of websites in online marketing institutions to understand the future trends and developments.

First, hotel managers should be encouraged to use online destination image as a strategy to attract local and international tourists and persuade them to visit. Using an effective strategy will generate interest in the destination market among potential tourists, and impact visitation intentions (Kim & Lee, 2015). The global competition among several destination markets has made it necessary for tourism organizations to improve their strategies to attract more tourists. The provision of basic information

on tourism products and services are not enough to withstand the severe competition among destination markets (Shuai and Wu, 2011). The development of websites qualities based on relationship orientation and information search can assist in directing tourist to destinations (Savolainen, 2014; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Internet communities like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and TripAdvisor are all new communication channels that can be adapted by tourism destination marketing organizations for online word of mouth messages. The online destination organizations in Spain used the Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr as a platform to communicate and influence tourist to visit (Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo, 2013; Ruiz-Mafé et al. 2009). Similarly, in Taiwan, though English is not a major language among the residents, hotels used Facebook and YouTube to disseminate information to potential tourists (Hsu, 2012)

Tourism products should be displayed with clear and accurate image to entice tourists to view and engage with them on the internet. The tourism information centers responsible for tourism in the local communities within the Kumasi environs should arrange and run training programs to upgrade the local peoples' understanding of online destinations positive reputation and internet vulnerability issues. This is important to help visitors become aware of Kumasi as a good reputation destination and more familiar with search engines and the possibility of internet crimes avoidance (Chiu et al. 2014; Nadube & Akahome, 2017). Tourism management and affiliated organizations should clarify the benefits of planned behavior to employees. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) influences employees to value the online destination image, online tourists' satisfaction, and degree of interest to visit and support organizations through hard work (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2016; Tegegne, Moyle & Becken, 2016). Furthermore, based on the standards of reciprocal ideology, the front desk employees who distributed the

questionnaire of this research to the local and international tourists expect recognition from their institutions, such as rewards for their tireless efforts. The commitment of tourism organizations to reward employees involves financial reimbursement or rewards based on non-financial activities, such as work life and benefits; where work life is non-traditional and intangible. With the ideology of TPB, tourists can be enticed and attracted to online destination market.

Secondly, training programs should be organized for front desk employees dealing directly with tourists in the destination, as this is important for planned behavior. Employees can be trained to understand the priorities of the institutions they represent to avoid errors when dealing with online tourists' satisfaction, expectations and needs (Suryawardani, Wiranatha & Petr, 2016). With trained employees to deal with online tourists, vulnerability issues can be reduced and online destination image can be improved to meet the expectations of tourists visiting the setting. Tourism employees who undergo frequent training and are well informed about the prioritization and strategies of their institutions will exhibit better performance, thereby increasing online tourists' satisfaction and entice tourists to visit the setting. Training of employees, such as tour guides, may help to develop good and effective skills for problem solving, such as strategies for dealing with complaints when tourists are not satisfied (Nam, Kim & Hwang, 2016). The organizing of such training will assist to bring about positive outcomes in the online destination image. A good reputation of destination marketing can impact travelers' degree of interest to visit for conventions or meetings. Hotel managers should therefore consider a good reputation as a strong strategy to market Kumasi as a tourism destination on the internet to reach tourists worldwide.

Thirdly, study was conducted based on duration of three months with the intention to reduce common bias methods. In the future, this research can be used by other researchers to investigate and predict online website destination marketing activities (Xia, Zhang & Zhang, 2017). Our sample data was smaller and future researcher should use larger sample size to validate their results. Secondly, it was also stated from the onset that the management of the hotels and the guests' houses did not allow the researchers to directly contact the respondents. The collection of the data was therefore depended on the relevant managers and front desk employees who volunteered to collect the data on behave of the researchers (Nugraha, 2017; Ana & Bini, 2015).

They paid special attention to the problem of confidentiality when submitting the questionnaire to the local and the international tourists. It is generally accepted that data collection in this manner may have created potential selection bias problems (Berger, 2009; Bethlehem, 2010). Fourthly, In the near future, collecting of questionnaire directly from respondents should be encouraged to eradicate potential issues of all biases related to data collection. Researchers should include different types of online destination marketing organizations and compare the difference in the internet marketing activities. In conclusion Ghana is new online tourism destination marketing and more internet marketing should be considered to attract more tourists.

## **6.1 Limitations and Future Research**

This research should cover the online destination image of Kumasi and tourists' by examining the textual and eye information in distinct categories of websites. Comparing of the relations and distinction between the messages on these websites by travelers can lead to more findings about the destination and tourists' satisfaction

(Aliman et al., 2016; Huimin, 2016). The word of mouth messages on tourism organizations websites by tourists provides valuable understanding of the destination and helpful for making decision to visit. The impacts of the building of online destination marketing implications are significant to note for future research purposes. If the communication goals of the distinct websites are not properly investigated, the destination image of Kumasi will not be consistent or in line with different types of online destination image information (Azmi, 2017). This will further suggest that the desire online destination image by the tourism organization in Kumasi is not successfully delivered to the potential tourists wishing to visit the setting (). The intermediaries involved in the marketing of the destination image may be frustrated if the image fails to satisfy the target visitors. Information should be made easy to access from different sources and distinct image views should be organize in the form of strategies to market the destination to the highest level (Dorcic & Komsic, 2017).

The implications of tourists' satisfaction are drawn from Kumasi as a destination market. This research should be replicated in the future to represent large tourists' populations and tourism destination markets (Breitsohl & Garrod, 2016). The difference in culture and where travelers come from can have influence on behavior intentions and perceptions. The inspirations that influence tourists' intentions to visit Kumasi could have been taken into consideration when examining tourists' satisfaction and similar research should be done in other locations in Ghana. The questionnaires were administered three months apart. In the future, more time should be given to examine the relationships. The researchers were not allowed to contact the tourists directly. The researchers depended on the managers and the front desk

employees to distribute and collect the data. The researchers also note that data collection involving this process can be affected by selection bias (Valeri & Coull, 2016). Selection bias is when data for analysis are not collected and do not represent the population under study. Such data collection procedures were also evidently described in a similar study by Sekaran & Bougie, (2016) and Oakeshott (2016). This study can be conducted in other organizations in the future to benefit travelers in Ghana to share their experience such as posting stories and writing comments. Owing to the availability of the internet in the destination, many travelers can use credit cards to buy tourism products directly from source with lower interest rate. Both local and international visitors travelling to Ghana purchase tourism products and services directly on the internet, and this has resulted in travel agents going out of business. To counter this, travel agents may require innovative skills, techniques, and ideas to stay competitive and avoid bankruptcy.

Tourists have become more knowledgeable and have efficient computer skills to buy tourism products directly online. Previous empirical studies focused on tourism destinations across many countries. Online tourist satisfaction as a mediating effect to attract tourists to the destinations has not been studied in Ghana (Rosa, Bocci & Dryjanska, 2017). A major contribution of online word of mouth is the attraction of potential local and international tourists to the destination through the internet marketing. For these reasons, suitable delivery systems are recommended to meet tourists' requirements and expectations while visiting destinations. Lower prices for hotel rooms can also help to attract more local and international tourists.

The research was analyzed by using two distinct types of software applications AMOS 22 and SSPS 22 statistical instruments. Websites should have better design characteristics to attract tourists that visit the sites to look for information. It should

play a prominent role in shaping tourists beliefs and buying behavior intentions. Products communication to tourists plays an important role in convincing tourists to make purchases on such websites (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). The development of pleasing, organized and user-friendly websites for online tourism products is a good strategy to attract tourists to destinations.

However, one of the most important limitations of this study is that the research focused more on the online users while the non-users of the internet are being ignored. In the future, this study should be conducted to include non-users of the internet. It is also observed that the demographic variables result such as age, gender, education, marital status were not significant and not included in the results. The results however indicate that online word of mouth has a huge positive impact on tourists regarding creating awareness and credibility of information about destinations. Due to the influence of online word of mouth on destination marketing further studies should be conducted to focus on the factors that affect both positive and negative online word of mouth.



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doi:10.1177/1354816616656264

## **APPENDIX**



## **Appendix A: Questionnaire Sample**

### **The research team members:**

Prof. Dr. Mustafa İlkan

Selira Kotoua

### **Addresses:**

School of Computing and Technology

Eastern Mediterranean University

Famagusta

Via Mersin 10

Turkey

Faculty of Tourism

Eastern Mediterranean University

Famagusta

Via Mersin 10

Turkey

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to collect data to analyze the research about information technology and destination marketing in Kumasi, Ghana. We kindly request you to complete the items below. We assured you that the data generated will be kept confidential and only the results will be shared with the management. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements regarding the questions. Put an X mark in the box of each of your answers

The information you furnish will be kept confidential and it is not necessary for you to provide your name while completing the questionnaire. We greatly appreciate your effort and involvement in our research. Thank you very much

	Questionnaire	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1	<b>Online tourists' satisfaction (Jin &amp; Tu,2014)</b>					
2	I will buy online tourism product if the website is secured					
3	Tourists are very concerned about the security of a website to buy online tourism products					
4	Tourists will not put their personal details online to buy tourism product if the website is not secure					
5	<b>Online word of mouth (Yu,2016)</b>					
6	Online information about Ghana as a tourism destination was very valuable to me					
7	I have gained a lot of new knowledge about Ghana as a tourism destination on the internet					
8	The online information before arriving to the destination was valuable					
9	Online information as electronic word of mouth about the destination was valuable					
10	<b>Online vulnerability security(Security Vulnerability Survey,2016)</b>					
11	Making online booking myself to visit the tourist destination was easy					
12	I bought the ticket online with my own credit card					
13	Buying the ticket online was better than buying from a travel agent because they charge commission					
14	Vacating on a destination through online information search is beyond my anticipation					
15	<b>Online destination image (Sigala, 2017)</b>					
16	Most people have positive opinion about online destination image					
17	Online destination image website is user friendly					
18	The online destination images are update frequently					
19	Online images show previous entertainment pictures of happy tourists					
20	Online destination images can be deceptive					
	<b>Degree of interest to visit (Lim et al.2017)</b>					
21	Online destination images of night life and entertainment					
22	Online images of the opportunity get enough rest.					
23	Online images showing cleanliness of the destination					
24	Tourist decision to visit the destination depends on the online images viewed					

Sample Questions for local and international tourists:

State yes or no by placing X in each box of your answer to indicate if you agree or disagree with the statements below

Questions	Yes	No
26. Have you used the internet recently to purchase tourism products		
27. Did you travel to a destination by buying your ticket online recently		

28, Did you use the travel agents		
29. Did you buy the ticket yourself		
30, Did you take some time to get information online about the destination		
31, Were the messages positive		
32. Were the messages negative		

**Demographic Information**

**Age:**

17-20 [ ]

21-24 [ ]

25-28 [ ]

29-35 [ ]

36-50 [ ]

**Gender:**

Male [ ]

Female [ ]

**Marital status**

Married/ engaged [ ]

Single/ Divorce/Non married [ ]

**Education:**

Primary school [ ]

Secondary school [ ]

Training colleges [ ]

Associate degree [ ]

University degree [ ]

Master degree [ ]

PhD degree [ ]

Primary school [ ]

**Organizational tenure:**

1- 4 years [ ]

4-8 years [ ]

8-12 years 12 year and above [ ]

Name of the organization: Hotels and guest houses