

Towards Transforming Digital Interaction with Visitors of the Livingstone Museum, Zambia: A Digital Marketing Communication Approach

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ABSTRACT

The prominence of digital marketing communication (DMC) in the fields of Marketing Communication and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a result of the rapid technological advancements and digitalisation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Though recognised in extant literature, the application of DMC, in the context of museums, is scant. The Livingstone Museum in Livingstone, Zambia, a well-known tourist destination, was the focus of this investigation. The main research objective was to recognise the significance of digital advances and their importance for cultural institutions, such as the Livingstone Museum. This was achieved by exploring opportunities for DMC to enhance visitor awareness, reach and engagement. Most museums are still in the early stages of digitalisation, as seen by recent declines in visitor numbers and recommendations in the literature, which made this inquiry necessary. Literature provided recommendations on the use of DMC to innovate and achieve a competitive edge in the context of the digital transformation in tourism and of tourists' experiences, albeit not specifically for museums. The Livingstone Museum's need for DMC was validated by the results, which led to suggestions to enhance visitor awareness, reach, and engagement through digital transformation. Through an integrated and cohesive DMC strategy that adheres to IMC principles, chances to improve DMC content, comprehend complex visitor behavior, raise communication frequency, permit input, and prioritise visitors' demands were

subsequently identified. This study contributes academically to knowledge on digital transformation of museum communication and considers the practical implementability of DMC for museums.

Keywords: Digital interaction, digital marketing communication, museum communication, visitor awareness, visitor engagement, visitor reach

1.1. Introduction

This study is premised on the need to approach museum IMC from a DMC perspective to put forward recommendations in response to challenges in reaching visitors, enhancing awareness and facilitating engagement, with the intention of promoting emotional involvement and social interaction (Nechita 2022), and meeting their expectations in regard to museum activities, communication and information, in the context of the digital transformation of tourism and the creative economy (Indriastuti, Amalian & Sufa 2023). This research was undertaken in 2023, at the Livingstone Museum, Zambia. Since it had to shut down during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a steep decline in visitor numbers (Chabu, Francis & Machinyise 2023) and there has been no significant increase in visitor numbers since. The study was furthermore motivated by the international movement to digitalise museum communication and activities, due to the pandemic, and the rapid pace at which communication technologies develop and digitalisation occurs (Indriastuti, Amalian & Sufa 2023; Nechita 2022; Cristobal-Fransi, Ramón-Cardona, Daries & Serra-Cantalops 2021; Black 2020; Navarrete 2019). For these reasons, this study aimed to explore the opportunities for the use of DMC in the Livingstone Museum's communication, to align it with recent technological developments in IMC and other communication disciplines. Extant literature (Indriastuti, Amalian & Sufa 2023; Nechita 2022; Zollo, Rialti, Marrucci & Ciappei 2022; Cristobal-Fransi et al. 2021; Navarrete 2019) supports the need for the current study, through recommendations for future research to explore digitalisation, online presence and DMC, in the context of museums, and highlight the exigency for guidelines on the implementation thereof, to maintain positive financial outcomes.

DMC utilises digital and online channels to reach consumers, audiences and stakeholders, and is often referred to as the 'fourth marketing revolution', 'revolution 4.0' or 'marketing 4.0' (Shankar, Grewal, Sunder, Fossen, Peters & Agarwal 2022; Nechita 2022; Kim, Kang & Lee 2021; Peter & Vecchia 2021). Digitalisation offers museums opportunities to reconsider traditional services and communication practices, to initiate change in their communication that aligns with technological innovations, which could result in enhanced engagement and, subsequently, meaningful relationships with visitors and audiences (Indriastuti, Amalian & Sufa 2023; Nechita 2022; Amalia & Hanika 2021). To remain relevant and sustain a competitive advantage in the tourism market, in a complex digital context, it is put forward that museums

should develop DMC strategies that comprise DMC elements, as they have been recognised for their significant impact on marketing and communication activities. In the marketing communication context, the move to digitalisation is radical, as it possibly surpasses the exclusive use of social media. Hence, this study is approached from a DMC perspective, as it aims to provide practical and implementable recommendations for the Livingstone Museum, to transform their digital interaction with visitors, through awareness, reach and engagement, and will highlight the significance of a DMC approach in a tourism context. The goal of the study is in line with key considerations in the DMC context, namely awareness as a result of active engagement (Vernuccio, Cesareo, Pastore & Kitchen 2022), as it is premised on the notion that the digital environment centres interactivity, as opposed to previous passivity.

1.2 Literature review

The Livingstone Museum is the oldest and largest of five museums in Zambia and holds large collections of artefacts, including clay figurines, beadworks and art pieces, such as *makishi* masks and *mbusa* objects, as well as musical instruments from the colonial to the post-colonial eras (Mufuzi 2012). In the colonial era, exhibitions were Eurocentric, however, these events contributed to consistently disseminating information to foster an understanding of Zambian history and promote “national unity and identity through cultural diversity” (Mufuzi 2012). Museums, in general, are cultural institutions (Winesmith & Anderson 2020) that “exhibit the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment” (Nechita 2022:12), including “social material culture” (Fernandez-Lores et al 2022) in the form of “works of art and science” and cultural heritage goods (Zollo et al. 2022) with high historical value (Indriastuti, Amalian & Sufa 2023). Therefore, museums are regarded as social and economic contributors, with the potential for commercialisation (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2022; Cristobal-Fransi et al. 2021; Amalia & Hanika 2021), key sources of foreign exchange and job creators (Nechita 2022). The Livingstone Museum in Zambia is no exception; hence, it is argued that its survival is paramount in the bigger context of Zambia’s economic viability. This study, therefore, reports on the importance and current state of DMC at the museum, and makes recommendations to enhance digital interaction through increased visitor awareness, reach and engagement, to strengthen the social value of this cultural institution by offering social and experiential benefits to visitors (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2022). The need to approach this from a DMC perspective is recognised and underwritten by extant literature on the progressions of IMC to DMC, due to rapid technological advancements and digitalisation (Nechita 2022), as previously suggested.

1.2.1 Digital marketing communication

The study is grounded in the broader organisational communication discipline, with a specific emphasis on the subfields of IMC and DMC, as it underpins the use of DMC for museum

communication, to reach and engage visitors, and gain an understanding of their expectations regarding enhanced digital interaction. The context of the study further aligns with an external view of organisational communication, since the needs of potential visitors to the museum and the institution's current marketing communication practices are at the core of this study.

DMC is grounded on IMC principles; hence, this study integrates IMC principles in the recommendations made for the use of DMC through the adoption of digital interactive media at the Livingstone Museum. The principles of synergy, seamless integration, coordination and reinforcement of marketing communication elements, on a strategic level, are paramount in achieving unified messages. For the purpose of this study, the points of integration are proposed to be between DMC elements, as well as between offline and online marketing communication initiatives. It is evident that the integration of messaging and experiences requires consistency and unified effort to underscore an integrated perspective.

In line with the IMC principles mentioned previously, DMC requires an integrated approach on a strategic level, to ensure consistent and cohesive messaging across all digital platforms and touchpoints, including, but not limited to, social networking sites, content marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), e-mail marketing, advertising and websites (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2022; Smith & Zook 2016). Websites provide opportunities for potential and existing visitor interaction; thus, serving an informational purpose, while e-mail marketing communication offers low-cost targeted messaging, based on visitor/audience data. By integrating SEO into the DMC mix, website visibility is enhanced when displayed by a search engine (Nechita 2022). In line with the integrated perspective followed in this study, it is put forward that these DMC elements should be integrated into the museum's social media strategy, to optimise communication, engagement and relationships. The motivation for museums to use social media (Navarrete 2019) is indicative of a need for visitor/audience participation, through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2022; Amalia & Hanika 2021) interaction and conversational opportunities; in other words, through engagement. Thus, in the context of museums, the focus of IMC is in line with key considerations for using social media, which, arguably, is centred on consumer engagement, conversations and connections. The significance of visitor engagement and conversations is to ensure reach and, ultimately, to enhance organisational value and innovation.

1.2.3 Growth and trends in DMC in museums

Tourism marketing has, at its core, the systematic, procedural employment of integrated communication strategies to promote awareness of services and products, and reach and engage visitors/consumers/tourists, with the ultimate aim of realising profits and reaching economic goals (Nechita 2022; Zollo et al. 2022; Grigore, Coman & Ardelean 2019). The need for

innovation in museum communication and activities is aligned with the development of innovative technologies, such as digital applications (Navarrete 2019). The importance of identifying relevant consumer groups (Indriastuti, Amalian & Sufa 2023), and obtaining information regarding their requirements and needs, has been established. It has, furthermore, been argued that, to keep pace with recent technological advancements and progressions in the IMC and marketing communication disciplines, and the changes in the way that organisations communicate with consumers (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2022), a DMC perspective must be applied. This study regards the application of DMC, in the context of museums, as complex, due to the intangibility and social and cultural importance of the products and services they offer (Nechita 2022), resulting in challenges to develop a competitive edge. In line with a DMC approach, emphasis is placed on continuous communication in the form of conversations, to accommodate visitors' changed expectations (Nechita 2022; Grigore et al. 2019). It is argued that continuous communication is probable in a DMC context, as digital platforms and media allow this. It has been established that DMC is important for organisations and, in this context, for museums' conversations and engagement with consumers/visitors. In line with the known benefits of the adoption of an IMC and a digital approach in current organisations, DMC is acknowledged for its potential to increase museum visitor numbers significantly; therefore, this study aimed to investigate visitor expectations at the Livingstone Museum. The study is further premised on the acknowledgement of the role of new technologies in the field of marketing communication, as it empowers and revolutionises organisations by creating possibilities to generate visitor traffic, allows for interactivity, and enhanced relationships and user experiences, based on consistent and personalised communication (Fernandez-Lores, Crespo-Tejero & Fernández-Hernández 2022; Nechita 2022; Grigore et al. 2019).

Studies by Khalil, Kallmuenzer and Kraus (2024), Nechita (2022), Fernandez-Lores et al. (2022), Navarrete (2019) and Grigore et al. (2019), confirm the incorporation of digital marketing communication elements by some museums. This is evident in their use of virtual museums, virtual communities, augmented reality and virtual reality, such as virtual assistants, through which museums' collections are showcased as a prelude of what can be expected when the museum is visited physically. The use of virtual museums is, generally, supported by e-mail marketing, to communicate and engage with potential and existing visitors, and is further enhanced by the use of websites and social media, through paid, earned and owned media. These studies confirm the notion put forward in the current study that DMC should be approached from an integrated perspective, to increase digital interaction.

1.3 Theoretical framework

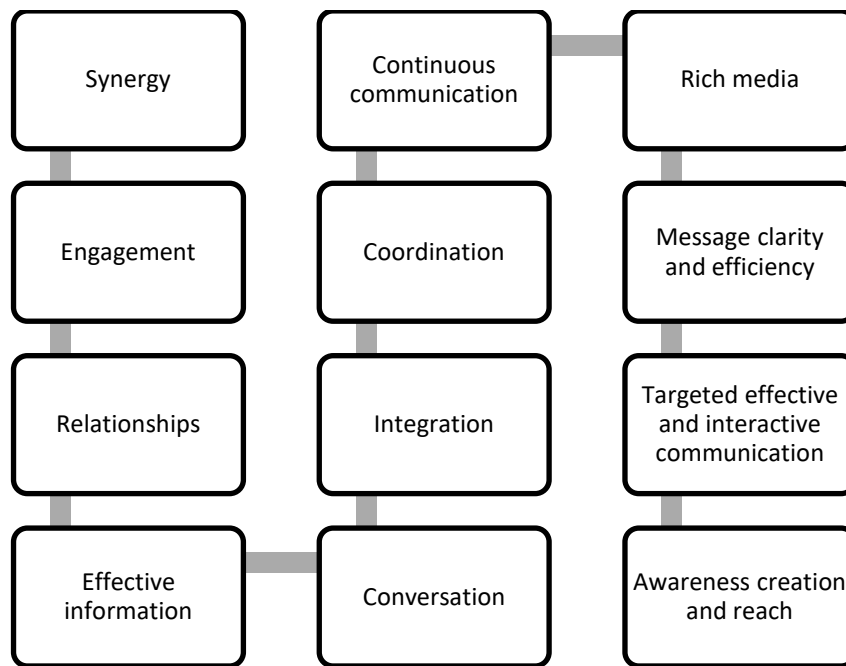
The relevance of the diffusions of innovation theory (Rogers 1962), the media richness theory (Daft & Lengel 1986) and the AIDA model (Strong 1925), is attributed to their theoretical

descriptions of the opportunities and barriers to the adoption of technological advancements, the ability of digital media to convey information effectively, through rich media, and the awareness to action stages through which consumers, or in this case visitors, proceed. The diffusion of innovations theory explicates key factors, such as compatibility, trialability, relative advantage and complexity that could potentially influence the adoption of DMC at the Livingstone Museum (Rogers 2003). Innovations are adopted at different rates, in different contexts (Navarrete 2019); therefore, this study is anchored in Rogers' (1962) diffusion of innovation theory, to support the investigation of visitors and the communication staff's perceptions of the adoption of DMC at the Livingstone Museum. Grounded in these theoretical constructs, the study measured the opportunities for and potential barriers to the adoption of DMC for the Livingstone Museum in their communication with visitors and, subsequently, derived recommendations for engagement strategies for the different visitor segments of the museum.

The media richness theory grounds the study's emphasis on information clarity and efficiency, by expounding theoretically on requirements for rich media, for the purposes of information effectiveness, reducing ambiguity and facilitating understanding (Daft & Lengel 1986). DMC was evaluated against criteria such as feedback capability, message complexity and multiple cues, to ascertain the alignment between the chosen media and the complexity of the messages. The relevance of this theory was confirmed by empirical results, which conveyed improved visitor engagement and comprehension, through the use of rich media for DMC. The AIDA model is rooted in advertising literature and is used to explain the stages through which consumers progress, from awareness of an advertising message to an action stage, where they purchase products or use services. DMC can, arguably, influence visitors' decision processes (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2022); therefore, this model was applied to the DMC approach, to support the empirical phase, where visitors to the Livingstone Museum were questioned about their perceived journey, from being aware of the museum's DMC messages to taking action, by visiting the museum. Strong (1925) highlighted the importance of targeted, effective communication during each stage of consumers' progression; therefore, the study set out to determine visitors' perceptions of the museum's current DMC efforts.

Figure 1.1 features theoretical criteria for DMC, to create digital interaction, centred on awareness, reaching and engaging visitors at the Livingstone Museum. These theoretical criteria were derived from an extended review of extant literature and the theoretical framework.

Figure 1.1 Theoretical criteria for the use of DMC, for digital interaction centred on visitor awareness, engagement and reach



1.4 Research methods and design

This study adopted both positivist and interpretivist research paradigms, aimed at obtaining a well-rounded view of the use, opportunities and challenges relating to DMC at the Livingstone Museum. The decision to apply both paradigms was based on the unique possibilities to describe and explore the topic at hand through quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and their related research methods. This combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques allowed the researchers to achieve triangulation and, thereby, strengthen and validate the research findings. To prevent one type of data from influencing the collection of the other, the concurrent triangulation approach was employed, in which the data were gathered simultaneously, in a single phase.

1.4.1 Population, sample and sampling design

A target population typically denotes the larger group of individuals from which respondents and participants are selected. For the purposes of this study, the target group included all museum

visitors for the questionnaires and all staff members of the Livingstone Museum's Marketing and Communications Department for the interviews.

Considering the challenges to include all visitors to the museum, the accessible population, from which the samples were drawn, included the museum visitors for the quantitative research (questionnaires), and the staff members from the communications department at the Livingstone Museum for the qualitative research (interviews).

The parameters (or characteristics) of the population consisted of 300 visitors and six individuals from the Marketing and Communications Department, who were present during the data collection period. A respondent to the questionnaire was expected to be: (1) available during the data collection periods; (2) 18 years and older; and (3) conversant in English. A participant in the interview was expected to be: (1) a staff member of the marketing and communications department; (2) formally employed by the museum; (3) available during the stipulated data collection periods; and (4) 18 years and older.

This study made use of convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, as well as the census method, which is a probability sampling technique. Using convenience sampling, the 300 respondents, who satisfied the aforementioned criteria, were chosen. All six employees of the Marketing and Communication Department were sampled, using the census method. The rationale for including all employees in this particular department is that they are in a position to provide real-life accounts and useful insights into the museum's use of DMC. In this way, the researcher demonstrated commitment to gaining a comprehensive and unique understanding of each participant's job, experiences and views.

1.4.2 Data collection and analysis methods

A researcher has to consider using a variety of research techniques to obtain the necessary insights that can contribute to the investigation on the digital transformation of Livingstone Museum's interaction with their visitors. Therefore, multiple methods that are typically linked to the research paradigms adopted in this study were considered, specifically to achieve triangulation (Bryman et al. 2014:62). That being so, interviews and questionnaires were deemed appropriate data collection methods.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire and the credibility of the data collection techniques, both the data collection techniques were pretested with respondents, who did not partake in the study, and credible academic scholars, respectively. The questionnaires were administered in person, at the museum, in April 2023, during which the prospective respondents received an information sheet, with details about the research, including a consent form. On the other hand,

semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with all the employees in the museum's Marketing and Communications Department.

The quantitative data for this research was analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), with the assistance of a statistician. The qualitative data collected during the interviews was analysed using inductive thematic analysis, to gain rich insights into the topic under investigation.

1.5 Findings and discussion

1.5.1 Quantitative findings

In-person questionnaires were administered to 300 visitors, who provided consent to complete them, with all 300 responding, yielding a response rate of 100%.

Demographics

The characteristics of the respondents were obtained and focused on age, gender and type of visitor. In terms of age, most of the respondents fell into two distinct groups, namely the age group 51 to 60 years (47.3%) and 40 to 50 years (30.3%). The other group comprised the ages of 61 years and above (13.7%), 29 to 39 years (6.7%) and 18 to 28 years (2%). The significance of this finding is two-fold, as the museum should ensure its digital communication stays aligned with the needs of the larger groups, and that their communication with the smaller groups is more tailor-made, to meet their specific needs and preferences. In terms of gender, most respondents were female (65.7%, 197) and (34.3%, 103) were male. This underlines the importance of knowing which communication efforts and types of content appeal to their visitors. The type of visitors revealed that 77% (231) are local and 23% (69) are international. This is important, since it may suggest that the communication initiatives reach a limited audience.

Investigating the use of digital marketing communication at the Livingstone Museum

The questionnaire investigated the visitors' perception of the museum's use of digital marketing communication by obtaining their views on three main aspects: (1) *the use of digital marketing communication by the museum* (creating awareness on different platforms, conversations about the products and services, and informative content and regular visits); (2) *the role of digital marketing communication at the museum* (uniform messages, conversations and meaningful interaction, informative content and regular visits); and (3) *opportunities of using digital marketing communication* (frequent communication and visits, products and services meet visitors' wants and needs, conversations and adequate information about products and services).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements on a five-point Likert scale, that is, ‘1 = strongly agree’, ‘2 = agree’, ‘3 = neutral’, ‘4 = disagree’, and ‘5 = strongly disagree’. For interpretation and presentation purposes, the responses were reduced to three categories, by summing up “strongly disagree” and “disagree” to one category (“Disagree”), and “strongly agree” and “agree” to another category (“agree”) and the “neutral” responses were retained.

Noteworthy is the overwhelming responses indicating how many visitors *disagreed* with all the statements. Included in the table below are the three broad areas that were explored, and the statements to which most of the respondents indicated that they “disagree” with all the statements. Considering the “disagree” percentages, the low responses to “agree” and “neutral” are insignificant and, therefore, are not included in the table.

Table 1.1 The extent to which respondents *disagreed* with issues regarding the overall use of digital marketing communication at Livingstone Museum

	Facebook	Twitter	WhatsApp	Instagram	E-mail	Website	Virtual Museum
Visitors’ perceptions of the Livingstone Museum’s use of digital marketing communication							
“I am made aware of the museum's products and services through the following platforms”	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%
“I am able to have conversations with the museum about their products and services on the following platforms”	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%
“I visit these platforms, because I find the content displayed by the museum informative”	92.3%	92.3%	92.3%	92.3%	92.3%	92.3%	92.3%
The role of digital marketing communication at the Livingstone Museum							
“Similar messages posted by the museum about their products and services across the following platforms allow me to know about the museum’s products and services”	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%

“I believe my conversations with the museum on the following platforms have made my interactions with them meaningful.”	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%	91.0%
“The manner in which the museum interacts with me on the following platforms allows them to meet my expectations in terms of them being informative, interactive, innovative and simple to understand”	91.7%	91.7%	91.7%	91.7%	91.7%	91.7%	91.7%
Opportunities that digital marketing communication can provide the museum							
“Frequent communication from the museum on the following platforms has contributed to me often visiting the museum.”	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%
“The products and services marketed to me by the museum on the following platforms are specific to my wants and needs.”	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%	91.3%
“The conversations I have with the museum on the following platforms provide adequate information about their products and services.”	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.7%

Source: Muche (2024)

The predominantly *disagreement* with the above statements reveals significant opportunities for improvements in all the areas investigated.

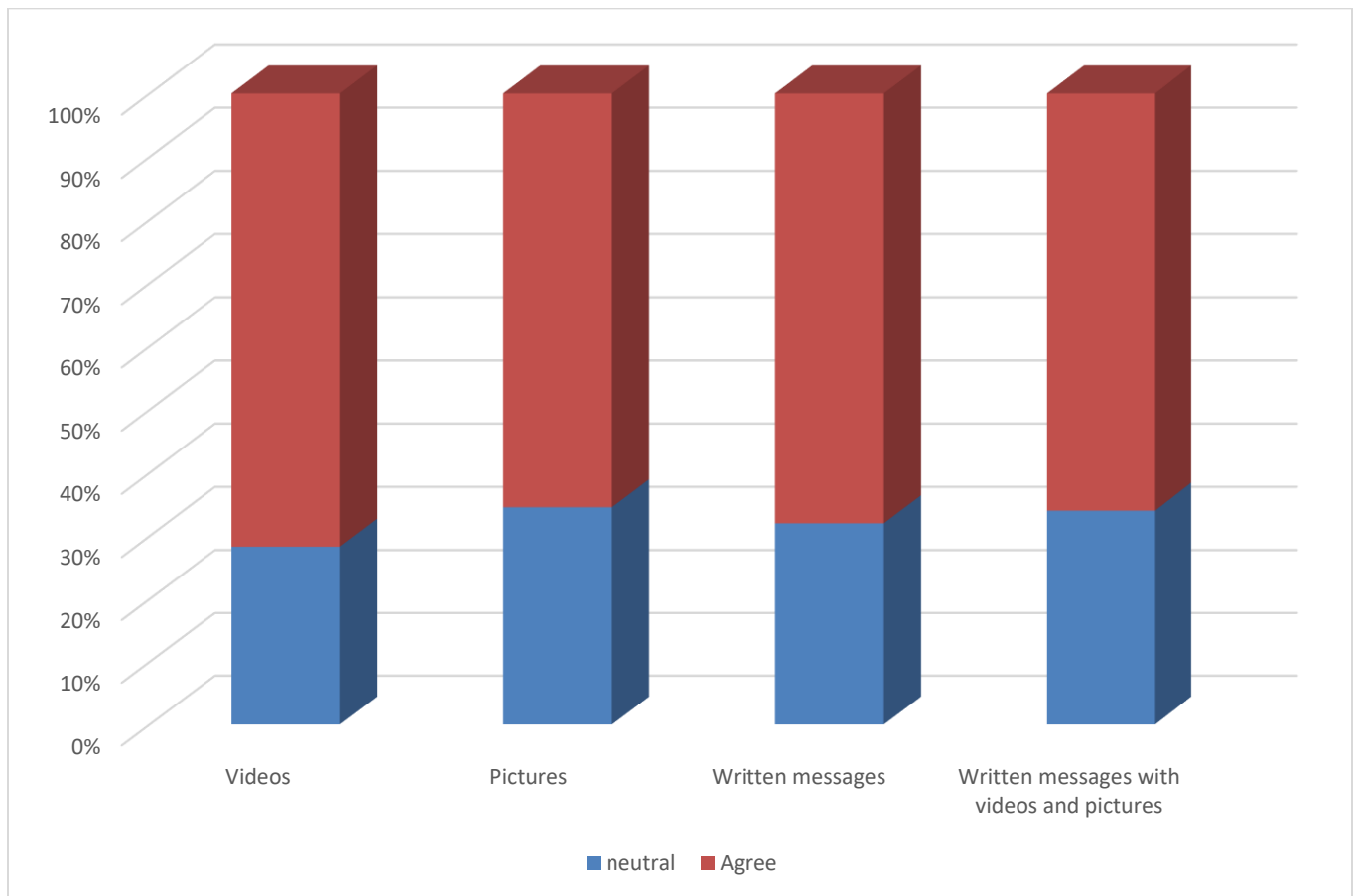
It is clear that the Livingstone Museum's *use of digital communication*, across all platforms examined, is viewed as lacking in effectively raising awareness of its products and services, having meaningful conversations about its offerings, and, finally, delivering content that is informative.

Additionally, the responses suggest that the *role of digital marketing communication* is perceived as inconsistent, conversations with visitors do not contribute to meaningful interactions, and interactions on the platforms do not meet expectations.

Moreover, it is indicated that the museum fails to exploit the *opportunities digital marketing communication* can offer. Respondents felt that communication on these platforms, to ensure frequent visits, is sporadic and does not occur regularly; moreover, information on the platforms does not address visitor’s unique needs and the museum does not take advantage of the conversations, to provide sufficient information.

The questionnaire also posed the statement, “*I prefer the following types of content*”, to determine the preferences of the respondents. As figure 1.2 illustrates, the visitors predominantly would like the museum to use all these types of content in their communication. Noteworthy is the fact that there were no “disagree” responses, but a number of “neutral” responses, which points to possible uncertainty regarding the type of content they prefer and, thus, warrants further investigation.

Figure 1.2 Types of content



Source: Muche (2024)

1.5.2 Qualitative findings

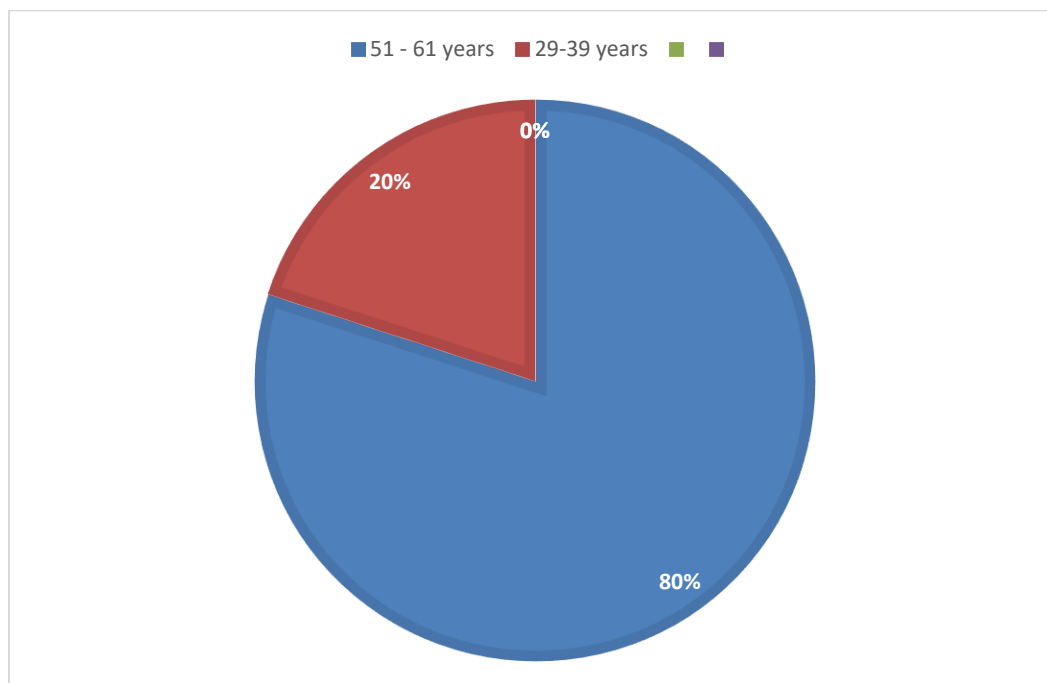
The main reason for using interviews as a research method was twofold: (1) to obtain insight into the topic under investigation, that is, the use of digital marketing communication to modify interactions with visitors to the museum; and (2) to discover emerging topics that could facilitate this transformation in the digital interaction with these stakeholders. The qualitative part of the empirical research comprised interviews with six staff members of the Communication and Marketing Department, which lasted between 35-45 minutes each, over five consecutive days.

Section A in the interview schedule explored the demographics of the participants, namely gender, age and work experience at Livingstone Museum.

Demographics

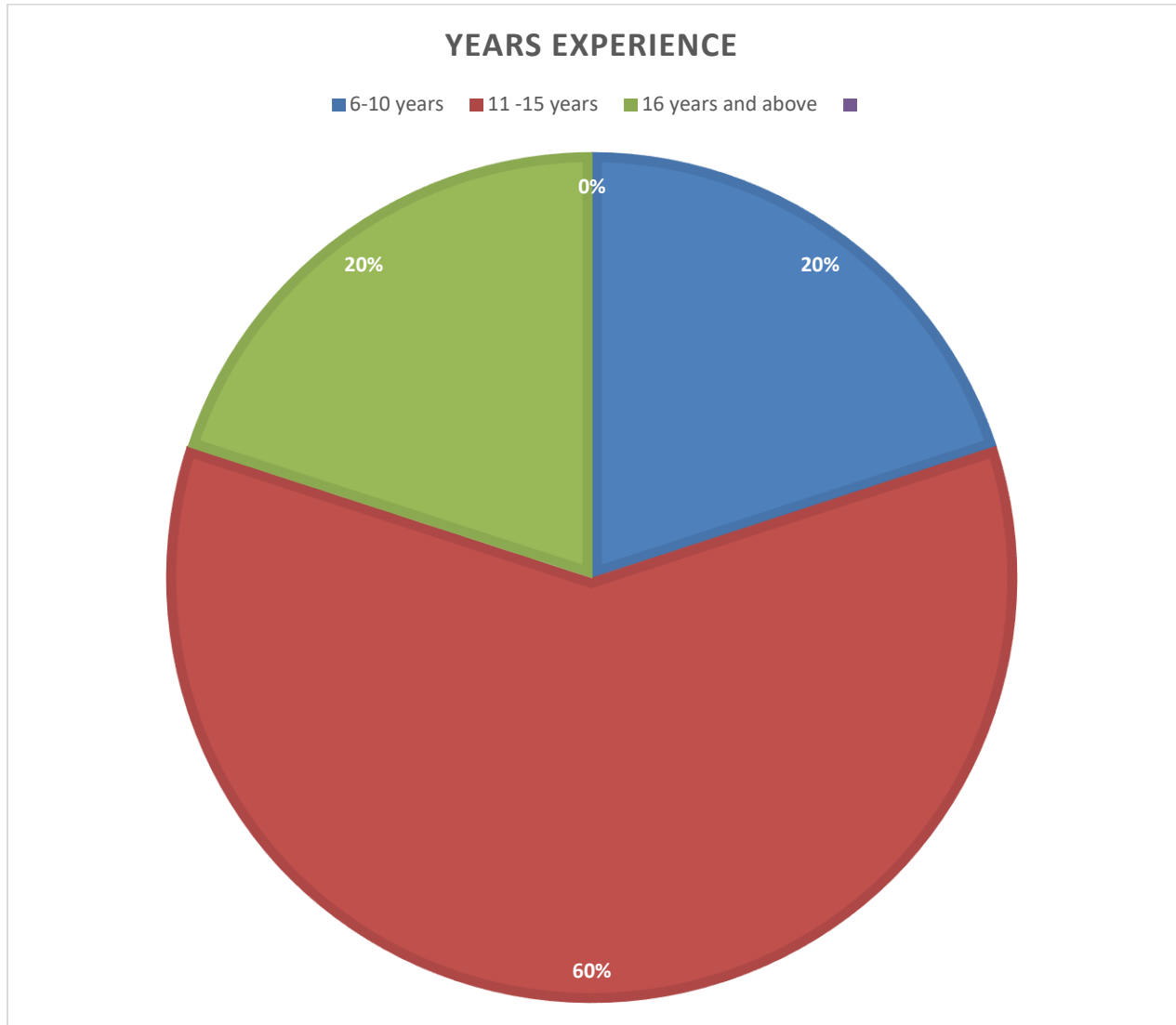
The six staff members comprised 3 male and 3 female participants. Further investigation reveals that the participants mainly fall into two age groups (29 to 39 years and 52 to 61 years). This indicates that the majority of individuals responsible for the communication of the museum are in the older age group, with a significant gap between the two age groups.

Figure 1.3 Age distribution of the staff members



Source: Muche (2024)

Figure 1.4 Number of years' of work experience at Livingstone Museum



Source: Muche (2024)

It is evident that staff members in the Marketing and Communications Department have a vast number of years of work experience, which suggested that valuable insights will be gained from them.

Sections B and C explored specific aspects on the topic evident in the literature. Marketing communication and digital marketing communication were examined in section B of the interview guide. Section C then focused on the role of digital marketing communication, the opportunities it offers and the difficulties it presents.

Figure 1.5 below displays the specific themes that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data and provides the basis for the report on the findings.

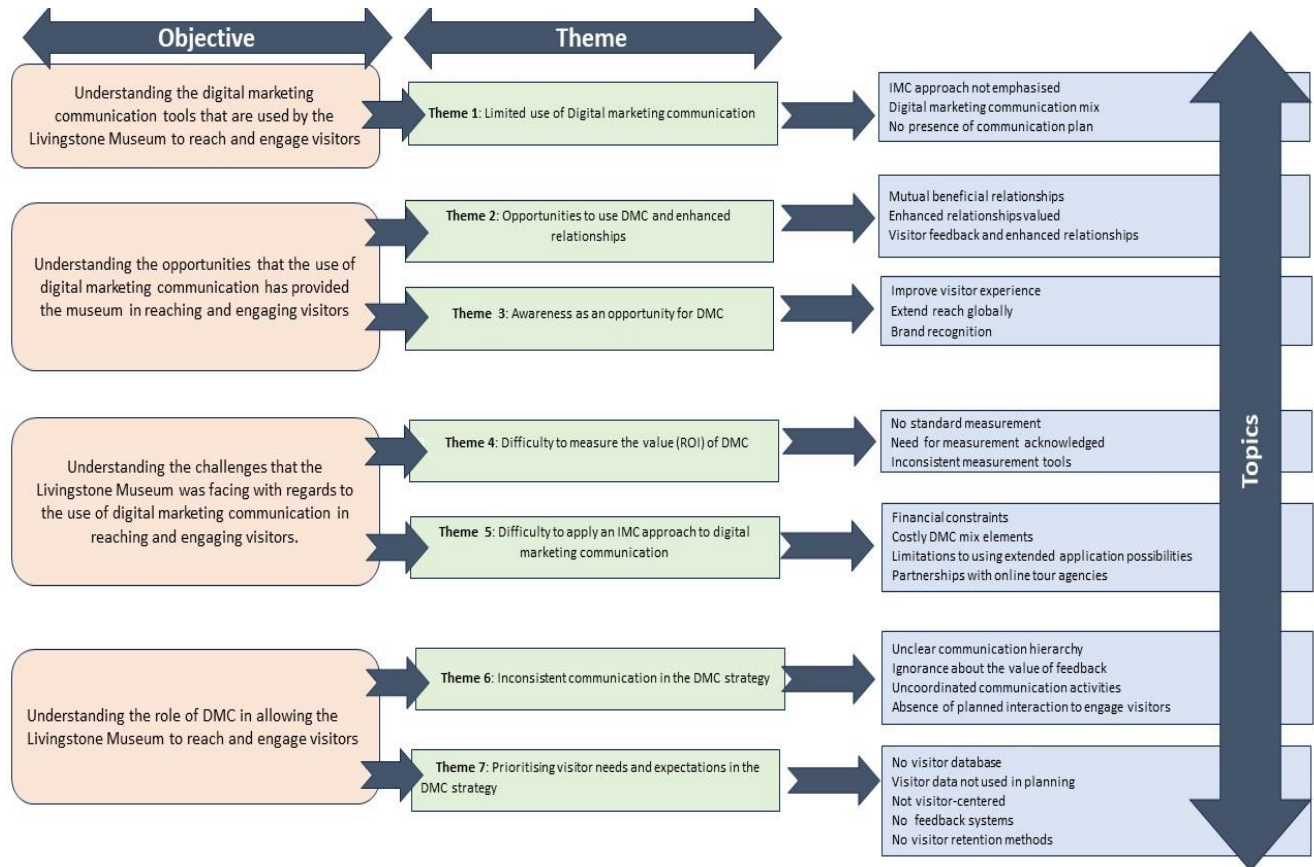


Figure 1.5 Themes regards to the use of DMC

Theme 1 relates to obtaining an understanding of the types of DMC tools that are used by the Livingstone Museum to reach and engage visitors. Apart from the focus on DMC, some questions on general marketing communication were included to recognise the contribution, if any, of DMC to the museum’s overall communication strategy. Participants indicated that communication and marketing tools are only used to a limited extent and the museum relies mainly on its website (which is not functional), Facebook page, referrals from previous visitors, and its affiliations with various tour agencies. No consideration is given to other DMC avenues, such as e-mail marketing, virtual museums, or social media platforms. Moreover, it was found that there was not a specific effort to create a well-synergetic communication strategy, by integrating some of the relevant marketing communication mix elements. The museum outsources its marketing communication activities, despite an established marketing and communication department.

Theme 2 and theme 3 emerged when investigating the opportunities that DMC provides to be able to reach and engage with the museum's visitors. Theme 2 focuses on the use of DMC to enhance relationships. Participants recognised the importance of their visitors for the existence of the museum and the need to create, improve and maintain these relationships, and improve perceptions regarding the museum. Sandles (2019:24) believes that perceptions are directly linked to organisational reputation, which underlines the significance of having positive relationships. The findings highlight the participants' awareness of the importance of good relationships with the visitors and the role of digital marketing communication in achieving it.

Theme 3 deals with the opportunities digital marketing communication offers in creating awareness of the museum and its products and services. Most of the participants agreed that the information they post on the website and Facebook are aimed at creating an understanding of the message they wish to distribute and, thereby, extending their reach globally. Moreover, the participants are attentive to the opportunities that digital marketing communication can offer and agree that the increased use of digital marketing activities may improve the visitor's experience.

Themes 4 and 5 emerged while exploring the challenges that the Livingstone Museum faces in regard to reaching and engaging visitors through digital marketing communication. Theme 4 touches on the difficulty to measure the value of the digital marketing communication initiatives in relation to the resources invested by the museum. Participants acknowledged the need for such measurement, but noted that it is impeded by the absence of a standard measurement, and elementary and inconsistent measurement tools. Theme 5 is linked to the challenges the museum faces and relates to the effort to apply an integrated approach to its DMC. It emerged that financial constraints are a particularly significant challenge, as the Livingstone Museum is a non-government-supported institution, which restricts the use of additional paid-for applications of Facebook, for example. This limits the museum from taking full advantage of a wide range of DMC mix elements.

Theme 6 and 7 developed while exploring the role of digital marketing communication at the Livingstone Museum, in engaging and reaching visitors. Theme 6 refers to inconsistent communication in the DMC strategy. The lack of a central communication structure, disregard of the feedback, unorganised efforts to reach and engage visitors, and a lack of organised visitor interaction that promotes engagement, are the four main areas that were found. The lack of consistent communication was confirmed during the interviews. Furthermore, it became evident that management makes most of the decisions about the digital communication strategy, as well as the information to be uploaded, excluding the staff, who are really in charge of carrying it out. In respect of the participants' views on the consistency of the museum's messages, it was obvious from the responses that it was not a top priority, because the museum did not organise all of its digital marketing communication messages according to a predetermined concept. It was

evident that the staff members did not have the same knowledge on specific areas, which further complicates the matter.

Theme 7 addresses the importance of concentrating on visitors' needs in the DMC strategy. Currently, the strategy does not consider the visitors' expectations and does not provide for their needs. Responses highlight that there is limited interaction and irregular communication on the platforms. The participants strongly emphasised the value of retaining visitors, by understanding their expectations and needs, and their use of interactive communication. It was also mentioned that opportunities to obtain feedback from the visitors will be welcomed, which could be valuable when planning communication initiatives. At the same time, the need for proper guidance on how to respond to visitors was expressed. Despite the importance of being visitor-oriented, it is presently not the case at the Livingstone Museum.

1.6 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the transformation of digital interaction, specifically visitor awareness, reach and engagement at the Livingstone Museum, Zambia, in recognition of the prominence of digital developments and their importance for cultural institutions. For these reasons, this study is grounded in a DMC perspective and a theoretical framework, consisting of the diffusions of innovation theory, the media richness theory and the AIDA model. The investigation revealed limited use of DMC platforms and, hence, proposes that the museum should consider a more prominent presence on DMC platforms, the inclusion of informative content, regular feedback monitoring, frequent visitor engagement through communication on digital platforms, consistent measurement of DMC initiatives, and continuous recognition of visitor preferences. By finding ways to employ DMC, to improve digital connections, the study additionally underscores the need to improve visitor engagement. In keeping with the need for digitalisation in the museum realm and the usage of digital spaces, it is anticipated that this would increase the museum's online presence, which could lead to greater visitor connections and improved information exchange. The conclusions and recommendations stem from the identified challenges regarding digital interaction at the museum. Although the intangibility of the museum's communication impact on visitors is acknowledged, it is contended that the inability to quantify the outcomes of digital interaction, DMC, and visitor awareness, engagement and reach initiatives leads to inaccurate performance results and reach quantification. Similarly, challenges related to the application of an integrated approach to digital communication and interaction relate to an inability to recognise the Livingstone Museum as a brand that has to be portrayed consistently, at all touch points. Finally, the use of DMC for digital interaction is imperative to ensure unified, informative and consistent communication, in a digital context. In doing so, the museum should follow an integrated approach in its use of DMC platforms, as part of a well-structured communication plan. This could enhance digital

engagement and relationships with visitors, in that it will, presumably, create enhanced awareness, result in meeting visitor expectations and preferences, and achieve a positive brand, due to tailored content. The creation of a central and visitor-centred communication structure, whereby visitor feedback is prioritised and visitor interaction is strategically planned, is recommended when implementing a DMC approach for digital interaction.

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