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**Social Media Marketing for promoting tourism: The case
of travel agencies in Kenya**

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Abstract

The marketing of tourism services through social media has become an urgent and fundamental requirement in light of the developments that have taken place in the tourism industry. Digitalization is necessary in order to increase its contribution to the marketing of travel services, develop the tourism sector, and make the most of the numerous opportunities that are presented by social media. The purpose of this study is to investigate the degree to which travel agencies in Kenya may profit from the utilization of social media in tourism marketing. A quantitative methodology was utilized for the research, and several tourist agencies in Kenya made up the universe of the investigation. A data gathering tool, a questionnaire, was distributed to the travel agencies, and a statistical software was used to analyze the data. According to the findings of the study, there is no significant connection between the use of social media in tourism marketing, with special attention to social media marketing, and the fact that they collaborate with a marketing firm that specializes in a particular field. As reported by the findings of the study, the utilization of social media platforms by travel agencies, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, can result in greater visibility, engagement with clients, marketing, promotion, and accessibility of information. This results in a rise in the total number of consumers as well as an improvement in the level of customer satisfaction, which in turn leads to an increase in the number of favorable comments.

Key Words: Tourism, Social Media, Marketing, Travel, Promotion

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Introduction

The tourism business is expanding at a quick rate and has a significant influence on the economy of the entire world. The ways in which individuals travel and arrange their travels have undergone significant transformations as a direct result of the proliferation of the internet and social media. The use of social media platforms has evolved into an indispensable method for travel companies to advertise and market their products and services to prospective clients. Travel agencies, in particular, play an important part in this industry because they offer helpful services and support to travelers as well as to other businesses that are involved in the travel industry. On the other hand, there is a dearth of studies about the influence that marketing through social media might have on the tourism sector, particularly in Kenya. Through the lens of travel agencies in Kenya, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the part that social media marketing plays in the overall process of boosting tourism. The purpose of this study is to determine the significance of social media marketing in the travel industry, assess the existing use of social media by travel agencies in Kenya, and investigate the connection between successful social media use and the performance of travel agencies. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What are the main digital channels used by Kenyan travel agencies?
2. How does social media marketing influence the performance of travel agencies in Kenya?

The methodology used in this study is quantitative, with a questionnaire survey being conducted among travel agencies in Kenya. The survey collected data on the current use of social media by travel agencies, their marketing strategies, and their perceptions of the impact of social media on their business. The data was analyzed using OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) test with Gretl software to determine the relationship between social media usage and travel agency success. The results of this research will contribute to the understanding of the role of social media marketing in promoting tourism through travel agencies in Kenya. It will provide insights for travel agencies on how to effectively use social media in their marketing strategies and help identify opportunities for improvement. Additionally, the findings of this research will inform policymakers about the importance of social media marketing for promoting tourism in the tourism industry.

The first chapter of the thesis, the literature chapter, provides an overview of literature relevant to the topic, like the definition and importance of social media, traditional and digital marketing, the benefits of social media marketing in the tourism sector, as well as information about travel agencies. The research methodology which is presented in the second chapter is based on a quantitative research method through a questionnaire survey distributed to travel agencies located in Kenya. Finally, the third chapter presents the results of the study through the statistical analysis of the collected data from 71 travel agencies that are members of KATA (Kenya association of travel agencies).

Chapter 1

Literature Review

1.1 Definition of social media and the importance of the social media concept

Marketing is considered to be an essential part of a company's management to achieve success in meeting company goals. The field of social media marketing is highly diverse. Power arrangements in the market have evolved as a result of social media. The last 20 years have seen substantial changes in marketing as a managerial function and academic field. Many academics and industry experts concur that while the mass marketing strategies that were popular in the 1960s and 1970s are less successful nowadays and some of the conventional marketing ideas are still being used today despite their decline (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017).

Users may join groups, view attendance for events that are scheduled, connect with others and share photographs or posts, participate in community page forums, select preferences, receive automated suggestions, and do a lot more using the new medium of social media. Social media may be viewed as an infinite network with limitless connections to individuals, organizations, groups, hobbies, events, and information (Burford, 2012). For billions of people worldwide, the internet, social media, smartphone applications, and other digital communication tools have ingrained themselves into daily life. As described by Pantelimon et al. (2020), the most recent data for January 2020 shows that there are 4.54 billion active internet users worldwide, or 59% of the world's population.

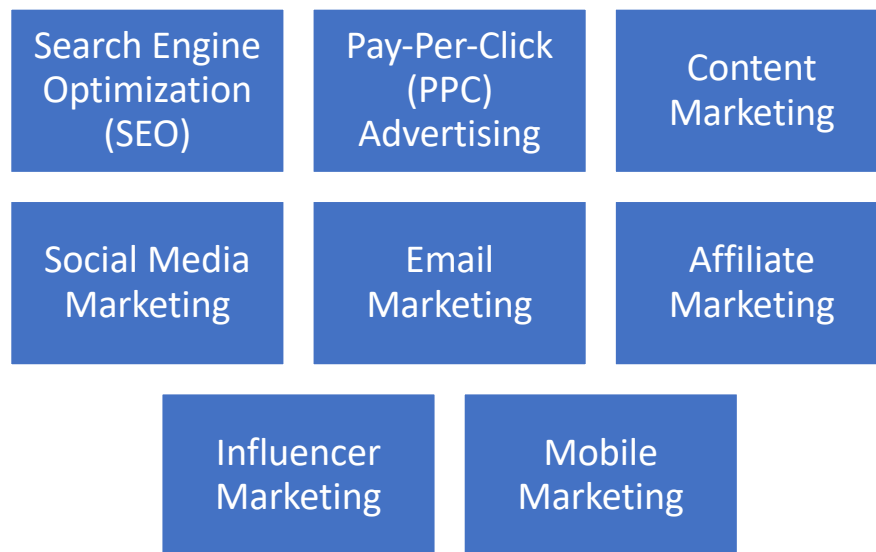
Social media may help users create new buying, evaluating, and researching habits for products and services. Social media will be defined and explained in this part, along with its significance, features, and tools. The foundation of Web 2.0 is social media, which is described as internet-based platforms that offer social communication and engagement possibilities that showcase the entirety of the material that people make. Social media may be viewed as one of the tools for bringing people together online and enabling unrestricted direct communication between individuals via technology. A collection of internet-based tools known as social media is used to create and share user-generated content, which is valuable content. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) claim that philosophy and technology are based on Web 2.0. Another description of social media is that it is

comprised of web-based apps where users may build personal profiles, engage with other social media users, boost sharing with those who share their interests, and compile a contact list. Social media can offer improved networking and conversation capabilities that are not intrinsically present in traditional internet usage. Social media may help businesses interact with their consumers, create brand recognition, shape consumer perceptions, gather feedback, enhance current goods and services, boost sales, as well as facing with competitors. The primary tool used by marketers to build the visibility of their businesses is social media. According to Infante & Mardikaningsih (2022), social media is employed as an efficient promotional medium because of its broad reach and substantial market share. Users are developing habits of using social media to connect, learn, and cooperate. Online video-sharing platforms have been shown to have the highest amount of interaction across different social media websites. Direct communication is possible on online video-sharing platforms, which sparks a lot of curiosity among social media users.

1.2 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to the application of marketing principles and techniques on the internet and in social media environments such as social media profiles and blogs. When we discuss the idea of digital marketing, which is one of these current trends, we talk about how businesses use digital marketing to reach their larger group of sales targets, present advertising and promotion organizations, provide brand image and brand management, and interact with their customers in an effective manner. It is obvious that how digital marketing has changed users' behaviors in terms of how they access information, interact, and communicate with another as well as their purchase behaviors for products and services. Therefore, businesses should adapt themselves in response to these changes in order to be competitive in the market. According to Todor (2016), it is possible to describe it as the actions that they carry out in order to carry out communication, and this is a valid definition. The fact that digital marketing can be done at a very low cost compared to conventional channels of marketing is its most significant advantage. The main elements of digital marketing are summarized in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Main elements of digital marketing



Source: Yasmin, (2015)

The process of optimizing a website in order to increase its ranking on search engines such as Google and attract organic visitors is referred to as search engine optimization, or SEO for short (Panchal et al., 2021). Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising is a type of internet marketing in which the advertiser pays a fee each time a user clicks on one of the marketer's ads (Agarwal, 2021). Content marketing can be defined as the process of creating and distributing content that is valuable, pertinent, and consistent with the goals of attracting and retaining a clearly defined audience, and ultimately, driving lucrative customer action (Lopes et al., 2022).

Marketing on social media refers to the practice of using social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to advertise a company's goods and services as well as increase consumer knowledge of the brand (Li et al., 2021). Email marketing is the process of promoting goods and services using electronic mail, as well as establishing and maintaining relationships with clients (Noorbehbahani et al., 2019). Affiliate marketing is a model of marketing that is based on performance, and under this model, affiliates are compensated for promoting a merchant's goods or services and earn a commission (Pradina & Poeradisastira, 2019).

Influencer marketing is a form of marketing in which a brand forms a partnership with a person who has a significant number of followers on a social media platform in order to promote the brand's goods or services (Vrontis et al., 2021). Mobile marketing

can be defined as the practice of promoting products, services, or brand recognition through the use of mobile devices and applications (Tong et al., 2020).

When marketing their goods or services in digital settings, however, companies should create clear, lengthy descriptive words and photos with a huge volume of content. If this is not the case, then it will not be very appealing to buyers (Desai et al., 2019). With digital marketing, it is possible to steer the marketing plan in a certain direction based on the analyses that are gathered. It is possible to snap a screenshot of what clients are doing, in addition to tracking the number of pages they visit, the amount of time they spend on the website, and what they put into the search engine. With the help of digital marketing, companies can gain a deeper understanding of their clientele, discover their requirements and requirements in real-time with the use of real-time alerts, and cater to them in the most suitable manner.

It is vital to discuss the process of the historical development of digital marketing in order to have an understanding of how the evolution of digital marketing from the past to the present may be seen. Before the 1990s, marketing organizations were produced through newspapers, radio, television, and magazines, in addition to audio and visual media; but, as technology developed, businesses shifted their focus to digital platforms. After 1994, new marketing technology was able to emerge as a direct result of the widespread usage of e-mail, which was an integral component of the first firms to engage in online marketing. The launch of Amazon.com in 1995 was a watershed moment for the rapidly expanding field of electronic commerce. Even while it is conceivable to talk about e-commerce activities in prior years, the activities that were described were apps termed intranet or extranet, which are closed to third parties and are only accessible within the organization or among the companies themselves (Weber, 2009).

In the year 2000, the introduction of mobile advertising marked the beginning of a transition away from traditional methods of marketing. Google's advertising efforts on the internet were significantly improved in the early 2000s as a result of the company's growth in search engines and marketing tools such as Adwords and Adsense. The decade of the 2000s will usher in a new age for the globe that will be marked by significant upheavals in the realm of marketing, as well as significant opportunities and threats. The lightning-fast development of internet technology, the requirements of the information society, the growing awareness of human rights, and the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar

world order; yet, the creation of new power centers and the consequent balances bring about commercial progress (Zainurossalamia and Tricahyadinata, 2017). Because of advances in technology, users of the internet today may carry out financial transactions that were simply unimaginable to them twenty years ago. These kinds of transactions were not even possible to imagine. Because of the increasingly cutthroat nature of business circumstances, companies are required to devise not just short-term but also medium-term and long-term strategies in order to ensure their continued existence.

1.2.1 Difference between Traditional and Digital Marketing

In today's era, marketing trends are changing very quickly, and the market is shifting from traditional marketing to digital marketing. Marketers use their brands, e-commerce sites, e-commerce ads, Google ads, emails, etc. Digital platforms have emerged for adoption as digital marketing platforms. They are used more often and can be used for the maximum number of markets/target audiences. So, marketers/businesses and companies will now reach out to digital marketing platforms to reach target consumers and generate more revenue and profits instead of spending their marketing efforts and money on traditional marketing ways only (Durmaz & Efendioglu, 2016).

When choosing a promising market, it is important to understand that being successful is not the only step, you also need to know how to turn this promising consumer market into successful business leaders or potential customers. The population still expects traditional marketing methods and does not believe in online transactions or online shopping, but the market is seeing exponential growth in the number of customers or consumers using the Internet for daily transactions.

Digital marketing or digital promotion has become useful, and marketers can retain consumers more easily. In addition, automation is on the rise and is a highly automated process that reduces manual steps in digital marketing for both consumers and marketers. While both traditional marketing and digital marketing are still effective for merchandise marketing trends. Digital marketing is slightly ahead of traditional methods. To better understand the best traditional marketing, let us follow Bala & Verma (2018) in considering the key differences between the two methods (see Table 1.1).

While traditional marketing is limited to local/consumer customers, digital marketing attracts the attention of customers or consumers all over the world, and

therefore some of them can reach large consumers/buyers/customers through digital marketing companies. In addition, digital marketing includes two-way communication that effectively represents customer needs. By delivering fast, real-time marketing results, digital marketing allows companies to refine and simplify their marketing strategies to maximize revenue and profits. This is one of the main reasons companies are switching to digital marketing platforms. Digital marketing is highly efficient and green to provide paper-free transactions. Marketers and consumers can interact, and documents can be accessed at any time in the form of soft copies stored on websites.

Table 1.1 Comparison of features of traditional and digital marketing

| Comparison basis | Traditional marketing | Digital marketing |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Engagement | Low | Relatively high |
| Conversion | Slow | Extremely fast |
| Nature | Static | Dynamic |
| Investment returns | Not easy to measure | Simple to measure |
| Effectiveness | More expensive, less effective | Less expensive, more effective |
| Targeting | Standardized | Customized |
| Tracking | Not possible | Possible |
| Reach | Local | Global |
| Tweaking | Not possible once the advertisement is placed | One can change or edit anytime |
| Results | Slow results | Quick and live results |
| Communication | It is mostly one-way communication | It is a two-way communication |
| Interruptions | It is not easy to skip the advertisements, as they are bound to the users. | One can easily skip between advertisements if it does not interest them. |

Source: Simplilearn, (2022)

Table 1.1 points out that traditional marketing, which is regarded to have low engagement, is significantly outperformed by digital marketing, which has a substantially higher engagement rate. Additionally, conversion rates in digital marketing are far higher than those of traditional marketing, which has a much lower conversion rate. As stated by Arunprakash (2021), traditional marketing is characterized by its static nature, in contrast to the dynamic nature of digital marketing. The return on investment can be easily measured via digital marketing, however, using traditional marketing methods can be more difficult. Traditional marketing is more expensive and less effective than digital marketing, which is less expensive and more effective.

The targeting of digital marketing can be individualized, but the targeting of traditional marketing is more standardized. In digital marketing, tracking can be done, but this is not possible in traditional marketing. According to another study by López García et al. (2019), traditional marketing is more effective at reaching local customers than digital marketing, which may reach consumers all over the world. In digital marketing, it is always feasible to make changes or edits, however, in traditional marketing, once an advertisement has been published, it is impossible to make any modifications to it. The effects of digital marketing are instant and live, whereas the results of traditional marketing take a long time to appear. In terms of communication, digital marketing is two-way communication, but traditional marketing is primarily one-way communication.

Consequently, digital marketing is more effective. Traditional advertising cannot be readily skipped because it is bound to the users, while digital commercials may be quickly missed if the user does not find them interesting. The collection of all points is clear that digital marketing has treated traditional provinces due to greater advantages and structures offered to consumers/recipients.

1.2.2 Social media tools

The development of social media has aided in the development of online social networking sites. Consumers are now using social media and the internet to share information and voice their opinions in the present online environment. As a result, social media platforms are a perfect tool for helping marketers build relationships with the people they want to reach. Online shoppers may learn about products from several sources, but product evaluations on social networking sites are a particularly useful tool.

Before buying goods and services, consumers frequently read product reviews. According to Ahmad & Khan (2017), online recommendations are given greater weight than conventional marketing communications. Hendrayati & Pamungkas (2020) claimed that, through social media, these customers communicate their experiences to other consumers. Users of social media may easily shop on social networking sites and locate services there, and both are handy. The value of a company's brand and the perceptions of its customers may be impacted by the usage of social media platforms in marketing. Cyberspace's distinctively interactive character provides internet users with unparalleled access to information about goods and services, the chance to connect with customers, communities, and even businesses, and several ways to evaluate goods' prices and qualities. Instant messaging, forums, online communities, social networking sites, and comparable social networking sites are used for this engagement. Social media users communicate and share information using a variety of channels that are categorized as social media, including blogs, microblogs (Twitter), social networking sites (Facebook), and video-sharing websites (YouTube). Depending on the presence of social networking websites, it is anticipated that customers may exchange product information with other consumers online.

As described by Saravanakumar et al. (2012), a new age of social media has begun thanks to the explosive rise of community websites like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. With social media at its foundation and a variety of online social networking sites that promote involvement, openness, dialogue, connections, and a feeling of community, the world has undergone what some academics claim is the largest transformation since the industrial revolution. A blog is a sort of content management system that facilitates the publication of brief pieces, or posts, by anybody. For marketing purposes, blog software is ideal since it offers a range of social features, including comments, trackbacks, and subscriptions. As they can be integrated with virtually any tool and platform, blogs serve as ideal hubs for other social media marketing initiatives (Desai & Vidyapeeth, 2019).

It is recommended for any business with a website to have a blog that engages both existing and future consumers on a human level. Corporate press releases have no place on blogs, which should only use a simple, common language. For a number of reasons, blogging may be seen as a key component of a content marketing strategy or social media marketing tactic. According to Nyagadza (2020), common examples of user-generated or

produced internet material include Wikipedia and blogging. Blogs can assist specialists in publicly sharing their knowledge and presenting themselves in certain social contexts. Additionally, blogging may assist a firm increase consumer interaction and attract new clients. In most cases, internet shoppers won't return to the same website if they can't find the goods or services they're seeking on blogs.

1.2.3 Social Media Marketing

Social media is one of the means that connects individuals online that allows direct interaction between one party and other parties through technology in place and time indefinitely. The persuasive power of social media, one of the elements of marketing, is one of the main drivers of the emergence of the term social media marketing (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020). Social media can be preferred to increase sales widely to reduce marketing costs. Social media stands out as the place where consumers can easily find information about all the products they want to buy directly. Elements such as social media online, social media approval, and social media activation are now seen as tools or activities of digital marketing. For this reason, we can say that social media is now one of the most important marketing areas offered by the digital world. According to Dwivedi et al. (2021), both opportunities and challenges have arisen for institutions and organizations that develop social media strategies and plans. Negative online word-of-mouth communication and similar developments can have negative consequences for the relevant business.

Social media marketing is defined by Dilek and Yaşar (2021), as direct or indirect marketing for a brand, business, product, person, or other legal entity that aims to raise awareness and take action by consumers, using tools such as blogging, social networking, and content sharing. It is a new technique of marketing that offers commercial enterprises a substantial amount of room to successfully sustain long-term relationships with their clients that are also characterized by value addition. However, according to Jacobson et al. (2020), it is the process of developing, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offers that are of value to the various stakeholders in a business through the utilization of social media technology, channels, and software. Marketers utilize relationship marketing tactics to develop long-term connections with crucial partners, such as customers, that are mutually rewarding and satisfying to both parties.

The term "social media" refers to various online platforms that allow users to communicate with one another and build interpersonal connections. Users based on the web can interact with one another through the use of instant messages, digital audio, and video sharing for this sort of engagement (Huang et al., 2021). Businesses are making an effort to keep their customers up to date on their most recent endeavors by communicating with them in a digital setting that is both purposeful and consistent. Today, many firms grow their marketing efforts using social media. According to Kim et al. (2019), businesses that communicate information with their customers can make bonds by sharing their experiences and connecting with their customers on a deeper level. It is emphasized that firms that participate in activities related to social media marketing have the capability of generating brand value for prospective customers and have the benefit of obtaining feedback from those customers.

These days, businesses can reap the benefits of social media channels, which do away with boundaries based on location and allow far more effective engagement with their clients (Gao et al., 2018). The formation of social media was not primarily motivated by concerns over money, institutions, or corporate property. According to what they found and what they concluded in their study, social media is about regular people who construct a certain area of control around themselves and discover inventive new ways to bring their common voices together to achieve what it is that they desire. When considered in this light, social media marketing can be understood as being mostly internet-based.

Customers' habits of looking for information to utilize as a foundation for their purchase decisions have been altered as a result of the proliferation of new technologies such as social media, which have spread into many households. Companies are being encouraged to take use of the expanding marketing channel that is social media in order to interact effectively with their customers as the number of users of social media continues to rise. The technique of attracting attention by social media sites is known as social media marketing. Many social media marketing campaigns center their efforts on the creation of content that is captivating to readers and encourages them to share the information on their own social networks. Through the use of social media, businesses and individuals can communicate with one another, hence fostering the development of online communities and relationships.

Content that is shared by individuals via social media and queries that are posed online are two examples of buying signals that can be identified by marketers. Because mobile phones may be used to participate in social networking, their use is particularly advantageous for social media marketing. Mobile phones can be used to access social media. This gives users fast access to the internet and enables them to explore online and join social networking sites.

According to the findings of the research carried out by Hendrayati and Pamungkas (2020), information technology has developed into a significant medium that plays a part in the process of decision-making. As reported by the study, having access to timely information gives marketers an advantage over their competitors. Access to information is now both quicker and more convenient than ever before thanks to developments in fields such as digital telephone networks, interactive cable television, personal computers, online services, and the Internet. Hendrayati & Pamungkas (2020) found that, as a result of developments in the digital world, social media marketing is now one of the topics being discussed, and it is one of the most intriguing marketing areas to watch. The evolution of information technology has led to the rise of a new form of marketing known as social media marketing, which is a result of the development of the marketing notion itself.

It is common knowledge that the majority of the strategic goals of social media marketing necessitate the existence of a corporate policy that is focused on digital matters. Policies that are examples of this include ones that are functional, efficient, dependable, organizationally integrated, and customer-oriented. The corporate image, positioning, quality, and focus on customers should all be reflected and communicated through the online corporate presence of organizations today. Marketers need to be aware that users of social media can readily study and test the quality or price claims made by companies, identify alternatives or substitutes, evaluate products or services, and share their own experiences with many colleagues.

Today, new social media platforms are being developed, and the popularity of existing social media platforms is continuing to grow. The addition of new followers presents a social media marketing professional with both opportunities and challenges. On the various social media platforms, qualities have developed into a more dynamic structure that allows individuals and brands to communicate with one another. It is

becoming clear that social media marketing managers need to learn how to make effective use of the platform and adjust their strategies in order to connect with consumers in this setting. Additionally, to gain leads and enhance customer engagement, new marketing techniques must be implemented for newly emerging social media platforms. New social media platforms for academics to use in their studies on social media marketing; In addition to this, it presents additional research opportunities, such as the possibility of comparing various platforms, investigating how and why individuals may use various social media for different purposes, and developing or modifying metrics to measure return on investment. All of these are examples of possible research avenues (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

When it comes to marketing, social media is unavoidably forced to confront both its numerous advantages and its numerous disadvantages. Table 1.2 provides a comparison of the benefits and drawbacks of using digital marketing. The term "digital marketing" refers to the process of promoting goods or services through the use of various digital technologies, such as the internet, mobile phones, and other digital mediums.

The ability to reach a greater number of potential customers is one of the primary benefits that digital marketing offers. Digital marketing, in contrast to traditional marketing, which is restricted to a certain geographical area, enables firms to reach customers in any part of the world, thereby expanding their market globally. However, the preliminary expense of purchasing software and hardware can be extremely significant, which may prove to be a barrier for some types of companies.

The capacity of digital marketers to communicate with their target audiences in real-time is another benefit of utilizing digital marketing. This makes it possible for the two parties to have an instant engagement of reciprocity with one another, and it also offers customers a more personalized experience. The fact that digital marketing is typically less expensive than traditional marketing makes it an appealing choice for companies to implement in their marketing strategies.

On the other hand, there are a few drawbacks that should be taken into consideration. For instance, a large number of clients are unable to use the internet, which may restrict the scope of the reach of digital marketing initiatives. In addition, rules and

interventions in the realm of cyber security are ongoing and require attention. This creates the potential for difficulties for organizations that want to conduct digital marketing strategies (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020).

Table 1.2 Advantages and disadvantages of social media marketing

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|
| It provides a wider reach to reach potential customers. | The initial cost of software and hardware is quite high. |
| It is the only medium that can reach geographical and regional boundaries. | Consumers tend to feature goods/products on social media as a comparison rather than just a purchase reference. |
| Business promotion costs less. | Many customers are not internet literate, |
| It can connect marketers and consumers in real-time. | marketers have to lose some potential customers. |
| There is an instant reciprocity interaction between marketers and consumers. | In the context of cyber security, regulations, and interventions are ongoing and need attention. |
| It saves time and money. | It carries the possibility of fraud and dishonesty. |
| The business has a structure that allows it to work 24 hours a day. | Indirect interaction between marketers and consumers makes distribution channels less developed. |

Source: Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020

When it comes to social media marketing, businesses utilize a wide variety of social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter. The kind of customers who will be targeted and the marketing approach will dictate which platforms are used. Chen and Lee (2018) conducted research into the use of Snapchat for social media marketing aimed at young customers. The conclusions of the study underlined the fact that users perceive Snapchat to be the most personal, laid-back, and dynamic platform that offers information, opportunities for sociability, and amusement. According to the findings of the study, young consumers have a favorable view toward Snapchat and generate similar

thoughts concerning their buying intent and the companies that are advertised on the platform (Chen & Lee, 2018).

According to the findings of a research carried out by Kusumasondjaja (2018), interactive brand postings received a greater number of responses than informative message content. Twitter has been found to be more effective at appealing to people's thirst for knowledge. As reported by the data, Facebook is more effective for posting interactive forms of entertainment, but Instagram is more effective for posting interactive forms of material that mix informational and entertaining appeals. On Facebook and Instagram, the postings from interactive brands that had a variety of appeals received the most responses, while a self-directed message that had an educational appeal received the fewest (Kusumasondjaja, 2018).

Lee et al. (2018) analyzed 106,316 Facebook messages across 782 companies and found that incorporating humor and emotion leads to greater consumer engagement (Lee et al., 2018). While most studies have addressed social media marketing and the impact of digital marketing on commercial companies, some studies have focused on outcomes for nonprofits. By examining the use of Facebook and Twitter in the context of nonprofits and its impact on user engagement as well as results, Smith (2018) concludes that users respond differently to social media activities across platforms (Smith, 2018). Digital and social media marketing enable companies to achieve their marketing goals at a relatively low cost. There are more than 100 million registered businesses on Facebook pages, and more than 88% of businesses use Twitter for marketing purposes. Digital and social media technologies and applications are also widely used to raise awareness about public services and political promotions (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

In addition, the voice of consumers has become stronger with the development of social media and has been heard by many people. Social media plays an important role in marketing strategy. As a part of social media, social networking sites can be used by businesses to directly communicate with and establish good relations with their customers. Social media marketing activities and customer experiences can take place collectively on social networking sites. All marketing activities of businesses on social networking sites and experiences perceived by customers will affect customer response and will be included in analysis processes before purchasing. From this point of view, it is

about establishing a customer relationship that contributes to the achievement of the marketing objectives of the business (Wibowo et al., 2021).

Social media marketing platforms are seen as strategic places where customers want to be regularly updated with information about their product brand choices. The level of commitment to social media platforms leads to the development of brand advocates with a bold emotional commitment to product and service brands. Also, social media marketing platforms can always be a place where corporate storytelling for branding is expressed in terms of how corporate associations, corporate values, corporate personalities, and corporate benefits can be communicated to targeted internal and external stakeholders (Nyagadza, 2020).

Facebook: In October 2003, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook, a social network that started as a private site for Harvard students. Facebook, where anyone with an e-mail ID could sign up for free in 2006, surpassed MySpace between 2008 and 2009. Facebook is an ideal application for social media marketing. Suggestions for a marketer to take advantage of it can be listed as follows (Bratton, 2022):

- Creating and improving the brand image;
- Establishing and developing the company's authority in the market as a thought leader;
- use the network for market research (opinions and perspectives may be preferred for surveys);
- Very ideal for networking. Creating a Facebook group with similar interests;
- Targeted advertising.

Facebook is based on the creation of personal profiles that describe various roles in a person's life. In contemporary modern society, different social roles tend to intersect in various social areas. The boundaries between public and private life, as well as the workplace and home, are weakening. Facebook is seen as a social area where social roles tend to merge and integrate into profiles. It is matched with single profiles in social media systems such as Facebook and the world of life.

Twitter: Microblogging is a form of blogging that limits the size of each post. The most well-known example of this is Twitter. Twitter updates, or posts, could initially contain only 140 characters. This number is now 280 characters. Twitter, which rose in popularity in the first half of 2009 as a result of high-profile famous members being heard, has now become mainstream, leaving other social media tools behind. Most companies

are on Twitter. This venture, besides being easy, requires very little time investment. It is also valuable in terms of rapidly increasing interest, sales, and consumer insight. Twitter can also be used to announce offers or events, promote new blog posts, or notify readers with links to important news stories. In addition, businesses can show support by subscribing to the tweets of Twitter-loving customers. In short, Twitter for businesses is a fast, easy, and free way to (Karami et al., 2020):

- Keeping in touch with their customers;
- Announcing by offering special discounts and sales;
- Provide updates covering team members and employees;
- Follow tips to make a splash in job opportunities, trends, and breaking news;
- To be able to monitor what competitors are doing.

Twitter can be accessed through computers, mobile phones, and many other capable devices. It is free for all users, and users can use the app as little or as much as they want.

Instagram: On October 6, 2010, Instagram was established as a company. It is a form of social media application that is specifically tailored for aesthetically pleasing material and mobile devices, and it is offered for free in app stores. Instagram gives its users the ability to capture photos and videos, apply built-in filters to images in order to enhance them, and quickly share their creations with either a smaller audience consisting of their friends or a larger audience consisting of all Instagram users. Users who publish photos have the option to also share those photos on social networking sites such as Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter. Instagram is primarily intended for usage on mobile devices, as the program can only be used to produce new material when it is downloaded and installed on a mobile device. However, users can view images on a desktop computer if they so choose (Chen & Yuan, 2020). Since 2013, marketers have observed increased benefits across all product categories, with trademarks increasing the number of loyal followers and sales.

Because of this, 2013 has been a significant year for the development of social media. Getting a sense of the power that Instagram possesses is one of the most astonishing things that has occurred throughout this procedure. As a result of the fact that it enables fashion brands to engage directly with their customers, promote a variety of events and projects, and increase brand awareness, social media is an effective key for the

fashion industry. Brands have expressed a greater interest in Instagram as the use of visual infographics and marketing applications on social media platforms has increased. In addition, there is no language barrier on Instagram, and it delivers visual content that is highly crucial for all industries operating on a worldwide basis, particularly the fashion business.

YouTube: Contributors to YouTube share and consume videos in a manner that is less social than that of their peers. When two users interact on YouTube, they typically do so by posting or referring each other to content that they believe the other user will find interesting. Social connection occurs more on the level of the individual's intake of content as opposed to really shared or collaborative experiences. If there isn't already a strong network in place, merely broadcasting television commercials on YouTube won't inspire interaction among anybody other than the company's employees and possibly the employees' families who watch the commercials. YouTube is the best-known video hosting service in the social media space. Unlike traditional media, YouTube allows users to interact, interact, view, collaborate, and primarily evaluate communication systems. YouTube has made a significant portion of the Internet population its users and stands out as the most popular private video-sharing application. Besides music videos, YouTube also showcases different types of videos, such as movie trailers, video games, sports, talent, user content, and show recordings.

To be successful in social media marketing, companies need to establish buyer personas, and then develop and continually adjust their online marketing strategy based on their customers' interests for long-term success. Finding out what is best for which target audience leads to success. Regarding these aspects, companies can use online reputation systems to provide the right online incentives to the right online customers. Since the era of digitalization has come, the importance of social media has increased rapidly, and many businesses have begun to rely on social media to enter the consumer networks that make up social media. With the use of different social media channels such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat, even the most "inaccessible" products have suddenly entered the daily lives of buyers. The fact that new products are constantly seen every time one enters social media creates a feeling that products are no longer just a luxury but a necessity after a while. The marketing strategies that manufacturers rely

on today are based on this data. Marketing strategies are determined by infiltrating personal networks through social media.

1.3 Dimensions of Social Media Marketing Activities

Marketers today focus a significant amount of emphasis on social media to increase their market share rates. Marketers are excited about the potential of social media to open up new avenues via which they can sell their products or services. Although social media marketing is still relatively new for businesses, the period of adjustment has been rather brief. Just as the findings of their research, organizations may use social media to establish communication channels with their customers, sell their products, build brand equity, and boost customer loyalty. Managing this communication, however, requires effort and care because it is a conduit that works in both directions. Unhappy customers have the ability to raise objections, easily influence a large number of other customers, and damage the image of the company. The company must integrate its social media marketing plan with the company's worldwide marketing strategy in order to reduce the likelihood of doing more damage to the company's brand image than good. In order for this to be possible, it is essential for the company to select the human profile that is most suitable for its intended market and to interact with that audience in the most acceptable manner (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

In this day and age of digital technology, marketers are realizing that marketing content needs to give greater priority not only to the aspects that are commercially oriented but also to the aspects that are socially oriented, placing an emphasis on the interactions that occur between sellers and buyers. It is possible to give marketing services, approaches, strategies, and designs that demonstrate social involvement and meet the characteristics of the community for a business or any other entity that is interested in using social media as a marketing channel (Wibowo et al., 2021).

In addition to merely posting material, businesses should also make their social media platforms public in order to promote their vision and core values. This is the reason why, for a brand-related or proximate cause, they should provide ongoing learning and education as part of the brand broadcast, create conversational-level content, use podcasting and written interviews, share live videos and other videos on the website, and embed them in advertisements, and the real people behind the business should tell emotion-based stories that show how the business has impacted their lives. Because of

these, a climate of trust is generated within the organization by making it appear authentic and approachable to customers (Gedik, 2020).

According to Orel and Arik (2020), interaction implies that brands and customers have successful and ongoing communication with one another in terms of social media marketing communication, regardless of the time or place in which the interaction takes place. Because of this contact, customers are given the option to provide feedback to firms, during which they can offer information as well as suggestions. These feedbacks are able to be received by the brands since they have social media profiles that allow for this. In addition, businesses can use their social media profiles to post videos, messages, information, and other content related to the things they sell. These content exchanges between the company and the customer help improve the relationship between the customer and the brand, which in turn has a positive impact on the business in the form of positive outcomes such as an increase in the customer's intention to make a purchase and increased customer loyalty (Orel and Arik, 2020).

The term "interaction" refers to the degree to which different social media platforms provide chances for the sharing of information and the back-and-forth exchange of ideas. This gives customers the opportunity to discuss certain goods or brands with other individuals who share their interests on the social media platform, which is perhaps more influential than conventional forms of media such as print, television, and radio. Consumers are more likely to contribute their user-generated content once they have engaged with a brand, which also increases both their attitude toward the business and their intention to make a purchase. The practice of publishing content on social media that is tailored to the characteristics of the audience being targeted in this way stimulates conversation and helps develop relationships between customers and brands. As a result, it supports the actions of marketers who urge users of social media sites to join in debates that are available on those platforms (Cheung et al., 2020).

The concept of consumer engagement as a direct effect of social media marketing has been researched. It was suggested that commitment should be considered as a psychological state of mind and should be considered separately from interactive behavior, which includes liking and sharing content, according to the research that was carried out by Syrdal and Briggs (2018). Knowledgeability refers to the fact that

marketing messages regarding products or services can be sent to consumers using social media marketing activities. Through the messages that are sent, the objective is to develop a brand identity that is associated with the products and services. In addition, the ideas, views, and experiences of already-existing customers are shared with additional consumers through the use of platforms that are associated with social media marketing (Orel & Arik, 2020).

According to the definition provided by Orel and Arik (2020), personalization is defined as the act of carrying out social media marketing activities in a manner that is designed to appeal to the interests of individuals. It is possible to choose the appropriate target audience with the use of social media by making use of consumer information, and this is very useful in the display processes of advertisements. After analyzing the demographics of the population to which the advertisement is directed, personalized ad impressions generated by social media marketing tools are more cost-effective than those generated by traditional media. Because of these individualized presentations, clients are made to feel that they are important to the business, which in turn increases their loyalty to the company. In addition, because of the tools that are available for marketing on social media platforms, market segmentation may be accomplished with ease by taking into consideration the demographic and psychographic features of the users (Alan et al., 2018).

As reported by the research by Cheung et al. (2020), personalization is defined as the degree to which services, marketing efforts, and messaging are adapted to cater to the unique inclinations and preferences of individual customers. Creating value for a specific consumer or consumer group and making it easier for them to use a product or service is the goal of personalized services and information search. Additionally, personalization makes it simpler to communicate with the intended demographic, which in turn helps enhance consumers' faith in brands and their desire to make purchases. One example of personalization is allowing consumers of luxury brands to design their products based on their preferences. Another example is using social media platforms to provide consumers with personalized information and respond instantly to consumers' personal questions, which in turn ensures customer satisfaction and retention. Personalization can be achieved in several other ways as well (Cheung et al., 2020).

According to Orel and Arik's (2020) definition of trending, it means that consumers are provided with the most up-to-date information about items through the use of social media marketing tools. The marketing channel known as social media marketing is one that is effective in presenting consumers with trending products while they are conducting product searches (Orel & Arik, 2020).

Consumers are able to swiftly and unrestrictedly communicate their perspectives with other users thanks to the capabilities offered by social media platforms. Businesses like Hootsuite, Sprout Social, etc. can identify themes and materials that are popular thanks to the measurement tools for social media marketing. Both the number of visitors to a company's brand page as well as the number of sales that the company makes can grow as a result of the content that the company produces (Orel & Arik, 2020).

Trending refers to the degree to which a brand exerts influence over the consumers it aims to attract. Customers on social media are increasingly turning to day platforms in order to search for and get product-related information. Because of this, the impression is created that they are more helpful and up-to-date than when using traditional lines of communication, which is an advantage. This application might be helpful to marketers in giving customers the most up-to-date information on the latest trends. As a result, it adds value for customers by making it easier for them to get the information they need. The material that is considered to be trendy includes product reviews, information on newly launched brands from both marketers and customers, and updates on innovative concepts. It increases the consumers' good view of the brand and promotes trust among the consumers in the brand (Cheung et al., 2020).

As Orel and Arik (2020) claim, the construction of brand awareness and guiding consumers to purchase can be ensured through dependable word-of-mouth communication developed by consumers themselves. It means that customers express their positive or negative thoughts about businesses and products through the use of platforms that are associated with social media. Consumers are able to swiftly and unrestrictedly share their thoughts with other users of social media platforms thanks to the availability of these platforms. Studies have shown that consumer participation in the form of online word-of-mouth communication on social media sites has a favorable effect on consumers' propensity to make a purchase (Harrigan et al., 2017).

When it comes to supporting word-of-mouth communication on social media, businesses have the ability to conduct sweepstakes, contests, and games on their brand sites. By directing users and followers to tag each other on the brand's page in the activities that are held in the social media environment, they can enhance both the recognition of their brand as well as the sales of their products (Orel & Arik, 2020).

There has been a rise in the number of studies that investigate the impact of word of mouth on product sales and marketing strategies, as well as the utility of consumer product reviews in consumer decision-making, and the utility of consumer reviews in sales forecasting. This coincides with the rise in the number of people who are using social media. In the context of the internet, people under the age of 30 are seen as the most desirable age bracket. Therefore, it is very important to analyze the patterns that this group exhibits on the internet and in social networking, given that the behavior of this group may change depending on the setting in which it is seen. This demographic has never known a world without computers and has been profoundly shaped by the advancement of information technology during their whole lives (Ahmad & Khan, 2017).

Because of the proliferation of online social media platforms and e-commerce websites, online word-of-mouth marketing has the potential to become a significant and widely used source of information for customers. Numerous studies that analyzed vast amounts of data from e-commerce and social media platforms have provided evidence that word-of-mouth marketing is quite important. The influence of word-of-mouth is widely recognized by marketers and companies alike as an important factor. On the other hand, people tend to be more affected by the negative word-of-mouth they encounter as opposed to the positive word-of-mouth they hear. Having said that, this influence is not without its boundaries. People are less likely to have a negativity bias when they explain away negative word-of-mouth communication as being unusual or blame poor experiences on having terrible luck (Chen & Yuan, 2020).

Mobile phones are becoming an increasingly important tool for consumers in all aspects of their lives, including word-of-mouth communication. The evaluations that are written on mobile devices tend to be more emotive than those that are written on PCs, according to research. This uptick in sentimentality can be attributed to the fact that customers are increasingly concentrating on the meat and potatoes of their experiences when using mobile devices (Ransbotham et al., 2019).

1.4 Marketing for Tourism

Individuals now have access to a wide variety of new options and conveniences as a result of recent advances in economic conditions, political and commercial agreements, and technical advancements in the society we live in today. People increasingly prefer to fly, even when they are only going from city to city, because of the convenience it provides. Individuals started to make plans in advance for the holidays/vacations, with the aim of experiencing a pleasant time. Everyone has to take a break once in a while. Because of this circumstance, tourism has emerged as a central focus for many nations, particularly in the most recent years, as a result of the establishment of tourism as an essential component of the economy. This trend is seen in the World Tourism Organization's yearly report on tourism and the total number of tourists (Hudson & Hudson, 2017).

On the other hand, the development and expansion of tourism on a daily basis have unavoidably led to an increase in the level of rivalry that exists between various commercial businesses. At this point, businesses in the travel industry, such as airlines, hotels, travel agencies, and online reservation sites, place a high priority on communication and marketing activities. This is done with the goals of differentiating themselves from their rivals, developing a brand, increasing sales, and establishing a significant presence in the tourism industry. The marketing strategies of tourism business entities are deeply ingrained in the perceptions and choices of their clients at all levels. Along with business entities, also nations started to actively encourage tourists to visit their countries, in order to increase cultural values.

Tourism is not a sector that can be developed or expanded solely through the promotional efforts of government policies. However, it can be promoted and organized through a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors. To achieve this, individuals and organizations need to undertake specific tasks such as assessing the demand for tourism, evaluating its feasibility, and identifying potential constraints. In this way, the tourism sector can be effectively managed and sustained.

The manner in which the promotion will be carried out has to be decided. It is imperative that societal and political considerations be taken into consideration. Developing a plan for an efficient method of communication is essential. It is necessary to correctly identify target audiences and communicate with those audiences in a manner that has the intended effect. It is important to choose communication methods that are

both necessary and appropriate. As a consequence of this extensive procedure, the idea of promoting tourist products and services materializes.

As reported by the findings of a study conducted by the World Tourism Organization, tourism accounts for 10 percent of the global per capita GDP. People have more work options available to them as a result of tourism's expansion of the economy. There is hope for employment for one individual out of every 10 persons. In 2021, countries earned a total of USD 713 trillion from tourists traveling abroad. After the petroleum and chemical industries, the tourism industry is in the third place. People are able to interact with one another, which leads to cultural integration and conversation between different communities as a result of tourism. In a nutshell, the significance of tourism may be broken down into four primary categories: economic, social, cultural, and political elements (Roman et al., 2022).

Marketing tourism is necessary to ensure the success of the tourist industry. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism marketing is "the process of researching, estimating, and selecting a touristic product while taking into account the characteristics of tourism demand in order to ensure that the tourism product has a good place in the market." The purpose of tourism marketing is to ensure that a tourist product has a good place in the market. It is a management philosophy that is connected to the decisions that need to be taken on these problems, and it is defined in accordance with gaining the largest profit from a touristic location or tourism business. This definition was given in line with the aim. Another definition of tourist marketing describes it as the methodical and coordinated implementation of international and national tourism business policies by the public or private sector in order to provide the best possible service to the requirements of a specific consumer group and generate an appropriate return. When it comes to marketing tourism, the client is the single most crucial factor. As a consequence of this, providing satisfaction, value, and loyalty to customers is the central focus of tourist marketing. In the context of the tourism industry, "marketing" refers to the process of presenting, promoting, selling, and developing customer loyalty among visitors in order to sell products and services. These services may be offered to the guest either directly or via intermediary agents from a third party. At this stage, it is essential to generate interest in carrying out the procedure once more and

provide an appropriate response to the requirement for this to be done (Ranasinghe et al., 2020).

1.5 Travel Agencies

Travel agencies are an essential component of the tourism sector because they facilitate communication between tourists and the numerous service providers in the tourism industry. They provide a diverse selection of services, such as booking airline tickets, reserving hotel rooms, organizing tours, and many other options. Because they offer a one-stop-shop solution for customers' travel-related requirements, travel agencies have assumed an increasingly significant role in light of the proliferation of technology and the internet in recent years. We are going to talk about the significance of travel agents in the tourist industry in the following paragraphs.

Convenience: Working with a travel agency is beneficial for a number of reasons, but the convenience they provide is among the most significant of these reasons. Travel companies take care of all the aspects of a trip, from the very beginning to the very end. This saves passengers a great deal of time and effort in planning their trips. Because they have access to such a wide variety of travel alternatives, such as flights, hotels, rental cars, and tour packages, they are frequently in a position to provide discounts and special deals that independent travelers may not be able to locate on their own. The only information that the travelers need to submit is their preferences and their budget, and the travel agency will take care of everything else. Not only does this save time, but it also lessens the tension that is normally connected with trip planning.

Information and Expertise: When it comes to the travel sector, travel companies have a plethora of both knowledge and experience. Because of their extensive knowledge in the sector, they are able to offer travelers insightful guidance and credible recommendations. They can provide insights into the local culture and customs of a region, as well as insider information about destinations, travel options, and the most recent developments in the industry. This knowledge can assist travelers in making well-informed decisions, which can lead to an experience that is both more fun and more meaningful.

Working with a travel agency can often lead to significant cost savings for travelers. This is because travel agencies have access to special discounts and bulk deals

offered by various travel providers, such as hotels, airlines, and cruise lines. By leveraging these benefits, travel agencies can help their clients save money on their travel expenses. These cost reductions can quickly pile up, which is especially beneficial for families and groups that travel together. In addition, travel agents are frequently able to combine multiple travel components into a single itinerary, such as a flight and a hotel, which can result in even greater cost savings.

Another advantage of using the services of a travel agency is that you will receive individualized attention in the form of personalized service. Travel agencies are aware that every passenger has a unique set of requirements and preferences, and therefore make every effort to deliver individualized service. They are able to assist passengers with everything from the design of itineraries to the acquisition of travel visas, and they can provide support around the clock for the duration of the trip. When it comes to a traveler's overall experience, this degree of individualized care can make all the difference.

Support in an Emergency travel company also offers assistance in an emergency, which can be quite helpful if unanticipated events occur while a person is away from home. Because they have developed ties with airlines, hotels, and other travel providers, they are able to manage any unforeseen problems in a prompt and efficient manner. This sense of calm is of utmost significance for travelers, and it is especially vital for those who are traveling to a different country or who are organizing an intricate route.

A travel agency is a business that is authorized to sell services to the general public, including tours, cruises, transportation, hotel accommodations, meals, sightseeing transfers, and other components. These services can be purchased by the public. The travel agency industry makes use of some of the most essential management concepts, including the division of labor and the assignment of power and responsibility in a hierarchical structure (Syratt & Archer, 2012). The travel agency makes the arrangements, organizes, directs, regulates, coordinates, and arranges everything to get the customer in such a way that it can accomplish its goals. After ensuring that their clients' needs are met, successful travel agencies create profits from the functional areas of management that are related with the organizational goals. For instance, Thomas Cook established himself as an industry leader in the travel agency sector all over the world as a result of his persistent efforts to ensure quality in order to satisfy and please customers (Smith, 1998).

According to another viewpoint by Millan & Esteban (2004), a travel agency is a commercial enterprise or company that acts as an agent for several airlines, hotels, tour companies, and cruise lines in order to provide consumers with packaged tours or any other unique travel solutions. In today's day and age, travel agencies have established specialized departments to cater to the requirements of business travelers in addition to vacationers. In most cases, a travel agency will provide guidance to travelers on the weather, distance, culture, and appropriate dos and don'ts to follow while visiting a certain destination or city. At this time, the majority of vacation packages are marketed through travel agents. Thomas Cook is remembered by modern travel agencies for his contribution to many creative methods, while Sir Henry Lunn (Lunn Poly) is credited with developing skiing as a recreational sport. Both men are known as "Lunn Poly." In order to effectively run their businesses, travel agencies need to have organizations that are both dynamic and structured, as well as years of relevant work experience. Examining both the fixed and variable investments that will be required to run the firm is of the utmost importance. Other external circumstances, such as natural disasters, outbreaks of illness, ethnic conflicts, and so on, can have a detrimental impact on the prospects of a travel company in addition to being negatively impacted by the seasonal nature of the business itself in other ways (Syratt & Archer, 2012).

According to Medlik (2012), travel agents are responsible for making reservations for flights, trains, ships, or automobiles, as well as making hotel reservations or bookings at guesthouses and hiring taxis, among other services. In addition to selling tickets for domestic flights, travel agencies also handle bookings for foreign flights as well as other reservations, such as those for special business tours or conferences. On the other hand, tour operators are responsible for managing both Free Independent Travelers (FIT) and Group Inclusive Tour (GIT) travel, as well as bulk travel arrangements. As a result, they have established a reputation as either a major agency or a wholesaler. Tour operators are also responsible for coordinating ground handling agents, who are responsible for greeting and transporting guests to and from airports and train stations, as well as arranging tourist activities. It is important to note that tour operators primarily advertise trip packages by working in conjunction with travel agencies.

The fact that travel agencies are engaged parties makes them a crucial component of the tourism industry; this is mostly due to the function that they play as mediators. The

primary function of travel agencies is to act as mediators between clients and the providers of various travel services, including hotels and airlines (Dolnicar & Laesser, 2007). Travel agents, in contrast to distributors in a wide variety of sectors, do not deal with tangible things but rather with information. Information, distribution, reservation services, and customer service are the four key responsibilities that fall within the purview of a travel agency. The following are the functions that a travel agency performs during a typical business day (Lam & Cheung, 2009):

1. Organizing transportation locally and internationally, including air travel, sea cruises, bus and rail travel, and car rentals;
2. Arranging individual itineraries, guided tours, group tours, and selling prepared package tours
3. Taking care of the preparations for lodging, meals, sightseeing, the transfer of passengers, and unique activities like music festivals and theater tickets;
4. Taking care of the documentation needs and providing advice regarding them (visas, health certificates, etc.);
5. Making use of expert knowledge and expertise in the supply of flight, train, and other transportation schedules, hotel prices, and the standards and qualities of the hotels;
6. Making arrangements for reservations for unique activities such as religious pilgrimages, corporate travel and conferences, incentive and educational tours, environmental tours, and other similar activities, etc.

1.6 Benefits of using Social Media in Tourism

The impact of social media can be seen in practically every facet of modern society, as it has evolved to become an essential component of contemporary living. The tourist industry is not an exception, as it has swiftly embraced the power of social media to reach out to potential clients, communicate with them, and develop new business prospects. The capacity to communicate with more people is among the most significant advantages offered by utilizing social media in the tourism industry. According to Dolan et al. (2019), the usage of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn has made it possible for enterprises related to tourism to reach an international audience despite the existence of geographical barriers. Because these platforms have billions of active users, businesses have the ability to easily reach millions of potential customers with only a few clicks of the mouse. The capacity to establish a personal relationship with prospective clients is yet another advantage of using social media in the tourism industry. The use of social media platforms by businesses in the tourism industry allows for a more personalized and interactive presentation of the products, services, and experiences

offered by such enterprises. This includes providing prospective customers with a preview of what they may anticipate from the company through the use of photographs, videos, and testimonials from prior clients.

In addition to reaching a larger audience and establishing a personal connection, the use of social media platforms allows for the collection of feedback from customers. The use of social media platforms by tourism firms to elicit input from clients, which can then be used to make adjustments and give better experiences, is a win-win situation for everyone involved. This input may also be utilized to develop a better understanding of client wants and preferences, which can be extremely helpful in assisting businesses in making more informed decisions regarding the products and services they provide (Alghizzawi et al., 2018).

The ability to target certain demographics is one of the most significant advantages offered by social media platforms in the tourism industry. For instance, businesses can utilize advertising on social media platforms to target customers based on various demographic information about those customers, such as their age, interests, geography, and so on. This makes it possible for companies to target the appropriate customers with the appropriate message, which can contribute to an increase in the efficiency of the marketing activities that they undertake.

The capacity to develop content contributed by users is yet another advantage of utilizing social media in the tourism industry. Because it enables customers to share their experiences and promote the business within their own social networks, user-generated content has the potential to be an extremely useful tool for enterprises in the tourism industry. Customers may be encouraged to interact with a company on a more personal level and to contribute to the development of a feeling of community in the vicinity of the business if this is done.

The usage of social media in the tourism industry also gives businesses the option to provide clients with experiences that are more immersive and interesting to them. For instance, companies can employ augmented reality and virtual reality technologies to build virtual tours of their products, services, and experiences. These tours can be accessed by customers anywhere, anytime. This can assist to provide customers with an

experience that is more immersive and participatory, which in turn can help to boost customer happiness and loyalty (Narangajavana et al., 2017).

Last but not least, another function of social media in the tourism industry is to promote customer loyalty and brand exposure. Businesses may strengthen their online presence and boost their visibility by continuously offering customers with material that is valuable to them and relevant to their needs. This can contribute to the creation of a positive brand image, which can be useful in recruiting new consumers and keeping the ones you already have.

1.7 Consequences of Social Media for the Travel Sector

The tourism industry has been significantly impacted by social media in a variety of different ways, but these changes have also been accompanied by a new set of challenges. In the following paragraphs, we will investigate the effects that social media has had on the tourism industry, focusing on both the positive and bad effects that social media has had on the sector as a whole. To begin, let's take a look at the good effects that social media has had on the travel industry. Increased exposure is one of the most significant advantages brought to the tourism industry by the use of social media. Travel companies have the ability to reach a larger audience and boost the visibility of their products and services by establishing a presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In addition, social media provides a forum in which travel companies can disseminate information regarding their most recent sales and discounts, as well as present prospective clients with an overview of their locations, points of interest, and services (Pop et al., 2022).

Another advantageous effect that social media has had on the tourism industry is the opportunity to collect insightful and helpful comments and suggestions from customers. Travel companies can obtain a better knowledge of what their consumers are seeking in terms of travel experiences and what they want to see enhanced by watching the various social media channels. This feedback can then be utilized to make adjustments to existing products and services, as well as create new ones that better fulfill the demands of customers. Alternatively, it can also be used to develop new products and services (Narangajavana et al., 2017).

The influence that social media has had on customer behavior is one of the most significant effects that it has had on the travel industry. People are now able to do more thorough research and comparisons of available travel options thanks to social media, which has also altered the way that people book and organize their vacations. When deciding where to go on vacation today, customers are more likely to base their choices on the suggestions of their friends and family members, as well as on online evaluations and ratings left by other people who have taken similar trips. This has resulted in customers who are better informed and more discerning, which has increased the amount of pressure placed on travel businesses to produce products and services of higher quality at costs that are more affordable (Ioanas, 2020).

However, the tourism industry is also facing certain negative effects as a direct result of social networking. One of the most significant obstacles is the widespread dissemination of fictitious news and inaccurate information, both of which can have a negative effect on the reputation of a location. For instance, a single unfavorable post or review about a location can quickly go viral and reach a large audience, which can cause prospective customers to rethink their plans to vacation there. This can lead to a considerable decrease in tourist revenue for the location that is impacted, as well as damage the reputation of travel companies that operate there.

The impact that social media has had on the environment is another unintended consequence that the tourism industry has seen as a direct result of social media. The rapid expansion of the travel industry, which has been pushed in part by social media, has put stress on the world's ecosystems and natural resources, which has led to an excessive number of visitors in some locations. This has led to environmental degradation, congestion, and the loss of biodiversity, all of which have the potential to have a long-term influence on the destinations' ability to remain financially viable. In addition, the proliferation of irresponsible tourist practices, including the trafficking of animals, the destruction of cultural heritage sites, and the exploitation of local populations has been aided by social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Travel firms are currently facing a growing amount of pressure to embrace methods that are more responsible and sustainable in order to protect their reputation and steer clear of the bad outcomes that are linked with these practices.

1.8 Social media marketing management in Travel agencies

Social media marketing (SMM) has been adopted by various tourism companies, such as travel agencies, as a means of promoting their products, expanding their audience, and delivering better service to their customers. The purpose of this article is to provide an extensive review of SMM management in the tourist industry, with a particular emphasis on travel agencies.

SMM management in tourism organizations entails the formulation and implementation of promotional plans for use across a variety of social media platforms. These strategies are intended to increase awareness of the tourism organization's offerings. Finding out who exactly will be using the travel agency's services is the first thing that has to be done in this process. This information is essential in evaluating which social media sites are the most productive ones to use for the purposes of marketing. For instance, if the target audience is composed primarily of young people who are proficient with technology, then social media networks such as Instagram and Snapchat might be more effective than Facebook.

After determining who the audience that you want to reach is, the next step is to formulate a strategy for marketing using social media. The objectives of the marketing campaign, the audience that will be targeted, the platforms that will be used, and the material that will be delivered are all outlined in this strategy. In addition to this, the strategy details the expenditures that will be made for the campaign as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate its performance.

The following phase, which comes after the creation of the plan, is to put the strategies that are specified in the plan into action. This comprises generating and publishing material that is engaging on the selected social media sites, interacting with followers as well as potential consumers, and monitoring the metrics to measure how successful the campaign is. The stage of the company model that is devoted to marketing and sales is where SMM management in travel agencies can be found. At this point in the process, the primary goals of social media marketing (SMM) are to raise awareness of the brand, promote products and services, create leads, and cultivate client loyalty. Attracting new clients, maintaining engagement with existing customers, and building a community of devoted followers are the primary focuses of social media marketing techniques during this stage.

It is important that the material that is published on social media platforms is interesting to the audience that is being targeted. This can include photographs and videos demonstrating the travel agency's products and services, as well as travel tips and guidance, specials and discounts, and so on. Interaction with one's followers is another crucial aspect of managing a social media platform. This can involve replying to questions and comments left by customers, conducting polls and surveys, and cultivating a feeling of community by encouraging followers to share their own travel experiences.

In addition to the development of content and participation in interactions, it is essential to track and examine the metrics of the social media marketing campaign. This includes monitoring the number of people who follow the account, as well as engagement rates and conversions. Travel agencies are able to make educated decisions regarding their SMM tactics and alter them as necessary if they base those decisions on the data that they collect. One of the most significant benefits of utilizing SMM in travel companies is the increased audience that can be reached. As a result of the millions of active users that social media platforms have, travel firms now have the possibility to connect with prospective customers located all over the world. Another benefit of SMM is that it is more cost-effective than other methods. SMM is a relatively low-cost alternative to more conventional marketing strategies, and it has the potential to generate a high return on investment.

Nevertheless, SMM management in travel agencies does come with a few drawbacks that should be considered. Keeping up with the ever-shifting algorithms and software modifications that are implemented on social media platforms is one of the most difficult problems. Creating material that is pertinent to the target audience while also being interesting to them is another difficulty. In addition, keeping track of and conducting analysis on the metrics of the SMM campaign can be a time-consuming endeavor that calls for specific knowledge.

Chapter 2

Research Methodology

2.1 Research purpose

The empirical research investigates the role that social media marketing (SMM) plays in the promotion of tourism in Kenya, with a particular emphasis on travel agencies as the target audience. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects that utilizing SMM has on four important factors namely the number of consumers, the profit, the positive feedback, and the detection of weaknesses. Travel agencies need to take a more proactive approach to promote tourism in today's quickly expanding digital landscape, and social media gives them a unique platform for communicating with clients. This study's objective is to investigate whether or not SMM can boost the number of clients patronizing travel businesses in Kenya. The research will also investigate whether or not SMM may boost profit for these agencies and determine whether or not it is possible to elicit good feedback from clients. In addition, the study will investigate the identification of any flaws that may exist in the utilization of SMM for the purpose of marketing tourism.

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the possible advantages that SMM could give to travel businesses in Kenya. The findings of this study will be helpful not only for travel companies in Kenya but also for travel and tourism enterprises located in other nations. This research will contribute to the development of more successful marketing strategies for travel firms by giving proof of the impact that SMM has on the promotion of tourism.

An empirical study of travel agencies in Kenya will also be a part of this research, and it will make use of quantitative research methodologies. In order to assess the extent of the influence that SMM has on the marketing of tourism, the data obtained from the empirical study will be subjected to statistical analysis.

The findings of this study will make a contribution to the existing body of information regarding SMM and the development of tourism. It will shed light on the possible advantages of SMM for travel companies in Kenya as well as other companies operating in a similar capacity in other countries.

2.2 Research design and data collection

In order to collect data for this study, it has been reached to the contacts of the members of the Kenya Association of Travel Agencies (KATA). In this study, a questionnaire survey is utilized, and statistical methods are utilized to analyze the data that has been gathered. The survey has a total of 23 questions, and 13 of those questions use a Likert scale with four different answer alternatives. After getting the list of the travel agencies, research was done in order to find the contacts for the invitation to the survey. The survey was made using Google Forms, and it was emailed to members of KATA. The data collection took place over the course of one month, during which time the response rate was tracked to ensure that the information obtained was accurate and representative of the population that was intended to be studied. As a result, 71 travel agencies participated in the survey.

Statistics such as descriptive statistics and the ordinary least squares model statistics are utilized in the process of analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire survey. While ordinal logistic regression statistics are used to test hypotheses and establish the associations between variables, descriptive statistics are used to summarize and characterize the data that has been collected. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted on the questionnaire in order to look for any potential flaws or problems with the questions and the response alternatives. These measures were taken to make certain that the data acquired was precise, trustworthy, and representative of the population that was being studied.

2.3 Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were addressed via the questionnaire:

H1: Usage of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya will positively impact their profits.

Explanation: This hypothesis assumes that by using social media marketing, travel agencies in Kenya will be able to reach a wider audience and attract more customers, which will result in an increase in profits.

H2: Usage of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya will lead to an increase in the number of customers.

Explanation: This hypothesis assumes that social media marketing will help travel agencies in Kenya to effectively promote their services and reach a larger audience, which will result in an increase in the number of customers.

H3: The inclusion of social media marketing in the marketing strategies of travel agencies in Kenya will identify weaknesses in their current strategies.

Explanation: This hypothesis assumes that by incorporating social media marketing into their marketing strategies, travel agencies in Kenya will be able to evaluate their current strategies and identify any weaknesses that need to be addressed.

H4: The use of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya will result in more positive feedback from customers.

Explanation: This hypothesis assumes that by using social media marketing, travel agencies in Kenya will be able to effectively engage with their customers, leading to an increase in positive feedback from them.

2.4 Data analysis

The approach of statistical analysis that has been adopted is Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). The application of OLS makes it possible to investigate the nature of the connection that exists between a dependent variable, in this case, the social media marketing efforts of travel operators in Kenya, and one or more independent variables (tourism promotion outcomes). The OLS method will provide insights into the impact of social media marketing on tourism promotion, and it will allow for the estimation of the parameters of a linear model that can be used to make predictions about the possible outcomes of the dependent variables based on the values of the independent variables. The OLS method will also allow for the estimation of the parameters of a nonlinear model that can be used to make predictions about the dependent variable.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) is a well-known statistical method in the field of data analysis. Its purpose is to model the relationship that exists between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables using any combination of those variables. Estimating the values of the parameters of a linear model can be done with the help of the OLS method, which belongs to the category of linear regression techniques. The OLS technique makes the assumption that the relationship between the dependent and

independent variables is linear and that the errors produced by the model have a normal distribution. This allows the OLS method to produce more accurate results.

OLS is relevant for the data analysis of Likert scale questionnaires because Likert scale items are frequently used to measure attitudes, opinions, or perceptions. Additionally, Likert scale items are typically scored on a five- or seven-point scale, with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." This makes OLS applicable for the analysis of Likert scale questionnaire data. This thesis eliminated the neutral answer choice and substituted it with four scale responses in order to obtain more precise findings. Because it can be used to model the relationship between the independent factors and the dependent variable, which is the response to the Likert item, the OLS technique is helpful for analyzing Likert scale data. This is one of the reasons why the OLS method is beneficial for analyzing Likert scale data.

An OLS analysis requires the estimation of a regression equation utilizing the independent variables and the variable being analyzed (the dependent variable). The OLS approach seeks to find the point at which the sum of the squared discrepancies between the observed values and the values predicted by the regression equation is at its lowest possible value. The values of the independent variables are input into the regression equation, and then that equation is utilized to make a prediction about the dependent variable.

When compared to other regression techniques, according to Craven & Islam (2011), the OLS method has several benefits that set it apart. OLS is easy to put into practice, and the findings of the study are straightforward to comprehend. In addition to having a solid theoretical foundation, the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Method is usually regarded as a trustworthy and stable method for doing data analysis.

It is an assumption made by the OLS technique that the connection between the independent variables and the dependent variables is linear, which is one of the approach's most significant drawbacks. This indicates that the OLS method might not produce correct findings if the relationship between the variables is a non-linear one, as the OLS approach relies on linear relationships. In addition to this, the OLS approach assumes that the errors in the model have a normal distribution, which is not guaranteed to be accurate in all circumstances.

Chapter 3. Research findings

3.1 Descriptive analysis of findings

In this study, a questionnaire was administered to gather data on the usage of social media marketing (SMM) in travel agencies operating in Kenya. The questionnaire aimed to collect information on various aspects of SMM usage, including the demographic characteristics of respondents, such as gender, age, and the number of people working in the agency, as well as the years of operation of the company. This section of the study will present a descriptive analysis of the findings from the questionnaire, focusing on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The purpose of the descriptive analysis is to provide a general overview of the sample and describe the distribution of the variables of interest. By understanding the demographic characteristics of the respondents, we can gain insights into the types of travel agencies that are most likely to use SMM and the ways in which they use it. Table 3.1 presents the demographic results of the survey.

Table 3.1 Demographic indicators

| Indicator | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 42 | 59.2% |
| Female | 29 | 40.8% |
| Other | 0 | 0 |
| Age | | |
| Under 20 | 0 | 0 |
| 20-29 | 21 | 29.2% |
| 30-39 | 27 | 37.5% |
| 40-49 | 16 | 22.2% |
| Above 50 | 8 | 11.1% |

Table 3.1 Demographic indicators (continued)

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----|-------|
| Travel agency years of operation | | |
| 0-4 | 15 | 20.8% |
| 5-10 | 33 | 45.8% |
| 11-15 | 13 | 18.1% |
| 15-20 | 5 | 6.9% |
| 20+ | 6 | 8.3% |
| Number of employees | | |
| 1-5 | 31 | 43.1% |
| 6-10 | 22 | 30.6% |
| 11-20 | 14 | 19.4% |
| 20+ | 5 | 6.9% |
| Total | 71 | 100% |

The sample size of the survey was 71 respondents. As can be seen in Table 3.1, the majority of respondents were male (59.2%), while the remainder were female (40.8%). Most respondents being male suggests that the travel agency industry may have a higher representation of male employees, at least in this sample of 71 respondents.

In terms of age, the largest age group was 30-39 years old (37.5%), followed by 20-29 years old (29.2%). The age group less than 20 years old was empty (0%). The largest age group being 30-39 years old could indicate that this is a common age range for individuals working in the travel agency industry. The fact that there are no respondents under 20 years old may suggest that young individuals are not as involved in the industry or that they have not yet built up enough experience to participate in the survey.

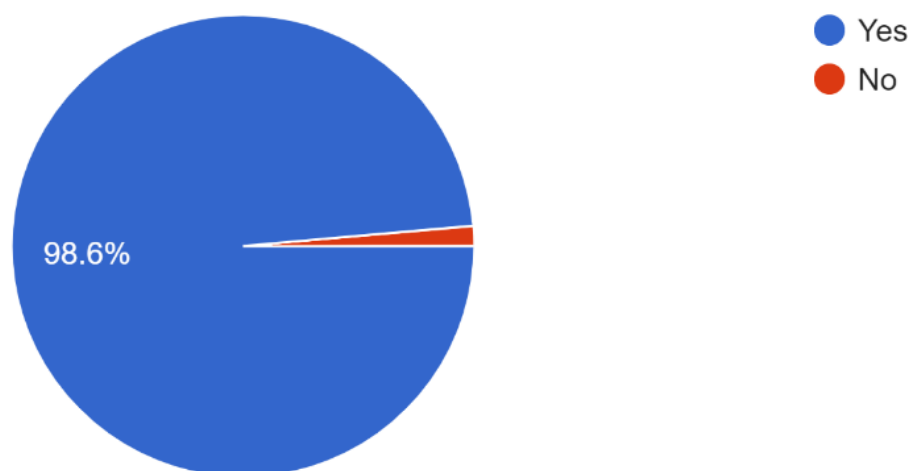
With regards to the years of experience of the travel agency, the largest group had 5-10 years of experience (45.8%), followed by 0-4 years of experience (20.8%). The smallest group had 15-20 years of experience (6.9%). The largest group having 5-10 years of experience suggests that this is a common length of time for the agencies to be in the travel agency industry. This could also indicate that these businesses have gained a certain level of experience and success in the industry. On the other hand, the smallest

group having 15-20 years of operation could indicate that it is hard to be in the business for a long time, but the fact that a higher percentage of the group has more than 20 years operation could mean that if they try to survive long years, they can operate in the market.

In terms of the number of employees in the travel agency, the largest group had 1-5 employees (43.1%), followed by 6-10 employees (30.6%). The smallest group had 20 or more employees (6.9%). The largest group having 1-5 employees in their travel agency could suggest that the industry is composed of a high number of small-scale businesses. This could indicate that there are many small travel agencies operating in the market, rather than a few large ones. The smallest group having 20 or more employees could suggest that there are fewer larger travel agencies in the market.

These results provide a general overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents and can be useful in understanding the types of travel agencies that are using SMM and their level of experience and staffing levels. However, it is important to note that the sample size of the survey was relatively small, so the results may not be representative of the larger population of travel agencies in Kenya. As reported by KATA (Kenya Association of Travel Agencies), there are 155 travel agencies. Figure 3.1 represents information about the digital marketing usage of travel agencies.

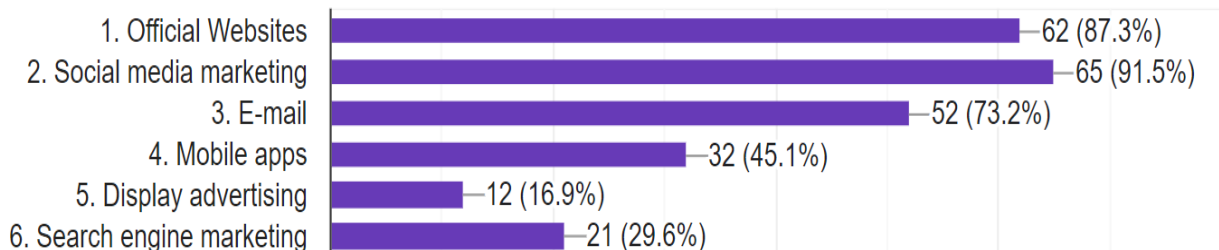
Figure 3.1 Does the Travel Agency use digital marketing as a marketing tool?



The pie chart in Figure 3.1 represents the results of a survey in which almost all travel agencies (98.6%) are utilizing digital marketing as part of their marketing strategies.

According to the findings of the survey, the three forms of digital marketing that are employed the most frequently by travel agencies in Kenya are their official websites, marketing done via social media, and email (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Which digital marketing channels does the travel agency use?



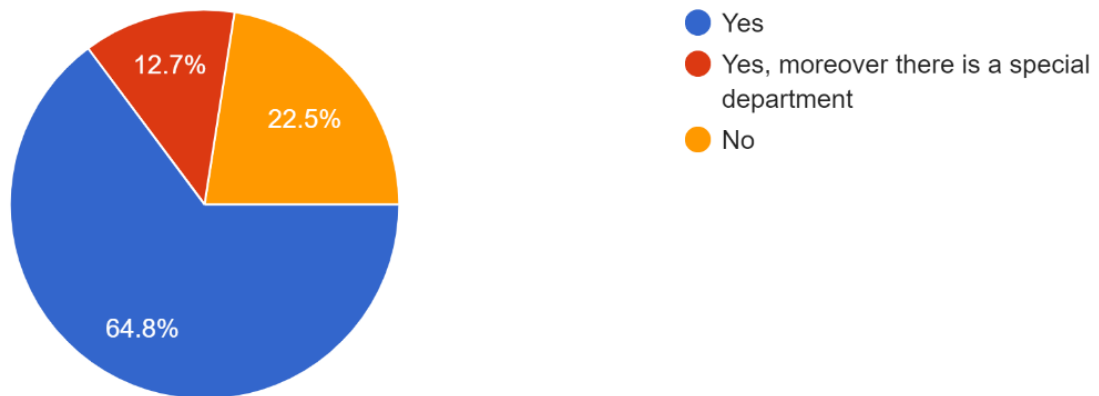
It is estimated that 87.3% of travel agencies in Kenya use official websites as a way of digital marketing. This statistic demonstrates that the majority of these travel agencies understand the need of maintaining a robust online presence. Official websites are the primary source of information for prospective clients, and they also give a platform for travel agencies to display their wares and services to potential customers.

As a kind of digital marketing, 91.5 percent of the travel agencies in Kenya have opted to promote their businesses through social media. This should not come as a surprise given the prevalence of the use of social media in Kenya as well as the simplicity with which a large target audience can be reached through the utilization of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TripAdvisor. Travel companies also benefit from social media marketing since it enables them to communicate with clients in real time, which helps to strengthen their ties with those customers.

E-mail is the third most popular kind of digital marketing utilized by travel agencies in Kenya, with 73.2% of them doing so. E-mail is a powerful tool for building relationships with clients and reaching a specific audience at a low cost. This may be accomplished by sending them information and deals that are pertinent to their interests. Only 45.1% of the travel companies in Kenya are utilizing mobile applications, 29.6% are using search engine marketing, and only 16.9% are using display advertising therefore, the data also imply that the adoption of these digital marketing channels is relatively low.

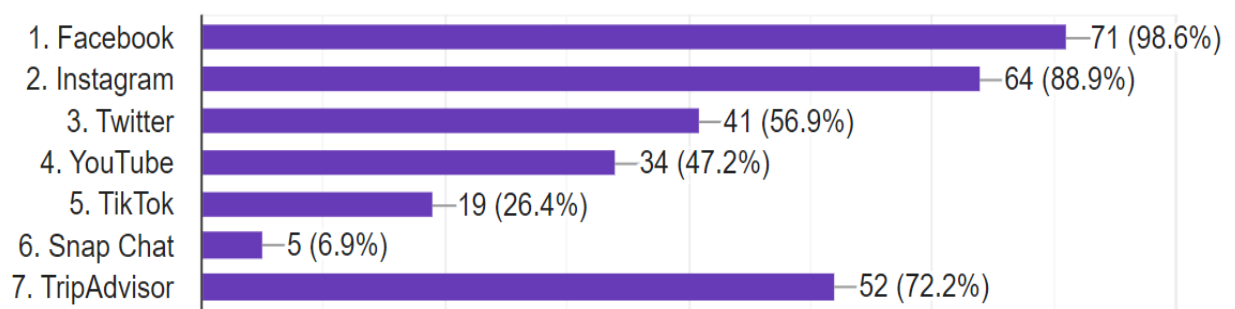
As reported by the survey's findings (see Figure 3.3), 12.7% of respondents have a separate department solely devoted to social media marketing, compared to 64.8% of respondents who have dedicated personnel for the task.

Figure 3.3 Do you have dedicated people for social media marketing?



However, only 22.5% of the respondents said they had staff members who were solely responsible for social media marketing. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents had resources set aside for social media marketing, highlighting the significance of this strategy for these companies. The fact that fewer respondents have a department specifically for social media marketing implies that this role is still not always performed independently in all firms and may be included in other marketing or communications initiatives.

Figure 3.4 What types of Social Media channels does the Travel Agency mainly use?



As stated in the study's findings (see Figure 3.4), Facebook (98.6%), Instagram (88.9%), TripAdvisor (72.2%), YouTube (47.2%), and Twitter (56.9%) are the social media platforms most frequently employed by the sample travel businesses. It is crucial

to remember that social media is an essential part of digital marketing and can be very effective in promoting travel and tourism-related businesses. While Twitter and YouTube can be utilized for real-time interaction and client involvement, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TripAdvisor give travel agencies the chance to promote their offerings and connect with new customers. The frequent use of Facebook and Instagram by the sample's travel businesses implies that these platforms are widely acknowledged as significant marketing platforms in the travel sector. Furthermore, the widespread use of TripAdvisor implies that the platform's reputation management and consumer feedback opportunities are valued by travel operators.

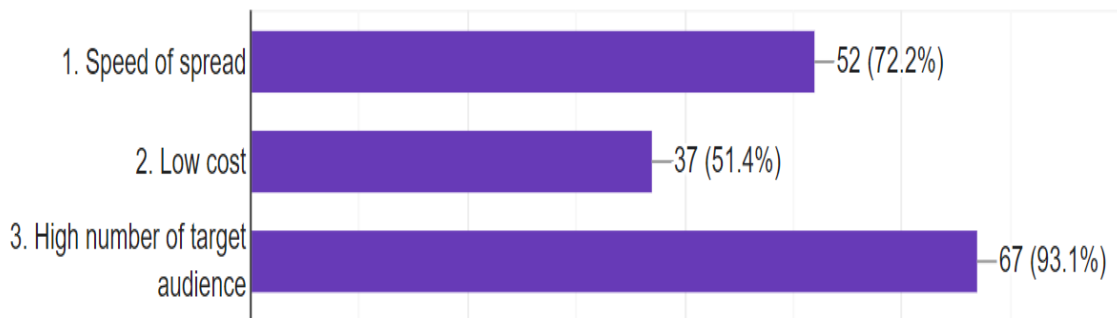
Figure 3.5 What is your target audience?



With 62 out of 71 responses, or 89.9% of the total, the findings indicate that the consumer category that Kenyan travel agents focus their attention on the most is foreign nationals who are currently living outside of the country. This is followed by responses from Kenyan nationals, who accounted for 66.7% of the total, and responses from foreign citizens stationed in Kenya, who accounted for 58% of the total, with a total of 40 responses.

It is possible that the goal of using digital marketing in order to reach a bigger audience and extend the client base of the travel agencies was the driving force behind the decision to target customers who are nationals of other countries who are living abroad. Because it is likely that foreign residents living abroad will have access to the internet and other forms of technology, it is much simpler to get in touch with them through various forms of digital marketing, such as websites, social media, and email marketing. In addition to this, marketing to people living in other countries can assist travel agencies in increasing their revenue and reaching a wider audience with their offerings.

Figure 3.6 Why does the Travel Agency use digital marketing?



According to the survey's findings (see Figure 3.6), "a high number of the target audience" was identified by 93.1% of respondents as the top explanation for why Kenyan travel businesses utilize internet marketing. Speed of spread, selected by 72.2% of respondents, is the second most popular choice, followed by "low cost," picked by 51.4% of respondents. These findings imply that Kenyan travel operators are aware of the advantages of digital marketing for quickly reaching a broad target audience. The importance of reaching a sizable and varied audience for these firms is highlighted by the high percentage of respondents who selected "a high number of the target audience." It is getting simpler to reach a big target audience and advertise travel services to a larger audience thanks to the rising use of digital technologies and social media. The significant percentage of respondents who selected "Speed of Spread" demonstrates that Kenyan travel agencies are aware of the need of swiftly connect with and inform potential consumers. Being able to disseminate information and contact clients rapidly can be essential for success in a cutthroat and quick-paced industry. Last but not least, the smaller percentage of respondents who selected "low cost" indicates that cost might not be the main factor for Kenyan travel businesses when adopting internet marketing. This should not be taken to mean that price is not important, as even though a smaller percentage of respondents selected "low cost," price is still an important consideration for a sizable amount of travel companies.

3.2 Statistical analysis of findings

This subsection presents a statistical analysis of the findings from a questionnaire on the usage of social media marketing (SMM) and its impact on the performance of travel agencies in Kenya. The questionnaire was based on a Likert scale, and the data collected were analyzed to determine the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the responses (see Table 3.2). The results provide valuable insights into the perception of

travel agencies in Kenya regarding the utilization of SMM and its effects on their performance.

Table 3.2. Summary of statistics of survey results

| Variable | Mean | Median | S.D. | Min | Max |
|--------------------------------|------|--------|-------|------|------|
| Social media usage | 3.47 | 4.00 | 0.855 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Reading comments | 3.47 | 4.00 | 0.712 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Reply comments | 3.24 | 3.00 | 0.746 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Monitoring frequently | 3.51 | 4.00 | 0.822 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Problems resolved quickly | 3.34 | 3.00 | 0.759 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Using hashtags | 3.20 | 3.00 | 0.791 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Using videos | 3.07 | 3.00 | 0.834 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Using images | 3.45 | 4.00 | 0.733 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Update | 3.55 | 4.00 | 0.672 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Number of customers | 3.48 | 4.00 | 0.753 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Positive feedback of customers | 3.39 | 3.00 | 0.686 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Weaknesses | 3.32 | 3.00 | 0.713 | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Profit | 3.10 | 3.00 | 0.783 | 1.00 | 4.00 |

Based on the statistics, it can be seen that the travel agencies in Kenya generally had a positive perception of the usage of SMM and its impact on their performance, with most mean scores falling between 3.0 and 3.5. The most positively viewed aspects were social media usage, reading comments, monitoring frequently, and using images, while the least positively viewed aspects were profit, weaknesses, and using videos. The standard deviations indicate that the responses were somewhat consistent, with most values falling within a range of 0.7 to 0.8.

In this section, an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) test is illustrated, which examines the relationship between the usage of Social Media Marketing (SMM) by travel agencies in Kenya and their performance indicators. The hypotheses being tested are (see Chapter 2):

H1: The usage of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya will lead to an increase in the number of customers.

H2: The inclusion of social media marketing in the marketing strategies of travel agencies in Kenya will identify weaknesses in their current strategies.

H3: The use of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya will result in more positive feedback from customers.

H4: The usage of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya will positively impact their profits.

Table 3.3 Report H1

| | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Std. Error</i> | <i>t-ratio</i> | <i>p-value</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| const | 2.62337 | 0.362718 | 7.233 | <0.0001 |
| Social media usage | 0.245915 | 0.101260 | 2.429 | 0.0178 |
| Mean number of customers | 3.478873 | | S.D. number of customers | 0.753263 |
| Sum squared resid | 36.59069 | | S.E. of regression | 0.728217 |
| R-squared | 0.078745 | | Adjusted R-squared | 0.065394 |
| F (1, 69) | 5.897840 | | P-value(F) | 0.017770 |
| Log-likelihood | -77.21218 | | Akaike criterion | 158.4244 |
| Schwarz criterion | 162.9497 | | Hannan-Quinn | 160.2239 |

Table 3.3 displays the outcomes of the OLS test. In the model, "the number of consumers" is the dependent variable, and "social media usage" is the independent variable. The constant term from the regression equation, "const," is the only variable in the model. The coefficient for "social media usage" is 0.245915, which means that for every unit increase in social media usage, a predicted 0.245915 rise in the number of consumers may be expected. The computed coefficient's standard error, which expresses

the degree of uncertainty, is 0.101260. The "social media usage" variable has a t-ratio of 2.429 and a p-value of 0.0178, both of which are significant at the 5% level. This suggests that there is a strong positive correlation between the number of customers and social media usage. Social media activity explains 7.87% of the fluctuation in the number of clients, according to the R-squared value of 0.078745.

After accounting for the number of independent variables in the model, the adjusted R-squared value of 0.065394 shows that social media activity may account for 6.54% of the variation in the number of consumers. The F-statistic of 5.897840 and the corresponding p-value of 0.017770 show that, at the 5% level, there is a significant link between the use of social media and the number of consumers. The model's goodness of fit is demonstrated by the log-likelihood of -77.21218 and the Akaike criterion of 158.4244. These findings support the null hypothesis H1 that Kenyan travel agencies will see an increase in consumers as a result of their use of social media marketing, and H2 is accepted. This indicates that there is proof that social media marketing is effective in increasing the number of clients for Kenyan travel businesses.

Table 3.4 Report H2

| | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Std. Error</i> | <i>t-ratio</i> | <i>p-value</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| const | 2.92130 | 0.354018 | 8.252 | <0.0001 |
| Social media usage | 0.115741 | 0.0988314 | 1.171 | 0.2456 |
| Mean weaknesses | 3.323944 | | S.D. weaknesses | 0.712634 |
| Sum squared resid | 34.85648 | | S.E. of regression | 0.710751 |
| R-squared | 0.019489 | | Adjusted R-squared | 0.005279 |
| F (1, 69) | 1.371458 | | P-value(F) | 0.245590 |
| Log-likelihood | -75.48849 | | Akaike criterion | 154.9770 |
| Schwarz criterion | 159.5023 | | Hannan-Quinn | 156.7766 |

The OLS regression results given in Table 3.4, indicate that the usage of social media marketing has no significant effect on identifying weaknesses in the current marketing strategies of travel agencies in Kenya. The t-ratio for the coefficient of social

media usage is 1.171 and the p-value is 0.2456, which is higher than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggests that the coefficient is not statistically significant and there is no evidence to support the hypothesis. Therefore, based on these results, we can reject the hypothesis H2 that the inclusion of social media marketing in the marketing strategies of travel agencies in Kenya will identify weaknesses in their current strategies.

Table 3.5 Report H3

| | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Std. Error</i> | <i>t-ratio</i> | <i>p-value</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| const | 2.21106 | 0.311428 | 7.100 | <0.0001 |
| Social media usage | 0.340142 | 0.0869415 | 3.912 | 0.0002 |
| Mean feedback of customers | 3.394366 | | S.D. feedback of customers | 0.686167 |
| Sum squared resid | 26.97413 | | S.E. of regression | 0.625243 |
| R-squared | 0.181554 | | Adjusted R-squared | 0.169693 |
| F (1, 69) | 15.30613 | | P-value(F) | 0.000212 |
| Log-likelihood | -66.38768 | | Akaike criterion | 136.7754 |
| Schwarz criterion | 141.3007 | | Hannan-Quinn | 138.5749 |

As reported by the results described in Table 3.5, Kenyan travel businesses that use social media marketing receive significantly more favorable customer reviews. The social media usage coefficient has a p-value of 0.0002, which is much lower than 0.05 and indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant. This suggests that it is unlikely that there is a coincidence between using social media and receiving favorable consumer feedback. The use of social media has a favorable and significant impact on consumers' positive feedback, as shown by the t-ratio (3.912), which also demonstrates that the coefficient differs from zero significantly. The use of social media can account for 18.16% of the variation in positive customer feedback, according to the R-squared value of 0.181554. A more accurate measure of the model's goodness-of-fit is the adjusted R-squared value of 0.169693, which takes into account the number of independent variables in the model. Given these results, we can conclude that the hypothesis H3: "The use of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya will result in more positive feedback from customers" is accepted.

Table 3.6 Report H4

| | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Std. Error</i> | <i>t-ratio</i> | <i>p-value</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| const | 2.71536 | 0.390256 | 6.958 | <0.0001 |
| Social media usage | 0.110803 | 0.109141 | 1.015 | 0.3136 |
| Mean profit | 3.100000 | | S.D. profit | 0.782971 |
| Sum squared resid | 41.66843 | | S.E. of regression | 0.782797 |
| R-squared | 0.014931 | | Adjusted R-squared | 0.000445 |
| F (1, 68) | 1.030686 | | P-value(F) | 0.313596 |
| Log-likelihood | -81.16939 | | Akaike criterion | 166.3388 |
| Schwarz criterion | 170.8358 | | Hannan-Quinn | 168.1250 |

The constant term's coefficient is 2.71536, which indicates that, on average, Kenyan travel agencies make 2.71536 when they use no social media marketing. Social media use as an independent variable has a coefficient of 0.110803. For every unit that rises in the independent variable, social media usage, this coefficient shows how the dependent variable, profit, will change.

Social media usage's standard error of the coefficient is 0.109141. This shows the degree of uncertainty surrounding the coefficient estimate. Social media usage's t-ratio, which contrasts the coefficient and standard error, is 1.015. The null hypothesis, according to which there is no correlation between social media activity and profit, is supported by the p-value of 0.3136, which denotes the likelihood of finding a t-ratio as large as the one computed.

Profit is a dependent variable with a mean of 3.100 and a standard deviation of 0.782971. The sum of squared residuals is 41.66843, and the regression's standard error is 0.782797. Only 1.49% of the change in profit can be attributed to the variation in social media activity, according to the R-squared value of 0.014931. The modified R-squared value is much lower, at 0.000445. These low R-squared values imply that only a small portion of the fluctuation in profit can be attributed to social media use.

The overall significance of the regression model is evaluated using the F-statistic of 1.030686, with a corresponding p-value of 0.313596. As long as the p-value does not

fall below 0.05, the null hypothesis—that all coefficients are equal to zero—is not significantly refuted. The Akaike criterion of 166.3388 and the log-likelihood value of -81.16939 are measurements of the model's quality of fit. Alternative measurements of the goodness of fit include the Hannan-Quinn criterion and the Schwarz criterion. The overall results of the hypotheses are described in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Overall results of hypothesis

| Hypotheses | p-value | result |
|------------|---------------|----------|
| H1 | 0.0178 < 0.05 | Accepted |
| H2 | 0.2456 > 0.05 | Rejected |
| H3 | 0.0002 < 0.05 | Accepted |
| H4 | 0.3136 > 0.05 | Rejected |

3.3 General evaluation

As reported by the findings of the OLS tests, the usage of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya has varying effects on a variety of performance measures. These findings were found after the travel agencies in Kenya participated in the testing. The findings provide support to the first hypothesis, which states that an increase in the number of clients can be attributed to marketing efforts that make use of social media. The t-ratio for the variable titled "Social media usage" is significant at the 5% level, and the model explains 6.54% of the variation in the total number of consumers. There are many possible explanations for why there is often a positive correlation between the amount of time spent on social media and the total number of customers:

- An increase in visibility: Travel agencies can reach a big audience and become more visible to prospective clients by utilizing various social media platforms.
- Interaction with Customers: The use of social media makes it possible for travel companies to interact with their customers in real time. This can result in increased customer loyalty as well as trust in the company's brand.
- Marketing and promotion: You may reach new customers through targeted advertising and promote vacation packages, offers, and deals by using social media.

- **Reviews Left by Customers:** Customers who have used a travel agency have the ability to leave reviews of their experiences on social media sites. These reviews can have an effect on the reputation of the travel agency, which in turn can bring in new clients.
- **Accessibility:** Being able to obtain information quickly and easily about travel destinations and vacation packages is one of the primary selling points social media platforms offer to prospective clients.

The findings do not give support to the second hypothesis, which states that the incorporation of social media marketing into the marketing plans of travel companies in Kenya will highlight areas of improvement for those businesses' existing marketing tactics. At the 5% confidence level, the t-ratio test for the "Social media usage" variable does not produce a significant result.

The findings provide support to H3, which states that the adoption of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya leads to an increase in the proportion of satisfied clients who provide positive comments. At the 5% significance level, the t-ratio for the "social media usage" variable is significant, and the model explains 18.16% of the variation in positive customer feedback. Travel agencies can reach a broader audience and boost their visibility by aggressively promoting their services and goods on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TripAdvisor. Because of this, the number of favorable comments received from customers may grow. Travel agencies now have the opportunity to communicate with their consumers at the moment thanks to the platform provided by social media.

Travel agencies can establish a great impression and boost client satisfaction by immediately responding to questions and feedback from customers. This, in turn, will lead to a rise in the number of positive feedbacks received. Through the use of social media, travel agencies are able to more effectively personalize their connection with consumers by catering the content of their promotions and offers to the customers' unique requirements and preferences. This may result in a more satisfying experience for the consumer and may also enhance the likelihood that they will provide favorable feedback. Travel agencies can strengthen their consumers' devotion to their brands by cultivating online relationships with them through the use of social media. This can result in repeat

customers and positive referrals via word of mouth, thus increasing the number of positive feedbacks received.

The findings do not provide support for the hypothesis, H4, which states that the utilization of social media marketing by travel companies in Kenya will have a beneficial impact on the earnings of those businesses. The p-value for the coefficient of social media usage is 0.3136, which is greater than the standard level of significance of 0.05 that is typically applied. This leads one to believe that the coefficient is not statistically significant, which in turn shows that there is no meaningful association between the utilization of social media platforms and the revenue generated by travel agencies in Kenya. It is probable that other factors, such as the state of the economy, the level of competition in the market, and the standard of service provided by the agencies, have a more substantial impact on the profits that they generate. Additionally, it is likely that the usage of social media is not being utilized efficiently by the agencies in order to create profits. This possibility should not be discounted. To have a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the negative effect that the use of social media has on the profitability of travel agencies in Kenya, additional research is required.

Conclusions

The use of social media marketing as an effective strategy for travel companies in Kenya to promote their services and raise their exposure has become increasingly crucial. The results of the empirical research that was carried out as part of this study provide support for the hypothesis that increased usage of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya leads to an increase in the number of customers who provide positive feedback and an increase in the total number of customers who patronize the travel agencies.

The sample size of 71 travel agencies for the research may lead to a lack of representativeness and generalizability of the results to a wider population. This means that the findings of the study could potentially differ if a larger sample size was used. Despite these limitations, the sample size was sufficient to provide a preliminary insight into the use of social media marketing by travel agencies in Kenya and its impact on their businesses. However, further research with a larger sample size and a more comprehensive methodology is necessary to strengthen the conclusions and provide a more accurate representation of the situation.

According to the conclusions of the study, the use of social media platforms by travel agencies may result in increased exposure, customer interaction, marketing, promotion, and accessibility of information. This results in an increase in the overall number of consumers as well as the degree of customer satisfaction, which in turn increases the number of positive reviews. Travel agencies have the ability to customize their connection with consumers by catering to the specific needs and preferences of the customers, which increases the likelihood of positive feedback being received from the customers. In addition, increasing the quantity of positive feedback obtained by establishing online relationships with clients through the utilization of social media can result in return customers as well as good referrals from existing customers.

However, the research did not discover any evidence to support the claim that integrating social media marketing into the marketing plans of travel companies in Kenya will identify areas of development for the companies' already established marketing strategies. The research also indicated that the use of social media marketing by travel companies in Kenya did not have a favorable influence on the revenue generated by these

businesses. Because the p-value for the coefficient of social media usage was lower than the conventional level of significance, this finding suggests that there is no meaningful link between the utilization of social media and the revenue that is created by travel companies in Kenya.

It is essential to point out that the number of travel agencies that were used as participants in this study was restricted to 71, which is one of the potential limitations of the research. In addition, the profitability of travel companies in Kenya may also be significantly influenced by additional factors, such as the status of the economy and the degree of market rivalry. It is necessary to do additional studies in order to have a better understanding of the elements that contribute to the detrimental effect that the usage of social media has on the profitability of travel companies in Kenya.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the significance of social media marketing for travel agencies in Kenya as a technique to boost exposure, customer satisfaction, and positive feedback. This is because social media marketing can help travel businesses in Kenya reach more potential clients. However, in order for travel agencies to see positive results from their use of social media, it is essential that they utilize social media in an effective manner.

Appendix 1

Online questionnaire

Dear participants,

You are invited to be part of a simple questionnaire which is carried out by Ezgi Gencsoy, a master's in Marketing and Innovation student at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. This questionnaire will help the researcher to find out the role of social media marketing in tourism marketing in Kenya. The responses will be used only for research purposes and will be treated in a confidential manner.

Thank you for your participation.

1. Please indicate your gender.

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. Please indicate which age category you belong to.

- Under 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- Above 50

3. How many years has the Travel Agency been in operation?

- 0-4
- 5-10
- 11-15
- 15-20
- 20+

4. How many people are working in the Travel Agency?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20+

5. Does the Travel Agency use digital marketing as a marketing tool?

- Yes
- No

6. If yes, which digital marketing channels does the travel agency use? (Multiple choices are allowed)

- Official Websites
- Social media marketing
- E-mail
- Mobile apps
- Display advertising
- Search engine marketing
- Other...

7. Do you have dedicated people for social media marketing?

- Yes
- Yes, moreover there is a special department
- No

8. What type of Social Media channels does the Travel Agency use? (Multiple choices are allowed)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Snap Chat
- TripAdvisor
- Other

9. What is your target audience?

- Kenyan citizens
- Foreign citizens located in Kenya
- Foreign citizens located abroad
- Other

10. Why does the Travel Agency use digital marketing? (Multiple choices are allowed)

- Speed of spread
- Low cost
- High number of target audience
- Other

Social Media Marketing questions

The questions below represent the approach of Travel Agency to the usage of Social Media Marketing. Please choose the option that best corresponds with how you feel about the question.

11. Travel agencies must use social media as a marketing tool.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

12. The Travel agency must read and follow the comments the customers make related to the shared content on social media.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

13. The Travel Agency must reply to the comments of customers via social media.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

14. The Travel Agency must monitor its social media pages frequently.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

15. Problems reported by customers through social media are resolved quickly by the Travel Agency.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. Travel agencies must use hashtags to spread the content.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

17. Travel agencies must use videos to reach customers.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

18. Travel agencies must use images as a tool to convey their ideas to customers.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

19. Travel agencies must update the content on social media frequently.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Performance related questions.

20. Usage of social media marketing may increase the number of customers.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

21. Usage of social media marketing may result in the increase of positive feedback of customers.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22. Usage of social media marketing can help travel agencies to find out their weaknesses.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

23. Usage of social media marketing may altogether result in the increase of profit of the Travel Agencies.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

THE END

Thank you very much for you contribution, time, and patience. :)

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