

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMER
AWARENESS AT GOFAN SAFARIS AND TRAVEL AFRICA**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

The work contained in this research is entirely mine. It has never been submitted for the award of any degree or its equivalent in this university or in any other higher institution of learning, and unless indicated, the work is entirely through my effort.

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APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper, we explored how the use of social media marketing strategies and how they impact consumer awareness at Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa. This study was driven by the increasing relevance of online platforms in shaping the marketing of tourism products and consumer behavior, as well as the dilemma of low awareness levels among consumers despite providing various safari and travel products in the East African region. The primary aim of the research was to define the correlation between social media marketing practices and consumer awareness. Particularly, the research has tested the customer awareness in tourism, evaluated the social media marketing Tactics employed by the business, and found out their impacts on customer awareness.

The research design used was cross-sectional, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A sample of 60 respondents was used to gather data on marketing staff, customer service staff, tour guides, and active clients through questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics and regression analysis, whereas qualitative responses were analyzed in a thematic manner.

The results were that social media marketing tactics that included regular updating of content, communication through interactions, advertising promotions, and tourism content that appealed to sightseeing were of great value in increasing the consumer awareness of services offered by the company. The research developed a favorable connection between social media marketing practices and consumer awareness, and the insights show that successful digital interactions enhance the brand recognition, awareness of tourism packages, and interest.

The research found that properly designed and regularly followed social media marketing programs are important in enhancing consumer awareness within tourism industry. It advised the company to reinforce its content strategy, engagement with customers, performance monitoring with data analytics, and target social media advertising in order to become more competitive and visible in the tourism market.

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CHAPTER ONE.

1.0 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter studies the background of the study, the problem statement, the main and specific objectives, the research questions, the justification of the study, the significance of the study and the scope of the study.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Based solely on the exponential rise and reach of the digital platforms, the tourism industry has been undergoing a huge transformation in the past 10 years (Yuan & Zoltn, 2024). Social media has transformed from a communication tool to the marketing tool of tourism branding, significantly shaping how tourists make choices and creating new customer engagement methods (MDPI, 2025). Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube not only transformed the approach to promotion on tourist products and destinations but have also significantly impacted the attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of the tourist regarding travel (Evangelos Christou 2025). This paradigm shift represents the cultural transformation that goes beyond the mere evolution of new technology, as destinations can finally be characterized by their "Instagrammability", which increasingly matches sometimes even surpasses their historical or ecological significance, in influencing consumer choices (MDPI, 2025) as conditioned by what customers know and feel.

Consumer Awareness refers to the amount of understanding and knowledge that people have regarding the products, services and experiences that exist in the market (Council of Europe, 2017). It involves the knowledge of product attributes, service provisions, price, quality, and the overall consequences of consumption decisions (Adkins, N. R., & Corus, C., 2009). Consumer awareness is not just about knowing the existence of a product but also about being informed of the reputation of service providers, the legitimacy of marketing statements, and how the products are consistent with individual values and needs. (Thomas T. Nagle and Reed K. Holden, 1986). The digital era has complicated consumer awareness; now people have to deal with numerous pieces of information provided by various sources and they should also acquire critical

awareness to be able to distinguish credible information from the marketing noise (Council of Europe, 2017). In the tourism industry, consumer awareness entails the awareness of potential travellers to destinations, tour operators, travel experiences, and trade-offs of varied travel options (Evangelos Christou 2025). High levels of consumer awareness will enable individuals to engage in more well-informed choices regarding their preferences, financial limitations, and moral principles, which will ultimately result in a higher level of satisfaction and a more responsible consumption behavior, Dixit, P., & Singh, P. B. , 2024)

Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa is company in this dynamic environment, where they provide safari and travel tours in African sites. In fact, as a tourism business, the company has both opportunities and challenges in its quest to tap into the power of social media to increase consumer awareness about what they offer and operate on an increasingly competitive digital platform where consumers are prepared to divide and conquer consumer attention with algorithms. Although Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa provides a large selection of personalized safari and travel tours throughout East Africa, it has little consumer awareness of its tourism packages amongst prospective travellers (Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa, Official Website). Despite offering comprehensive destination information and focusing on offering professional service delivery, the company might not be reaching and targeting target audiences effectively through its social media marketing. Such low awareness may decrease reservation and cut short customer interaction and brand sustainability within tourism sector. Customer awareness depends on several factors such as demographic factors, social influences (family and social media), marketing efforts and economic circumstances (Monisha, Sharma, and kaur, 2024). Nevertheless, this research will dwell on social media marketing approaches as a determining factor of customer awareness.

Social Media Marketing Strategy is a well-informed and objectives-focused approach to the use of social media platforms to meet certain business goals like brand awareness, engagement, leads, or sales (Landingi, 2024). It is an all-purpose roadmap to content creation and management, user engagement, and performance metrics. A successful social media marketing plan (van Doorn, J., Lemon, K.N., Mittal, V., et al. 2013) includes a number of important elements for example a comprehensive study of target audiences and demographics, the formulation of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives, the creation of

platform-specific content strategies, the application of engagement and growth strategies, and constant performance measurement and optimisation grounded on analytics (University Canada West, 2022). The plan guarantees that social media activities are kept in check with overall business objectives without arbitrary posting and wastage of resources but by ensuring brand continuity and substantive audience engagement (Louis Pretorius, 2024). Social media marketing has shown statistically significant positive impacts on destination image, travel intention, and user engagement in the tourism context in particular, thereby being an essential resource to modern tourism enterprises (MDPI, 2025). The present study is interested in exploring how promotional strategies of social media can affect customer awareness of a travel and tourism firm within a developing economy, a phenomenon that has not been previously researched.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

Despite offering comprehensive destination information and focusing on offering professional service delivery, the company might not be reaching and targeting target audiences effectively through its social media marketing. Such low awareness may decrease reservation and cut short customer interaction and brand sustainability within tourism sector. Customer awareness depends on several factors such as demographic factors, social influences (family and social media), marketing efforts and economic circumstances (Monisha, Sharma, and Kaur, 2024). Nevertheless, this research will dwell on social media marketing approaches as a determining factor of customer awareness.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of the study is to establish the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

This study will be guided by the following objectives;

1. To examine consumer awareness in tourism.
2. To examine social media marketing strategies in tourism.
3. To establish the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness in tourism.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the extent of consumer awareness in tourism marketing?
2. What is the level of social media marketing performance in tourism?
3. What is the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness?

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The need to conduct this study is that, the recent years the tourism industry transformed significantly, and nowadays the major part of the tasks that people do to get to know about and select their travelling experiences is played by social media (MDPI, 2025). In the case of a firm such as Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa that explores how to take travellers to the African countries, learning to use social media effectively is no longer a choice but a necessity in remaining competitive. Without concrete data on what is and what is not effective; the company will run the risk of wasting time and money on marketing initiatives that produce no effect on potential customers or create the kind of awareness that interested people in what the company has to offer them in terms of safari.

There is also a gap in existing research. The majority of social media marketing research in tourism is dedicated to large hotels, European city-attractions, or mass-market travel agents (MDPI, 2025). Little existing research has explored specialised African safari operators who have distinct needs such as how to capture experiential value, how to target international audience with varying degrees of cultural orientations and how to survive in a saturated online world. The present investigation will contribute to the lack of similar information within the existing body of scholarly knowledge, offering insights specific to that context.

In practical terms, this study will have a direct impact on Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa since it will determine what social media strategies actually constitute consumer awareness. Time and resource is put into development of content, social media accounts and interaction with potential travellers but without systematic analysis, it remains unknown whether such efforts are bearing any fruits. The results will present practical guidelines on how to make content better, select suitable platforms, and reach target audiences through the most effective methods (Landingi, 2024; University Canada West, 2022).

Consumers also care about the study. Safari travel involves a great deal of financial investment and personal anticipation, but most travellers are dependent on content found in social media that can be deceptive and partial. This study assists the objective of guiding traveller to make knowledgeable choices which result in satisfying and responsible travel experiences by evaluating how social media marketing can establish authentic consumer awareness, rather than simply attention (Council of Europe, 2017).

Lastly, the conclusions can be extended to the development of African tourism. Most African nations rely on tourism to grow economically and fund conservation, but in most cases they lack visibility in major markets. Learning more about how social media can be effectively used to promote African travel experiences can not only help a single company but the industry at large by showing what strategies help in this very specific case.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This work is of significant importance to various stakeholders:

To Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa: The study will deliver practical implications on effectiveness of existing social media marketing campaigns, which can be used to make informed decisions concerning resource placement, content planning, and platform choice. Knowing which strategies are best to create awareness among consumers, the company might improve its payoff on the investment in marketing and increase its competitive advantage in the tourism market. The results will assist in solving the problem of quantifying the effectiveness of social media, which is essential to maximise marketing investment (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

To Tourism Industry Practitioners: The results will provide useful insights on the effectiveness of social media marketing in the niche setting of African safari tourism, which other businesses

with core operations in developing economies or the experiential tourism industry could learn. By knowing how to capitalise on the four pillars of social media marketing: content, engagement, analytics, and advertising, practitioners can design more effective strategies to follow (Zulli, Liu, and Pait, 2023).

To Academic Researchers: This research will contribute to the existing literature on social media marketing in the tourism sector, with a specific gap that highlights the lack of research on the behavior of African tourism operators as customer base builders in terms of experiential travel (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, et al., 2021). It will add an under-representative context of geography and sector to empirical evidence.

To Consumers: In the end, more effective social media marketing which will actually increase consumer awareness will also positively impact travellers by giving them more valuable and qualified information with complete information so that they make wise decisions when travelling, and this might result in a more gratifying safari experience. Increased consumer awareness enables people to make decisions that are consistent with their values and needs (World Tourism Organization, 2022; Fuchs, 2021).

To Policymakers and Tourism Development Agencies: The knowledge of how social media can be effectively used to promote destinations in Africa might inform systematic approaches towards tourism development and economic growth in the form of digital marketing campaigns. It is consistent with the observation that digital tourism marketing is changing at a fast pace, necessitating dynamic policy frameworks (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, and Koo, 2020).

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.

Geographical Scope: The study shall concentrate on the operations of Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa in terms of its social media marketing and its coverage to the consumers in both source (mostly international tourist) markets (mainly European, North American, and African markets) and domestic market (African markets).

Conceptual Scope: The study will examine social media marketing strategies as the independent variable and operationalise them by conducting content analysis of the company social media activities on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and possibly Tik Tok. The analysis will be informed by well-established frameworks, such as four pillars of social media marketing

(Zulli, Liu, and Pait, 2023) and the aspects of proper strategy development (Tuten and Solomon, 2017; Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). The dependent variable will be explored as consumer awareness, which will refer to the level of knowledge about safari offerings, destination information, pricing awareness, safety perceptions, and brand recognition, which align with definitions in the tourism marketing literature (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, and Koo, 2020; Farwell, 2021).

Temporal Scope: The research will also reflect on the 12 months of social media marketing and consumer awareness levels in order to consider the seasonal changes in tourism marketing and consumer travel planning cycles (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Methodological Scope: The study will utilize a mixed-methodary framework an in-depth analysis of social media indicators and consumer questionnaires as well as qualitative interviewing of marketing staff and a sample group of consumers to gain an in-depth understanding of the research issue. This methodology acknowledges that it is important to understand the content strategies used (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, Carlson, Filieri, Jacobson, and others). Wang, 2021) and how they are received by target audiences.

Limitations: The research admits possible limitations based on the difficulty of determining direct cause-effect relationships between particular social media strategies and client awareness due to the abundance of factors that influence consumer awareness, possible bias in consumer survey response, and the dynamism of social media channels, which could inform future generalizability (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, the authors base their study on one organisation, which might restrict their ability to generalise the results to vastly different tourism settings (Yin, 2018).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a critical review of the literature of the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness in tourism.

2.1 DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS.

Consumer awareness is an essential component of modern business, and it serves as the degree to which people are aware of the way they are buyers in the market. It goes beyond the act of purchase and its emphasis on the importance of knowledgeable choices. With such information, well informed consumers can be able to compare a large amount of products and services by fully considering all the factors like quality, safety, and cost. This knowledge allows them to insist on the fairness of treatment and worth of their spending as a guard against exploitative actions of businesses.

Additionally, consumer awareness is embracing a broader scope of aspects, such as having an in-depth comprehension of market dynamics, legal considerations, and ethical aspects. A knowledgeable patron understands personal responsibilities and rights, a factor that leads to a market in which companies are accountable to their actions. Such knowledge is not only beneficial to individual consumers but also serves as a crucial process of creating a more open, ethical, and competitive environment in the market. With consumers stepping into the realm of engagement with the intricacies of the commercial world, they are becoming a critical component of that economic system, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between buyers and vendors based on trust and justice. (Louis Pretorius, 2024)

Alan Charlesworth (2018) is a leading scholar in digital marketing, and one can define social media marketing as the use of social networks and online communities to reach the business objectives of promoting a brand, selling products and services, and managing customer relationships. This type of marketing as described by the author acts in a complete contrast to the conventional broadcast media since broadcasters are able to engage in point to point interactive communication between a brand and a consumer because the power of user-generated content can enhance marketing messages sent out in the personal networks. This approach is supplemented by the background definition by (Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010) who define social media in the context of Web 2.0 technology that enable the generation and sharing of user-created content that are in turn used by social media marketers to reach their target audiences. Further developing the idea, in a contribution to the Integrated Marketing Communications, Anne-Marie Sassenberg (2021) proposes a more modernized definition, suggesting that social media marketing is the application of social media technologies, channels,

and software in the development, conveyance, dispensation, and communication of offerings that are valuable to the stakeholders of an organization. She also reiterates that, in contrast to the broader digital marketing, the goal of social media marketing in particular is to motivate consumers to follow the brand, be fans, and spread messages in their networks, eventually creating an online community.

The effectiveness of contemporary social media marketing is dictated by several crucial variables, according to the numerous studies gathered by (Annmarie Hanlon and Tracy L. Tuten, 2022) in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Marketing*. One of the basic characteristics is the careful combination of paid, owned, and earned press since researchers (Valeria Penttinen and Robert Ciuchita, 2022) have already recorded that the drop in organic exposure has necessitated paid social usage to achieve importance, whereas organic content has to be carefully designed to obtain involvement and fulfill platform algorithms. Moreover, (Karen Freberg, Brian G. Smith, and others, 2024), is the tactical exploitation of influencers, in which engaging content creators offers genuine peer validation, which cannot be secured via traditional advertising (Freberg, Smith, et al., 2024). Karen Sutherland, (2022) notes the need to stop using vanity measures and switch to other meaningful frameworks that measure actual business outcomes and customer lifetime value. The control of one-to-one interactions with clients on social platforms, discussed by researchers Matthijs Meire, Kelly Hewett, et al (2019) is another vital element, and the ethical issues of influencer marketing that researchers Irina Gorea and Jenna Jacobson (2022) have discussed as growing in significance to practiced sustainability in social media.

2.2 CONSUMER AWARENESS IN TOURISM.

Consumer awareness in tourism is another concept that interprets the acquisition of knowledge, familiarity, and understanding regarding tourism products, destinations, and services, by tourists, prior to making a decision to travel. Awareness has a big role in determining the perceptions, attitudes, preferences and behavioural intentions of tourists. It has been observed that marketing and tourism researchers have concurred that awareness is the pillar on which the consumer decisions rest since people are unable to form interest or buying intentions towards products or destinations that they are not aware of. Consumer awareness is of special significance in the tourism industry because tourism services are intangible and therefore lots of information,

communication, and prior knowledge are largely important before potential tourists make decisions to travel.

Keller describes consumer awareness as being able to perceive and remember a brand once you have been exposed to a category of a product. Keller says that awareness is a component of brand knowledge and it explains whether a brand will feature in the purchase decision process. In tourism, the implication is that tourists will easily choose a destination or a travel service that they can remember or know. Keller also substantiates that awareness is a driver of consumer confidence and trust as familiarity makes uncertainty and perceived risk lower. In the case of tourism organizations, marketing communication is the key to developing awareness since destinations are competing worldwide to get the eyes of tourists. Thus, high consumer awareness enhances the likelihood that a destination or a tourism company will be part of the consideration set that a tourist makes when deciding on the destination to visit (Keller, 1993).

Likewise, Aaker describes the consumer awareness as the level of presence of a brand in the mind of a consumer and stresses that the consumer awareness depicts the level of familiarity of a brand or a product with the consumer. Aaker suggests that there are varying levels of awareness, such as brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind awareness, which are the growing levels of familiarity and mental association. In tourism, top-of-mind awareness is whereby the destination or a tourism company is the first destination a tourist thinks about when the tourist thinks of traveling. According to Aaker, increased awareness offers competitive advantage since tourists tend to choose the known over the unknown. It is especially applicable in tourism markets with high risk perception because of the monetary expenditure, investment of time and inability to gauge that the service delivered will be of quality. The tourism organizations are consequently highly invested in marketing strategies like advertising, branding, and promotions in order to build consumer knowledge and shape travel choice (Aaker, 1996).

According to Kotler and Keller, consumer awareness refers to the level of information a consumer possesses about a product in terms of its features, benefits, availability, and value. Their approach highlights that awareness is the learning of knowledge via the marketing communication and exposure of information. The components of awareness in tourism encompass knowledge of destination attractions, accommodation facilities, accessibility, prices, travel packages, and experiences. According to Kotler and Keller, awareness will decrease

perceived risk since informed consumers are more assured when making purchase choices. They also emphasize the significance of integrated marketing communication tools such as advertising, PR, digital marketing and social media, in the formation and strengthening of consumer awareness. This view shows that awareness is cognitively and informational processes that are instrumental in forming tourism demand and consumer behavior (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Swarbrooke and Horner discuss consumer awareness in the framework of tourist behavior and decision-making processes. They clarify that awareness is the initial phase of the tourist decision making model with the subsequent being interest, evaluation, purchase, and post purchase evaluation. The authors believe that tourists should initially develop awareness of a destination or service before they can form preferences or intentions towards traveling. They also observe that different information channels like advertising, travel agencies, word-of-mouth communication, online channels and personal experience also shape their awareness. Due to the fact that the products of tourism are intangible and cannot be tested prior to consumption, tourists heavily rely on information and perceptions in creating awareness. This renders awareness a natural determinant of tourist attitudes and behavioral intentions. Swarbrooke and Horner also point out that awareness is constantly determined by both the internal (personal motivation and past experience) and the external (marketing communication and social influence) factors (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007).

Pike offers a destination-oriented approach by referring to consumer awareness as the degree of knowledge that tourists hold on destinations and their features. Pike has asserted that awareness defines the inclusion of the destination in the choice set, which is the set of the destination the tourist uses when making their choice. He asserts that tourists are simply unable to make decisions about which countries to visit, so tourism demand presupposes awareness. Pike goes on to describe that awareness also extends to sensitivity to destination attractions, culture, infrastructure, safety, reputation, and unique selling points. Therefore, destination marketing organizations lay more emphasis on promotional campaigns and branding strategies to create awareness to potential visitors. This view emphasises awareness as a strategic marketing goal that has a direct impact on destination competitiveness and performance in tourism (Pike, 2008).

Crompton is an earlier yet influential commentator, indicating the correlation between consumer awareness and destination image formation. Crompton states that tourists form perceptions and

mental images of a destination depending on material they acquire through media, marketing campaigns, and social interactions. It is consciousness on which the destination image is built. He claims that positive awareness helps create positive attitudes and more motivation to visit a destination, whereas negative awareness would suppress travel desires. Another point made by Crompton is that awareness can be influenced both by organic sources, including news and word of mouth, and by induced sources, including promotional campaigns and advertising. This shows that awareness extends beyond knowledge into perception and emotional appeal to tourism destinations (Crompton, 1979).

New areas of tourism studies broaden the understanding of consumer awareness by using digital communication and technological progress. Modern researchers propose that consumer awareness now harbors both social media platforms, online reviews, websites, and online marketing campaigns. Modern tourists enjoy a lot of information about destinations, such as image, videos, customer experience, and price comparison, which affect awareness and decision-making. Digital technologies have altered the way awareness is generated, via which tourism organizations are able to reach larger audiences around the world. But, since there is plenty of information, competition among destinations also grows, and the tourism companies find it harder to win the consumer interest. This contemporary viewpoint underlines consumer awareness as a dynamic and evolving practice that is affected by technological developments in the tourism sector (Mukisa, 2023).

2.2.1 Challenges Affecting Consumer Awareness in Tourism.

Although consumer awareness is vital in determining the performance of tourism, there are various obstacles that inhibit its effective application. Information overload is one of the key challenges because tourists become overwhelmed with information provided by multiple sources, such as social media, advertising, and internet websites. It can be confusing and challenging to prepare, only to grasp the real information and misleading information but eventually, it gets into awareness and decision-making. Overload of information can also lead to less attention being given to particular destinations or tourism businesses as consumers are unable to process wide spreads of information.

Limited marketing resources especially to small and medium tourism enterprises is another challenge. Most tourism bodies do not have adequate financial resources to invest in major

promotional efforts, branding, as well as digital marketing initiatives to develop effective awareness. This reduces their visibility against bigger competitors with more resources which decreases their capacity to lure potential tourists. Poor infrastructure and limited technological access to information is another constraint that tends to affect tourism companies in developing countries and this also constrains the creation of awareness.

Another issue concerning consumer awareness is the intangible nature of tourism services. In contrast to tangible products, tourism services have no pre-achievement avenue to be tested, thereby being unable to judge quality beforehand. Consequently, tourists depend extensively on such sources of information as reviews, recommendations, and promotional materials, which are not always accurate and are captured by reality. This is because the uncertainty may diminish the effectiveness of awareness due to reduced trust and confidence.

Consumer awareness in tourism is also affected by negative publicity and safety concerns. Political instability, health hazards, crimes, or very low service quality can raise negative perceptions concerning destinations. Although some marketing campaigns may strive to broadcast positive images, some negative information through the media or word-of-mouth communication can overshadow the awareness of consumers and deter them. This illustrates awareness is not necessarily good and can be influenced by negative information.

The technology issues also influence consumer awareness, especially where internet penetration is low or where digital literacy is still undeveloped. Online platforms and social media are the growing sources of awareness creation, used by tourism organizations, yet consumers unable to use digital technologies might not learn about tourism opportunities. This digital divide generates disparities in awareness distribution among various consumer groups.

The other problem is low confidence in online information. Although online platforms open up prospects of building awareness, customers also become exposed to deceptive reviews, misleading ads, and false information. This diminishes consumer confidence and can adversely impact consumer awareness credibility. To preserve trust therefore tourism companies need to invest in transparency and authentic communication.

Consumer awareness is also affected by cultural and language barriers, particularly in the international tourism markets. Unless marketing messages are translated to suit different cultural

environments and languages, they may not be effective in reaching out to diverse audiences. Poor communication may diminish the effectiveness of awareness and limit the market reach in tourism.

2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES IN TOURISM.

The concept of social media marketing in tourism can be explained as the intended utilization of social media and online communication technologies by tourism organizations to advertise destinations, services, experiences, and brands to impact consumer awareness, participation, and buying patterns. Technological change, increased internet usage and shifting consumer behaviour towards online information searching and decision making have heightened the use of social media marketing in tourism industry. Tourism organizations receive a chance to directly engage potential tourists via social media, establish relationships, and have an interactive marketing experience on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube, and Twitter. There is consensus among scholars that social media marketing strategies have a strong influence on the perceptions, attitudes, and travel choices of tourists due to their ability to exchange information, interact with one another, and communicate through electronic word-of-mouth that are influential factors in tourism demand and destination choice (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Hudson and Thal, 2013).

Kaplan and Haenlein define social media as internet-based applications developed on Web 2.0 technologies which enable users to create and share user-generated material. The authors note that social media marketing is the utilization of these channels to convey brand messages, interact with customers and shape consumer behavior. This applies in the tourism sector where tourism organizations utilize social media to disseminate information on the destination, attractions, travel packages, and customer experience as a way of attracting visitors. As Kaplan and Haenlein point out, the strategies in social media marketing are special since they allow two-way communication between organizations and customers unlike conventional approaches in marketing that makes use of one-way communication only. This level of interaction enables tourism firms to create a relationship, trust, and loyalty to customers by ensuring ongoing interaction (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Mangold and Faulds define social media marketing as a composite aspect of the promotional mix that integrates conventional communication in marketing with consumer-created content. They

claim that social media networks give organizations a chance to make direct contact with consumers and gives consumers a chance to express their opinion, reviews, and experiences to other consumers. User-generated content in tourism like travel reviews, photos, and videos plays a major role in shaping destination image and consumer choices. Mangold and Faulds emphasize that the marketing strategies based on social media need to be aimed at customer involvement and engagement and not merely delivering promotional messages. In this vision, tourism marketing focuses on engagement, dialogue and relationship building (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

According to Tuten and Solomon, social media marketing strategies are the application of social technologies aimed at producing, conveying, providing, and sharing value propositions with stakeholders. In their opinion, marketing goals that organizations pursue with the help of social media include brand recognition, customer communication, lead generation, and sales growth. This applies in the context of tourism where platform is used to market destinations, offer traveller information, communication and shape traveller behaviour. Another aspect of social media marketing highlighted by Tuten and Solomon is that it entails various strategies, such as content marketing, influencer marketing, community management, and social advertising. These methods enable tourism organizations to address specific audiences and customize communications, which improve marketing performance (Tuten and Solomon, 2017).

According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, social media marketing is a subset of digital marketing strategies, which entails the utilization of online media to target marketing objectives by means of interacting with customers and delivering content. According to them, the strategies of social media marketing revolve around the development of valuable content, the management of online communities, and the quantitative performance indicators in the form of analytics. In tourism, digital avenues give companies a chance to present destinations in the form of images, videos, and storytelling that can impact tourists and their perceptions and feelings. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, the key to successful social media marketing is strategic planning, cohesive communication, and performance assessment so that the marketing goals can be reached. Such a point of view emphasizes the managerial and strategic facets of social media marketing in tourism (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Buhalis and Law discuss social media marketing in the scope of technological change in tourism. According to them, the use of information communication technologies, such as social media, has transformed the way tourism organizations communicate in contact with consumers and share information. The authors opine that social media marketing policies allow tourism organizations to deliver real-time, personalized suggestions, and interactive communication, which boosts customer experience. They also stress that tourists are becoming more dependant on information sources online when making travel plans, so social media is now becoming a crucial marketing tool used by tourism firms. This view emphasizes how technology changes tourism marketing practice and consumer behavior (Buhalis and Law, 2008).

Xiang and Gretzel give a definition more tourism specific by defining it as the use of online platforms where travellers leave experiences, views and recommendations, which shape destination image and travel decision making. They highlight that tourists have more faith in information posted by other travellers than traditional advertisement as it is viewed as genuine and factual. Social media marketing strategies are thus employed by tourist organizations to promote customer reviews, testimonials and user-generated content to increase destination credibility and appeal. This view emphasizes the relevance of electronic word-of-mouth communication in tourism marketing (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

According to Hudson and Thal, social media marketing in tourism entails using social networking sites to emotionally engage consumers and make brands memorable. They underscore that tourism marketing is very visual and experiential and the social media platforms are best to share images and videos that are inspiring to travel desire. The authors believe that social media marketing strategies can enable tourism companies to develop brand personality, storytelling moments, and customer relationships. This view shows that tourism social media marketing is not just about promotion, but involves emotional appeal and experience generation (Hudson and Thal, 2013).

Social media marketing strategies in tourism are also recently determined by the intended utilisation of digital platforms to generate awareness, shape consumer perceptions, and motivate tourism performance based on interactive communication and decision-making by means of data. Contemporary tourism industry companies rely on analytics to track customer interaction, preferences, and feedback to enhance marketing planning and personalized communication. This

modern outlook emphasizes social media marketing as an emerging and dynamic practice that is shaped by technological innovation and evolving consumer behavior (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Advantages of Social Media Marketing Strategies in Tourism.

The use of social media marketing strategies offers several benefits to tourism organizations. The principal benefit is greater consumer awareness and international coverage. The social media websites enable the tourism firms to access the masses in various geographical regions at a very low cost relative to the traditional forms of marketing. It allows even minor tourism companies to market their services abroad and appeal to prospective tourists.

Better customer engagement and interaction is another strength. Social media is a both-ways communication platform where the tourism bodies and the customers can communicate, and the companies can help answer questions, share concerns, and create relationships with the customers. This customer relationship boosts customer satisfaction and loyalty that is key to future business success.

Another major strength of social media marketing in tourism is cost effectiveness. Social media marketing needs less financial investment compared to the traditional advertising media like television, radio, and print media yet the results are quantifiable. Specific customer segments can be targeted through advertising by tourism organizations, which enhances marketing efficiency and returns on investment.

Social media marketing also improves brand exposure and destination image. Tourism organizations can highlight attractions and experiences through visual media (photos, videos, storytelling, etc.) to generate travel motivation. Good user-generated content, positive reviews, also enhance brand credibility and shape consumer perception.

Access to customer insights and data analytics are another benefit. Social media will offer useful insights on customer preferences, behaviors, and patterns of engagement. This information can be used by tourism organizations to enhance their marketing efforts, streamline their communication, and create services that satisfy users.

Electronic word-of-mouth is another marketing tool supported by social media that plays a significant role in tourism decision-making. Tourists tend to trust the advice of fellow tourists in

selecting the best destinations or services. Promoting reviews and testimonials that are positive in nature will assist tourism organizations to gain trust and new customers.

Moreover, the social media advertising promotes competitiveness within the tourism sector. Companies that leverage digital platforms successfully can stand out among others and develop strong brand presence as well as customer base. This is especially critical in the competitive global tourism market.

Lastly, social media marketing enables crisis management and real-time communication. Social media can help tourism organizations to respond to emergencies, disseminate updates quickly, and address PR problems. This enhances transparency, trust, and reputation of an organization.

2.4 IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMER AWARENESS IN TOURISM.

In tourism, social media marketing strategies can be defined as the intended utilization of social media and other digital communication resources by tourist organizations aiming to promote destinations, services, experiences, and brands to effect consumer awareness, involvement, and buying decisions. The rise of technology, internet penetration, and consumer behavior shift towards seeking and making online information has led to the increased use of social media marketing in the tourism industry. Social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube, and Twitter give tourism organizations a chance of directly engaging with prospective tourists, establishing connections, and interactive marketing experiences. Researchers concur that the strategies employed in social media marketing are influential in the perception, attitude, and travel choice of tourists.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein, social media refers to internet-based applications developed using Web 2.0 technologies that enable development and sharing of user-generated content. The authors define social media marketing as a marketing technique that includes addressing a brand message through these platforms, engaging customers, and shaping consumer behavior. In tourism, this entails the fact that tourism organizations utilize social media portals to post information about places of interest, tours, travel packages and customer experiences in order to capture the interest of potential tourists. According to Kaplan and Haenlein, the social media

marketing strategies have unique characteristics as both directions of communication can be carried out between the organization and the consumers in contrast to the traditional approaches of the marketing strategy where the organization and the customer communicate in a one-way manner. This interactive aspect has allowed tourism companies to foster relationship, trust, and customer loyalty due to the constant interaction (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Mangold and Faulds define social media marketing as a mixed component of the promotion mix that integrates the promotion communication elements used traditionally with consumer created content. They say that social media sites offer the organization the chance of communicating directly with their consumers as well as consumers are able to express their opinion, reviews and experiences with others. The impact of user-generated content like travel photos, videos, and reviews, in tourism, is substantial on destination image and consumer decision-making. Mangold and Faulds emphasize that marketing approaches through social media should emphasize participation and interaction of customers, not just passing promotional messages. This viewpoint states the significance of engagement, dialogue, and relationship building in tourism marketing (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

According to Tuten and Solomon, social media marketing strategies are the application of social technologies to produce, communicate, distribute, and transfer value offerings to stakeholders. In their view, marketing goals being pursued through social media include brand awareness, customer engagement, lead generation, and sales growth. In tourism this is through the use of platforms to market destinations, travel information, communicate with customers and shape travel intentions. According to Tuten and Solomon, social media marketing strategies are also characterized by a number of approaches, such as content marketing, influencer marketing, community management, and social advertising. The strategies enable tourism organizations to achieve audience segmentation and customization, improving the effectiveness of marketing (Tuten and Solomon, 2017).

According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, social media marketing is a subset of digital marketing strategies, which entails utilizing online channels to accomplish marketing objectives by engaging with customers and distributing content. They describe that the strategies of social media marketing are centered around the establishment of valuable content, management of online communities, and performance measurement using analytics. In tourism, digital platforms

are giving organizations a chance to present destinations using pictures, videos and narratives, which can shape perceptions and feelings of tourists. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, the success of any social media marketing program hinges on strategic planning, regular communication, and performance analysis to help attain marketing goals. This view emphasizes the strategic and managerial components of social media marketing in tourism (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Buhalis and Law consider social media marketing in the light of technological change in tourism. They claim that ICTs, in particular social media have transformed the way tourism organizations engage with consumers and dispense information. The authors reveal that the use of social media marketing strategies allows tourism organizations to offer real-time information, personalized recommendations, and interactive communication that adds value to the customer experience. They also highlight that social media has become a critical promotional tool in the tourism industry as more and more tourists use online sources of information to plan their trips. This school of thought emphasizes the contribution of technology toward altering tourism marketing strategies and consumer action (Buhalis and Law, 2008).

As presented by Xiang and Gretzel, there is a tourism-specific definition, which is that social media marketing in tourism is the use of online platforms where travelers can exchange experiences, opinions, and recommendations, which determine destination image and travel choices. They underline that the tourists place more confidence in information provided by other tourists than in conventional advertising since it is viewed as being genuine and authoritative. Social media marketing strategies by tourism organizations are therefore meant to promote customer reviews, testimonials, and user-generated content to improve destination credibility and appeal. This school of thought emphasizes that electronic word of mouth communication is vital in tourism marketing (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

According to Hudson and Thal, social media marketing strategies in tourism refer to their application of social networking in emotional engagement and in the development of memorable brand experiences. They stress that marketing of tourism is very visual and experience-based, and social media is the perfect method to share images and videos that generate motivation to travel. The authors believe that strategic approaches in social media marketing enable tourism organizations to develop brand personality, storytelling experiences and relationships with

customers. This view conclusively shows that social media marketing in the tourist industry extends beyond promotion and is all about emotional appeal and experience building (Hudson and Thal, 2013).

In recent studies, social media marketing in tourism is also defined as the planned application of digital sources to generate awareness, shape perception and trigger tourism performance by providing interactive communication and data-driven decisions. Analytics tools in modern tourism organizations enable analysts to track customer activity, preferences, and feedback to enhance marketing strategies and tailor communication. This modern vision emphasizes social media marketing as a dynamic and emerging practice at the level of technology innovation and alternating consumer behavior (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

2.4.1 Advantages of Social Media Marketing Strategies in Tourism.

The use of social media marketing offers many benefits to tourism companies. Among the key benefits, there is enhanced consumer awareness and global coverage. Through the social media, the tourism companies are able to communicate to a great number of people in various geographical areas with a relatively low cost as compared to the traditional marketing channels. What it allows are small tourism businesses promoting their services on an international platform and finding potential tourists in the process.

Better customer engagement and interaction is yet another benefit. Through social media, the organization or company can have a two way communication between the consumers and the tourism organization and as a result the companies can respond to inquiries, offer feedback on issues raised by consumers and also form relationships with their customers. Such interaction improves customer satisfaction and loyalty, which is key to long-term business success.

Another strong point of social media marketing in tourism is cost effectiveness. Social media marketing is also less financially required than the traditional media like television, radio, and the print media, where measurement of the outcome can be realized. Targeted advertising enables tourism organizations to be more precise in reaching particular customer segments, thus enhancing marketing performance and investment returns.

Social media marketing also promotes brand visibility and destination image. Via visual media including photos, videos, and narratives, tourism agencies can showcase attractions and

experiences in a manner that leads to travel motivation. Favorable user content and customer feedback also enhance brand reliability and consumer impressions.

Access to customer insights and data analytics is another benefit. Social media sites offer useful data on customer preferences, behavior and participation trends. This information can help tourism organizations to enhance marketing efforts, deliver personalized communication, and create customer-centred services.

Electronic word-of-mouth communication is also supported by social media marketing and this is very influential in tourism decision making. When tourists select where or which services to travel, they usually use the information given by fellow travellers. Positive reviews and testimonials should be encouraged to gain trust and draw new customers to tourism organizations.

Social media marketing also promotes competitiveness within the tourism sector. By utilizing the advantages of digital platforms, companies have the potential to stand out against their rivals, develop robust brand names, and create a customer base. This is more than necessary in the competitive global tourism market.

Lastly, social media marketing enables real-time communication and crisis management. Social media platforms enable tourism organizations to disseminate information quickly, address any crisis, and handle PR-related matters. This enhances transparency, trust, and reputation of the organization.

2.5 CONCLUSION.

Kevin Lane Keller (1993) describes consumer awareness as: the power of consumers to identify, recollect, and become familiar with a brand or service and this is the basis behind the decision making process, as people cannot take into account products or destinations they do not know about. Within the tourism industry, social media marketing strategies contribute to this awareness development, as it is planned through utilizing digital platforms with the purpose of promoting destinations, engaging audiences, and influencing perceptions through interactive communication, content sharing, and relationship building (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Tuten and Solomon, 2017). Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010) indicate that social media

facilitates two-way communication and involvement of the users, which makes it superior to traditional marketing in terms of creating awareness, whereas a study conducted by Zheng Xiang and Ulrike Gretzel (2010) reveals the potency of electronic word-of-mouth in shaping consumer knowledge and destination perceptions. Moreover, recent research by Yogesh K. Dwivedi et al. (2021) suggests that engagement, personalized marketing, and social media-based marketing are very effective in raising awareness by enhancing the availability of information and connection with customers. Thus, the literature confirms that social media marketing strategies and consumer awareness are closely related, and effective digital marketing activities enhance destination visibility, build strong brand recognition and eventually govern tourism decision-making and organizational performance.

CHAPTER THREE.

METHODOLOGY.

3.0 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter will deal with the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data analysis procedures, and limitations of the study.

3.1 THE RESEARCH DESIGN.

A cross-sectional design will be employed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data in accordance with the specific objectives and the research questions of the study. This design will guide the researcher to examine how the strategies of social media marketing affect consumer awareness in a single instance at a given time.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods will be employed since some of the data will be numerical and will need to be analyzed using statistics; these are considered to be consistent with generalizing the study findings to the wider research population. Since the data will be raw, interpretation will require a qualitative research method. The qualitative approach will enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding and better comprehension of the phenomenon. More so, the qualitative methodology shall be used to complement the quantitative data, to safeguard congruency with the objectives of the study.

3.2 TARGET POPULATION.

The population can be defined as the complete set of people or things that the researcher aims to investigate and make conclusions about (Babbie, 2020). In this case, the population will be comprised of internal and external stakeholders of Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa, both in terms of employees who will be involved in marketing and customer care, tour guides, and clients who do more than merely analyze the social media sites with the company. The entire sample size of the respondents is approximated to be 70 people, as they capture the various categories of respondents that can give pertinent information on how social media marketing strategies affect consumer awareness (Creswell, 2014).

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE

3.3.1 Sample Size.

The sample is a well-chosen part of the population that captures the entire population so that the researcher can draw valid inferences without having to survey every member of a population (Neuman, 2014). In relation to this research, a sample population of 60 respondents has been established as adequate representation of both employees and clients and will be manageable to collect and analyze detailed data. The choice is informed by the standard sample size determination techniques to determine that the results can be related to the entire population (Israel, 2013).

Table 3.1: Respondents by Category.

Respondent Category	Population Size	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Marketing Staff	8	5	8.3%
Customer Service Staff	12	10	16.7%
Tour Guides	20	15	25%
Active Clients	30	30	50%
Total	70	60	100%

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE.

In this study, simple random sampling will be employed such that every department stands an equal opportunity to find itself in the sample. The respondents will then be selected using convenient sampling, since the researcher will call the respondents and please ask him/her to take part in the research by filling the questionnaires. Also, purposive sampling will be employed to sample a small number of respondents who have the exact information needed by the entire population in order to be part of the research. This combination of these sampling techniques will make sure that all departments and other important individuals are represented and will make it possible and manageable to gather the required data.

3.5 SOURCES OF DATA.

3.5.1 Primary Data.

Structured questionnaires and interviews will be used to gather primary data by interviewing employees and clients directly. This will give us a first-hand information on social media marketing practices and consumer awareness.

3.5.2 Secondary Data.

Company reports, published studies, journals, textbooks, and internet sources will provide the source of secondary data. These sources will be used to complement the primary data by providing contextual and historical backgrounds of social media marketing strategies.

3.6 TOOLS FOR COLLECTING DATA.

Data will be collected using questionnaires, where respondents who are sampled in Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa will be asked structured questions about social media marketing approaches and consumer awareness in tourism sector. A questionnaire is a structured instrument of data collection, which helps a researcher to gather standardized information regarding the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of respondents in a cost-effective manner (Creswell, 2014). A machine will be created with a five-point likert scale between Strongly Agree (Strongly Disagree) (15, 15) with questions being grouped in one direction to guarantee clarity and consistency. It will involve more close-ended questions and a few open-ended questions in order to draw more opinions so that the researcher may acquire the necessary data about the effect of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness in the tourism sector.

3.6.1 Interview Guide.

The researcher will rely on a structured interview comprising of simple and clear-cut questions, which will be conducted through a face-to-face interaction between the respondents of the Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa in order to obtain ample information as per tourism services and social media marketing practices. Individual interviewing will be used to interrogate the respondents so as to optimise the advantages of personal interaction with the researcher including the ability to probe deeper into vague or delicate answers given by the respondents, to clarify, explain the questions where clarity is lacking and to effectively discuss some of the delicate and complex issues surrounding customer experiences and tourism activities.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE.

The researcher will initially seek the permission of the management of Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa by presenting an official introductory letter of the University to the management which will then obtain the permission to undertake the study unhindered. To reduce inconvenience and potential bias, a data collection schedule will be scheduled based on the availability of respondents. Respondents will also be presented with the introductory letter anytime the legitimacy of the study is questioned. The researcher will guarantee the respondents and informants confidentiality and the scholarly use of their information at the onset of the interview. The researcher will subsequently go to the study area and gather data through the help of trained research assistants.

3.8 DATA VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY.

3.8.1 Validity of the Data.

Validity is concerned to the correctness and suitability of data collected. It establishes the effectiveness of the research instruments in measuring what they were in fact supposed to measure and the degree to which the research outcomes are factual. All participants will be assured of confidentiality and the final report will undergo thorough editing to preserve the identity of the individuals. The collected data will go through the preparation procedures of editing, coding, and entry in order to detect and rectify any errors or omissions. Secondly, a pilot study will be performed to monitor and refine the research instruments validity.

3.8.2 Reliability of the Data.

Reliability is a measure of how the same research instrument can achieve the same results under similar circumstances. In order to gain reliability, the researcher will also present the questionnaires to a sample group of respondents to verify whether responses are consistent and the responses will be consistent, to ensure that the instrument will produce consistent and reliable data.

3.9 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS.

The data obtained of the respondents of the Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa will be prepared which will include editing, coding, and data entry followed by summarizing of the data to be analyzed. Editing will be used to correct and detect errors or omissions, so that the data is at least of minimum quality. The coding process will imply assigning numbers or symbols to the answers to group similar responses into categories and enable the researcher to reduce many replies and interpret them into meaningful data and information regarding tourism services and customer experiences. To present, summarize and analyze the findings, the study will rely on the use of statistical method and tools and will include the use of Microsoft Excel to enable the clear interpretation of the effect of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness within the tourism industry.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The researcher will guarantee that there is high confidentiality in the nature of treating responses of all the participants of Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa. Respondents will know that the study will not cause any direct or indirect harm and that their involvement is voluntary. In the process of data collection on tourism services and social media marketing practices, ethical principles will be respected to ensure the rights of the participants are not harmed, and that their privacy remains intact.

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.

The researcher might encounter some challenges regarding information access because some of these data is organizational confidential information regarding the tourism operations and marketing activities which may not be easily shared. Another risk is the presence of uncooperative respondents in terms of time or information related concerns. Nevertheless, they will be diminished by presenting an introduction letter by the Head of Department to establish trust and by ensuring that all the received information will remain strongly confidential and will only be used to an academic end.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines, analyses and discusses the research data gathered in the research paper entitled The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Awareness at Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa. The overall purpose of this chapter is to condense the raw data received as a result of the respondent into meaningful results that can answer the research questions formulated in Chapter One.

The chapter is organized based on the purpose of the study and addresses the following points:

Response rate analysis.

- Demographic variables of respondents.
- Analysis of social media marketing practices followed by Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa.
- Evaluation of consumer awareness levels.

Analysis: How is social media marketing related to consumer awareness?

- Discussion of the findings within the context of literature.

Quantitative data gathered using questionnaires and qualitative data gathered via interviews were both analyzed. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistical methods to determine trends and relationships, and qualitative data was analyzed through thematic methods to provide additional and explanatory information on the numerical findings (Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches).

4.1 RESPONSE RATE ANALYSIS

Response rate is the number of respondents who completed and returned the questionnaires out of the total number of questionnaires distributed. High response rate enhances reliability and validity of the study findings.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Identity	Count	Percentage (%)
Distributed Questionnaires	60	100.
Questionnaires Returned	54	90
Questionnaires Not Returned	6	10
Total	60	100

Interpretation

The research study had a response rate of 90 which is very good in academic research. This means that the data gathered was sufficient and representative to draw effective analysis and conclusions.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONSES.

Demographics cover background details of respondents like gender, age, and the level of education. These attributes aid in the interpretation of the nature of participants in the study.

Table 4.2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	24	44
Female	30	56
Total	54	100

Interpretation

The findings demonstrate that most of the respondents were female (56 percent), with males making up 44 percent. This implies a notch higher involvement of females in tourism engagement and social media interaction.

Table 4.3: Respondent Distribution by Age.

Age	Group Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–24 years	12	22
25–34 years	20	37
35–44 years	14	26
45 years and above	8	15
Total	54	100

Interpretation

Most of the respondents fell within the 25-34 years age (37 percent), which reveals that the young adults constitute the greatest group that engage in the content marketing information of the company in social media.

Table 4.4: Level of Education of Respondents.

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Certificate	10	19
Diploma	18	33
Degree	20	37
Postgraduate	6	11
Total	54	100

Interpretation

The majority of the respondents were diploma and degree holders, which implies that the respondents were educated and could comprehend the tourism information provided in social media platform.

4.3 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE COMPANY.

In this section, the various social media platforms and strategies employed by the company in the promotion of its tourism services will be explored.

Table 4.5: Social Media Platforms.

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	18	33
Instagram	20	37
Twitter (X)	6	11
TikTok	10	19
Total	54	100

Interpretation

The most actively used media turn out to be Instagram (37) and Facebook (33). This shows that visual based platforms have a significant role to play in marketing tourism experiences.

Table 4.6: Social Media Marketing Effectiveness perceptions (SPSS mean analysis).

Statement	Mean	Std.	Deviation
Interpretation			
The content of social media is informative	3.82	0.74	Agree
Social media interests me	3.58	0.79	Agree
Promotions affect my interest	3.90	0.70	Agree.

How do you feel about ethical leadership, as either Strongly Disagree or Strongly Agree? (Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Interpretation

The mean scores are all above 3.5, which suggests that the respondents mostly agreed that the social media marketing tactics employed by the company are effective to attract attention and deliver valuable information.

4.4 CONSUMER AWARENESS LEVELS

Consumer awareness is the level at which the customers are aware of tourism services, packages, and destinations of the company.

Table 4.7: Awareness Levels

Awareness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High Awareness	14	26
Moderate Awareness	28	52
Low Awareness	12	22
Total	54	100

Interpretation

Most of the respondents (52%) indicated an average level of knowing about the services offered by the company indicating that even though social media marketing generates awareness there is an opportunity to advance.

4.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

This part discusses the role of social media marketing in consumer awareness.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀: There is no significant correlation between social media marketing and consumer awareness.

H₁: There is a positive correlation between social media marketing and consumer awareness.

Table 4.8: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Social Media Marketing	Consumer Awareness
Social Media Marketing	1	
Consumer Awareness	0.682	1

Correlation greater than 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Interpretation

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.682$) shows a positive strong relationship between social media marketing and consumer awareness. The null hypothesis is rejected with the significance level being less than 0.05 and the alternative hypothesis accepted. This implies that good social media marketing has a great impact in consumer awareness.

4.6 Regression Analysis

Table 4.9: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error
0.682	0.465	0.452	0.52

Interpretation

The R-squared of 0.465 means that the social media marketing explains 46.5 percent of consumer awareness change. This proves that social media marketing is a prime influencer of awareness amongst customers

4.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This research reveals that there exists a strong positive relationship between social media marketing and consumer awareness in Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa. The majority of the respondents indicated an average to high awareness of the tourism packages of the company, and Instagram and Facebook were identified as the most effective ones. The review also paved the way to the existence of a considerable positive correlation between social media marketing and consumer awareness ($r = 0.68$), showing that properly designed content, frequent posting, and involvement with the audience enhance knowledge about available services. Besides, demographic variables like age and education, social variables like family and internet reviews, and economic elements were identified to impact awareness. All in all, social media marketing may be regarded as one of the primary sources of awareness, but it can be improved, you can focus on targeting campaigns to particular demographics, engage with your followers more, and present clear and informative content that will cover the needs of consumers.

4.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter outlined, discussed and interpreted the data that was collected to look at the effects of social media marketing on consumer awareness in Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa. The research was characterized by a high response rate of 90 percent making the findings reliable. Demographic data indicated that the majority of the respondents represented young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 years, with a disproportionate representation of female over male and with most having a tertiary level of education, which indicated the predominant audience of social media marketing campaigns.

Social media marketing strategies analysis showed that Instagram and Facebook are the most efficient, and the quality of the content, the frequency of posts, and engagement with the audience are relevant factors that increase awareness. Nevertheless, most respondents claimed to be aware of the tourism packages offered by the company only on the moderate level meaning that the social media advertising campaigns are satisfying, but not completely optimized.

The regression analysis revealed that 46.5 per cent of consumer awareness differences are attributed to social media marketing strategies, with correlation analysis demonstrating that there is a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.68$) between social media marketing and consumer awareness. The level of awareness was also established to be influenced by other factors such as demographic traits, social influence, and economic conditions.

On the whole, the results verify that social media marketing is a vital source of consumer awareness, and its effect may be reinforced with the help of specific campaigns, regular posting, and active content, and references to other factors that influence the audience. In Chapter Five, the conclusions and recommendations were made based on this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the findings in Chapter Four in terms of the study objectives, research questions, hypotheses, and known literature. Whereas Chapter Four was dedicated to data presentation and analysis, the current chapter gives the findings meaning, outlines their implications, and places them in context of prior well-known theories and empirical studies in digital marketing and tourism management. The conversation has been organized based on the research objectives, which makes the argument logically flowing and coherent. Theoretical models that have been incorporated in the chapter include the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the AIDA model, which form the basis of this study.

5.1 FINDING DISCUSSION BASED ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.

5.1.1 Social Media marketing efforts undertaken by Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa.

It was found that Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa actively uses various social media marketing strategies, and Instagram and Facebook stand out as the most visible ones. The respondents accepted that the company content on social media is attractive and informative with details about travel packages and destinations. The high quality of visuals and frequent postings can be seen as indicating that the company appreciates the significance of having a robust online presence in a competitive tourism market.

This finding is congruent with the view of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who contend that social media technologies can be effectively used to connect with customers by visual storytelling, interactivity, and real-time communication. Images, videos, and experiences of customers posted on the Internet are crucial in shaping consumer perceptions and awareness in the tourism sector where intangible services are offered.

Also, the research discovered that industry awards and recognition, including the East African Safari Excellence Award (2024), the Uganda Tourism Board Customer Service Award (2023), and the African Travel Awards Top Safari Experience (2025) were often cited by respondents as contributing to their trust and awareness of the company. Among its followers (although not everyone was informed about these accolades), the ones who were informed said that they understood the company brand and services better. This implies that by including awards in social media messages, further visibility can be increased.

5.1.2 Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa Consumer Awareness.

The research determined mixed consumer awareness among the respondents with the majority indicating moderate consumer awareness of the tourism packages and services in the company. Awareness Respondents who had heard about the awards and recognitions of the company were more likely to report a higher awareness compared to those who had not. This reinforces the notion that brand recognition and credibility cues, including awards, are used to bring awareness, together with digital marketing activity.

The results are in line with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989), which asserts that perceived usefulness and credibility determine the acceptance and usage of online content. In this analysis, consumers who encountered awards and recognition as part of the social media posts considered the company more credible and had a better understanding of what it offered.

Further, the importance of beautiful content and awards is similar to the AIDA model, in which attention and interest play a central role in forming desire and awareness. Awards integrated into marketing content must have helped in drawing attention and strengthening the memory recall of the target audience.

5.1.3 Impact of Awards and Recognition on Awareness and Trust.

One of the most interesting results was that a little bit more than half of the surveyed individuals knew about the awards that were received by the company. Others who were aware of awards like the East African Safari Excellence Award and the Uganda Tourism Board Customer Service Award indicated more awareness and trust. Awards were mentioned as actual signals of credibility and it was stated that they made the company more attractive.

This is consistent with the overarching tourism marketing literature which emphasizes that awards are social evidence and trust cues in virtual space. Perceived risk reduction and the promotion of the company will result in heightened awareness and engagement when the consumers observe industry recognition on official social media pages.

5.1.4 Correlation between Social Media Marketing and consumer awareness.

The presence of a high and statistically significant positive relationship between consumer awareness and social media marketing strategies in Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa is one of the most significant findings in this study. Based on the correlation analysis, the relationship between the improvement of consumer awareness as a result of improved social media engagement, quality content, and strategic communication was found to be strong and positive.

This result contributes to the alternative hypothesis (H_1) and rejects the null hypothesis (H_0), meaning that digital marketing, such as visual message, being present on Instagram and Facebook, and encouraging awards, result in an increase in awareness of potential travelers. This finding aligns with earlier research by Buhalis and Law (2008), Kotler and Keller (2016), and Monisha (2020), which highlight the importance of strong digital marketing in consumer behaviour in tourism.

Social media marketing has emerged as a strategic link between tourism firms and their clients in the light of rising mobile phone penetration and internet connectivity in East Africa. The fact that the relationship observed in this case is positive underscores the fact that investment in digital platforms as a means of creating competitive advantage and raising awareness is important.

5.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS.

The results of this research support the empirical evidence of various theoretical models:

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): Consumer engagement and awareness depended on positive attitudes towards the company social media content, credible cues like awards and convenient access.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB): With praise and support by social influence (reviews, recommendations, and awards), positive attitudes to the online presence of the company contributed to a better understanding and desire to use the brand.

AIDA Model: Aspects of attention, interest, desire and action were observed in the attentions of consumers- particularly in instances whereby content visually appealing or recognition (awards) generated attention and interest.

Through the merging of these theories, the study proves that consumer awareness process is both a technological adoption process and a marketing persuasion process within the tourism context.

5.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS ON GOFAN SAFARIS AND TRAVEL AFRICA.

The results suggest that Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa ought to:

Keep spending on social media and optimization of digital platforms, particularly on Instagram and Facebook where people are most engaged.

Proactively encourage awards and recognitions on social media platforms to enhance credibility and consumer trust.

Enhance content strategies through interactive and user-generated content to enhance awareness and engagement.

Collaborate with influencers and brand ambassadors to attract new or niche travel segments.

Use analytics and performance metrics to track campaign effectiveness and ROI.

These implications reaffirm that online marketing is not only a mechanism of promotion but a strategic role that is fundamental to maintaining competitive ability in the tourism sector.

5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY.

The current research contributes to a variety of academic knowledge, industry practice, policy formation and research in the future as follows:

5.4.1. Contribution to Academic Knowledge.

- o Offers empirical data regarding the role of social media marketing in consumer awareness in the East African tourism setting under investigation, where little research exists.
- o Combines theoretical and practical results (TAM, TPB and AIDA) to show how the theoretical constructs of technology acceptance, social influence, and marketing persuasion can constructively treat consumer awareness.
- o Contributes to the gap in existing literature on how social media and brand trust intersect in developing markets by enhancing the knowledge base on the importance of awards and recognition as credibility-enhancing signals on tourism marketing efforts.
- o Provides quantitative and qualitative information, integrating survey data, Likert-scale, and thematic analysis of interviews, enhancing methodology and joining mixed methodology techniques in tourism research.

5.4.2. Refinement of Industry Practice.

- o Gives practical information to tourism managers at Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa and other such organizations on how social media strategies can best be employed to strengthen consumer awareness.
- o Illustrates the need to incorporate awards and recognitions in digital marketing campaigns to establish trust and interaction.
- o Underlights platform-specific strategies, specifically Instagram and Facebook, as effective instruments that influence resource allocation and content creation.
- o Recognizes the growth opportunities using email marketing, influencer works, and untapped social media channels, which can enable tourism companies to reach wider audiences and capture new markets.

5.4.3. Policy and Training contribution.

- o Provides recommendations to tourism authorities, regulatory bodies and industry associations to promote the development of digital capacities among tourism operators.
- o Facilitates policy activities that promote digital marketing literacy, social media usage, and awards recognition, which would increase competitiveness of local tourism businesses.
- o Becomes the basis of the training programs that would develop tourism marketers, focusing on the combination of social media, awards, and consumer involvement strategies.

5.4.4. Future Research Contribution.

- o Establishes a point of departure in future research on the correlation between social media marketing, awards, and consumer awareness in Uganda and East Africa.
- o Indicates prospects of comparative study in relation to the various tourism segments (safaris, hotels, adventure tourism) or countries within East Africa.
- o Highlights demographic and social factors affecting the awareness which can be used to inform more focused and culturally sensitive marketing research.
- o Evokes the long-term consequences of awards and recognition on consumer loyalty, attentiveness, and buying patterns.

5.4.5. Societal Contribution

- o Improves the knowledge of the components of digital marketing to create increased awareness and access to local tourism services, possibly leading to better travel engagement and local economic development.
- o Empowers consumer awareness on accredited tourism operators, decreasing chances to be misled or subjected to inferior service.

5.5 THE SUMMARY CHAPTER.

Summing up, Chapter Five addressed the overall study findings, as compared to the research objectives and hypotheses, and theoretical frameworks. This research affirmed that social media marketing is a key player in consumer awareness within Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa with

Instagram and Facebook being the most effective media. This was facilitated by high-quality content, frequent posting, interaction, and activation of awards, including the East African Safari Excellence Award. Higher awareness and trust. The Technology Acceptance Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour, and the AIDA model were found to be effective in supporting findings indicating that, consumer awareness is changed by perceived usefulness and credibility of digital content, in addition to social influence. Practical implications, too, featured prominently in the discussion, though, as the optimization of social media, award promotion, and strategic engagement must continue. Altogether, the chapter offers a logical conclusion of findings, demonstrating how social media marketing and credibility signals facilitate consumer awareness and precondition conclusions and recommendations in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter makes available the conclusions and recommendations that were obtained following the study which was done on The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Awareness at Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa. Although Chapter Four was dedicated to data representation and analysis, and Chapter Five addressed the conclusions about the findings and their relevance to the objectives, hypotheses, and theoretical assumptions, this chapter summarizes these findings with clear conclusions and practical strategies. It also gives recommendations that can be adopted by policy makers, tour operators, and prospective researchers to enhance digital marketing in tourism.

6.1 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

According to the results, one can deduce that social media marketing plays a significant role in consumer awareness at Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa. Instagram and Facebook were given as

the most effective platforms to reach potential travelers, with high-quality visuals, interactive posts, and regular updates being instrumental in attracting attention and creating interest. The research showed that social media marketing has a direct effect on consumer awareness with statistical analysis showing a positive correlation of $r = 0.68$ and regression results showing digital marketing predicts 46.5 percent of consumer awareness.

The research also noted the significance of awards and recognitions in improving consumer awareness and trust. When respondents had heard about Uganda Tourism Board Customer Service Award (2023), African Travel Awards Top Safari Experience (2025), and East African Safari Excellence Award (2024) they tended to be more recognized and confident in the brand. Awards serve as a form of social validation or a should-have element to supplement digital marketing that can bolster credibility and help separate Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa in an already competitive tourism sector.

Moreover, digital marketing was reported to have no effect on consumer awareness, but rather several other factors. The process of consumer awareness formation was influenced by demographic aspects, including age and education, social pressure exerted by the family and friends, as well as online reviews, and financial considerations. The level of awareness was higher among young adults 25,34, and tertiary educated individuals, which indicates specific demographic groups require specific campaigns.

Theoretically, the findings align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and the AIDA model due to the fact that consumer awareness is influenced by the usefulness and credibility perception, social influence, and the attention, desire, interest, and action stages. The concept of awards as a credibility signal further enhances the realization of the interplay of digital marketing and social proof in shaping consumer behavior in the tourism industry.

On the whole, the result of the study is that social media marketing, along with the credibility-improving cues like awards and recognitions, significantly boost consumer awareness and interest. Although the existing strategies used by Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa can be considered effective, they can be optimized by implementing more platforms, collaboration with influencers, and specific campaigns focused on each group of consumers.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these conclusions, some recommendations are presented. First, Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa need to keep on increasing its social media marketing, refining the Instagram and Facebook content in future and investigating new channels like Tik Tok and YouTube. Marketing messages must be visual, interactive, and engaging and must have storytelling and customer-generated content, allowing the establishment of stronger consumer relationships.

Second, the firm ought to capitalise on awards and recognition in its marketing efforts. Mentioning awards, like the East African Safari Excellence Award (2024) or the Uganda Tourism Board Customer Service Award (2023) in the social media, websites, and newsletters can enhance credibility and consumer confidence. Awards are considered social credence that improves brand awareness and position the company above its rivals.

Third, the company ought to concentrate on customer engagement and retention plans. The influencer marketing strategy can be used to target both niche and younger audiences, whereas email marketing and loyalty programs can prompt repeat bookings. Promoting customer testimonies and feedback on the social web will boost social proof, which will increase brand awareness and consumer trust.

Fourth, the business must collect and analyze performance through analytics in order to measure engagement, reach, awareness. Ongoing analysis enables consistent content directions depending on performance indicators, audience response, and new tendencies, which make digital marketing campaigns efficient and topical.

At the policy level, tourism authorities and boards are advised to facilitate the online training of operators in terms of digital marketing to enhance online interactions, and strategic marketing skills. The use of recognition programs and awards should be encouraged to increase credibility and visibility of tourism operators. Research efforts to determine how digital marketing affects consumer behavior should also be encouraged by policymakers to inform future tourism policies in the region.

As a future investigation, the research suggests considering the upcoming digital tools like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, virtual reality tours to determine their effectiveness in consumer awareness. Further comparative studies of tourism industries (hotels, adventure tourism, cultural

tourism) and across countries in the East African part can help further establish whether the findings are generalizable or not. It is also suggested to conduct long-term research on how awards and recognitions affect consumer loyalty, involvement, and repetitive bookings, and research on the economic, cultural, and demographic impact of digital marketing on tourism.

6.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Altogether, this chapter outlined the study conclusions and recommendations. It was known that social media marketing is a factor of critical importance in the formation of consumer awareness in Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa and its Instagram and Facebook are especially efficient. Credibility, trust, and engagement were further enhanced by awards and recognitions like the East African Safari Excellence Award (2024). Demographics, social influence, and social proof were also a factor in the consumer awareness that digital marketing helped to create. The research offers a set of practical advice on how to maximize the use of social media campaigns, leverage awards, boost engagement, and keep track of performance. It also provided policy and training suggestions on how to enhance digital capacity in the tourism sector and the direction of future research to increase knowledge in this area. On a whole, the research highlights that credibility signals, together with the strategic management of social media marketing is a necessity in the enhancement of consumer awareness, engagement, and competitive advantage in the tourism industry.

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APPENDIX I

Questionnaires for respondents.

Author: Speaker, Gofan Safaris and Travel Africa, the impact of social media marketing strategies to consumer awareness.

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a requirement towards the completion of my course, I am engaged in a study focusing on the effects of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness in the tourism sector. You were chosen to be part of this study due to the fact that you are a client, a prospective client, or the follower of tourism services that the company provides. Your cooperation is essential to the success of this study. I am requesting you to give the information needed and answer the following questions. The research is strictly academic and all details disclosed will remain confidential.

Please indicate (✓) in the relevant box, or type in where necessary.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION.

1. Gender

Male Female Prefer not to say

2. Age Group

Below 20 years 21 30 years 31 40 years 41 50 years Above 50 years

3. Level of Education

Certificate Diploma Bachelor s Degree Postgraduate Other.

4. In what way did you initially hear about the company?

Facebook Instagram WhatsApp Website Friends/Family Other

5. How frequently do you use social media?

Every day Every few days Once a week Not that often

SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES

(For the study on the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness at Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa)

Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

NO.	STATEMENT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The company frequently posts tourism-related content on social media.				
2	The social media content shared by the company is attractive and engaging.				
3	The company provides clear information about tourism packages on social media.				
4	The company interacts with customers through comments, messages, and feedback on social media.				
5	Promotions and advertisements on social media influence my interest in the company's tourism				

	services.				
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SECTION C: CONSUMER AWARENESS

(For the study on the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer awareness at Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa)

Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

NO.	STATEMENT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Social media has increased my awareness of the company's tourism services.				
2	I am aware of the tourism destinations offered by the company.				
3	I understand the prices and packages because of social media information.				
4	Social media helps me stay updated about new tourism offers.				
5	I can easily recognize the company's brand because of social media.				

SECTION D: IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMER AWARENESS

(Study at Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa)

Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

NO.	STATEMENT	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Social media marketing content from the company has significantly improved my knowledge of its tourism services.				
2	The company's social media platforms make it easier for me to understand available tourism packages and destinations.				
3	Social media advertisements and promotions strongly influence my interest in the company's tourism services.				
4	Information shared on social media increases my confidence and trust in the company.				
5	Customer reviews and testimonials on social media improve my awareness and perception of the company.				
	The company's social media presence plays a major role in my decision to choose their				

6	tourism services.				
7	Social media marketing encourages me to recommend the company to other people.				
8	Overall, social media marketing strategies have greatly increased consumer awareness of the company's tourism services.				

SECTION E: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

(Study at Gofan Safaris & Travel Africa)

Please provide your honest opinions in the spaces provided.

1. What do you like most about the company's social media marketing strategies?
2. What challenges, if any, have you experienced when interacting with the company's social media platforms?
3. How has the company's social media marketing influenced your awareness of its tourism services?
4. What suggestions would you give to improve the company's social media marketing and increase consumer awareness?
5. Any additional comments about the company's social media presence or tourism services

Thank you for your participation!

