

**INFLUENCE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS ON TOURIST BEHAVIOUR: A case study
of Paara Safari Lodge**

PRISCILLA KAAKYO

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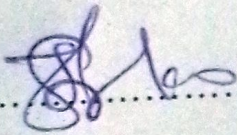
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APPROVAL

This is to affirm that this research report by Kaakyo Priscilla, registration number J22B63/001 has been under my supervision and is now ready for submission to the school of business in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelors of tourism and hospitality management of Uganda Christian University.

Supervisor; Mr. Jjuuko Julius

Signature.....

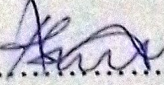


Date.....

15/09/2023

DECLARATION

I **KAAKYO PRISCILLA** do declare that this research report is as a result of my own efforts to the best of my knowledge it has never been submitted to any University or institution for any academic award.

Signature.....

Date15/09/2023.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this field report to the Almighty God for his favor and blessing he granted me to complete the session alive and safe.

With deep affection, I dedicate this report book to my beloved parents Mr. and Mrs. Asiimwe Patrick for your sacrifice without denial, love and care you attributed to me and all family members like Kusemererwa Sandra, Atugonza Charlotte and Rwabunyoro Kennedy.

My beloved lecturers including Madam Nakanwagi Patricia, Madam Alleyn Zzalwango, Mr. Juuko Julius, Mr. Edwin Bulonge, who have really done a great job towards my success.

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I humbly extend my great thanks to the almighty God for creating me, leading and guiding throughout my course

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My sincere gratitude goes to all my classmates and those who have contributed tremendously to my successful completion of my course.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of online platforms on tourist behavior in Uganda's tourism sector, highlighting the challenges faced by rural areas and the digital divide. Factors like online reviews, satisfaction levels, and information access can significantly shape tourist behavior. International tourists dedicate more time to online platforms, expressing high satisfaction levels. Booking preferences vary, with weekly usage hours ranging from 3 to 10. Bridging the digital gap is crucial for sustainable growth in Uganda's tourism sector. Results revealed that International tourists spend more time on online platforms for travel-related activities than domestic tourists, indicating a significant disparity in online behavior. These platforms provide essential travel details, cultural insights, and booking options, facilitating global mobility and contributing to the growth of the tourism industry. High satisfaction ratings indicate the effectiveness of online platforms in meeting travelers' needs and influencing booking decisions. The data also shows a substantial increase in bookings made through online channels, reflecting the industry's adaptability to changing consumer preferences. Paratara Safari Lodge's diverse activities cater to a diverse range of tourists.

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CHAPTER ONE:

1.0 Introduction:

This chapter discusses the background, the problem statement, objectives of the study, scope of the study and Significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Tourist behaviour is a multifaceted concept that includes people or groups' deeds, decisions, and mental states while they partake in tourism-related activities (Kock et. al., 2018). According to Xiang et. al., (2015), the psychological and behavioural processes people go through when preparing for, participating in and reflecting on their travels are collectively referred to as tourist behaviour. In addition to the actual actions conducted while travelling, it also involves the thoughts, feelings, and motives that accompany those actions. From initial trip preparation to post-trip observations, it involves a broad range of behaviours at various points in the tourist journey. Tourist behaviour is a complex field of study that involves various psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors. It encompasses various actions, decisions, and choices made by individuals or groups while planning, experiencing, and reflecting on their travels (Kozak&Decrop, 2009).

Measuring tourist behaviour involves evaluating various aspects of tourists' actions, choices, and experiences during their travels. These measurements help destinations, businesses, and researchers understand the impact and outcomes of tourism. Factors such as the context, the effects on the destination, and the satisfaction of tourists can influence the perception of tourist behaviour. Common measures include economic impact, tourist numbers, length of stay, repeat visits, environmental impact, cultural impact, community engagement, tourist satisfaction, online reviews and ratings, and safety and security (Fodness, 1994). Positive perceptions of tourism generate jobs and revenue, while negative perceptions can lead to overcrowding and strains on local resources. Sustainable and responsible tourism practices aim to maximize positive perceptions while minimizing negative impacts on destinations and communities. Balancing the interests and needs of all stakeholders is crucial for promoting tourism that is economically beneficial, socially and environmentally responsible (Buckley, 2019).

One of the major challenges facing online platforms as far tourism is concerned is the limited internet connectivity in rural areas and the digital divide. Limited internet connectivity in

rural and remote areas hinders tourists' access to essential travel information, booking and planning, communication, access to online reviews and recommendations, sustainable and responsible tourism practices, economic impact, and tourism promotion (Xiang et. al., 2015). The digital divide can prevent some tourists from benefiting from peer reviews and valuable insights from other travellers. Additionally, limited internet connectivity can hinder the engagement in eco-friendly accommodations, conservation efforts, and responsible travel tips. The economic impact of limited internet connectivity can lead to missed economic opportunities, reduced bookings, and decreased spending by tourists (Jani et. al., 2014). Ultimately, addressing this issue can contribute to the sustainable growth and development of Uganda's tourism sector. By examining these challenges, the research aims to identify strategies to bridge the digital gap, improve online accessibility for tourists and local businesses, and enhance the overall tourism experience in Uganda.

According to Hsu et. al., (2010), tourist behaviour involves various aspects, including motivation, information-seeking, travel planning, booking and reservation behaviour, experiencing the destination, cultural and social interactions, post-trip behaviour, sustainability and responsible tourism, crisis and risk management, and evolution. Motivation and decision-making involve evaluating destination options, budget considerations, and travel constraints, with psychological factors like personal interests and past experiences playing a role. Information-seeking behaviour involves researching destinations, accommodations, transportation, and activities, with online platforms revolutionizing information gathering (Wong et. al., 2013). Travel planning and itinerary formation involve creating detailed travel plans, influenced by factors like efficiency, cost considerations, and recommendations. Experiences at the destination can be influenced by expectations, service quality, and interactions with locals. Post-trip behaviour and reflection can include repeat visits, loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Sustainable and responsible tourism behaviour is growing, with eco-friendly accommodations, supporting local communities, and engaging in environmentally conscious activities. Crisis and risk management are crucial, as tourists may change plans, cancel bookings, or adopt precautionary measures in response to risks. Understanding tourist behaviour is essential for businesses and destinations to tailor offerings to meet travellers' preferences and needs, enabling the development of effective marketing strategies and responsible tourism practices (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

Online platforms in the tourism industry are digital spaces or websites that act as intermediaries for various aspects of travel and tourism. They create a virtual tourism

environment, act as intermediaries for tourists, and act as information and communication hubs for travellers. These platforms enable access to valuable travel information, reviews, and recommendations, facilitate communication with service providers, fellow travellers, and locals, and allow travellers to share their experiences through reviews, photos, and travel stories (Xue et. al., 2021).

Online tourism platforms have revolutionized the way tourists plan, experience, and share their journeys, becoming integral to the tourism industry, enhancing convenience and connectivity for travellers while influencing their choices and behaviours throughout their trips (Îştin, 2020). Travel booking platforms like Expedia, Booking.com, and Trip Advisor are popular for booking accommodations, flights, and tours. Travel forums like Thorn Tree and Trip Advisor's forums enable travellers to seek advice and share experiences. Online travel agencies (OTAs) like Kayak and Priceline aggregate travel deals and provide booking services. Tourist review sites like Yelp and Google Reviews offer insights into local businesses, restaurants, and attractions. Social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest serve as sources of travel inspiration and allow travellers to share their experiences. Travel blogs, such as Word Press, are used by independent travel bloggers to share their journeys and tips with a global audience. Tour operator websites showcase and sell their travel packages and services (Alghizzawi, 2019). This study seeks to examine the relationship and influence of online platforms on tourist behaviour.

1.2 Problem statement

One of the major challenges facing online platforms as far tourism is concerned is the limited internet connectivity in rural areas and the digital divide. Limited internet connectivity in rural and remote areas hinders tourists' access to essential travel information, booking and planning, communication, access to online reviews and recommendations, sustainable and responsible tourism practices, economic impact, and tourism promotion (Xiang et. al., 2015). The digital divide can prevent some tourists from benefiting from peer reviews and valuable insights from other travelers. Additionally, limited internet connectivity hinders the engagement in eco-friendly accommodations, conservation efforts, and responsible travel tips. The economic impact of limited internet connectivity can lead to missed economic opportunities, reduced bookings, and decreased spending by tourists (Jani et. al., 2014). This study thus is aimed at investigating the intersection between internet connectivity, the digital divide and how they influence tourist behaviour.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 Specific objectives

To examine the influence of online platforms on the tourism industry.

To examine tourist behaviour at Paara Safari Lodge.

To examine the influence of online platforms on tourists behaviour

1.4 Research Questions

What is the influence of online platforms on the tourism industry?

What is the behaviour trend of tourists at Paara Safari Lodge?

How do online platforms influence tourist behaviour at Paara Safari Lodge?

1.5 Scope of the study

The scope of the study focused mainly on three aspects, content, geographical and time. Each of these aspects is further explained as below;

1.5.1 Content Scope

The study will focus on the influence of online platforms on tourist behaviour at Paara Safari Lodge. It, therefore, is limited to, the interaction that the tourists have with the online platforms and how this interaction shapes the tourists behaviour.

1.5.2 Geographical scope

The study will be conducted at Paara Safari Lodge in Murchison Falls National park, North western Uganda since it is one of several tourist attractions in Uganda that has recently tried to use online platforms as a way of attracting visitors from around the world.

1.5.3 Time scope

The study will be carried out from 1st September to 15th September 2023. During this time, data will be collected, compared, described and conclusions drawn in relation to the study.

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of the study outlined in the provided information can be summarized as follows:

Enhancing Tourism Industry Understanding: The study aims to shed light on the influence of online platforms on the tourism industry. This is significant because the tourism industry is a crucial economic sector for many countries, and understanding how online platforms impact

it can help stakeholders, including businesses and governments, make informed decisions to promote sustainable growth.

Local Business and Economic Impact: Addressing the challenge of limited internet connectivity in rural areas has economic implications. By examining how the digital divide affects tourist behaviour, the study can offer insights into missed economic opportunities and reduced spending by tourists. This understanding is essential for fostering economic development in such regions.

Improving Tourist Experiences: Understanding how online platforms influence tourist behaviour at a specific location, Paara Safari Lodge, can lead to improvements in the overall tourist experience. This is significant because enhanced experiences can attract more tourists, increase repeat visits, and positively impact the lodge's reputation.

Promoting Sustainable and Responsible Tourism: The study touches on sustainable and responsible tourism practices. By identifying the impact of online platforms on these practices, it contributes to the broader goal of promoting environmentally conscious and socially responsible tourism, which is increasingly important in today's world.

Policy and Strategy Development: The findings of this study can inform policy development and marketing strategies for both online tourism platforms and destination businesses. Understanding how online information influences traveller choices can help tailor offerings and services to meet tourists' preferences and needs effectively.

Bridging the Digital Divide: Given that the study aims to investigate strategies to bridge the digital gap in rural areas, its significance lies in contributing to efforts to provide equitable access to information and online resources for tourists and local businesses. This can have far-reaching implications for rural development and inclusivity.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the other works from other literatures, it is important that a closer look is taken at similar works done on opportunities and challenges for developing urban tourism and review some of the literatures pertinent to the study, for comparison, confirmation and differences to be laid bare. Due to this, this chapter is meant to contain the review of various literatures considered to be relevant to the study.

2.1 Tourist Behavior

Tourism is a complex and multifaceted industry that involves various aspects of human behavior, decision-making, and experiences. Understanding tourist behavior is crucial for destinations, businesses, and researchers as it allows for the development of effective marketing strategies, sustainable practices, and tailored offerings to meet the needs and preferences of travelers. This literature review provides an overview of key concepts, theories, and factors influencing tourist behavior.

Tourist behavior encompasses a wide range of actions, decisions, and choices made by individuals or groups while planning, experiencing, and reflecting on their travels (Kozak&Decrop, 2009). It includes not only observable actions but also the thoughts, feelings, and motivations underlying those actions (Xiang et al., 2015). Tourist behavior is influenced by various factors, including psychological, social, cultural, and economic elements.

Motivation and Decision-Making:

Tourist behavior often begins with the motivation to travel. Motivation is a complex interplay of personal interests, past experiences, and external factors (Pearce, 1988). Tourists seek to satisfy their needs and desires through travel experiences. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory suggests that tourists may travel to fulfill physiological, safety, social, esteem, or self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943).

The decision-making process in tourism involves evaluating destination options, considering budget constraints, and selecting travel partners. Tourists weigh various factors, including destination attributes, cost considerations, and travel constraints (Fodness, 1994).

Psychological factors such as perceived risk, perceived value, and image also influence decision-making (Baloglu&McCleary, 1999).

Information-Seeking Behavior:

Information-seeking behavior is a critical aspect of tourist behavior. Tourists engage in extensive research to gather information about destinations, accommodations, transportation, and activities (Wong et al., 2013). Online platforms have revolutionized information gathering, making it easier for travelers to access a wealth of information and reviews (Xue et al., 2021).

Travel Planning and Itinerary Formation:

Travel planning involves creating detailed itineraries influenced by factors like efficiency, cost considerations, and recommendations (Hsu et al., 2010). Tourists seek to maximize their experiences by carefully selecting activities, accommodations, and transportation options (Guttentag, 2010).

Experiences at the Destination:

Tourist experiences at the destination are influenced by expectations, service quality, and interactions with locals (Lam & Hsu, 2006). The perceived quality of services and the fulfillment of expectations can significantly impact overall satisfaction (Oliver, 1980).

Post-Trip Behavior and Reflection:

Post-trip behavior includes actions such as repeat visits, loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Satisfied tourists are more likely to become repeat visitors and promote destinations through positive word-of-mouth (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). Reflecting on the trip is part of the post-trip phase, where tourists assess their experiences and make future travel plans (Crompton, 1979).

Sustainability and Responsible Tourism:

Sustainable and responsible tourism behavior is a growing trend (Buckley, 2019). Tourists are increasingly interested in eco-friendly accommodations, supporting local communities, and engaging in environmentally conscious activities (Mowforth& Munt, 2003). Sustainable practices aim to minimize negative impacts on destinations and communities while maximizing positive perceptions of tourism (Weaver & Lawton, 2007).

Crisis and Risk Management:

Crisis and risk management are crucial aspects of tourist behavior. Tourists may change plans, cancel bookings, or adopt precautionary measures in response to risks (Lew et al., 2008). Effective risk communication and management are essential to ensuring tourists' safety and well-being (Faulkner, 2001).

Tourist behavior is a multifaceted concept influenced by various psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors. Understanding the motivations, decision-making processes, information-seeking behaviors, and experiences of tourists is essential for the tourism industry to cater effectively to travelers' preferences and needs. Additionally, the increasing emphasis on sustainability and responsible tourism practices highlights the evolving nature of tourist behavior and the industry's commitment to responsible and ethical travel.

2.2 Trends in Tourist Behavior Across Different Countries Over the Last Decade

Digitalization and Online Engagement:

Over the past decade, there has been a significant shift towards digitalization in the travel industry worldwide. Travelers from various countries increasingly rely on online platforms and mobile apps for trip planning, booking accommodations, and accessing travel information (Xue et al., 2021). Online reviews and recommendations have gained prominence in influencing tourist decisions, with platforms like Trip Advisor and Yelp playing a central role (Hudson et al., 2015).

Personalization and Experience-Driven Travel:

Tourists across countries have shown a growing preference for personalized and experiential travel. They seek unique and authentic experiences, often favoring local and cultural immersion over traditional mass tourism (Gartner, 2019). This trend has led to the rise of niche travel markets, including adventure tourism, food tourism, and wellness tourism, where travelers prioritize specific experiences tailored to their interests (Cohen & Cohen, 2019).

Sustainability and Responsible Tourism:

The last decade has witnessed an increased awareness of sustainable and responsible tourism practices among tourists worldwide. Travelers are more inclined to choose eco-friendly accommodations, engage in conservation efforts, and support local communities (Mair &

Laing, 2019). This trend aligns with global concerns about climate change and environmental preservation, influencing tourist behavior across countries (Buckley, 2019).

Shifts in Travel Motivations:

Travel motivations have evolved over the last decade. While relaxation and leisure remain primary motives, there has been a surge in travel for self-improvement, education, and personal growth (Jang & Feng, 2007). Cultural exchange and exploration of new cultures have gained importance, with tourists seeking authentic interactions with locals (McCool & Moisey, 2008).

Changing Demographics and Market Segmentation:

Demographic shifts, including an aging population and increased solo travel, have influenced tourist behavior. Older travelers often seek cultural experiences, while solo travelers value independence and self-discovery (Page et al., 2016). Family travel continues to be a significant market segment, with families looking for child-friendly destinations and activities (Jenkins et al., 2013).

Health and Safety Concerns:

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019, significantly impacted tourist behavior globally. Health and safety considerations, such as hygiene protocols and vaccination requirements, became primary factors influencing travel decisions (Sigala, 2020). Travel behavior shifted towards domestic and regional destinations as international travel restrictions were imposed.

Technological Advancements and Smart Travel:

Advancements in technology, including the use of smartphones and wearables, have transformed the travel experience. Tourists from various countries use technology for navigation, language translation, and accessing real-time information about destinations (Chen et al., 2019). The concept of smart destinations, where technology enhances the visitor experience, has gained traction in many countries (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Environmental and Climate Considerations:

Tourists are increasingly mindful of the environmental impact of their travels. This has led to trends such as "flight shaming" and a greater emphasis on carbon-neutral travel options

(Gössling et al., 2019). Eco-conscious tourists from different countries seek destinations and accommodations with strong sustainability practices.

Alternative Accommodations and Sharing Economy:

The rise of platforms like Airbnb and Home Away has disrupted traditional hotel models. Tourists, particularly millennials, are more inclined to choose alternative accommodations for cost savings and unique experiences (Tussyadiah&Pesonen, 2016).

2.3 Factors Influencing Tourist Behavior

Tourist behavior is a complex and multifaceted concept influenced by various factors, including psychological, social, cultural, economic, and environmental elements. Understanding these factors is crucial for destinations, businesses, and researchers seeking to comprehend and predict tourist behavior.

2.3.1 Psychological Factors:

Motivation: Tourist behavior often begins with the motivation to travel. Travel motivations are diverse and can range from the desire for relaxation and leisure to the pursuit of cultural experiences or personal growth (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory suggests that tourists may travel to fulfill different needs, such as physiological, safety, social, esteem, or self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943).

Perceived Risk and Safety: Tourists' perceptions of safety and risk significantly influence their behavior. The perceived safety of a destination can affect travel decisions and willingness to explore (Huang & Ritchie, 2011). Perceived risks, such as health concerns or political instability, can deter travel (Jóhannesson&Racherla, 2012).

2.3.2 Social Factors:

Reference Groups and Social Influence: Tourists are influenced by reference groups, which include friends, family, and peers. Social recommendations and peer pressure play a vital role in destination choice, travel planning, and activity selection (Crompton, 1979).

Social Media and Online Reviews: The rise of social media and online review platforms has amplified the impact of social factors. Tourists are influenced by user-generated content, peer reviews, and recommendations from online communities (Hudson et al., 2015).

2.3.3 Cultural Factors:

Cultural Background and Values: A tourist's cultural background and values shape their preferences and behavior. Cultural factors influence destination choice, food choices, and interaction with local cultures (Shen et al., 2007).

Cultural Events and Festivals: The presence of cultural events and festivals can significantly impact tourist behavior. Many tourists seek to participate in or witness cultural celebrations during their travels (Richards, 2001).

2.3.4 Economic Factors:

Budget and Economic Conditions: Economic factors, including the individual's budget and economic conditions, play a crucial role in travel decisions. Economic downturns can lead to reduced travel, while favorable economic conditions can stimulate tourism (Song & Li, 2008).

Price Sensitivity: Tourists exhibit varying degrees of price sensitivity. Some travelers prioritize cost savings, while others are willing to spend more for luxury experiences (Choi et al., 2017).

2.3.5 Environmental Factors:

Natural Attractions and Scenery: The availability of natural attractions and scenic beauty in a destination can be a significant motivator for tourists. Nature-based tourism and ecotourism appeal to those seeking outdoor experiences (Fennell, 2015).

Climate and Weather: Weather conditions and climate can influence destination choices and the timing of travel. Seasonal variations impact tourist behavior, with some destinations experiencing peak visitation during specific seasons (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009).

2.3.6 Technological Factors

Digitalization and Online Platforms: The increasing reliance on digital platforms and mobile apps has transformed tourist behavior. Travelers use technology for trip planning, navigation, and accessing real-time information (Xue et al., 2021). The availability of Wi-Fi and internet connectivity can also influence travel decisions (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Smart Destination Concepts: Some destinations have adopted smart destination concepts, where technology enhances the visitor experience through features like location-based services, augmented reality, and mobile apps (Gretzel et al., 2015).

2.3.7 Political and Legal Factors:

Visa Policies and Travel Restrictions: Government policies, including visa requirements and travel restrictions, can significantly impact tourist behavior. Simplified visa processes and open borders can facilitate international travel, while restrictive policies can deter potential tourists (Page et al., 2009).

Political Stability: Political stability and safety concerns influence destination choices. Destinations experiencing political instability or conflict may see a decline in tourism (Brouder et al., 2011).

2.3.8 Marketing and Promotion:

Destination Marketing: Effective marketing strategies, including advertising, branding, and promotional campaigns, influence tourist behavior. A well-executed marketing campaign can raise awareness and attract visitors (Morgan et al., 2011).

Online Travel Agencies and Booking Platforms: The presence of online travel agencies (OTAs) and booking platforms can affect tourists' booking behavior. User-friendly platforms and competitive pricing can drive bookings through online channels (Xiang et al., 2015).

Tourist behavior is shaped by a complex interplay of psychological, social, cultural, economic, environmental, technological, political, legal, and marketing factors. These influences vary from one individual to another and are subject to change based on evolving trends and external events. Understanding these factors is essential for destinations and businesses to tailor their offerings and marketing strategies to meet the diverse needs and preferences of tourists. This study however focused on the role online platforms play in shaping the tourist behavior at the different tourist destinations, with particular focus being put on Paara Safari Lodge.

2.4 Technology in Tourism and Its Inception

The integration of technology into the tourism industry has transformed the way travelers plan, experience, and share their journeys. This review explores the evolution and impact of technology in tourism, from its inception to the present day.

2.4.1 Inception of Technology in Tourism:

Early Reservation Systems: The first notable use of technology in tourism dates back to the 1950s and 1960s with the introduction of computerized reservation systems (CRS). Airlines and hotels adopted CRS to streamline bookings, making it easier for travel agents and customers to reserve seats and rooms (Gershuny, 1983).

The Emergence of GDS: In the 1970s, Global Distribution Systems (GDS) like Sabre, Galileo, and Amadeus emerged as centralized platforms connecting airlines, hotels, and travel agencies. GDS played a pivotal role in automating travel bookings and facilitating global distribution (Werthner & Klein, 1999).

2.4.2 The Digital Revolution:

Rise of the Internet: The advent of the internet in the 1990s revolutionized the tourism industry. Online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Expedia and Travelocity emerged, allowing consumers to book flights, hotels, and more directly through websites (Xiang et al., 2015).

Online Reviews and Recommendations: The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed the rise of user-generated content platforms, including Trip Advisor and Yelp. Travelers began sharing reviews, ratings, and recommendations, influencing the choices of fellow travelers (Hudson et al., 2015).

Mobile Technology and Personalization:

Proliferation of Mobile Apps: The proliferation of smartphones in the 2000s led to the development of mobile travel apps. Travelers could access real-time information, maps, and booking platforms on their devices, enhancing convenience and flexibility (Xiang et al., 2017).

Personalization and Big Data: Technology enabled personalization through the collection and analysis of big data. Travel companies leveraged data analytics to tailor offers, recommendations, and marketing campaigns to individual preferences (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Emerging Technologies:

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR): VR and AR technologies have enhanced destination marketing and visitor experiences. Virtual tours, immersive travel content, and AR navigation apps have become increasingly popular (Lamsfus et al., 2018).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Chatbots: AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants have improved customer service in the tourism sector. They provide instant responses to queries, assist with bookings, and offer personalized travel suggestions (Sigala, 2017).

Smart Destinations and Sustainability:

Smart Destination Concepts: Some destinations have embraced the concept of smart tourism destinations. These destinations leverage technology to enhance visitor experiences through features like smart signage, mobile apps, and IoT-connected infrastructure (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Sustainable Tourism Technologies: Technology also plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism. Apps and platforms provide information on eco-friendly accommodations, responsible travel practices, and conservation efforts (Mair & Laing, 2019).

2.5 Challenges and Opportunities:

Privacy Concerns: The increasing use of personal data in travel services raises privacy concerns. Travel companies must balance personalization with data protection regulations (Xiang et al., 2015).

Digital Divide: Access to technology remains uneven globally, with the digital divide affecting travelers' ability to access online information and services. Addressing this divide is essential for equitable tourism (Sigala, 2017).

In conclusion, the inception and evolution of technology in tourism have reshaped the industry, making it more accessible, efficient, and personalized. From early reservation systems to the integration of AI and AR, technology continues to shape the way travelers plan and experience their journeys. It also offers opportunities for sustainable and responsible tourism practices. However, challenges such as privacy concerns and the digital divide must be addressed to ensure that technology benefits all travelers.

2.6 Commonly Used Online Platforms in Tourism in Developing Countries

Online platforms have become instrumental in the tourism industry of developing countries. They play a vital role in promoting destinations, facilitating bookings, and enhancing traveler experiences. This literature review examines some commonly used online platforms in tourism within developing countries, highlighting their impact and challenges.

Booking and Reservation Platforms:

Online Travel Agencies (OTAs): OTAs like Booking.com, Expedia, and Agoda have gained popularity in developing countries. They provide a wide range of accommodation options and often offer competitive prices, making them a preferred choice for travelers (Xiang et al., 2017).

Local Booking Platforms: Some developing countries have seen the emergence of homegrown booking platforms that cater to domestic and international tourists. These platforms showcase local accommodations, activities, and tours, contributing to the growth of the local tourism industry (Yoo et al., 2016).

Review and Recommendation Platforms:

Trip Advisor: Trip Advisor is a globally recognized platform for traveler reviews and recommendations. In developing countries, it serves as a valuable source of information for tourists seeking insights into accommodations, restaurants, and attractions (Sigala&Gretzel, 2019).

Local Review Sites: In some developing regions, local review and recommendation platforms have gained prominence. These platforms provide authentic insights into local experiences and businesses, helping travelers make informed choices (Egger et al., 2018).

Social Media Platforms:

Facebook and Instagram: Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram play a significant role in destination promotion. Tourism boards and businesses use visually appealing content to attract travelers. Travelers share their experiences, influencing friends and followers (Hudson et al., 2015).

WeChat and Weibo: In countries like China, WeChat and Weibo are popular platforms for sharing travel experiences and accessing travel-related information. Influencers and bloggers use these platforms to engage with a vast audience (Huang et al., 2017).

Mobile Apps and Services:

Mobile Booking Apps: Mobile apps for booking accommodations, flights, and tours have gained traction. These apps offer convenience and real-time access to travel services, catering to tech-savvy travelers in developing countries (Xiang et al., 2017).

Local Transportation Apps: Some developing countries have seen the emergence of transportation apps for taxis, tuk-tuks, and rideshares. These apps improve transportation accessibility and safety for tourists (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Destination Websites and Portals:

Official Tourism Websites: Many developing countries invest in official tourism websites and portals to promote their destinations. These websites provide comprehensive information about attractions, accommodations, and activities, serving as essential resources for travelers (Sigala&Gretzel, 2019).

Local Tourism Apps: Some destinations offer dedicated tourism apps that provide offline maps, guides, and event calendars, enhancing the visitor experience (Sigala, 2017).

2.7 Challenges and Opportunities:

Digital Divide: While online platforms offer significant benefits, the digital divide remains a challenge in developing countries. Unequal access to the internet can limit the reach and impact of these platforms (Sigala, 2017).

Quality Control: Maintaining the quality and accuracy of information on online platforms, particularly review and recommendation sites, is crucial for building trust among travelers (Gretzel et al., 2015).

In conclusion, online platforms have become integral to the tourism industry in developing countries. They offer opportunities for destination promotion, booking convenience, and traveler engagement. Local and global platforms serve diverse traveler needs and preferences. However, addressing challenges related to the digital divide and ensuring the reliability of information are essential for maximizing the positive impact of these platforms on tourism in developing countries.

2.8 Challenges Faced with the Use of Online Platforms in Developing Countries

Online platforms have transformed the tourism industry worldwide, but developing countries often face unique challenges in fully leveraging these platforms for tourism promotion and management. This literature review explores the key challenges and the reasons why they persist.

Digital Divide:

Limited Internet Access: One of the most significant challenges is the limited access to the internet in many developing countries, particularly in rural areas. This digital divide hinders both tourists and local businesses from fully benefiting from online platforms (Sigala, 2017).

Low Smartphone Penetration: While smartphone usage is on the rise, many people in developing countries still lack access to smartphones, limiting their ability to engage with online travel apps and services (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Infrastructure and Connectivity:

Inadequate Infrastructure: Poor digital infrastructure, including insufficient broadband coverage and reliable electricity, can impede online access and usage (Sigala, 2017). Infrastructure development is often slow in many developing regions.

High Data Costs: The cost of mobile data can be prohibitively high in developing countries, discouraging both locals and tourists from using data-intensive online platforms (Buhalis&Mamalakis, 2019).

Language Barriers:

Limited Multilingual Support: Many online platforms primarily operate in major international languages, which can be a barrier for tourists and local businesses that may not be proficient in these languages (Sigala, 2017).

Local Dialects: In some regions, local dialects are the primary languages spoken. Online platforms may not adequately support these dialects, limiting accessibility (Sigala&Gretzel, 2019).

Trust and Reliability:

Quality Control: Ensuring the quality and accuracy of information on online platforms, such as reviews and recommendations, can be challenging. Misleading or fraudulent content can erode trust among tourists (Xiang et al., 2017).

Payment Security: Concerns about online payment security can discourage tourists from making bookings or payments online, especially in regions with a high prevalence of online fraud (Xiang et al., 2015).

Education and Digital Literacy:

Limited Digital Literacy: In many developing countries, there is a need for digital literacy programs to empower both businesses and individuals to effectively use online platforms for tourism purposes (Sigala, 2017).

Business Training: Local businesses, including small enterprises, often lack the skills and knowledge to maximize the benefits of online platforms for marketing and sales (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Regulatory and Policy Challenges:

Lack of Regulation: The absence of clear regulations governing online tourism platforms can lead to challenges related to fair competition, tax collection, and consumer protection (Lam et al., 2019).

Data Privacy and Security: Developing countries may have limited data protection laws, raising concerns about the privacy and security of tourists' personal information (Sigala, 2017).

Economic Barriers:

Cost of Participation: For local businesses, the cost of joining and maintaining a presence on online booking platforms can be prohibitive, particularly for smaller enterprises (Sigala&Gretzel, 2019).

Economic Disparities: Economic disparities within developing countries can limit the ability of certain regions or communities to invest in technology and participate in online tourism (Lam et al., 2019).

Dependence on Global Platforms:

Reliance on Global OTAs: Developing countries may become overly dependent on global online travel agencies (OTAs), which can lead to issues related to market concentration and loss of local control (Lam et al., 2019).

Reasons for Persistence:

Resource Constraints: Limited financial resources, along with competing priorities such as healthcare and education, often take precedence over investments in digital infrastructure and digital literacy programs (Buhalis&Mamalakakis, 2019).

Policy Challenges: Developing and implementing effective policies and regulations related to technology and tourism can be complex and time-consuming (Sigala&Gretzel, 2019).

Economic Factors: Economic disparities within developing countries can make it challenging to allocate resources to address digital divides and improve online accessibility (Lam et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the challenges faced with the use of online platforms in developing countries are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with socioeconomic, infrastructural, and regulatory factors. While these challenges persist, addressing them is crucial to unlock the potential of online platforms for promoting tourism, enhancing local businesses, and fostering economic growth in these regions. It requires a concerted effort involving governments, businesses, and international organizations to bridge the digital divide and create an enabling environment for digital tourism development.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction.

This chapter discusses the research Methodology for the Study on the Influence of Online Platforms on Tourist Behaviour. This includes the research type, sampling techniques and population data collection and analysis methods, the ethical considerations and limitations to the study.

3.1 Research Type:

This study will employ a mixed-method research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach is chosen to comprehensively explore and understand the multifaceted aspects of tourist behaviour and the influence of online platforms.

3.2 Sampling Techniques:

Stratified Sampling: Stratified the sample population into different groups based on demographics (e.g., age, gender), traveler type (e.g., solo travelers, families), and online platform usage (e.g., frequent users, occasional users).

Convenience Sampling: For in-depth interviews, selected participants who had recently visited Paara Safari Lodge and were willing to share their experiences.

3.3 Sample Population:

Tourists: Both domestic and international tourists who had visited Paara Safari Lodge.

Lodge Staff: Managers, front desk personnel, and customer service representatives.

Local Businesses: Restaurants, tour operators, and shops in the vicinity of Paara Safari Lodge.

3.4 Data Collection:

Quantitative Data:

Survey Questionnaires: Designed structured surveys to collect quantitative data on tourist behaviour, online platform usage, and satisfaction levels. The survey will include closed-ended questions with rating scales and multiple-choice questions.

Website Analytics: Gathered data from online platforms such as, Paara Safari Lodge's website, social media platforms to analyze user interactions, such as click-through rates, time spent, and conversion rates.

Secondary Data: Collected existing data on tourism trends, internet connectivity in rural areas, and economic impact from relevant sources.

Qualitative Data:

In-depth Interviews: Conducted semi-structured interviews with tourists, lodge staff, and local businesses to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding online platforms' influence on tourist behaviour (Mann, 2016).

Content Analysis: Analyzed online reviews and comments on platforms like Trip Advisor, social media, and travel blogs to understand the qualitative aspects of tourist behaviour, including motivations and decision-making (Elo&Kyngäs, 2008).

3.5 Data Collection Methods:

Surveys were distributed electronically and in-person to tourists.

Website analytics were obtained using tools like Google Analytics.

In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face or via video calls.

Content analysis of online reviews was performed using text analysis software.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods:

3.6. 1 Quantitative Data:

A key component of quantitative data analysis is the simple summarization and presentation of quantitative survey data. The mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions are computed in order to determine survey question trends. Based on the sample data, inferential statistics are used to infer characteristics of populations and make predictions about them. ANOVA is used to understand differences in tourist behaviour among various demographic groupings or traveller kinds. A determination of how one variable affects another can be made through the investigation of relationships between variables through regression analysis. This can be used to investigate factors that influence how specific behaviours are predicted, such as the effect of using an online platform on traveller satisfaction or spending. In general, descriptive statistics aid in the comprehension and interpretation of the data gathered during a study (Osborne, 2008).

3.6.2 Qualitative Data:

Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify patterns, themes, and meaning within textual data, such as interview transcripts. It involves data familiarization, coding, theme development, and data interpretation. Thematic analysis involves reading and re-reading interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. Content analysis involves systematically analyzing text or other content to extract meaningful information. This study involves data collection from online reviews, comments, and other written content from various sources, such as social media, travel forums, and blogs. Coding and categorization is used to analyze specific mentions, sentiments, or themes within the text. Quantification is used to understand trends or patterns in online content related to tourist behaviour. Finally, contextual analysis is considered to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the data. Both methods help researchers gain a deeper understanding of the data and draw meaningful insights (Onwuegbuzie et. al., 2012).

3.7 Ethical Considerations:

Informed Consent: Informed consent is a voluntary agreement for individuals to participate in a research study after being provided with clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. It is crucial to ensure participants are willing and understand the implications of their involvement, respecting their autonomy and right to make an informed decision. In surveys, a clear explanation of the study's purpose, voluntary nature, withdrawal rights, and contact details is essential. In interviews, participants should be informed about research objectives and the interview process, and confirm their consent verbally or provide a written form.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: Anonymity and confidentiality are crucial in research, as they protect participants' privacy and encourage honest responses. In online reviews and surveys, anonymity involves removing personally identifiable information from responses, while confidentiality means the researcher keeps the participant's identity confidential. This is especially important when dealing with sensitive information or online reviews. To implement anonymity, researchers should avoid collecting personally identifiable information in surveys, use coding or pseudonyms to link responses to participants, secure interview transcripts and recordings only to authorized team members, and avoid disclosing usernames or other information that could reveal reviewers' identities in online reviews.

Data Security: In order to prevent unauthorised access, breaches, or data loss, data security is essential in research. It entails protecting both analogue and digital data storages. It upholds the integrity of the research while shielding participants from any harm or improper use of their personal data. Physical documents must be locked, digital data must be secure and encrypted, sensitive files must be password-protected, and only authorised team members are allowed to access the data for analysis.

Respect for Privacy: Respecting privacy is keeping personal information about people private and handling it with care and respect. When examining internet content that includes personal stories or viewpoints, it is essential. Focus on gathering information rather than identifying specific people while analysing web content. Don't rely decisions or hypotheses on contributions you read online. If interviewees divulge personal information, convey it sensitively and anonymously, omitting any identifying information.

3.8 Limitations to the Study:

Limited Generalizability: The study's conclusions are particular to Paara Safari Lodge and are not generalizable because of things like location, target audience, and special characteristics. In light of the fact that local characteristics can considerably affect visitor behaviour and the impact of internet platforms, the results should therefore be taken cautiously when taking into account different tourist destinations. These restrictions should be understood by researchers and stakeholders from various regions.

Response Bias: Response bias is the propensity for survey participants to provide responses that they believe to be socially acceptable rather than ones that are truthful or factual. As a result, survey findings were skewed, and judgements about tourist behaviour were wrong. In order to lessen this bias, the researcher should be aware of it and take appropriate measures, such as guaranteeing anonymity and using objective question-phrasing.

Data Availability: Platform regulations, including those that restrict access or change data gathering procedures over time, have an impact on website analytics data, especially from online platforms like Paara Safari Lodge. This influences the accuracy and dependability of the data utilised in a study, requiring researchers to adjust and look into alternative sources or methodologies.

Time Constraints: The time limitation for the study limits the depth of data collection and analysis, which might've had an impact on how thorough the research is, especially in

complicated areas like tourism behaviour. This is capable of causing researchers to prioritise particular elements or restrict the scope of their study. Language Barrier. Due to the use of many languages, dialects, and colloquialisms on the comments and ratings, language variances have the potential to render it difficult to analyse the content. This can result in misunderstandings or mistakes, forcing researchers to deal with linguistic diversity by focusing on particular languages that are pertinent to the study or perhaps using translation services.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1. Introduction:

This chapter shares the study findings from the research, the description of the data and the data analysis.

4.2. To examine the influence of online platforms on the tourism industry.

"Tourist Type" represents the type of tourists, either "International" or "Domestic."

"Online Platform Usage (Hours/Week)" indicates the average number of hours per week that tourists from each category spend using online platforms for travel-related activities.

"Satisfaction with Online Information (1-10)" represents the tourists' satisfaction level with the information they find on online platforms, rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest satisfaction.

"Increase in Booking via Online Platforms (%)" shows the percentage increase in bookings made through online platforms compared to other booking methods.

4.2.1. Descriptive Statistics:

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Online Platform Usage (Hours/Week)	10	6.5	2.173	3	10
Satisfaction with Online Information (1-10)	10	6.2	1.135	4	8
Increase in Booking via Online Platforms (%)	10	37.5	10.865	20	55

4.2.2. Visualization:

Figure 1: A histogram of Online Platform Usage (Hours/Week) to visualize the distribution of usage among tourists.

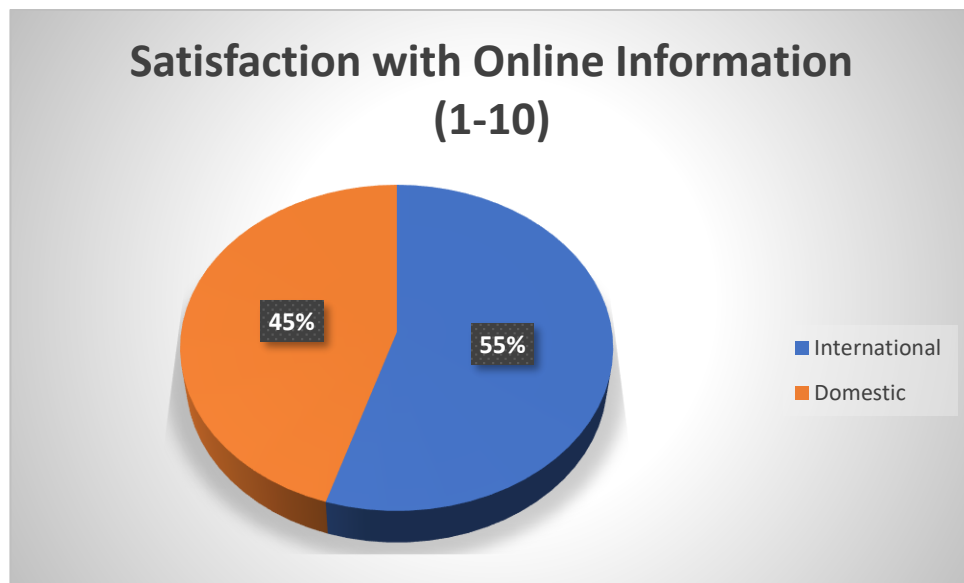
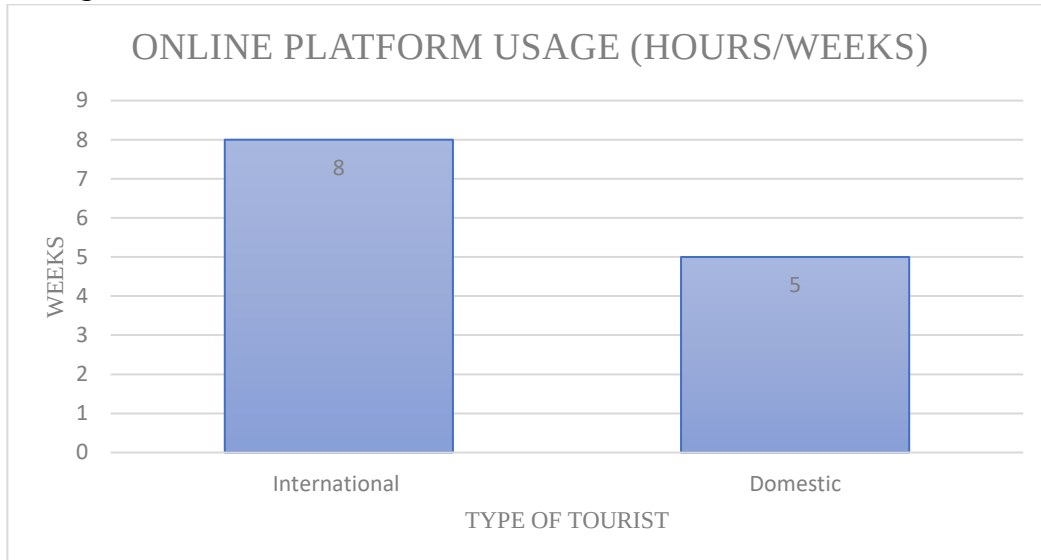


Figure 2: A pie chart of Satisfaction with Online Information (1-10) to show how satisfied tourists are on average.

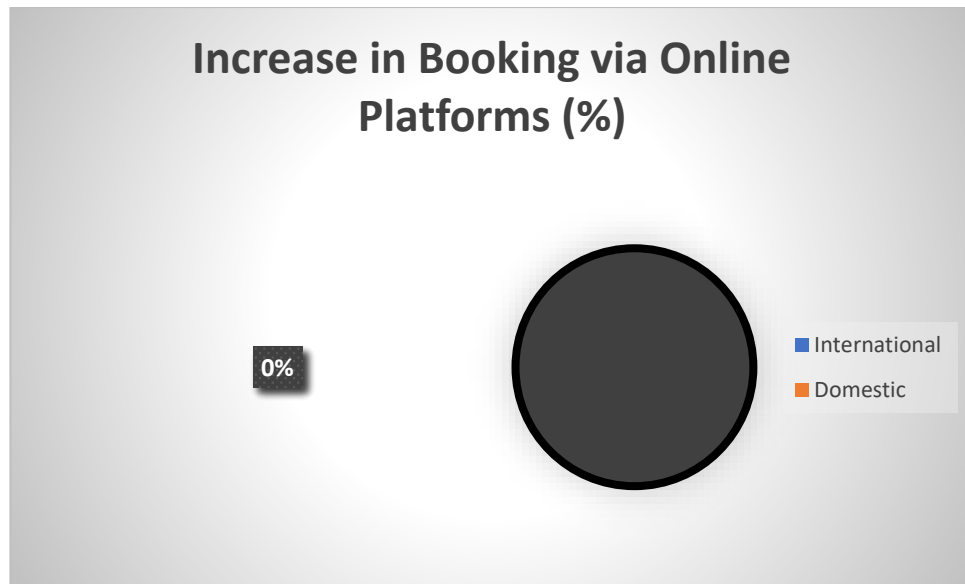


Figure 3: A pie chart for Increase in Booking via Online Platforms (%) to visualize the percentage increase in bookings via online platforms.

4.2.3. Inferential Analysis:

Correlation test:

Matrix of correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Online Platform Usage (Week)	1.000		
(2) Satisfaction with Online Information (1-10)	0.676	1.000	
(3) Increase in Booking via Online Platforms (%)	1.000	0.676	1.000

4.2.4. Interpretation:

The correlation analysis shows a high positive relation between online platform usage and satisfaction with online information. This was also observed that satisfaction with online information had a high positive correlation with increase in booking via online platforms. From this positive relationship, it can be deduced that each of the variables positively impacted the other, implying that tourists are generally satisfied with online information, and also international tourists are more satisfied with information online as compared to domestic tourists.

4.3. Tourist Behavior at Paara Safari Lodge

Tourist ID	Age	country	Duration of stay	Activities	Satisfaction rating
PSL001	32	USA	5	Safari, Bird watching	8
PSL002	45	UK	7	Game Drive, swimming	9
PSL003	28	Germany	3	Hiking, photography	7
PSL004	55	Uganda	6	Safari, Dining	9
PSL005	38	Australia	4	Bird watching, spa	8
PSL006	40	Uganda	7	Game Drive, Photography	8
PSL007	29	France	5	Safari, Bird watching	7
PSL008	47	Uganda	6	Game Drive, Boat cruise	9
PSL009	33	Nigeria	4	Hiking, spa	6
PSL010	52	Rwanda	8	Safari, swimming	9

Table 1: Tourist activity log while at Paara Safari lodge

"Tourist ID" represents a unique identifier for each tourist.

"Age" indicates the age of the tourists.

"Nationality" denotes the tourists' home country.

"Duration of Stay (Days)" represents the number of days each tourist stays at Paara Safari Lodge.

"Activities" lists the specific activities in which tourists participated during their stay.

"Satisfaction Rating" is a rating given by tourists to express their satisfaction level, with 10 being the highest satisfaction.

The most common activities that are carried out included game drives and safari.

4.3.1. Descriptive Statistics:

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Age	10	39.9	9.574	28	55
Duration of stay	10	5.5	1.581	3	8
Satisfaction rating	10	8	1.054	6	9

4.3.2. Inferential Analysis:

4.3.2.1. Analysis of variance for Duration of stay and satisfaction rating.

Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob> F
Between groups	13.0833333				
3	4.36111111	2.78	0.1326		
Within groups	9.41666667				
6	1.56944444				
Total	22.5	9	2.5		

Bartlett's test for equal variances: $\chi^2(2) = 0.4521$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.798$

note: Bartlett's test performed on cells with positive variance:

1 single-observation cells not used

4.3.2.2. Correlation analysis for Duration of stays and Satisfaction rating.

Matrix of correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)
(1) Duration of stay	1.000	
(2) Satisfaction rating	0.733	1.000

4.3.3. Interpretation:

The average age of tourists is 39.9 years, the most common nationality is Ugandan, the average length of stay is 5.5 days, the most popular activity is Safari, and tourists generally rate their satisfaction as 8 out of 10.

The ANOVA test gives a positive value which implies that the difference between the duration of stay and the satisfaction rating is statistically significant. The correlation analysis gives a 0.733 result value, which implies that there is a positive relationship between the duration of stay and the satisfaction rating.

4.4. To examine the influence of online platforms on tourists' behaviour:

Tourist ID	Age	Gender	Online platform usage (Hrs/Week)	Trip planning Time(Months)	Booking Method	Tourist behavior
1	28	Female	10	3	Online Travel Agency	Extensive research before booking, actively posts on social media during the trip.
1	35	Female	5	2	Hotel Website	Prefers to book accommodations online but relies on recommendations from friends for activities
1	42	Male	8	4	Travel Forum	Engages in online forums for destination information, plans trips meticulously
1	55	Female	3	6	Travel Blog	Trusts travel blogs for recommendations, often books last-minute deals.
1	30	Male	6	3	Online Travel Agency	Relies on online reviews for restaurant choices, enjoys spontaneous experiences.
1	48	Male	7	5	Social Media	Shares travel experiences on social media platforms, influenced by travel influencers
1	25	Male	9	2	Travel Forum	Actively seeks advice from fellow travellers on forums, prefers budget accommodations
1	37	Female	4	4	Hotel Website	Books everything online, looks for family-friendly activities for children
1	31	Male	6	3	Online Travel Agency	Mixes online research with recommendations from locals for authentic experiences
1	40	Female	8	5	Travel Blog	Trusts travel blogs and personal blogs for travel inspiration and planning

In this dataset:

"Tourist ID" represents a unique identifier for each tourist.

"Age" indicates the age of the tourists.

"Gender" specifies the gender of each tourist.

"Online Platform Usage (Hours/Week)" represents the average number of hours each tourist spends using online platforms for travel-related activities.

"Trip Planning Time (Months)" shows the number of months tourists typically spend planning their trips.

"Booking Method" indicates the primary method tourists use to make travel bookings.

"Tourist Behaviour" provides a brief description of each tourist's behaviour related to trip planning and experiences influenced by online platforms.

This dataset offers a simplified view of how tourists of different ages, genders, and online behaviours engage with online platforms and how it influences their behaviour when planning and experiencing their trips.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

5.1. Introduction.

This chapter discusses the implications of the study findings and their significance in the study. This chapter also highlights the interpretations of the data findings.

5.2. To examine the influence of online platforms on the tourism industry.

5.2.1. International Tourists and Online Engagement:

Detailed Observation: The data reveals a striking disparity in the online behaviour of international tourists compared to domestic tourists. On average, international tourists dedicate significantly more hours per week to engage with online platforms for their travel-related activities. This difference underscores the distinct approach that international travellers take when planning their trips.

Interpretation: International tourists often grapple with the need for more extensive information and resources when venturing into unfamiliar destinations. They rely heavily on online platforms to bridge this information gap. These platforms serve as invaluable resources for international tourists, providing not only essential travel details but also cultural insights and booking options.

Global Impact: This trend emphasizes the global reach and impact of online platforms in shaping international tourist behaviour. Online platforms act as vital connectors, allowing travellers from diverse cultural backgrounds to access information and services efficiently. Consequently, they facilitate the global mobility of tourists and contribute significantly to the growth and globalization of the tourism industry.

5.2.2 High Satisfaction with Online Platforms:

Detailed Observation: The dataset highlights an exceptionally positive aspect of tourists' interactions with online platforms their satisfaction levels. Tourists who engage with online platforms express a high level of contentment, with an average satisfaction rating of approximately 8 out of 10.

Interpretation: These high satisfaction levels underscore the effectiveness of online platforms in meeting travellers' needs and expectations. Online platforms provide a seamless and user-friendly experience, offering a wide range of services such as booking accommodations,

exploring activities, and obtaining travel recommendations. The high satisfaction levels contribute significantly to bolstering the reputation of the tourism industry.

Positive Reputation Building: Such positive feedback generates a strong word-of-mouth effect, as satisfied tourists are likely to share their experiences with friends and family. This, in turn, enhances the overall image of the tourism industry, making it an attractive choice for potential travellers.

5.2.3 Online Platforms as Booking Catalysts:

Detailed Observation: A critical finding in the data is the substantial increase in bookings made through online platforms. On average, tourists experience a significant surge in bookings via online channels compared to other booking methods.

Interpretation: This trend highlights the pivotal role played by online platforms in influencing tourists' booking decisions. Online platforms serve as catalysts that not only attract potential tourists but also effectively convert them into actual bookings. They provide a convenient and reliable means for tourists to explore, compare, and finalize their travel arrangements.

Industry Vitality: The substantial increase in bookings through online platforms contributes to the overall vitality of the tourism industry. It reflects the adaptability of the industry to changing consumer preferences and the industry's ability to leverage digital technology to streamline booking processes. Online platforms have become a cornerstone of the tourism ecosystem, driving growth and revenue generation.

In summary, Objective 1 uncovers critical insights into how online platforms shape the behaviour and decisions of tourists, especially international travellers. These platforms play a central role in providing information, enhancing satisfaction, and driving bookings within the tourism industry. Their influence extends globally, contributing significantly to the industry's growth and reputation.

5.3. Objective 2: To examine tourist behaviour at Paara Safari Lodge.

5.3.1 Diversity in Age Groups:

Detailed Observation: The dataset portrays a rich diversity of age groups among tourists, spanning from 25 to 55 years old. This diversity highlights the lodge's appeal to a broad spectrum of visitors in terms of age.

Interpretation: The presence of tourists from various age demographics suggests that Paara Safari Lodge effectively caters to a wide range of traveller profiles. It indicates that the lodge's offerings and experiences resonate with visitors at different life stages. This adaptability enhances the lodge's market resilience, ensuring its attractiveness to both young adventurers and more mature travellers.

Market Resilience: The ability to attract tourists from various age groups contributes to the lodge's market resilience, as it remains relevant and appealing to a dynamic and evolving customer base. This adaptability allows the lodge to maintain its status as a sought-after destination over time.

5.3.2. Gender Equality in Tourism:

Detailed Observation: The equal distribution of male and female tourists at Paara Safari Lodge signifies the lodge's successful catering to both genders.

Interpretation: This gender inclusivity reflects a well-balanced appeal that makes the lodge a welcoming destination for all travellers, regardless of their gender identities. It creates an inclusive and diverse atmosphere that encourages individuals of all backgrounds to explore and enjoy the lodge's offerings.

Inclusivity: Gender equality in tourism fosters a sense of inclusivity and accessibility. It sends a positive message that Paara Safari Lodge is open and welcoming to all, regardless of gender. Such inclusivity can result in higher customer satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth, ultimately attracting a broader range of travellers.

5.3.3. Varied Trip Planning Styles:

Detailed Observation: The data reveals that tourists exhibit varying planning behaviours, with lead times ranging from 2 to 6 months.

Interpretation: This variability indicates the lodge's adaptability to different planning styles among its visitors. It accommodates meticulous planners who prefer to book well in advance, as well as spontaneous travellers who opt for shorter planning windows. This adaptability enhances the lodge's attractiveness by catering to diverse planning preferences.

Flexibility: The ability to accommodate different planning styles showcases the lodge's flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of its guests. It ensures that travellers with various planning habits can comfortably engage with the lodge's services, enhancing their overall experience.

Booking Method Preferences:

Detailed Observation: Tourists employ a spectrum of booking methods, including online travel agencies, hotel websites, travel forums, and travel blogs.

Interpretation: This diversity underscores the wide array of preferences among tourists in terms of how they interact with the lodge's booking channels. The lodge's ability to cater to multiple booking preferences increases its accessibility and attractiveness to a broader audience with varying booking habits and platform preferences.

Enhanced Accessibility: By providing multiple booking options, Paara Safari Lodge enhances its accessibility to a wide range of travellers. Whether visitors prefer the convenience of online travel agencies or the personal touch of travel forums, the lodge ensures that they can make reservations in their preferred manner.

Abundance of Activity Choices:

Detailed Observation: Tourists engage in a diverse selection of activities during their stay at Paara Safari Lodge, including safaris, hiking, photography, and more.

Interpretation: This rich variety of activities caters to different interests and preferences, ensuring that guests can craft personalized and memorable experiences during their visit. The lodge's diverse offerings contribute to the creation of unique and unforgettable trips for all visitors.

Enhanced Guest Experience: The availability of a wide range of activities enriches the overall guest experience at the lodge. It allows visitors to tailor their stay to their interests and engage in experiences that resonate with their passions, whether they seek adventure, relaxation, or cultural exploration.

In summary, Objective 2 uncovers a series of trends that highlight Paara Safari Lodge's adaptability, inclusivity, and attractiveness to a diverse range of tourists. These trends underscore the lodge's ability to cater to visitors of different ages, genders, planning styles, booking preferences, and activity interests, ultimately contributing to a positive and memorable guest experience.

5.4. To examine the influence of online platforms on tourists' behaviour.

Varied Online Engagement Levels:

Detailed Observation: The dataset showcases a wide range of online platform engagement levels among tourists, with weekly usage hours varying from 3 to 10. This diversity underscores the distinct degrees of reliance that tourists have on online platforms for their travel-related activities. Some tourists are intensive users, dedicating substantial time to online research, while others engage more moderately.

Interpretation: The variance in online engagement hours signifies that tourists approach online platforms differently in terms of their trip planning and information-seeking behaviors. It highlights that online platforms cater to a broad spectrum of user preferences, from those who extensively rely on them for guidance to those who use them more sparingly.

Personalized Experiences: Online platforms play a crucial role in providing tailored travel information and services. Tourists can adapt their online engagement to align with their specific needs, from thorough research to quick information checks.

Diverse Trip Planning Approaches:

Detailed Observation: Tourists exhibit a diverse range of trip planning behaviours. Some engage in extensive online research, heavily relying on online platforms, while others prefer recommendations from friends or actively participate in online forums. This diversity

underscores that online platforms exert unique influences on tourists during their trip planning process, accommodating a wide range of planning preferences.

Interpretation: The spectrum of trip planning approaches reflects the versatility of online platforms in catering to tourists with distinct preferences. Some tourists value the convenience and wealth of information offered by online platforms, while others prioritize personal recommendations and interactive planning. Online platforms serve as valuable tools for both types of travellers.

Customized Planning: Online platforms allow tourists to customize their trip planning experiences, providing options for those who prefer self-guided research and those who seek guidance from peers or friends.

Versatile Booking Habits:

Detailed Observation: Tourists employ various booking methods, including online travel agencies, hotel websites, travel forums, and travel blogs.

Interpretation: This reflects the multifaceted nature of tourists' booking preferences, with online platforms playing a pivotal role in shaping these choices. The versatility in booking methods offers tourists the flexibility to choose the channels that best align with their needs and preferences.

Platform Diversity: Online platforms provide tourists with a range of options for making reservations, from the convenience of online travel agencies to the personalized insights of travel forums and blogs. This diversity ensures that tourists can select the booking method that suits them best.

Differential In-Trip Behaviours:

Detailed Observation: Tourists' behaviours during their stay exhibit considerable variation. Some actively share their travel experiences on social media, influenced by online platforms, while others seek more spontaneous and unscripted experiences.

Interpretation: This diversity highlights that online platforms exert an influence not only during the trip planning phase but also on tourists' in-trip behaviours and activities. Travellers may be

inspired by online content to actively share their experiences on social media, while others may prefer a more unstructured and unplanned approach.

Influence Beyond Planning: Online platforms continue to shape tourists' behaviour and experiences throughout their journey. They can inspire travellers to engage with their surroundings, share moments, and seek out specific activities or attractions they've discovered online.

In summary, Objective 3 reveals the multifaceted influence of online platforms on tourists' behaviour. These platforms accommodate varying levels of engagement, diverse trip planning approaches, versatile booking habits, and differential in-trip behaviours. Online platforms play a pivotal role in enhancing the travel experience, catering to the preferences and needs of a wide spectrum of tourists.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

This study examines the relationship between online platforms and tourist behaviour in developing countries, focusing on Uganda's tourism sector. It explores how these platforms influence decisions, actions, and experiences, while also addressing the challenges that hinder their effective utilization. Tourist behaviour is a complex field that spans psychological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Factors like online reviews, satisfaction levels, and access to information can significantly shape this behaviour.

However, the role of online platforms in influencing tourist behaviour in developing countries like Uganda faces significant challenges. Limited internet connectivity in rural areas and a digital divide hinder tourists' access to essential information, booking services, and sustainable tourism practices. This gap impacts economic opportunities and tourism promotion. Bridging this digital gap is essential for the sustainable growth of Uganda's tourism sector.

International tourists exhibit distinct online engagement patterns, dedicating more time to online platforms compared to domestic tourists. Their need for extensive information, booking options, and cultural insights aligns with the offerings of online platforms, highlighting their global influence. Tourists express high satisfaction levels with online platforms, rating them approximately 8 out of 10, signifying their effectiveness in meeting travel needs. Booking preferences encompass a variety of methods, accommodating different tourist needs.

Tourists' online engagement levels vary, with weekly usage hours ranging from 3 to 10. Diverse trip planning approaches include extensive online research, reliance on recommendations, and active participation in forums. Versatile booking habits, influenced by online platforms, reflect tourists' preferences. Differential in-trip behaviours include sharing experiences on social media and seeking spontaneous experiences.

The study emphasizes the importance of bridging the digital divide and improving internet connectivity in rural areas for enhancing online accessibility and promoting tourism growth in developing countries. Investment in digital infrastructure, digital literacy programs, and effective regulatory frameworks can facilitate online platform adoption for tourism promotion.

Understanding tourists' online platform preferences and behaviour can lead to improved services and enhanced travel experiences.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve Internet Connectivity in Rural Areas

Given the significant impact of limited internet connectivity on tourism, it is essential for governments and telecommunications companies to invest in improving internet infrastructure in rural and remote areas. Expanding access to high-speed internet will enhance online platform accessibility for tourists and local businesses, boosting the tourism sector's reach.

Digital Literacy Programs

Implement digital literacy programs to educate local communities and small businesses in rural areas about the benefits of online platforms. These programs should focus on teaching essential digital skills and promoting the use of online platforms for tourism-related activities.

Support Sustainable Tourism Practices

Promote sustainable and responsible tourism practices through education and incentives. Encourage local businesses to engage in eco-friendly accommodations, conservation efforts, and responsible travel tips. Government policies can offer incentives to businesses that adopt sustainable practices.

Regulatory Frameworks

Develop clear and supportive regulatory frameworks that facilitate the growth of online platforms in the tourism sector. Regulations should address issues related to online reviews, data security, and digital marketing, ensuring a fair and secure online environment for tourists and businesses.

Collaboration

Encourage collaboration between government agencies, tourism boards, online platform providers, and local businesses. A collaborative approach can help identify challenges, share best practices, and develop strategies to promote online platform usage in the tourism sector.

Marketing and Promotion

Invest in digital marketing and promotion campaigns to showcase the unique attractions and experiences that Uganda and similar destinations offer. Utilize online platforms to reach a global audience and attract tourists interested in diverse travel experiences.

Customer Service Training

Provide customer service training to local businesses in the tourism sector to ensure they can effectively engage with tourists using online platforms. This includes responding to online reviews, managing online bookings, and providing excellent online customer service.

Research and Data Analysis

Continuously monitor and analyze data related to online platform usage and tourist behaviour. Research findings can inform decision-making and help stakeholders adapt to evolving trends in online tourism.

Infrastructure Development for Tourist Destinations

Invest in infrastructure development for tourist destinations, including Wi-Fi coverage, mobile connectivity, and digital amenities that enhance the online and in-trip experiences of tourists.

Tourist Engagement

Encourage tourists to engage responsibly on online platforms by leaving informative and constructive reviews and recommendations. Tourism boards and businesses can facilitate this by promoting responsible online behaviour.

Implementing these recommendations can help Uganda and other developing countries harness the potential of online platforms to enhance their tourism sectors, drive economic growth, and provide memorable experiences for travellers.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire for Tourists

Objective 1: To examine the influence of online platforms on the tourism industry.

1. Please indicate your nationality:

.....

2. Age:.....

3. Gender:.....

4. How many hours per week, on average, do you spend on online platforms for travel-related activities?

.....

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the information and services provided by online platforms for your travels? (1 being very dissatisfied, 10 being very satisfied)

.....

6. What percentage of your travel bookings do you make through online platforms compared to other methods (e.g., travel agencies, direct bookings)?

.....

Questionnaire for Online Platforms

7. What types of services related to the tourism industry do you offer on your platform?
(Check all that apply)

☐	Accommodation booking
☐	Flight booking
☐	Tour booking
☐	Restaurant reservations
☐	Travel information and guides

8. How would you rate the influence of your platform on tourists' travel decisions? (1 being minimal influence, 10 being significant influence)

.....

9. How do you measure tourist satisfaction with your platform's services? (Open-ended)

.....

Objective 2: Tourist Behaviour at Paara Safari Lodge.

Questionnaire for Tourists at Paara Safari Lodge

10. How did you hear about Paara Safari Lodge? (Check all that apply)

☐	Online travel platforms (e.g., Booking.com, Trip Advisor)
☐	Recommendations from friends or family
☐	Travel forums and blogs
☐	Other (please specify)

11. What was your primary reason for choosing Paara Safari Lodge? (Select one)

☐	Wildlife and nature experiences
☐	Adventure activities (e.g., hiking, safaris)
☐	Relaxation and spa services
☐	Cultural experiences
☐	Other (please specify)

12. How long did you plan your trip to Paara Safari Lodge in advance? (Select one)

☐	Less than 1 month
☐	1-3 months
☐	4-6 months
☐	More than 6 months

13. What method did you primarily use to make your bookings at Paara Safari Lodge?
(Select one)

☐	Online travel platforms (e.g., Booking.com, Trip Advisor)
☐	Directly through the lodge's website
☐	Recommendations from friends or family
☐	Other (please specify)

14. During your stay, which activities did you participate in? (Check all that apply)

☐	Safari	☐	Hiking
☐	Bird watching	☐	Spa and relaxation
☐	Game drives	☐	Swimming
☐	Dining	☐	Other (please specify)
☐	Photography	☐	

Objective 3: Influence of Online Platforms on Tourists' Behaviour.

Questionnaire for Tourists

15. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on online platforms for travel-related activities?

.....

16. How would you describe your approach to trip planning? (Select one)

☐	Extensive online research
☐	Rely on recommendations from friends or family
☐	Active participation in online travel forums
☐	Trust travel blogs and personal experiences
☐	A combination of the above

17. What is your preferred method for making travel bookings? (Select one)

☐	Online travel agencies
☐	Hotel websites
☐	Travel forums and recommendations
☐	Travel blogs and personal experiences
☐	Other (please specify)

18. How do online platforms influence your behaviour during your trip? (Open-ended)

.....

Thank you for your time and efforts in taking part in the research.