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THE ROLE OF FACEBOOK IN PROMOTING DOMESTIC TOURISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN KENYA: CASE STUDY OF WANDERLUST DIARIES FACEBOOK PAGE

A dissertation presented to School of Communication and Computer Studies

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Masters of Arts in Communication Studies

By

Florence Mathangani

September 2024

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DECLARATION PAGE

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the role of the COVID-19 pandemic on Kenya's tourism industry, emphasizing the role of social media, particularly Facebook, in promoting domestic tourism. Focusing on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group, which has actively promoted domestic travel in Kenya since April 2020, the study engageds with the group's Facebook members to gather qualitative data from posts by tourism businesses, travel bloggers, and influencers.The objectives of the study were: to examine the significance of Facebook posts within the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group in effectively communicating about domestic tourism during the pandemic, to explore the influence that members of the Wanderlust Diaries group had on others' decisions to visit Kenyan tourist destinations during this period and to analyze how posts in this group were utilized as a marketing tool to promote domestic tourism, particularly at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic heavily impacted travel behaviors and choices. Supported by Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing, the research employed descriptive research design which was appropriate for this study as it enabled the researcher to gather information on the state of domestic tourism in Kenya and how Facebook posts wereused to promote it.The study used interviews to collect in-depth data from 30 participants on Facebook's influence on domestic tourism during the pandemic. The findings revealed that Facebook posts effectively created domestic tourism awareness to followers which led to the interest in visiting the parks and other tourist attraction areas, disseminated information, and marketed the domestic tourism industry even during lockdowns. Businesses can leverage Facebook to promote their services, with posts significantly raising awareness about domestic tourism destinations. In summary, the study demonstrated that Facebook was instrumental in promoting domestic tourism in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing valuable insights for businesses on utilizing social media as an effective marketing strategy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DMO	Destination Marketing Organizations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MAU	Monthly Active Users
SARS-COV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus.
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
US	United States

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction.

This chapter contains the background to the study, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and justification of the study, the significance of the study and, the scope and limitations of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Social media platforms, including Facebook, have gained popularity in the recent past due to the emergence of the internet, high penetration rate and affordable digital devices including tablets, smartphones and laptops (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). On October 28, 2021, Facebook announced that it was rebranding to Meta. The company's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, explained that the new name reflects the company's goal of building a new virtual world that is more immersive and connected than the internet we know today (Zuckerberg, 2021).

Facebook's rebranding to Meta marked a significant shift in the company's focus from social media to the metaverse, reflecting the company's goal of building a new virtual world that is more immersive and connected than the internet we know today. The company's shift towards virtual and augmented reality technology is likely to have significant implications for the future of technology and society. The Covid-19 pandemic as explained by Adetunji, Mohd and Ishak(2018) propelled online business(es), online markets and social networks where almost all businesses and buyers switched to e-commerce and online shopping, respectively as preventive measures against the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Adetunji, Mohd

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and Ishak(2018), online portals and social networks were increasingly used in marketing businesses, products, and services, and Facebook posts on Facebook platforms were not exempt from promoting offerings, including the tourism industry's offerings (products and services). As explained by Madrigal (2017) Facebook posts encompass content uploaded or posted on a Facebook platform about anything in "what is on your mind" section.

On the other hand, local tourism comprises businesses and establishments that offer products and services designed to enhance enjoyment, leisure, and business activities outside of the home environment (Zsarnoczky, 2018). It consists of accommodation, attraction sites, game reserves and national parks, recreation and entertainment, transportation and travel services, among others. The sector was significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic leading to the temporary and permanent closure of some businesses, including restaurants and recreational facilities. According to Warah (2021), popular and iconic hotels, including Driftwood Club, Intercontinental, and Old Man and the Sea in coastal region shut down due to the effects of Covid-19 pandemic. This meant that there was need to use social media platforms, including Facebook, to promote local tourism in the times of/duringCovid-19 to ensure the sector survived.

Covid-19 pandemic period is crucial for this study because it affected all the sectors of the economy including the tourism and hospitality industry in Kenya. Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on world economies and business

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because its preventive measures disrupted supply chainsandbusiness operations making some businesses to shut down either temporarily or permanently. Also/ in addition, digital marketing surged during the Covid-19 pandemic leading to rise in social media marketing and internet users as well as online pages and groups Wanderlust Diaries,a social media page on Facebook with a following of more than 398,000 followers or members, was not left behind (Facebook.com, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the tourism industry globally, with travel restrictions and safety concerns affecting travel plans. However, social media platforms such as Facebook played a crucial role in promoting domestic tourism during this period. According to a study conducted by the Kenya Tourism Board (2021), social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have played a critical role in promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic. The research revealed that social media campaigns featuring local travel experiences were effective in attracting domestic tourists, with Facebook being the most popular platform for promoting these campaigns (Kenya Tourism Board, 2021).

The history of tourism dates back to the 17th century in European countries and became fairly stable in Kenya from 1964 to date when total tourists' arrivals rose from 65,000 to more than a 1 million in the mid-1990s and has risen steadily over the last three decades (Akama, 2019).

Tourism is one of the world's major economic sectors. It is the third-largest export category (after fuels and chemicals) and in 2019 accounted for 7% of global

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trade. For some countries, it can represent over 20% of their GDP and, overall, it is the third largest export sector of the global economy. Tourism was one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, impacting economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities on all continents. All parts of its vast value-chain were affected, (World Tourism Organization,2023).

The Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted the many different sectors of tourism globally ultimately causing the industry to shut down for months(Gössling et al., 2020). Though various efforts were made since June 2020 to reopen the industry, most sectors continued to struggle and the UNWTO (2020) has acknowledged tourism as one of the hardest hit industries. Crises are regular occurrences in tourism (Gössling et al., 2020). Many destinations are affected by natural and human-made crises and, over the years, have developed tactics and strategies of resilience and mitigation.

According to Muoki (2021) tourism is one of the largest foreign exchange earners and fastest-growing sectors in the East African Community (EAC). Tourism contributed to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the EAC Partner States by an average of 9.5% in 2019. It contributed an average of 17.2% to EAC total exports and 7.1% to employment. However, the upward trajectory in tourism in the region, with its positive impact on the economy, was devastatingly affected by the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. About/Approximately 4.2 million foreign touristscouldnottravel to their preferred EAC destinations. The trickle-down effects

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were felt across affiliated industries and the rest of the economy. In terms of impact on employment, it is estimated that tourism jobs in the region dropped from about 4.1 million jobs to 2.2 million jobs, that is, about two million jobs in the tourism sector were lost. There was a significant decline of about 65% of visitors to national parks and, therefore, impacting negatively on wildlife conservation efforts in the region.

Tourism is one of Kenya's main sources of foreign currency (Akama, 2019). As stated in Tourism.go.ke (2022) in 2019, the sector represented around 8% of total GDP and employed approximately 1.6 million people, and arrivals grew by 3.9% from 2.02 million to 2.05 million from 2018 to 2019, Tourism.go.ke (2022). The former Cabinet secretary for tourism, Hon. NajibBalala lauded the Kenya Tourism Board for its efforts in positioning Kenya as a high-value tourist destination.

According to Facebook.com (2022), Wanderlust Diaries is a social media page on Facebook with more than 400,000 followers who love travelling. It was started in 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic had just hit Kenya. Its main aim, as explained by the founder Dr. Wala is to help inspire other travelers, sharing uplifting stories and driving uptake of unique experiences.

The history of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects can be clearly traced in late 2019 in Wuhan in China. In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic spread to other parts of the world with Kenya reporting the first case on 12th March, 2020 (Ngwacho, 2020). As at April 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was severe and the Kenyan government moved to stipulate measures to curb the Covid-19 pandemic including

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lockdowns, curfews, social distancing rule, stay at home order and banning of public gathering and grounding of flights which adversely affected businesses. The tourism was one of the most affected sectors of the economy in Kenya by the coronavirus due to movement restrictions and grounding of flights among others.

The tourism industry, like other sectors, is rapidly evolving. To keep up with these changes and attract clients, businesses in the tourism sector must develop effective strategies, as discussed by Hole and Snehal, 2019. One key aspect of this is establishing clear communication channels to raise awareness and draw in domestic tourists. The three primary forms of communication—verbal, visual, and written—are essential in this effort. Communication is undeniably one of the most important tools in both social interactions and organizational management.

This study focused on the role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, using the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Group as a case study. The Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Group is a community of travel enthusiasts in Kenya, with over 400,000 members. The Group was chosen as a case study because of its popularity among Kenyan travelers and its potential to influence domestic tourism during the pandemic. The group's primary goal is to share travel experiences, tips, and information on various travel destinations in Kenya and around the world.

According to a study by Musau et al. (2020), social media platforms like/such as Facebook have become a crucial source of information for domestic tourists in

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Kenya. The study found that Facebook posts by tourism businesses, travel bloggers, and influencers played a significant role in shaping tourists' travel decision-making process. The study also found that tourists were more likely to engage with Facebook posts that contained high-quality visuals, engaging captions, and clear calls to action. In another study by Nyangara and Ndhlovu (2020), it was noted that social media platforms offer an opportunity for tourism businesses to reach a broader audience at a lower cost. Nyangara and Ndhlovu (2020)/ They, found that Facebook was the most popular social media platform in Kenya, with a user base of over 7 million people.

Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Group is a popular platform that promoted domestic tourism in Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study aimed to explore the role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism in Kenya using the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Group as a case study. The study provided insights into/on how tourism businesses, travel bloggers, and influencers couldleverage Facebook to promote domestic tourism in Kenya and other developing countries.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted Kenya's tourism industry, prompting a shift towards domestic tourism to aid recovery. Despite the increase in Facebook users and its potential as a marketing tool, there is limited research on how Facebook posts influenced domestic tourism during the pandemic in Kenya. This study soughtto fill this gap by exploring the specific communication strategies and content characteristics within Facebook posts that effectively promoted domestic

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tourism and influenced Kenyan travelers' decisions. The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted Kenya's tourism industry, prompting a shift towards domestic tourism to aid recovery. As documented by Jones and George (2021), travel restrictions and safety concerns led to a renewed interest in exploring local destinations. In this context, social media platforms emerged as vital communication tools Ahmad et al., (2022), with Facebook being a prominent platform for information dissemination and traveler engagement. While studies like Wang et al. (2020) highlight the significant impact of social media on tourism recovery, the specific communication strategies and content characteristics within Facebook posts that foster a renewed sense of trust, enthusiasm and engagement among Kenyan travelers remain understudied. Al-Badi et al.(2017) found that people use social media channels for tourist promotional efforts in order to stimulate and promote domestic tourism. Despite the critical role of social media in shaping consumer behavior and influencing travel choices, there is a significant gap in understanding how specific platforms, such as Facebook, facilitated the promotion of domestic tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya. This study therefore, sought to analyze the impact of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page on encouraging Kenyans to explore their country..

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1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of social mediain promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, using the Wanderlust Diaries Ltd Facebook group as a case study.

1.5 The Objectives of the study

i. To Analyze the strategies employed by Wanderlust Diaries on Facebook to promote domestic tourism Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.
ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication tool for domestic tourism promotion during Covid-19 pandemic.
iii. To assess the impact of Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group as a tool for marketing domestic tourism during the Covid- 19 pandemic.

1.6 The Research Questions

i. What Strategies were employed by Wanderlust Diaries on Facebook to promote domestic tourism Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya?
ii. How effective was Facebook as a communication tool for domestic tourism promotion during Covid-19 pandemic?
iii. What is the impact of Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group as a tool for marketing domestic tourism during the Covid- 19 pandemic?

1.7 Justification of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the role of Facebook posts in promoting tourism in Kenya, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. With Facebook users in Kenya increasing from 11 million in 2020 to 13 million in March 2022 Muthee, (2021), it is essential to understand the impact of this growing user base on

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businesses, including the local tourism industry. The Covid-19 pandemic led to international border closures and travel restrictions, causing a significant decline in international tourism. Consequently, promoting domestic tourism became vital for the industry's survival. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020), the tourism sector in Kenya experienced a 71.5% decline in international tourist arrivals and a 45.1% decline in tourism receipts due to the pandemic.

Social media, especially Facebook, with its over 10 million users in Kenya, has become an essential tool for promoting tourism. Studies by Muthee (2021) show that social media is the most popular source of information on tourist destinations in Kenya. Therefore, understanding how Facebook can be effectively utilized to promote tourism during a pandemic is crucial. The pandemic resulted in a significant loss of over Ksh 80 billion in tourism revenue (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2020). This study provided valuable insights for tourism stakeholders and businesses on adapting to the new normal by using Facebook to promote domestic tourism.

By questioning the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group followers, a popular online community of over 400,000 travel enthusiasts, this study offered a detailed examination of the effectiveness of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic. The findings contributed to the body of knowledge on using Facebook as a marketing tool for tourism and provided practical insights for tourism stakeholders and businesses on effectively leveraging social media to promote domestic tourism during a crisis.

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1.8 Significance of the Study

The research was/would be of paramount significance to numerous stakeholders in the industry by highlighting how Facebook posts promoted the expansion of domestic tourism in Kenya. Firstly, the studyprovided valuable insights into/on how domestic tourism can be effectively promoted during a pandemic in Kenya. This is particularly important given the significant negative impact that the pandemic had on the tourism industry in the country, with many businesses struggling to stay afloat (Owino&Kiguru, 2021). By identifying the key factors that influenced domestic tourists' decision to visit tourist destinations during the pandemic, the study provided recommendations for tourism stakeholders and businesses on how to effectively use Facebook as a marketing tool to promote domestic tourism incaseofa future pandemic.

The study will also contribute to the growing body of literature on the role of social media in promoting tourism. Social media platforms such as Facebook have become increasingly important in the tourism industry, with many tourists using these platforms to research and plan their trips (Buhalis& Law, 2008). However, there is a lack of research on the specific role of Facebook in promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic, particularly in the context of developing countries such as Kenya. Therefore, this study filled a gap in the literature and provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during a pandemic in a developing country. The researchermadeuse of the findings, research processes in the research work.

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1.9 Assumptions of the study

In conducting this study, assumptions were made to provide a framework forthe research.

Facebook platform was used in the promotion of domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Wanderlust Diaries Limited page.

The study reliedon the assumption that the feedback provided by the participants washonest and objective. The openness of the respondentswoulddetermine the credibility of the study.

Wanderlust Diaries Ltd page management wouldgrantthe permission to collect data for the study.

1.10 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group. Data collection was done within one month whereby the interviews were conducted within/on the Wanderlust Dairies Facebook group members. The interviews were conducted during organized trips in the Wanderlust diaries Facebook group, both online and physical. The study mainly analyzed the content of the Facebook posts that were posted during the Covid - 19 period June 2020 to December 2020 and their effectiveness in promoting domestic tourism. The research exploredthe factors that influenced domestic tourists' decision to visit tourist destinations during the pandemic. The study waslimited to the time frame of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, which began in March 2020.

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The geographical scope of the study was limited to Kenya, with a focus on the popular tourist destinations within the country. The study wasalsolimited to the analysis of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group, as it is one of the most popular Facebook groups in Kenya focused on tourism. This being a qualitative study, qualitative approach was applied which focused on descriptive information. It accounted for people's behavior and words (Taylor, Bogdan, &DeVault,2016). Descriptive research design was employed to investigate the role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.

1.11 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study

The study relied on self-reported data obtained from the Wanderlust Facebook group members. This data may have been prone to bias and may not have accurately represented the respondents' actual behavior.

The researcher mitigated this by encouraging members to be open on their experiences and promised not to expose the data to third parties.they were also informed that they could hold the researcher accountable in case anyinformation on their identity leakedto third party.

The research findings may not be generalizable to other countries or regions with different cultures and social media usage patterns. The researcher mitigated this by comparing results with existing literature and highlight similarities and differences.

It was a challenge collecting data from the vocal members of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page due their unavailability and time. This was mitigated by

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ensuring that the questions were short and precise and also explaining the importance of the responses to the study. The researcher also joined the group trips to engage the respondents during the interaction breaks.

1.12 Definition of Terms

Covid-19: This is a contagious disease caused by a virus, the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), a global outbreak of the coronavirus disease that began in December 2019 and affected millions of people worldwide (Aluga 2020).

Facebook: A popular social media platform that allows users to create profiles, share content, and connect with others (Zuckerberg, 2021). It is owned by Meta formerly known by Facebook. The company (Meta) owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among other products and services. The research will be conducted on one of Facebook group page.

Facebook posts: This is the content uploaded on Facebook account. Content shared on social media platforms, such as text, images, or videos as explained by Madrigal (2017).

Social media:Macharia (2020) describes this as online platforms that allow users to create and share content, connect with others, and participate in social networking

Wanderlust Diaries: This is a social media page on Facebook with a following of more than 400,000 (By April 2022) followers or members, Facebook.com (2022).

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1.13 Summary

In this chapter, the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, justification, significance, scope, limitations, and definition of terms related to the investigation of the effectiveness of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya were outlined. The study aimed to analyze the content of Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries group, to identify factors influencing domestic tourists' decisions to visit tourist destinations and provide recommendations for using Facebook as a marketing tool in the tourism industry.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises the theoretical review, conceptual framework, general literature review, the critiques of the existing literature relevant to the study, chapter summary and research gaps. It explores literature regarding social media and tourism related to the role of social media in promotion of domestic tourism.

2. 2 General Literature Review

The Covid-19 pandemic led to a significant decline in the tourism industry worldwide, with many countries focusing on promoting domestic tourism as a means of recovery. Social media platforms like Facebook became essential tools for promoting tourism during the pandemic, thanks to their wide reach and ability to facilitate targeted marketing campaigns. The stakeholders' collaboration has a role to create destinations resilience in crisis communication. They provide an in-depth analysis of how the tourism industry responds to pandemics, focusing on management strategies and marketing adaptations (Valeri&Fernandez, 2021).

Domestic tourism, which involves residents traveling within their own country,has gained attention for its economic implication and resilience during crises. Many countries have a strong tradition of domestic travel and vacationing that not only predates but also exceeds mass international travel. This is especially true in Asia, where recent economic growth and globalization trends have further influenced

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domestic tourism practices. Various dynamics of domestic tourism in the Asia-Pacific region have been explored, highlighting the motivations, trends, and impacts (Singh 2009).

Tourism promotion is the key component in the marketing of travel packages Raju, 2009. The tourism sector should make sure that promotion is not only focused towards potential clients but also to individuals and organizations such as agents and travel writers.. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have revolutionized the way tourism is marketed. According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), social media serves as a critical tool for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to engage with potential tourists, share rich content and create interactive experiences. The ability to share images, videos and user-generated content makes Facebook an ideal platform for promoting tourism.

Facebook's features, such as pages, groups, events, and targeted advertisements, enable DMOs to reach a wide audience efficiently. The interactive nature of Facebook allows for real-time communication and feedback, which can enhance customer engagement and satisfaction (Hays, Page, and Buhalis (2013). The use of Facebook to promote domestic tourism has gained grip, especially in response to travel restrictions and safety concerns during pandemics. Sigala (2011) discusses how DMOs can leverage Facebook to encourage local travel by highlighting nearby attractions, offering special deals, and creating community-driven campaigns that resonate with local travelers. By fostering a sense of community and pride, Facebook

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can effectively promote domestic tourism. It is clear that tourism crisis can be caused by natural disasters, pandemics, acts of war among other crises. Henderson explores various crises affecting tourism, including pandemics, and offers insights into effective management and recovery strategies (Henderson, 2007). In such cases tourist destinations are affected and the country is required to develop strategies to rebuild the industry for economic purposes.

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world. As stated by the World Bank, the tourism industry brought in $US4.7 trillion in revenue in 2019 as explained by Sofronov, 2018. Spending on tourism has a positive effect on a country's GDP as well as its interconnected sectors, the labor market, and overall economy. For example, tourism has a positive effect on both the micro and macro levels, Jordan's economy greatly benefits from domestic tourism. It contributed 14.20% of GDP in 2019 and grew at a CAGR of 16.2% between 2013 and 2017 Sofronov, 2018. Around 130,000 people work in the tourism industry, which includes both direct and indirect employment (11 percent of the work force). As mentioned by Jones et al (2017) 34,405 people are employed by the tourism cluster, with the hotel and restaurant sector accounting for 77.5% of total employment.

Since the end of the 1990s, China's domestic tourism industry has grewat a rapid pace, a total of 784 million Chinese citizens toured within the country, spending RMB352.2 billion (US$43.6 billion) Zhao & Liu, 2020. In recent years, China's domestic tourism has overtaken its international tourism. Several researchers have

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noted the rapid growth of China's domestic tourism and have concluded that it is primarily due to the rise in per capita income, the expansion of vacation time, and the structural alteration of China's national economy Webster and Ivanov, 2020. African countries, mainly those in sub-Saharan Africa, are also experiencing tremendous growth rates in the global tourism industry. Tourism is one of the few viable policy options left for many African economies despite the difficulties they face, especially in the developing world.

For Africa, domestic and regional tourism is the real source of its competitive advantage. According to experts, this sector is the driving force behind the overall growth of the tourism industry (Rogerson&Rogerson, 2021). When it comes to tourism in South Africa, for example, domestic tourists account for around 69 percent of the total volume of visitors, making them a significant contributor (Sixaba&Rogerson, 2019). This is a direct effort to boost South Africa's domestic tourism. In addition, the tourism industry provides investors, entrepreneurs, and policymakers with a path and opportunity to advance Africa's domestic tourism sector. Panashe(2020) estimates that the tourism industry in South Africa contributed R425 billion to the country's GDP in 2019, or about 8 percent. As a result, the industry provides more than 1.5 million jobs in comparison to the contributions of other industries in the country (Panashe, 2020).

Social networking, on the other hand, has grown exponentially in popularity over the last decade. In April 2022, Facebook had 2.94 billion monthly active users

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(MAUs), up from 2.60 million in April 2020, making it the most popular social networking site in the world. In addition, Facebook's global advertising audience in April 2022 was approximately 2.141 billion (Data Reportal, 2022). With 95 million African users and 13 million Kenyan users, Facebook penetration in Africa reached 19.3% in March 2021 according to Statista Research Department (2022). In today's communications industry, computers, mobile phones, and other electronic devices are widely used.

Overall, the literature suggested that social media platforms such as Facebook were effective tools for promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. The ability to target specific demographics and geographical areas, as well as facilitate user-generated content, enhanced the authenticity and effectiveness of tourism marketing campaigns.

2.3 Empirical Literature

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the universal tourism industry, and Kenya was not been an exemption. The restrictions and travel bans implemented to control the spread of the virus negatively affected the tourism sector. However, social media platforms such as Facebook provided an opportunity for tourism stakeholders to market and promote domestic tourism. This empirical framework aims to explore the relationship between domestic tourism, social media marketing, and the pandemic.

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of social media in promoting tourism. For example, a study by Pappas and Papatheodorou (2016) found that social

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media platforms influenced tourists' travel planning and decision-making processes. They noted the growing importance of online search and influence on travel behaviors, in a survey of the hotel and restaurant industry in Europe in 2007 concluded that 80% of UK consumers are researching online before booking a hotel and half of them maintained/reported to have refrained from booking a specific hotel as a consequence of a negative review on TripAdvisor-like website. A demographic analysis of the users is performed/done in TripAdvisor website for forums discussion and hotel rating categories comparison. The study did not include the interviews from the people who have/had posted on the Website. Similarly, a study by Govers and Go (2009) suggested that social media could be used to increase awareness of tourism destinations and encourage visitation.

In another study by Mugo and Otieno (2021), it was found that social media platforms, particularly Facebook, were an essential tool for promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic. The study revealed that Facebook posts featuring local tourist destinations, activities, and experiences significantly influenced people's travel decisions. According to an article by Macharia (2020), social media platforms, including Facebook, hadbecome crucial for tourism marketing during the pandemic. The article noted that businesses in the tourism industry had increased their use of social media to promote local tourism, and Facebook had emerged as the preferred platform due to its wide reach and popularity.

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In the context of domestic tourism promotion during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, Facebook may be particularly effective due to its ability to target specific demographics and geographical areas. A study by Ahmad and Pathan (2019) found that Facebook advertising was an effective tool for targeting specific audiences and increasing brand awareness. Similarly, a study by Wang, Yu, and Fesenmaier (2002) suggested that targeted marketing was essential for promoting tourism destinations. The use of social media platforms such as Facebook can also facilitate user-generated content, which can increase engagement and enhance the authenticity of tourism marketing campaigns. A study by Xiang and Gretzel (2010) found that user-generated content was a significant factor in shaping tourists' perceptions of destinations and influencing their travel decisions.

2.3.1 Strategies Employed by Wanderlust Diaries on Facebook to Promote Domestic Tourism Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic

Social media platforms, especially Facebook, have become essential tools for marketing in the tourism sector. With over 2.89 billion active users monthly as of 2021, Facebook offers vast reach and engagement potential for businesses and organizations (Statista, 2021). Its utility as a promotional platform was further emphasized during the pandemic when traditional marketing strategies became less viable (Miah& Ali, 2021). Researchers have noted that effective social media marketing can result in increased brand awareness and user engagement which are critical for encouraging travel (Bai et al., 2020).

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Facebook provides a versatile environment for creating and managing community-focused groups, which have been effective in promoting domestic tourism. These groups allow tourists to share experiences, recommendations, and insights into local attractions (Fuchs, 2020). Promoting domestic tourism on social media can enhance destination visibility and encourage the exploration of local sites. Research suggests that user-generated content plays a crucial role in influencing travel decisions, as potential tourists often rely on peer reviews rather than traditional advertisements (Dijkmans et al., 2015).

During the pandemic, fostering community engagement became paramount in encouraging travel and supporting local businesses. Effective strategies included organizing virtual events, photo contests, and travel storytelling sessions within Facebook groups (Cinar& Sari, 2020). For example, some groups encouraged members to share personal travel experiences within the community, which not only built engagement but also inspired others to visit these local attractions (Zung, 2020).

Additionally, live streaming events allowed local tourism authorities and businesses to showcase their offerings and connect with potential visitors in real-time (Gonzalez &Patiño, 2021). Such strategies effectively fostered a sense of community while promoting domestic tourism safely during restrictions.

Content curation and the sharing of relevant information have proven essential in establishing authority and providing value to group members. Facebook groups dedicated to domestic tourism often serve as platforms for sharing travel advice,

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safety guidelines, and promotional offers for local accommodations and attractions (Lee et al., 2020). Research indicates that informative content can significantly influence travelers' decision-making processes, especially in uncertain times (Bai et al., 2020).

Additionally, posts featuring attractive imagery and engaging videos of local destinations can entice group members to consider trips they might not have previously thought about. The importance of visual content in tourism marketing cannot be overstated as it plays a crucial role in captivating potential travelers' attention and arousing their interest (Duncan et al., 2021).

Collaboration with local businesses, influencers, and tourism boards has emerged as a vital strategy for promoting domestic tourism on Facebook. By partnering with local influencers, tourism-related groups have reached broader audiences and garnered trust through authentic endorsements (Hsu et al., 2021). Furthermore, initiatives like "shop local" campaigns within Facebook groups aimed at promoting local businesses indirectly support tourism by encouraging residents and visitors to explore their local areas (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Partnerships with local tourism authorities have also allowed groups to access valuable resources and promotional material that aid in providing better content to their members (Fuchs, 2020). This collaborative approach fosters a sense of community support, essential for bolstering the local tourism economy during challenging times.

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While organic reach on Facebook is crucial, targeted advertising has emerged as a potent strategy for tourism promotion. Facebook Advertisements offer tools for precise demographic targeting, allowing tourism businesses and groups to reach potential travelers more effectively (Gupta & Singh, 2021). During the pandemic, many tourism organizations pivoted toward targeted ads to promote domestic destinations and highlight safety measures implemented by local businesses (Miah& Ali, 2021).

Research shows that Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising on Facebook can lead to higher conversion rates, as travelers are more likely to respond to ads that resonate with their interests and current travel desires (Duncan et al., 2021). The strategic use of Facebook advertising, coupled with engaging content, resulted in substantial increases in inquiries and visitation to local attractions during the pandemic.

2.3.2 Solving Challenges with Facebook Posts

Using Facebook as a Guerilla Marketing tool is a common practice.Gaber, Labib, and Salem (2018) proved how Facebook, which is a key variable in this study, can be used to promote local tourism in Kenya as theyclassified it aslow-cost, unusual marketing approaches.. For the domestic tourismsector to develop trust and brand loyalty, it is critical that the updates and dialogues on their Facebook page include tangible, appealing, real-time material by understanding the concept of "selling a promise" (Kachamas et al., 2019). Domestic tourism is boosted as a result of this. In addition, Facebook users are more likely to return to a page with a variety of

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information, which increases the likelihood of information and content sharing. With the help of Facebook's built-in share button, organizations may influence visitors and Facebook fans by encouraging them to share their material with their friends and followers, as noted by (Gaber, Labib& Salem, 2018).

In order to prevent cyber terrorism, any internet material, including the Facebook page of the Wanderlust Diaries Limited travel group, could be erased or corrupted. There is a custom tab that informs site visitors of the limitations on how much involvement they are allowed to have with the page (Jashari&Rrustemi, 2017). There is also a note indicating that this should not be a free pass to disregard etiquette and delete all messages. This is because research shows that responding to criticism with meaningful action can have beneficial consequences and even convert critics into supporters and admirers. This is what they mean by "cart Blanche." According to Pütter (2017), a smart technique to encourage interaction with Facebook audience is to engage them throughopen-ended questions so that a wide variety of responses can be gathered. As Varghese and Agrawal (2021) recommend, it is important to tag people in photographs so that the notification displays on their walls as well, which is based on research. To assist visitors form a strong connection with apark, posts that elicit positive emotions, such as fun, wonder or curiosity, are essential.

Delete the space

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2.3.3 Effectiveness of Facebook as a Communication Tool for Domestic Tourism Promotion during Covid-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically transformed the tourism landscape forcing the industry to adapt to new challenges and dynamics. This unprecedented crisis triggered a shift towards digital communication channels, with social media platforms like Facebook emerging as vital tools for promoting domestic tourism. This literature review examined the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication tool for domestic tourism promotion during the pandemic, analyzing its reach, engagement, and impact on consumer behavior.

Social media has increasingly become an essential driver for tourism marketing (Xiang &Gretzel, 2010). Facebook, with its extensive user base, provides tourism entities an effective platform for communicating with potential tourists. According to Statista (2021), Facebook has over 2.8 billion active usersmonthly, making it an ideal platform for tourism promotion. The pandemic expedited the shift towards online communication, as travel restrictions and safety concerns limited the traditional marketing methods.

The effectiveness of a communication tool is often measured by its reach and engagement metrics. Reach refers to the number of unique users who view a post, while engagement includes likes, shares, comments, and overall interaction with the content. A study by Hays, Page, and Buhalis (2013) found that user-generated content significantly influences travelers' decisions, and Facebook's interactive features allow for greater consumer engagement.

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The COVID-19 pandemic saw an increase in user engagement on social media platforms, including Facebook. Statistics indicate that users spent more time on the platform during the pandemic, with many seeking travel inspiration and updates (Pérez et al., 2021). This spike in usage presented a unique opportunity for domestic tourism promotion, as stakeholders couldutilize Facebook to share content that resonatedwith potential travelers.

Several case studies highlighted the effectiveness of Facebook in promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic. For instance, the Philippine Department of Tourism launched a campaign titled "It's More Fun in the Philippines" that utilized Facebook to reach local travelers (Tourism Promotions Board, 2021). By leveraging visually appealing content and engaging narratives, the campaign successfully increased awareness of local destinations despite the ongoing pandemic.

Similarly, many regional tourist boards in the United States implemented Facebook campaigns to promote staycations and local attractions. According to a report by the American Travel Association (2020), these campaigns effectively reached target audiences, encouraging domestic travel and economic recovery in local communities. The ability to create targeted ads on Facebook allowed organizations to tailor their messages to specific demographics, further enhancing their outreach efforts.

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The effectiveness of Facebook as a communication tool is not only reflected in engagement metrics but also in its impact on consumer behavior. Research shows that social media influences travel-related decisions, with users often seeking information and inspiration from peers and influencers on these platforms (Leung et al., 2013). During the pandemic, Facebook's role as a source of travel information became particularly salient.

The travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic led to a significant shift towards domestic tourism. A survey conducted by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) indicated that many travelers expressed interest in exploring their own countries rather than international destinations. Facebook played a crucial role in this transition by promoting local attractions and experiences. The familiarity and accessibility offered by domestic tourism catered forthe desire for/of safe travel options, and Facebook's informational capabilities helped consumers make informed decisions.

User-generated content (UGC) on Facebook has emerged as a powerful influence on consumer perceptions and decisions in tourism. UGC not only enhances engagement but also fosters a sense of community among users. A study by Mariani et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of UGC in the tourism industry, stating that travelers often rely on authentic experiences shared by fellow tourists.

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During the pandemic, users turned to Facebook to share their travel experiences, tips, and safety measures, which in turn influenced the behavior of their networks. The peer-to-peer exchange of information became a potent marketing tool for tourism promotion, as potential travelers felt more confident in visiting destinations that wereendorsed by their peers.

2.3.4 Domestic Tourism

Domestic tourism refers to individuals touring within their country of residence for leisure or business purposes (UNWTO, 2019). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reported, domestic tourism is a vital component of the tourism industry, accounting for over 75% of all tourism activities worldwide. Domestic tourism is essential in generating revenue, creating employment opportunities, and supporting local communities' livelihoods. The pandemic led to a notable shift in travel preferences, with a greater focus on domestic tourism. Travelers were opting for local destinations due to ease of access, reduced travel risks, and supporting their own economies. This trend was observed globally(UNWTO,2020).

2.3.5 The impact of Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group as a tool for marketing domestic tourism during the Covid- 19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic drastically reshaped the global tourism landscape, compelling travel marketers to explore innovative avenues for promoting domestic tourism. This literature review examines the effectiveness of social media—specifically Facebook posts—in marketing domestic tourism within the context of the

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Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group during the pandemic. Leveraging digital platforms for tourism marketing is evident in the growing interest in user-generated content, community engagement, and shifting consumer behavior patterns. This paper/study /research explored studies on digital marketing strategies, social media engagement, and user interactions to elucidate the role of Facebook posts in enhancing domestic tourism during this challenging time.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced the tourism industry to adapt rapidly to evolving restrictions and consumer behaviors. As a result, the focus shifted from international to domestic tourism, compelling marketers to craft strategies that resonated with local audiences. The rise of social media as a significant marketing tool created opportunities for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and local businesses to reach potential travelers. This literature review centered on the impact of Facebook posts within the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group and how these posts have functioned as a tool for promoting domestic tourism.

Social media platforms like/such as Facebook have become pivotal in shaping travel-related decisions. According to Gretzel et al. (2015), social media influences travelers' destination choices, often providing authentic and relatable content. During the pandemic, when travel restrictions limited international movement, the significance of domestic tourism promotion via social media escalated. The Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group serves as a community-driven platform where users share experiences, recommendations, and travel tips specific to their locales.

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One of the major advantages of using social media platforms is user-generated content (UGC). UGC is often perceived as more credible compared to traditional advertising (Boley et al., 2019). In the context of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group, members frequently share their travel experiences and photos, creating a rich repository of content that showcases domestic attractions. The authenticity of the shared experiences may lead to increased interest and engagement among group members, promoting local tourism destinations.

Engaging with users is vital for effective tourism marketing. As stated by Ha et al. (2018), community engagement fosters brand loyalty and can significantly influence consumers' aspirations and actions. The Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group exemplifies this engagement through its interactive features, such as polls, discussions, and live events. These opportunities for interaction not only enhance community cohesion but also provide DMOs and businesses with critical feedback regarding what travelers are seeking.

Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries group serve as informational resources that help potential travelers navigate their options. A study by Li et al. (2020) found that informative social media content can increase travelers' perceived behavioral control, which positively affects their intention to visit certain destinations. Posts in the Wanderlust Diaries often detailed local events, safety measures, and travel tips, effectively dispelling uncertainties that potential travelers may have had during the pandemic.

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Visual content is essential forcapturing attention in digital marketing. The incorporation of images and videos in Facebook posts significantly enhances user engagement (Teng et al., 2019). Posts in the Wanderlust Diaries frequently utilized visual storytelling methods to showcase local attractions. For instance, highlighting scenic spots,historical landmarks, and eco-tourism initiatives through vivid imagery creates a compelling narrative that may inspire group members to explore nearby destinations.

The pandemic induced a sense of anxiety and uncertainty among consumers, influencing their travel behaviors and preferences. Research has shown that positive reinforcements on social media can mitigate anxiety and encourage desirable outcomes (Biel &Thakral, 2020). Posts that showcase safety measures taken by local businesses or communicate positive user experiences can instill confidence in potential travelers, prompting them to make plans for domestic travel.

The role of influencers in social media marketing is well-documented. Influencers can drive engagement rates higher than traditional marketing methods (Freberg et al., 2011). In the context of the Wanderlust Diaries, collaborations with local influencers can provide an authentic touch to marketing campaigns. These influencers often share their experiences within the community, drawing attention to unique local attractions and initiatives aimed at promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic.

2.3.6 Social media Marketing

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Social media marketing involves utilizing social media platforms to promote a product or service. Social media marketing has become an essential tool for businesses to reach their target audience and increase brand awareness (Kaplan &Haenlein, 2010). According to Ryan and Jones (2019), social media marketing has transformed the tourism industry, and many tourists use social media platforms to gather information about their travel destinations. Social media marketing has become an essential component of digital marketing strategies for businesses worldwide. It offers a platform for companies to connect with their target audience, build brand awareness, and drive engagement. Li.,andBernoff (2008) provide a comprehensive overview of social media marketing and its impact on businesses. They explore various case studies and provide insights into how companies can leverage social media to create a positive brand image, engage with customers, and drive business growth.

2.3.7 Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the global tourism industry, with many countries implementing travel restrictions and lockdowns to control the spread of the virus (Hall et al., 2020). According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2021) report, the global tourism industry's international arrivals decreased by 72% in 2020 compared to 2019. The pandemic compelled the tourism industry to adjust to new conditions, making social media marketing a vital tool for promoting domestic tourism.

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2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework includes the Chaffey's theory of Social Medial Marketing which has been expounded below.

Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing

According to Chaffey Dave who advanced this theory in 2016, human networking and communication via social media are at the heart of human behavior, which eventually manifests itself in consumer behavior (Rahyadi& Aras, 2020). Therefore, social media marketing makes use of these platforms to exert influence on users' thoughts about various goods and services, which eventually results in users making purchases and even developing brand loyalty to a certain company (Haule&Swallehe, 2021). This theoryviews social media as a tool that can be used to develop stronger relationships between a corporation and its customers. Interactions and connections that are substantive may be developed between the company and its customers as a result of this. There are assumptions based on Chaffey's theory and work on digital marketing. According to Chaffey, D. (2020) the assumptionsinclude; Consumer-Centric Approach which assumes that social media marketing is highly consumer-centric. This means that businesses must focus on understanding their audience's preferences, behaviors, and needs to create relevant and engaging content. Social media offers an opportunity for two-way communication, enabling brands to listen, engage, and respond to customers in real time. There is also an assumption on Integrated Marketing Communications that social media marketing does not work in isolation but is part of a broader, integrated digital marketing strategy. Domestic

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tourism marketers need to align social media with other channels, such as email, search engines, and content marketing, to create a seamless experience for users.

Chaffey and Chawick (2019) emphasize that interaction, feedback, and customer involvement are central to building trust and loyalty. Social media platforms are not just broadcasting tools but interaction platforms where brands must foster community engagement.

Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing offers several strengths and limitations when applied to domestic tourism promotion. A key strength is its consumer-centric approach, which enables tourism marketers to tailor their content to the preferences of local tourists. By leveraging social media platforms, tourism boards can engage directly with potential travelers, showcase destinations, and encourage travel through personalized campaigns (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Additionally, the theory's emphasis on data-driven decision-making helps marketers track the success of promotional efforts, optimizing strategies to boost tourism traffic. However, one limitation of Chaffey's theory is the assumption that there is high level of digital literacy and internet access among consumers (Chaffey, 2020). In many developing regions, including rural parts of Kenya, limited access to technology and the internet may reduce the effectiveness of social media campaigns aimed at domestic tourists. Furthermore, the theory's continuous optimization approach requires consistent monitoring and resources, which smaller tourism businesses may struggle to maintain. While Chaffey's theory provides useful insights into engaging

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with audiences online, the reliance on digital tools may overlook the importance of offline strategies in less connected areas.

Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing proposes a framework for understanding the role of social media in marketing. According to Chaffey (2011), social media can be used for various marketing activities such as brand awareness, customer engagement, customer service, and sales promotion. The theory suggests that social media can be used to achieve different marketing objectives depending on the type of content shared, the audience targeted, and the platform used.

Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing is relevant to this study as it provides a framework for grasping the role of social media, particularly how Facebook could be used to promote domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. The theory emphasizes the importance of creating content that is relevant and engaging to the target audience and using social media platforms that are popular among the target audience. It also highlights the need for tourism stakeholders and businesses to use social media as a means of fostering relationships with customers and promoting their brand (Chaffey, 2020).

Strategic social media marketing: Marketing communication process and consumer engagement. In the handbook of research on leveraging consumer psychology for effective customer engagement, Hong-yuGao & Ling Feng (2019) reference to the model Chaffey's theory as useful in understanding the process of marketing communication in the context of social media. The authors emphasize

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Chaffey's orientation to making clear what the objectives are and creating strategic tactics in social media marketing campaigns. Leung, and Lee, 2015 looks into Chaffey Theory as an instrumental framework guiding the development of effective strategies in social media marketing for tourism.

The notions included in the theory include social media, digital, and social media marketing fundamentals for business-to-business transactions to offer advice on social media and digital marketing. Because of the increased customization options and improved methods for gauging the success of marketing campaigns, business-to-business marketing has also moved into the digital and social media sphere (Rekola,2021).

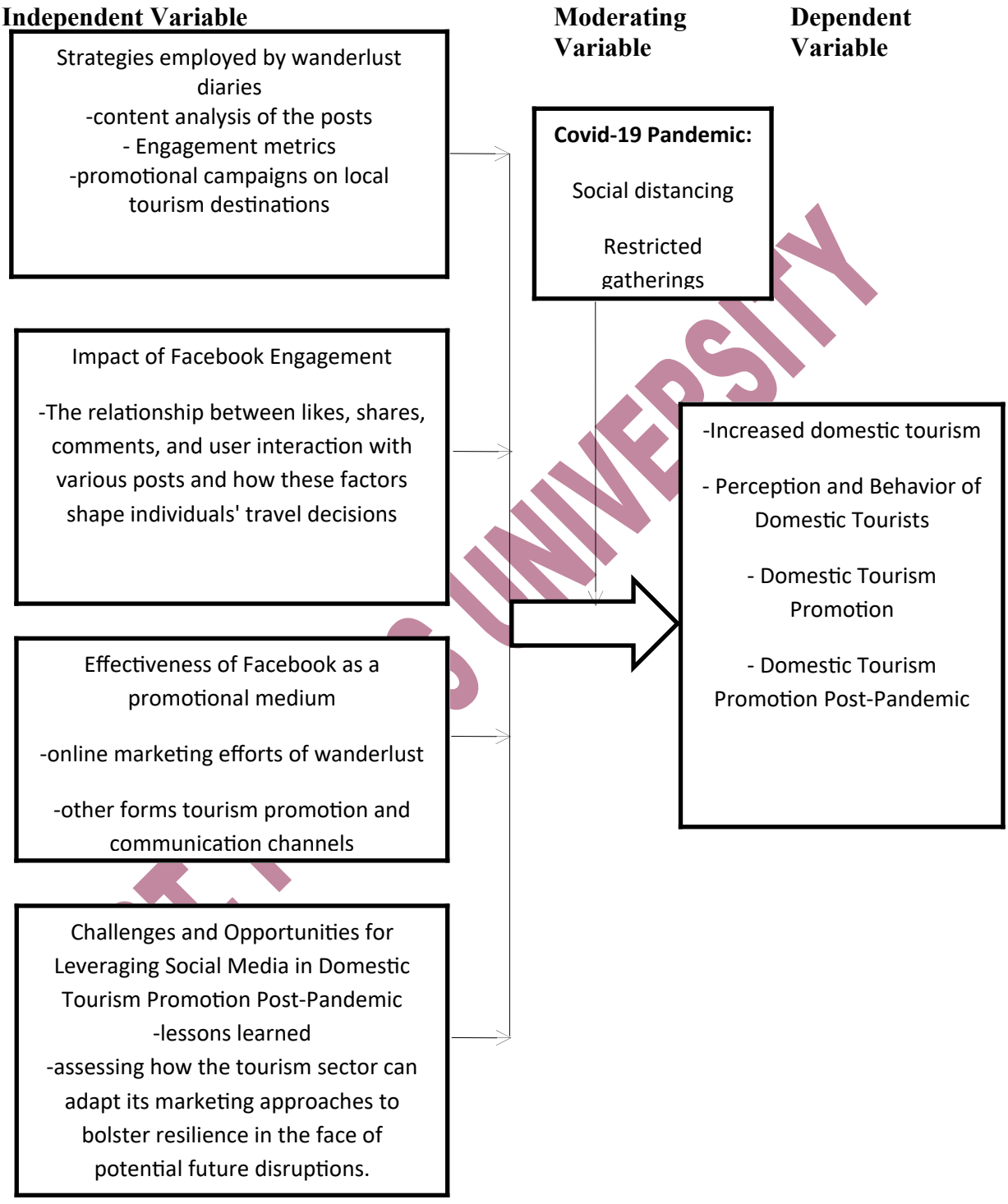
By applying Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing, this study aimed to identify the key factors that influenceed domestic tourists' decision to visit tourist destinations during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. It also aimed to provide recommendations for tourism stakeholders and businesses on how to effectively use Facebook as a marketing tool to promote domestic tourism. Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing, particularly as it applies to the use of platforms like Facebook, wasinstrumental in understanding and influencing domestic tourists' decisions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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2.5 The conceptual framework



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According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), a conceptual framework is an abstract model that helps in understanding the factors involved by examining critical variables and their influence on explaining why a problem occurred and how to solve it. In this study, the researcher focused on the main concepts rather than specific variables. Facebook posts are the dependent variable because they were examined to see how they impacted the promotion of domestic tourism. Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group werethe dependent variable because their influence on domestic tourists' decisions was being studied. Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group werealso the dependent variable because the study exploredhow they were used as a marketing tool.

Information on domestic tourism was anindependent variable because it wasthe outcome being measured in relation to the role of Facebook posts. Domestic tourists' decision to visit tourist destinations was also anindependent variable because it was the outcome being influenced by Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group. Use of Facebook posts as a marketing tool was the dependent variable because the study measuredhow these posts promote domestic tourism.

The conceptual framework developed by the researcher highlighted the concepts used throughout the research. When constructing a conceptual framework, it is essential to identify existing problems in previous research and theories, recognize gaps in current views, and offer a unique contribution from the particular study

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(Maxwell, 2013). Facebook's global advertising audience in April 2022 was approximately 2.141 billion (Data reportal, 2022). With 95 million African users and 13 million Kenyan users, Facebook penetration in Africa reached 19.3% in March 2021 (Statista Research Department, 2022).All these translateto increasedFacebook posts and their influence in marketing. Promotion of domestic tourism /affected /enhanced the efforts and strategies used to encourage local tourism within Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic.Marketing domestic tourism focused on the various marketing techniques and campaigns employed to advertise and attract local tourists to domestic destinations during the pandemic.

Covid-19- this is a contagious disease caused by a virus, the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic spread to other parts of the world with Kenya reporting the first case on 12thMarch 2020. As at June 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was severe and the Kenyan government moved to stipulate measures to curb the Covid-19 pandemic including lockdowns, curfews, 1 meter rule, stay at home order and banning of public gathering and grounding of flights which adversely affected businesses.

Tourism is one of Kenya's main sources of foreign currency. According to Tourism.go.ke, (2022), in 2019, the sector represented around 8% of total GDP and employed approximately 1.6 million people, and arrivals grew by 3.9% from 2.02 million to 2.05 million from 2018 to 2019. With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism sector was one of the most affected sectors of the economy in

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Kenya by the Coronavirus due to movement restrictions and grounding of flights among others.

The Covid 19 pandemic affected domestic tourism and travel decisions. The effects were felt on travel restrictions, health and safety concerns, and government guidelines on domestic tourism. Covid 19 as a moderating variable influencedthe strength or direction of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable. Essentially, it acted as a third variable that modified how the independent variable affected the dependent variable. Moderating variables can either enhance or weaken the effect of the independent variable, and in some cases, they can change the nature of the relationship entirely.

2.6 Research Gap Analysis

There are critiques of the existing literature relevant to the study as discussed.

Various empirical studies have explored the relationship between domestic tourism, social media marketing, and the pandemic. For instance, a study by Orellana-Rodriguez et al. (2020) investigated the role of social media marketing in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Ecuador. The study found that social media marketing was an effective tool for promoting domestic tourism and encouraged tourists to visit domestic destinations.

Similarly, a study by Nasrullah et al. (2021) explored the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on domestic tourism in Pakistan. The study found that social media marketing was an effective tool for promoting domestic tourism, and tourists

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relied heavily on social media platforms to gather information about travel destinations during the pandemic.

In conclusion, domestic tourism, social media marketing, and the pandemic are interlinked concepts that hada significant impact on the tourism industry. The Covid-19 pandemic forced the tourism industry to adapt to new circumstances, and social media marketing became an essential tool for promoting domestic tourism. Empirical studies have shown that social media marketing was an effective tool for promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic. Therefore, tourism stakeholders in Kenya should have embraced social media marketing to promote domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin this study were explored. The Chaffey's Theory of Social Media Marketing was identified as the key theoretical frameworks that informed this study.

Furthermore, the literature review focused on the relationship between domestic tourism, social media marketing, and the pandemic. several empirical studies that explored the impact of social media marketing on domestic tourism during the pandemic, with a particular focus on Facebook as a marketing tool were identified. The literature reviews also highlighted the importance of tourists' intention to visit tourist destinations, which serves as an intervening variable in the relationship between Facebook posts and domestic tourism during the pandemic.

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Overall, this chapter laid the foundation for the study by providing a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed the study, as well as reviewing the empirical literature related to the topic.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in this study. The chapter also explains the population, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection method, data collection procedures, data analysis plan, ethical considerations, and provides a summary of the research methodology.

3.1 The Research Design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that outlines how the research problem was addressed, the methods that were employed, and the data collected and analyzed to answer the research questions as explained by, Creswell 2014. A research design has also been defined as a plan that a researcher adopts to answer the questions of the study (Rose, Spinks &Canhoto, 2014). Types of research designs include observation, descriptive, exploratory, and experimental. This being a qualitative study, the researcher focused on descriptive information which also accounts people's behavior and words (Taylor, Bogdan, &DeVault,2016). In this study, a descriptive research design was employed to investigate the role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. Descriptive research design is a research method that describes a phenomenon as it is, without attempting to establish causal relationships or make predictions. The research design depicts the situation as it exists (Kothari, 2004). The primary objective of the study was to find out the role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism

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during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. Descriptive research design was appropriate for this study as it enabled researcher to gather information on the state of domestic tourism in Kenya and how Facebook posts were used to promote it. Kothari Pg 45 (2004), notes that "descriptive research design obtains relevant and precise information concerning the current status of a problem or phenomenon and whenever possible to draw valid general conclusions from the facts discovered." Therefore, the design was effective since the research entaileds significant collection of information such as facts, attitudes, opinions, perceptions, and compliments.

The research design involved collecting data through interviews from the members who were also followers of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Page. The interviews wereadministered to members of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Diaries who wereabove 18 years as it is the requirement forjoining the group. The criteria used to select the respondents included age, availability and when they joined wanderlust diaries. The Wanderlust Diaries members are above 18 years which is a requirement forjoining the group and the respondent ought to have joined the group during Covid 19 pandemic period to participate in the interview. The researcher collected data on their perceptions and behaviors related to domestic tourism during the pandemic.

In conclusion, the descriptive research design was suitable for it allowed researcher to provide a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study. Overall, the research design allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the role of

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Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, providing valuable insights for tourism stakeholders and businesses on effective social media marketing strategies during pandemics.

3.2 Population

The population for this study was all followers of theWanderlust Diaries Limited Facebook Page members who were brought together with a common goal of traveling. The population for the group was 400,000 people (by April 2022).

3.3 The Target Population

The study's target population included individuals who hadengaged with Facebook posts on Wanderlust Diaries Limited page related to domestic tourism in Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic. This includedindividuals who hadliked, commented, shared, or saved domestic tourism-related posts on Facebook. The sample size was 30 which was sufficient to achieve the objectives while keeping the study manageable. This number allowed the researchers to deeply explore the participants' experiences and perspectives without overwhelming resources or diluting the data quality. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend 20 to 30 interviews for a study and 5 to 25 participants for phenomenological studies, aligning with the principle that smaller samples are sufficient for in-depth qualitative research.

30 members were selected from the Wanderlust diaries Facebook page which has a following of over 400,000 members. From the 30 participants, 13 were male and17 female. This included five travel agents, two tour guides, 21 active members in the wanderlust

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Diaries Facebook page, one of the Wanderlust Facebook moderators and one of the directors from the same page.

3.4 The Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in Kenya using Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page. There are two types of sampling methods: probability sampling and non- probability sampling. On the one hand, probability sampling is a procedure in which a sample is chosen with a known probability. It includes basic random sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling, systematic sampling, network sampling, among others. On the contrary, when a sample has no known likelihood of being chosen, such as in convenience or voluntary answer surveys, non-probability or judgment sampling is utilized (Cresswell, 2018). For this study, the researcher used convenience sampling to select the participants, as it is a cost-effective and time-efficient method.

According to Babbie (2017), convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. As Etikan et al. (2016) noted, convenience sampling was chosen for its ease of access to participants and the speed with which data can be collected. The cost-effectiveness of convenience sampling is another major advantage as it required fewer resources. This made it a practical choice for the research due to the limited budget, Bornstein 2013. It is a common sampling technique used in qualitative research and can be useful in studying hard-to-reach populations.

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3.5 The Data Collection Method

This refers to the method used to collect data in a research study as explained by Dillmanet all. 2014. For this particular study on, an interview guide was used. An interview guide is a structured framework comprising predetermined questions and prompts used by interviewers to elicit information from respondents in a systematic and consistent manner (Patton, 2015). It helps to ensure that the interview process is focused, covers essential topics and facilitates the collection of relevant data. in addition, it allows greater flexibility.The interview consisted of semi-structured questions, which made it easier to analyze and gather in-depth information (Patton, 2015)

The interview guide was administered online and on phone calls which wereeasily accessible and allowed for easy data collection and analysis. The researcher collected data from two interviewees on phone and online through a zoom meeting. This is because the participants were away from Nairobi and the researcher was sure they could provide data in regard to the research topic. Due to the limited time in the field, the online interview was necessary with the limited access to the participant. With the video conference call, the facial expressions were easy to get compared to phone call only interview. Physical interviews were also conducted to the available members of the Wanderlust Facebook group.

The physical interviews were conducted during the trips where the researcher interviewed the participants during the interactions breaks each for 30-40 minutes.. The Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page hasorganized quarterly trips which were introduced in the year 2023 and it was convenient to collect data during the organized trip. The first trip this year was on 30th March 2024, in which 15 participants were interviewed. The trip was

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destined for Nairobi National park and a camp at Karen Brixen in Nairobi. The researcheralso joined another organized trip on 13th April 2024 to Lake Elementaita and Nakuru County where data was colleecetdthrough interviews from seven participants. Between 15th April and 25th April 2024 six participants were visited in their places of work for data collection through interviews. Two participants who were willing to participate/ share crucial data for the research were away from Nairobi and this resulted to the use of phone call and online meeting via Zoom. The researcher also visited the available interviewees for the interview during the data collection period.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data using interview guide as the main tool . Data is classified as eitherprimary orsecondary. Primary dataallows for the researcher to obtain information first hand from the participants. Itinvolvesobtaininginformationthroughobservationofaparticulargroupofpeople,holding focus group discussions or conducting face-to- face interviews. Secondary data,on the other hand, aims at obtaining data from different sources such as the internet,newspaperormagazineand books (Kadametal., 2013). The main source of data for this research was interviews.

The data collection procedures were conducted in adherence to ethical guidelines to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants. Social media page specifically the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page was used to identify some of the participants and the researcher reached out to them for the interview.

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In addition to the interviews, the researcher analyzed Facebook post. The research adopted a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Descriptive research is used to systematically and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of the observed phenomena. According to Sugiono (2015), this method guides researchers to explore and portray social situations thoroughly and deeply. It involved collecting detailed descriptions of events, interactions, and behaviors, which were then analyzed to identify patterns and meanings. This approach was particularly relevant for understanding the significance of Facebook posts in relaying information about domestic tourism and decision to visit the domestic tourist attraction sites in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.

The data analyzed for this research consisted of Facebook posts and comments on Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page. These data wee qualitative in nature, comprising information regarding travelling and travel destinations within Kenya. Data collection involved systematically sampling and analyzing relevant posts and comments over a specific Covid 19 pandemic period which was April May 2020 to December 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic period was crucial for this study because it affected all the sectors of the economy including the tourism industry in Kenya. The use of digital tools such as snipping tool inqualitative research shows how the research process in its entirety can be supported by technology in ways that can save time and add robustness and depth to qualitative work.The use of digital tools also addresses the use of a variety of tools to support every phase of the research process, providing practical case studies taken from real world research (Trena Paulus, 2013). Snipping tool was used to capture posts in terms of images from the

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Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Limited page since it is one of the straight forward ways of editing digital still images.

3.7 Data Analysis Plan

It involves understanding the whole picture by use of data to describe phenomena and what it means. In this study, an analytical and interpretative framework was employed for data analysis. This involved organizing transcribed interview and content analysis data to create coherent meanings that were relevant to the study, employing a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Kiger &Varpio, 2020).

Thematic analysis approach Braun& Clarke,2019 was applied in the research study. The method was selected to make sense of the information provided by the Wanderlust Diaries Limited research participants. The process wasinitiated by transcribing the interview data and subsequently engagingin multiple rounds of coding and categorization to identify and explore emerging themes and patterns within the data. Referring to the guidance of qualitative researchers such as Braun and Clarke (2019) and Kiger and Varpio (2020), the researcher paid careful attention to the emerging themes and systematically refined them in relation to the research questions at hand. The thematic analysis involved the following after transcribing the data: Familiarization with the data by reading through it. Generalizing initial codes which were compiled into codebook from the feature in MAXQDA. This was followed by searching for potential themes by use of MAXQDAand reviewing themby selecting, highlighting, grouping and categorizing the data to various segmentations. The themes were then defined and named. The themes were used to develop the research.

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Table 3.1 Thematic Analysis Framework

Stage	Activity
1. Transcription	All interviews were transcribed
2. Familiarization	Reading the transcribed data to familiarization.
3. Generalizing initial codes	The codes were compiled into codebook from the feature in MAXQDA
4. Searching for themes	Reviewing the themes by selecting, highlighting, grouping and categorizing the data to various segmentations
5. Defining themes and naming	The themes were then defined and named
6. Producing the report	The themes were used to develop the research.

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3.8 Ethical Considerations

These are values and principles that address questions of what is good or bad while conducting the research. The source of information should not be exposed, and in this case, the names of those who participated in the interviews werenot mentioned to avoid victimization. The informationwas being treated with the utmost confidentiality (Krause,

2017). Besides, informed consent was obtained for the voluntary agreement to participate in research. The researcher sought permission to collect data from the respondents and ethics committee. Permission was sought from the Nacosti and SPU Scientific Ethics Review Committee- ISEARC. Lastly, the researcher didnot cause physiological or physical harm to the participants and fully disclosed the purpose of the study, which was for academic purpose Ramrathan et al. 2017.

3.9 Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined the research design and methodology used in the study. The population, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis plan, and ethical considerations were discussed. The next chapter will present the results of the study

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter entails the analysis of the data obtained via face to face interviews. The research goal was to find out the role of social media specifically Facebook in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, using the Wanderlust Diaries Ltd Facebook group page as a case study. The structured in-depth interviews were designed to gather qualitative data on Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page followers on the role and influence the page had during the Covid-19 pandemic period in Kenya. a. The objectives of the study included; to investigate the significance of Facebook posts in communicating about the domestic tourism in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya,to find out the influence of Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group members in Kenyan tourist destinations decision during Covid-19 pandemicand to find out how Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group were used as a marketing tool to promote domestic tourism during the Covid- 19 pandemic.

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4.2 Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

A qualitative research approach was applied and a thematic analysis conducted on the interview data. The data obtained from the interviews was input into the MAXQDA software which was used to help in the analysis of qualitative data. MAXQDA is often considered one of the best software tools for analyzing qualitative data due to its versatility and comprehensive toolset as described by (Kuckartz& Radiker,2019). MAXQDA supports a wide range of qualitative data types, including text, audio, video, and images.

This versatility allows researchers to analyze various data formats within a single platformasMAXQDA is a comprehensive, user-friendly and versatile tool for qualitative data analysis. Its advanced features, robust data visualization options, and support for collaborative research makes it a preferred choice for many qualitative researchers. The research objectives guided in the creation and fine-tuning of the themes derived from the interview data. The themes that emerged from the data collection included; The role of Facebook in domestic tourism, Awareness and influence raised by Facebook posts, Effectiveness in providing information, Adaptations to Covid 19 pandemic period and Tourist stakeholders and businesses

4.3 Key Findings

The role of Facebook in Domestic tourism

Facebook pages were used to disseminate information in regard to domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic and the page followers got readily available information. This information was generated from the Wanderlust Diaries page participants when they were interviewedon their general observations on the role of Facebook in promoting domestic tourism in Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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During the Covid-19 Pandemic period in Kenya there were restrictions in movements and gathering activities. As a result, most people were not busy with closure of schools and work from home arrangements. With the creation of Wanderlust Facebook page which gained popularity within a short time, the followers were on look outforactivity to get involved in. Below are sentiments expressed by one of ther participants regarding domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

> *With the banof social gatherings during the Covid-19 pandemic period, it was a bit idle over the weekends. Wanderlust Facebook page posts were a great reminder that we had not visited the tourist destinations that are just next to our homes. For the years I lived in Nyahururu, I hadnot visited Thomson falls despite working in the area for more than 10 years. I leant more about it from the posts in the Wanderlust page. (Participant 7)*

> *One idle afternoon as I was scrolling through the social media specifically Wanderlust Facebook page, I came across a post which had a team hiking NgongHills Sanctuary. I figured out this is something I'd like to also participatein though I had never heard of the place. I followed the conversation on the post where they described the sceneries at the park and also recommended the OloluaSanctuary. This was a great recommendation which I developed interest in and actualized (Participant 4)*

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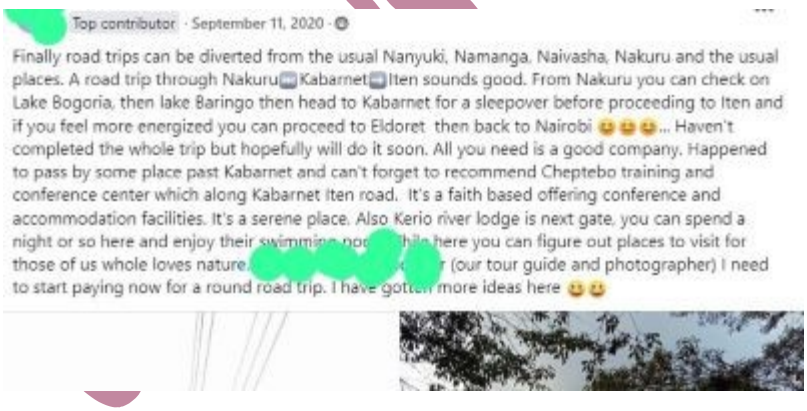
The description of Nanyuki Sweet Waters Camp, made us feel like we hadalready been there through the description we got from a traveler who visited and posted the photos. (Participant 9)

Awareness raised by Facebook posts

With the description of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group by the interview participant and facebook post on the tourist destinations on how they discovered about of the existence of tourism destination areas in Kenya which they had heard little of or no information about. According to the participants the posts contributed to promotion of domestic tourism and the tourists' destinations in Kenya.

From your perspective, how have Facebook posts contributed to the promotion of domestic tourism in Kenya, specifically during the pandemic?

Figure 1: Post from Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page



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Members of the group posted attractive photos showing the destination and they even indicated the entrance fee and some of the destination were not even charged. A good example is Chebiloch Gorge in ElgeiyoMarakwet. According to the poster, you were only required to pay a small fee for the young men to dive in the falls which I found exciting. (Participant 15)

From your perspective, how have Facebook posts contributed to the promotion of domestic tourism in Kenya, specifically during the pandemic?

The view of Mt. Kilimanjaro was only seen on maps and had never thought of as a magical view. During the Covid-19 I got to view it from Illasit after visiting Amboseli National park for the first time in my life. It felt like a new discovery of the beautiful view now that I had not viewed it physically before. (Participant 3)

Covid -19 actually made us realize that we have a beautiful country with a lot of unexplored areas that we only read in geography (Participant 16)

Some people had not interacted with various tourist destination within the country and during the Covid-19, they had an opportunity to first tour their surrounding tourism destinations within the country though they still had to observe the stringent measures that were put during this period. They got an opportunity to visit some parks that they had visited when they were in early primary school years.

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The descriptions, the stories, narrations and photos on the Wanderlust Facebook page made people wish to visit the various destination within their restricted area. From the description the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group followers had their minds visualize the tourist destinations and the views from the narrations and photos which led them to making the decision to visit the destinations.

In your experience, what types of Facebook posts have been particularly effective in attracting domestic tourists to different destinations within Kenya during the pandemic?

The first time I visited the Nairobi National Park for the game drive was during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was a post in Wanderlust group page that had very nice photos and the narration of the experience at the National park and we couldn't wait to also visit the park for the similar experiences. (Participant 17)

Can you describe the types of content commonly shared in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic?

The attractive pictures that were posted by member P(Name withheld) forced me out of the house and instead of just watching the screen and browsing online, I developed an interest of getting to know my country better and even interact with the community and food in the places we visited." (Participant 6).

In your experience, what types of Facebook posts have been particularly effective in attracting domestic tourists to different destinations within Kenya during the pandemic?

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The first time I visited Samburu National Park and its environs was during the covid-19 period. This was after getting a group through the wanderlust diaries that was joining for a roadtrip to the Samburupark via an overland vehicle (Participant 21).

From your perspective, what factors within the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group seem to influence domestic tourists' decisions to visit tourist destinations during the pandemic?

Joining the Wanderlust group brought a new meaning to the way I spent my free time during the Covid 19 period. The posts in the group gave ideas which enabled prior planning of visiting various destinations. This was either for Solo or group traveling (Participant 14)

Effectiveness in providing information

The responses provided by the Wanderlust Facebook followers interviewed paint a clear picture of positive influence on their decisions to visit the tourism destinations. From the posts they read and the pictured they saw, they developed the interest of getting to know the places physically and not just viewing them on the page. It also gave them the courage to visit places they thought were expensive to visit but they realized that the places were affordable.

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The Wanderlust Diaries page did not only motivate its followers but also made them feel part of the group. The members got a sense of belonging and the responses emphasized that the followers viewed themselves as part of the group and contributors to the group. They were ready to be invited and invited their friends to join the group and be on the lookout for the next travel idea since the members were generous enough in giving out ideas and budgets of traveling to various destinations.

Figure 2: Facebook post from a Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page

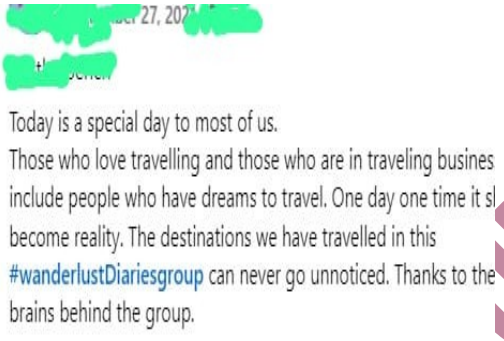


Figure 3: Facebook comment on a post from Facebook page Wanderlust Diaries



Tourist stakeholders and businesses

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During Covid-19, some new and existing businesses posted on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page, earning them clients. This included the tour and travels organizers and the hikers' groups. Some businesses were born out of interactions from the page.

Based on your experience, what strategies would you recommend to tourism stakeholders and businesses for utilizing Facebook effectively in promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic?

Are there specific features or approaches within Facebook that you believe are particularly beneficial for promoting domestic tourism in the current context?

How can tourism stakeholders and businesses leverage the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group specifically to enhance their promotion of domestic tourism during the pandemic?

"My company was born out of the Wanderlust diaries Facebook page. After several trips organized by the members in the group I decided to monetize this and came up with a tour company which I advertised on the same platform" (Participant 25)

After attaining hiking partners on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page, I decided to explore new areas where I would plan, get the best routes and charge the participants. This was a dawn to self-employment after losing my job over the Covid-19 period (Participant 2).

People lost their income during this period due to closure of some business such as hotel, entertainment, schools and other organization. Some people through the Wanderlust Diaries started their organizations in the tourism sectors by targeting the Wanderlust Diaries followers.

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Wanderlust diaries Facebook group page provided a platform for the tourism stakeholders to market their services time to time. The marketing posts promoted domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The tourism stakeholders got clients from the posts they sent on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page and they created a portfolio and increased their trips to the tourism destination within the country. The responders in the industry recommended constant posting to the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page to promote domestic tourism

"Constant posting on the page encouraging the members to visit the country assisted in marketing the various tourism destinations within the country." (Participant No 16)

Within five months after the creation of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page, there were many marketing posts as business operators in the tourism field advertised their trip packages on the page. The founder of the group had to regulate the posts by not approving the adverts but later introduced a fee to help regulate the posts. The business operators used the page in promotion of their services which included day trips, camping, hiking among others.

"Creating posters that have the photos for the previous trips and purpose for the trip enhanced the promotion of domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic period".

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4.4 Summary

The chapter delved into the role the Facebook posts played in promotion of Domestic tourism during the Covid -19 pandemic period especially in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page. A careful investigation of the role of Facebook posts in promoting Domestic tourism in Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya was undertaken. The themes that emerged from the data collected by the researcher included the role of Facebook in tourism, engagement on Facebook, the reach, Adaptation to the Pandemic, Contribution to promotion, awareness raised by Facebook posts, effectiveness in providing information, visual content, user generated content and tourism decision. The reactions of the members of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page stresses on various ways they benefited from the page during the period and the rise of interests and careers.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter sums up the findings from Chapter Four and gives conclusions and recommendations based on the objective of the research. The overall goal of this study was to investigate the role of Facebook in promotion of domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, case study of Wanderlust diaries Facebook page. The chapter also provides the summary of study including findings, conclusions, recommendations and the suggestions for further studies.

5.2 Discussions of Key Findings.

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The first objective aimed to investigate the significance of Facebook posts in communicating about the domestic tourism in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. The objective sought to determine the significance of Facebook in spreading the information on domestic tourism in Kenya during the Covid 19 pandemic. Facebook posts were used in promoting domestic tourism in Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was discovered that during Covid-19 pandemic period the posts in the Wanderlust diaries played a role in creating awareness of domestic tourism industry. Facebook post were employed to reach a higher number of people and meet specific requirement which in the current study was to promote domestic tourism. Wamuyu and Ireri (2019), study on the use of social media by Kenyans stated that, 88.6% of Kenyans are using Facebook, thus it was an important platform/toolfor use in promoting domestic tourism.since it has become a once stop shop for easily disseminating information, getting feedback and getting audience information relating to certain needs and interests.

The study findings established that because of the easy access and creation of the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page where the followers posted and collected views about domestic tourism, it led to people getting to know and appreciate domestic tourism. From the literature review, a study by Wang, et al 2002 suggested that targeted marketing was essential for promoting tourism destinations. The use of social media platforms such as Facebook can also facilitate user-generated content, which can increase engagement and enhance the authenticity of tourism marketing campaigns.

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The posts in Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page continually provided information related to domestic tourism in Kenya and made it easier for the followers to embrace and promotedomestic tourism. A lot of knowledge was gained from the posts and the members used that opportunity to learn about it and how it benefitedtheir counties in terms of revenue. In addition, they gained historical knowledge related to some of the destinations. This resulted in promotion of domestic tourism and it gained popularity. They also appreciated their surroundings. This could be beneficial to all people in social media whereby they couldrely on the platforms to get more knowledge related to tourism even during pandemics. However, social media users can also leverage posts shared on pages and groups with verified accounts, which are more likely to be authentic and credible. The social media pages and groups with verified accounts should be keen on maintaining the trust of their followers. Otherwise, users can report any account that violates any terms and conditions set out by Meta.

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To the second objective was intended to find out the influence of Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group members in Kenyan tourist destinations decision during Covid-19 pandemic.From the research study, there was influence in term of the destinations the followers visited and gained interest in exploring. They were relying on the posts to explore and seek diverse information about various destinations on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page. They made it an effort for themselves to frequent the page in order to get information on their next travel destinations. The posts influenced them to visit various destinations. The daily updates of posts on the Wanderlust diaries Facebook page made it easier for the followers to get the current conditions of the destinations they were looking forward to visit. This prompted them to budget since with the transparency of the posts, they could estimate the cost of visiting various destinations.

The followers had to make sure that they hadenough internet data to keep up with their daily postings especially from the people who were posting their daily activities once they embarked on a trip.. With all the details they read from the Facebook posts from the Wanderlust diaries group they were eager to also visit the destinations to allow them have the same experience or even better.

From the research, it was clear that engagements with the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page did not start and end with just posting of the information alone. One of the respondent noted that the people who posted information regarding their trip were very generous with the information. They kept engaging with the followers and offered the details of their trip as requested by the followers.

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Information regarding various tourist destinations in the country was freely shared on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page. As stated by Galbraith (2010), social media platforms provide a central place where information is freely shared. The information in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page was easily accessible without gatekeeping and it was up to the interested followers to evaluate the shared information to assess the credibility if there were any doubts. The fact finding led to getting more information regarding the destinations and influenced the followers in visiting the destinations.

The members ofthe Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page who posted frequently influenced the perception of the followers especially in positive reviews displayed in some posts as mentioned from the respondents. From the views of members who had visited a certain hotel and the overall services they received, the followers developed interest in visiting the same venue. Tourist destinations can gain popularity in the social media while their visitors post about them and their experiences.

Objective 3: To find out how Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group were used as a marketing tool to promote domestic tourism during the Covid- 19 pandemic.Facebook posts were used as marketing tool to promote domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic where travel agents advertised their travel packages and used the platform to showcase their previous trips and their services. From their posts, followers who hadpreviously travelled with them endorsed them, therefore, creating confidence for any other follower who was interested in their packages. The promotion adverts helped them transform followers to clients who travelled with their companies.

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The followers also regrouped and travelled together to same destination, for instance,inthe case of a group that was created and explored Nanyuki together specifically Sweet Waters Game Reserve. The destinations in Nanyuki has been marketed over and over and the followers decided to visit the venues and explore. The hotels and the reservations couldbe done online so it was easier for the followers to get the venues on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page and book the venues online.

According to Chaffey (2011), social media can be used for various publicizing actions such as brand awareness, customer engagement, customer service, and sales promotion. This was evident in the study from the respondents who through the Facebook posts in Wanderlust Diaries Page, engaged with the people personnel in the venues they were planning to visit. The good services received by followers led them to endorsing the venues and posting about them which gave them good reviews.

5.3 Conclusion

Facebook posts were used in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page. The followers contributed to posts by sharing their experiences and stories in regard to domestic tourism. The posts were attributed tothe first hand experiences of the domestic tourism. The posting of images, photos and narrations regarding the places they visited createddesires in the mind of the other followers who in return ended up visiting the places. The referrals also came in handy with the exchange of contacts and great teams, relationships were developed out of the group visits that happened during the visits. Influence incorporated followers trusting information shared

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by the followers who travelled and aired their opinion in regard to a travel company, hotels and other destinations.

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The Facebook posts helped increating awareness, passing information and also marketing the domestic tourism industry in the country even during pandemics when a country hada lockdown. Businesses can use Facebook in marketing their services. The findings of this study revealed that there was gratification pursued from the use of the Facebook to access information regarding domestic tourism destinations. It is worth noting is that one can gauge the credibility of a social media account based on the number of followers and posts shared on a particular page. Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page was easy to access and engage the followers with the motive of getting information in regard to their visits.

According to Tench and Waddington (2021) social media will not go away and will continues to grow with opportunities in digital space. Facebook is part of social media and if people understand how to interact and make use of the digital space, it can be of great benefit. From the study, the researcher brought out the impact of Facebook in promotion of domestic tourism during a Pandemic. Facebook will keep gaining more fame especially with more inventions and platforms that are users friendly based on factors such as age, needs and fashions.

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5.4 Recommendations

It is evident that the use of internet has made the world a global village. People across the world can come together for a common goal with the use of the preferred social mediaplatform. The internet has aided in reconnecting of people, old friends and also created new friendships. Groups can be formed by friends who share common interests and goals where they share their plans, likes and what they envy doing or participating in.

The discussions get to the point of planning trips and escapades together and discovering new tourist destinations. With a common goal, it will be so easy to get the information regarding the planed venues and destinations, their costs and route or even get the travel planner one would wish. Internet has become an enabler of such plans and a lot of information would be available in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook page..

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

This study focused on the domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic and narrowed the scope to Kenyan case study of Wanderlust diaries Facebook Page. However, further research could be conducted on the impact of Facebook on other areas apart from domestic tourism. Other areas in tourism can also be a great focus and the areas affected during the Covid-19 pandemic and how Facebook has been used to revive them.

Another approach for the research would be on the role of other social media platforms in promotion of domestic tourism. This can include Tiktok, Instagram, among others which can be used in creating awareness on domestic tourism. Focus on a different group for data collection would also be ideal to get more views on domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, similar research could be carried out focusing on venues such as hotels, parks and historical destinations to get their views on how Covid-19 pandemic affected their businesses. Lastly, the impact of Facebook as immediate platforms to satisfy the motive and desired objectives of the users in relation to domestic tourism should be studied. Future research is necessary to understand the dangers of social media and how to lessen their effects, especially when they come from the public because they are dissatisfied and have different observations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is Florence Mathangani a final year student at St Paul's University pursuing a Masters of Arts in communication degree. As part of the studies, am conducting a research on the role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism. This interview is used to gather insights on the effectiveness of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya, focusing on the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group. Its main purpose is for scholarly, and data collected will be treated with total secrecy/confidentiality.

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this research that will be useful in determining the role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during Pandemic. I kindly request your honest opinion and the information shared shall remain confidential. The information given will be anonymized and it is for academic purposes only.

Date……

Part I: Demographic information

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. What age range are you?

a. 19-29 Years [ ]

b. 30-39 Years [ ]

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c. 40-49 Years [ ]

d. 50 Years and above [ ]

3. Duration since joining Wanderlust Diaries Limited. ……...

4. How has the Wanderlust Diaries page impacted your domestic tourism?

……

……

Part 2: Understanding the Effectiveness of Facebook Posts

To investigate the effectiveness of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.

1. What is your general observations on the role of Facebook in promoting domestic tourism in Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic?

……

……

2. From your perspective, how have Facebook posts contributed to the promotion of domestic tourism in Kenya, specifically during the pandemic?

……

……

3. In your experience, what types of Facebook posts have been particularly effective in attracting domestic tourists to different destinations within Kenya during the pandemic?

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……

……

Part 3: Wanderlust Diaries Facebook Group

To identify factors influencing domestic tourists' decisions to visit tourist destinations during the Covid-19 pandemic Facebook posts in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group.

1.How familiar are you with the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group?

……

……

2. Can you describe the types of content commonly shared in the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group during the Covid-19 pandemic?

……

……

……

3. From your perspective, what factors within the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group seem to influence domestic tourists' decisions to visit tourist destinations during the pandemic?

……

……

……

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Part 4: Recommendations for Tourism Stakeholders and Businesses

To provide recommendations for tourism stakeholders and businesses on how to effectively use Facebook as a marketing tool to promote domestic tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.Based on your experience, what strategies would you recommend to tourism stakeholders and businesses for utilizing Facebook effectively in promoting domestic tourism during the pandemic?

……

……

2. Are there specific features or approaches within Facebook that you believe are particularly beneficial for promoting domestic tourism in the current context?

……

……

……

3. How can tourism stakeholders and businesses leverage the Wanderlust Diaries Facebook group specifically to enhance their promotion of domestic tourism during the pandemic?

……

……

……

Thank the participant for their time and insights.

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Signature of the participant…….

Contacts: …….

Signature of the Researcher…….

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Appendix B: Postgraduate introductory letter

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BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

29th February, 2024

National Commission for Science and Technology,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR FLORENCE MATHANGANI MACSNRB264621 –TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter confirms the above-named person is a student of the Master of Arts in Communication Studies Program at St. Paul's University.

The second year consists of a major research work leading to a Thesis. The student's selected topic is:

"The role of Facebook posts in promoting domestic tourism during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya."

Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours Faithfully

DIRECTOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY 29 FEB 2024 P.O. BOX 020-2020505/2020510 LIMURU P BAG - 00217

Dr. John Muhoho
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies

Appendix C: ISERC letter

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 Limuru,
Kenya
Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
Mobile: +254 (0) 728-669000
(0) 736-424440

REF: SPU/112/2023 **Date: 22nd February 2024**

TO: Florence Mathangi
St. Paul's University

Dear Florence,

==========

REF: The Role of Facebook Posts in Promoting Domestic Tourism During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya

==========

Greetings,

This is to inform you that SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee has reviewed the above-named research proposal. **Your ERB approval number is 121, for the period between 22nd February 2024 – 22nd February 2025 (1 year).**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours

St. Paul's University Repository

v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
viii. Please note that it is within the ISERC's mandate to monitor your research and to do random visits to the site. All research is subject to post approval monitoring.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Daniel Nzengya, PhD
Chairperson
SPU- Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY • INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE •
(ISERC)
APPROVAL WITH
CONTIGENCIES
RESEARCH
DIRECTORATE

Appendix D: NACOSTI Certificate



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **457108**

Date of Issue: **15/March/2024**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Miss.. FLORENCE MATHANGANI of St. Paul`s University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: THE ROLE OF FACEBOOK IN PROMOTING DOMESTIC TOURISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN KENYA- WANDERLUST DIARIES FACEBOOK GROUP for the period ending : 15/March/2025.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/24/33544**

457108

Applicant Identification Number

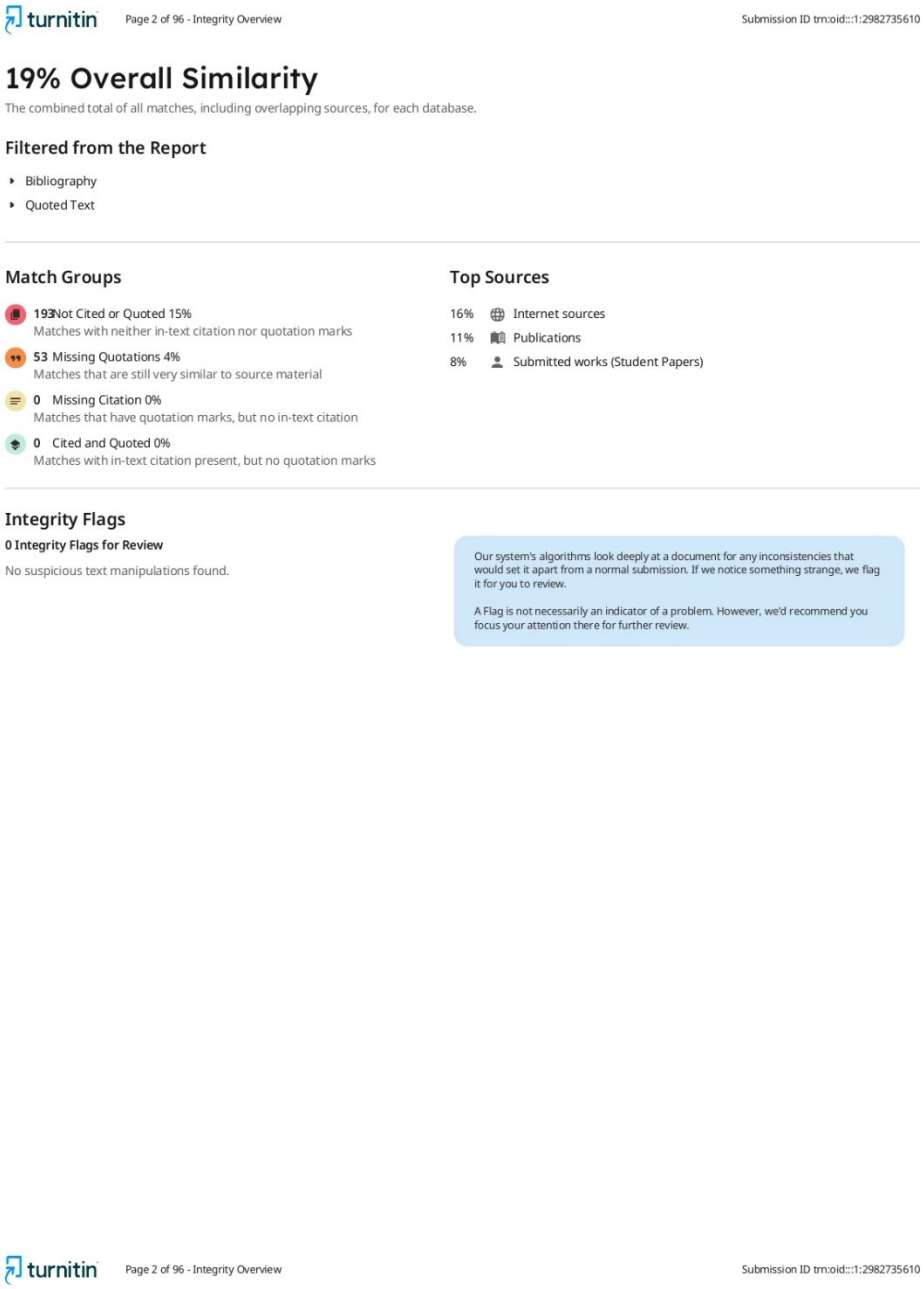
Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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See overleaf for conditions

Apendix E: Plagiarism Report



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