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An Investigation of the Influence of Social Media on the Consumer Behavior in the Tourism Industry – The Case of Zambia

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Abstract: Tourism has become one of the most important economic and business activities in world economics and business. Many countries have come to realize the impact of tourism on the lives of their people and the country's economy. With the advent of technology over the past twenty years, tourism has seen a massive shift in terms of its definition, application, and consumption. The availability of information has seen a rise in tourism consumption through social nets via the social media platforms that have informed the way people make decisions about their travel arrangements. This paper examines the effects of social media on consumer behaviour in the tourism industry, emphasizing the Zambian Tourism industry. The researcher applied a qualitative research methodology and targeted a sample of 50 respondents who were mainly tourists both local and international with a survey via questionnaire as a means of gathering data. The researcher managed to achieve 100% of the response rate. The research revealed that social media affects the consumer behaviour of tourists in the tourism industry. Almost all respondents responded positively towards the use of social media as a means of information search, sharing, comparison and finally aiding decision making. The research further revealed that the availability of the internet has increased social networking among consumers hence making it easier to share information and experiences. In conclusion, Zambia, being a landlocked country relies on tourism and agriculture as sources of direct foreign investment (DFI) second to copper mining. Therefore, the use of social media has become a common and very important phenomenon among internet users. Zambia as a preferred destination cannot afford to lag in creating a good image about the country, its tourism products, and services online, as this helps shape consumer behaviour in the tourism industry. Many consumers gather, search and share information about different products, brands, and services. This has helped them to make informed decisions and choose that which meets their needs or desires. Social media has therefore become a very important tool for information gathering, sharing, and marketing of goods and services, especially in the tourism industry. Many tourists use social media to plan for their next destinations, as such tour operators, marketers, business tour planners and advisers, and government agencies must work hard in ensuring a positive image is created on different social media platforms.

Keywords: Social Media, Tourism, Consumer Behaviour

1. Introduction

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) [31], highlights tourism as a composition of activities of a person or persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited www.unwto.org [31]. Camilleri [8], defines tourism in terms of particular activities, selected by choice, and undertaken outside the home environment. The person who voluntarily undertakes or participates in tourism activities is called a tourist. Tourists therefore voluntarily choose to undertake the different tour activities that are being offered away from their environment for leisure, business, and any other activities.

2. Literature Review

The process of choosing, evaluating, and analyzing which activities or destinations to undertake is what we call Consumer Behaviour. Priest, Carter & Statt [25], defined consumer behaviour as the mental, emotional, and physical activities that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of products and services to satisfy needs and desires. Consumer behaviour helps service and product providers to tailor their products and services toward the needs of the customers. The study of consumer behaviour has become very critical in the marketing of goods and products and the strategic focus of the company or industry such as tourism. Consumer behaviour becomes a process in which consumers or customers gather information about a particular product or service and once this information is gathered, they make decisions based on the information obtained. Consumer Behaviour is mainly influenced by the information that consumers gather. This information helps them to analyze the products, and services that meet their needs or desires. Many consumers have therefore resorted to the internet as a means of getting this information. The Internet has therefore become an important tool for facilitating information gathering. Batinić [3], observes in her research on "the Role & Importance of the Internet in the Contemporary Tourism in Travel Agencies Business". She observes that the development of information technology and the creation of computer networks and the Internet have brought about a new way of communication and information gathering. The internet with all its tools has enabled people to access information in a flash of a second. This sharing of information has led to the creation of social networks via the internet in which individuals or groups share their experiences about a particular brand, product, or service and can evaluate and advise others who may inquire about using such a service or product. Consumers have therefore become more aware of the best brands, products, and services in the market. This has on the part of the service providers created competition. Each one of them is trying to impress anxious consumers. Social networks, therefore, have affected the consumer behaviour of the customers in the tourism sector. They have enabled consumers to interact, connect and share information about the different products and services.

Consumers, therefore, have become actors on the marketplace stage. Consumers can be confused to mean Buyers. However, Etim & Ebitu [14], defined consumers as those who buy goods and services for personal consumption; while a buyer is somebody who buys goods and services for resale. These consumers, behave in a certain way when choosing which products or services to consume. The process of choosing and selecting makes them act in a certain way which leads to the development or activation of behaviour. This process, therefore, brought about the study of how consumers behave in the process of selecting a product or service.

The advancement in internet use and social sites has influenced consumer behaviour in the tourism industry.

According to Scott, Prayag, and Miguel [28], Consumers use technology for many consumption-related tasks such as searching for information, buying, sharing opinions and experiences, and for entertainment purposes. Such widespread use of technology by a growing number of consumers is perhaps more evident in product categories such as tourism Buhalis & Law [7]. Therefore, effective tourism marketing requires a thorough understanding of how technology is developing and consequently shaping tourism Consumer Behaviour. As the influence of technology on tourism Consumer Behaviour builds, researchers are devoting considerable attention to this rapidly changing area. At present, tourists can access travel information and share travel experiences through a variety of technology-mediated outlets of companies and destinations, social networking websites, and blogging and micro-blogging/video sharing websites. As the volume of content in these outlets rises and the display of information becomes more creative and user friendly, tourists' reliance on online sources has grown. Social media, has, therefore, in the recent past, developed into one of the most important influencers on tourism Consumer Behaviour. It provides a platform for not only sharing information but also for tourist experiences between consumers Xiang & Gretzel [36]. Social media is already used at all stages of the holiday cycle: before, during, and after the trip, Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides [15]. Not surprisingly, therefore that most researchers are now evaluating how various social media are influencing tourism Consumer Behaviour, including Vermeulen and Seegers [30] on the impact of online hotel reviews on consumer choice, Papathanassis and Knolle [24] on the usage of online reviews and Zehrer et al. [37] on user reactions to travel blog recommendations.

Social media has therefore changed the way consumers behave. The online platforms have made it possible for consumers to search for information about the product, service, or brand they are interested in. Oni and Oni [23] in their research article, entailed "The impact of Social media on Consumer behaviour," highlighted that Social media has become the most extensively used internet tool since the advent of the internet around the 1900s. It has been used for different business purposes such as the promotion of new products or services and connectivity with the customers. Social media platforms have empowered consumers to share their experiences, opinions of brands, and products.

With the adoption of social media, industries such as tourism have seen positive effects on consumer behaviour. Due to its user-friendliness, many consumers can consult each other and share information or videos about a particular product, service, brand or destination. This has empowered consumers to make a better choice in the process of deciding what meets their needs or desires. Further, social media has created consumer relationships due to easier access to sharing information via the internet. Icoz., O, Kutuk. A & Icoz., O [18], acknowledges that social media has become the medium of communication by many consumers. Tourism being an information intense business, consumers look for

information online that will inform their decision-making in choosing the destination of their choice. According to Minazzi [22], social media has had an impact on traveller behaviour, especially in the travel decision-making process. The traveller has had to look for information that aids or informs the decision-making process. Further, he mentions that social media helps suppliers of tourism products and services in highlighting opportunities, threats, and strategies that may exist in the tourism industry based on the perception or information gathered by the traveller. Social media has therefore become a very important business tool in tourism. Travellers can search for information and share their experiences about destinations which eventually influence other travellers. Social media has also influenced consumer behaviour from information acquisition to post-purchase behaviour such as dissatisfaction statements or behaviours about a product or a service.

2.1. Zambian Tourism Industry

Zambia is home to different tourism destinations and products. Zambia's tourism products include rivers and lakes, sports tourism, cultural tourism and ecotourism. The Victoria Falls and National Parks offer visitors the best opportunity to view Zambia as the best Tourism destination. With over 75 tribes, Zambia has a rich inheritance of cultural practices and ceremonies. The peaceful political environment has gained Zambia one of the safest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. With a growing population of over Eighteen million, Zambia is seen as an upcoming middle-income country with an expected GDP in the next five years of between 7 to 10 %. With peaceful transitional of power from one political party to another, Zambia has gained democratic credentials that have seen it attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in the mining, agricultural, and tourism industries.

Zambia, therefore, has over the years increased its tourism arrivals and products. Before the pre-Covid pandemic, Zambia recorded International tourism, number of arrivals of 1,266,000 in 2019, World Bank report [34]. This represented a 75% increase.

With investments in information technology (ICTs), Zambia has experienced tremendous growth in the use of Information technologies. According to the Zambia information Communication & Technology Authority ZICTA [38], it highlighted that Zambia has seen an increase in the usage of ICTs. This increase has enabled people to have easy access to information particularly connectivity to the internet.

ICTs have therefore enabled many people to connect through social networks on the internet and share information and experiences.

2.2. Use of Social Media in the Tourism Industry in Zambia

Zambia has further, seen growth in the use of technology. Over the past 20 years and with the emergency of the internet, many citizens have become technologically literate with 90% of the population owning a cell phone that has changed the way they communicate. According to the world

bank report on the Accelerating Digital Transformation in Zambia [35], highlights that Technology can play an important role as Zambia advances the vision for economic transformation. In the 7th National Development, advancement in technology was put as one of the priority areas that the government wanted to achieve. To do this, the government set up SMART Zambia, a digital institution that was mandated to ensure the promotion of e-government i.e. digitalizing all government functions and processes. Some of the processes included e-visa which directly affect the tourism industry. According to Zambia Information and Communications Authority National Survey report on Embracing a good Social Media Culture in Zambia [38], it is estimated that 53.5 per cent of Zambia's total population were active users of mobile cellular telephones, while the proportion of individuals who had used the internet before stood at 14.3 per cent. This finding represents a 5.5 per cent increment in the proportion of individuals that were reported to have used the internet in 2015. Further, the country experienced a boom in the use of social media whose raise has to be attributed to the availability of internet connections in most parts of the country. Social media has become a daily phenomenon that every Zambian of all age groups wants or is experiencing right now. The report also highlighted that the internet has become synonymous with social media, to a point where most internet users primarily use it for social media networking. Therefore, as consumers increasingly transition towards digital channels such as social media has become possible. Businesses are being awakened to the fact that social media is not simply a platform to build personal connections but a consumer channel of choice where they connect with everyday brands and businesses. This has not spared the Tourism industry. The tourism industry in Zambia relies on the connections that social media has brought about via social networks. Social networks, therefore, enable tour service providers to interact with potential customers while at the same time improving their service offering through the social networks reviews that consumers of tourism products and services share with their peers. Social media has therefore become a powerful tool in the tourism industry. For Zambia, many tour operators have realized the potential and impact that social media has on the life of their businesses.

2.3. Statement of the Problem

The advancement of the internet has enabled the tourism industry to diversify its products and many destinations now have innovated new products on their offer giving consumers a variety of choices to pick from. Search for information has become much easier now with the availability of the internet. Information Communications and Technology (ICTs) have transformed the way travellers plan for their vacations. With the advent of the Internet, Vacation planners now have access to information almost in a flash of a second and with very minimum costs in many instances. This has enabled them to access reliable and accurate information and has aided their decision to undertake the trip or not. However, the advancement of the internet has also brought challenges. Li

& Buhalis [19], the Internet is already influencing consumer behaviour in developing countries such as China enabling consumers to have much more choice. When Consumers have more choices, it means that there is a competition being created hence the tour operators are forced to be aggressive in their marketing and customer service strategies. The Internet has become one of the most influential tools that have impacted Consumer Behaviour, especially those in the tourism industry. Consumer behaviour in the tourism industry has drastically changed. The Internet has therefore enabled consumers to engage directly and deal with suppliers and change the role of intermediaries. It has also allowed consumers to interact with suppliers and destination managers and often make requests that will enable them to customize their products. This advancement in the use of the internet has further brought about the use of other internet tools such as Social media which has influenced the Consumer Behaviour of many customers especially those in the travel industry.

Social media is a new trend and rapidly growing in a way in which businesses are reaching out to targeted customers easily. Social media can simply be defined as the use of social nets or channels where consumers or customers share information about a product or service or their experiences. By encouraging users to spread messages to personal contacts, social media changed the way business is conducted.

Consumers use technology now for many consumption-related tasks such as searching for information, buying, sharing opinions and experiences, and for entertainment purposes. Such widespread use of technology by a growing number of consumers is perhaps more evident in product categories such as tourism Buhalis & Law [7]. Social media has now impacted on Consumer Behaviour of those in the tourism industry. Consumers in the tourism industry can now in a flash of a minute search, plan, enquire and buy tour products within a short time in the comfort of their home, office, etc. Tourism being an information-based business, most tourists undertake tour activities based on the recommendations or sharing they have received from others. The internet, therefore, has facilitated this process of information gathering and sharing. Social Media tools have become prominent tools that most tourists have adopted in helping shape and plan their travel arrangements. As a result of this, many tour operators have not adjusted to the power of social media in aiding the decision of consumers in the tourism sector. This study will therefore try to explore the influence of social media on consumer behaviour in the Zambian Tourism sector.

While there have been many studies on the subject matter, very little has been done in the Zambian context and hence the need to investigate the effects of social media on Consumer Behaviour in the Zambian Tourism Industry.

2.4. Aim of the Research

This research will aim to try and explore the effects of social media on Consumer Behaviour in the Tourism industry with a specific focus on how tourists both local and international have been influenced by social media platforms to decide on a particular tour, product or service. The focus of the research will mainly be in Zambia.

2.5. Objectives of the Study

The following are the Objectives of the research.
i. To understand the effects of social media on the tourism industry in Zambia.
ii. To understand the effect of social media on consumer behaviour in the tourism industry in Zambia.
iii. To identify any relationship between Social media and Consumer behaviour in the Zambian Tourism Industry.
iv. To explore Social media tools that are most commonly used in the Zambian Tourism Industry.
v. To determine and examine challenges associated with the use of social media tools in the Zambian tourism industry.

2.6. The Research Questions

The research questions will be as follows;
i. What are the effects of social media on the tourism industry in Zambia?
ii. What is the effect of social media on Consumer behaviour in Zambia?
iii. What is the relationship between Social Media and Consumer Behaviour in the Tourism Industry in Zambia?
iv. What Media tools are used in the Tourism Industry in Zambia?
v. What challenges are associated with the use of Social media in the tourism industry in Zambia?

2.7. Statistical Significance and Relevance of the Research

Since the researcher identified the knowledge gap in the subject matter regarding the study of Social Media's effect on consumer behaviour in the Tourism Industry in Zambia, The statistical significance of the study is that it will provide insights into the effects of social media on consumer behaviour in the tourism industry in Zambia and further recommend how the Zambian tourism industry can make use of social media to continuously innovate the tourism industry to meet the changing consumer preferences.

Further, the research is relevant because consumer needs never end. Consumers are always in need of goods and services that meet their demand and if these goods and services are not available then a gap is created. The study therefore will provide those insights into how consumer needs can be consistently met. The study will also fill the knowledge gap that has been identified such as;
1) The promotion of the usage of social media in the tourism industry as a strategic tool in the marketing and promotion of tourism products.
2) To help Tour operators to adopt social media as a means of information sharing and communication with consumers.

3) To adopt Smart tourism methods in the use of technology and enhance the growth of the tourism industry.

4) Meet consumer demands through social media interaction and sharing.

2.8. Scope and Location of Research

The research targeted 50 tourists both local and international and interviewed them on how they have been influenced by social media in picking a particular destination. The tourists were randomly picked and interviewed via questionnaire.

2.9. Limitations of the Research

The data that was collected was collected using a self-administered questionnaire may, therefore, have been a misrepresentation by the participants in the survey. The sample was quite small and may not be representative of the whole population. Further due to time constraints and costs, many perceived participants were not reached.

2.10. Theoretical Framework

The research was guided by the Veblenian socio-psychological model for online marketing. The model was discovered by Thorstein Veblen who experimented on complex Consumer Behaviours. The Veblenian socio-psychological theory [30], states that consumers' social and cultural backgrounds are important determinants of their buying behaviour. According to the theory, consumer needs are mainly influenced by the desire to maintain a certain social class as opposed to the real need. The theory highlights six factors that influence consumer behaviour. These include;

i. Social class,
ii. level of income,
iii. Culture,
iv. Sub-culture,
v. Family and,
vi. The reference group.

The Veblen theory was applied to the research at hand as most Consumers of Tourism products or Services are mainly influenced by the factors mentioned in the Veblen theory. Further, the model embraces the usage of Social Media via online searches and information sharing, especially in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. It also helps marketers to follow the demographic and behavioural traits of Consumers and tailor their expectations to the online product or service offerings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm

The research Paradigm is influenced by four cardinal research perspectives. According to Guba and Lincoln [16], a paradigm comprises four elements, namely, epistemology, ontology, methodology, and methods. It is important to have a firm understanding of these elements because they comprise the basic assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values that each paradigm holds. Scotland [27], defines the elements of the research paradigm as follows.

3.1.1. Ontology

Ontology is the study of being. That's the nature of being or existence, Crotty [10]. Ontological assumptions mainly involve what makes up reality (realism in this world). This entails that as a researcher, the issue of realism needs to be taken just as it is during research.

3.1.2. Epistemology

Epistemology on the other end involves or is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge. Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired, and communicated, in other words, what it means to know, Guba and Lincon [16]. Epistemology asks the what question.

3.1.3. Methodology

The methodology is the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular methods Crotty [10]. Thus, the methodology is concerned with why, what, from where, when, and how data is collected and analyzed. Guba and Lincon [16], explain that methodology asks the how question.

3.1.4. Methods

Methods are the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data Crotty [10]. Research methods, therefore, embrace all three other elements.

For this research, the researcher adopted a qualitative research methodology. Bhandari [5] defines qualitative research as the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. Qualitative research is, therefore, the multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives Denzin and Lincoln [11].

Creswell [9], defines qualitative research methods as research that explores and understands the meaning that some individuals or groups of people think or come from social or human problems. Qualitative research, therefore, focuses on individual meanings and translates the complexity of a problem. It's based on natural environments and not theory. Benaquisto and Given [4], define Qualitative research as research that is utilized to investigate human behaviour. It's designed to explore the human experience of a given topic where specific methods are used to examine how individuals see and experience the world. Qualitative research has now

taken centre stage in the studies of anthropology, sociology, development studies, marketing, and other business fields.

3.2. Research Design

Wahyuni [32], defines research design as a road map that guides the research with the combination of research purpose and research questions as starting points. A research design gives important pointers about what the researcher is aiming to achieve. The research design adopted in this study is an exploratory study. Rendle et al. [26] in their study, "Beyond exploratory: a tailored framework for designing and assessing qualitative health research" define exploratory methodology as one that approaches the topic of study primarily in an inductive fashion to investigate the areas of potential research interest that remain mostly or wholly unexamined by the scientific community. Bansal and Eiselt [2], defined exploratory research, as, research, that intends to just explore the research questions without finding the conclusive solutions to the problem.

Exploratory research aims at generating answers to new problems on which little or no previous research has been done. Exploratory research is flexible and can adapt to changing environments. It is also effective in laying a foundation for the future and it saves time and resources as it identifies the areas of interest much earlier in the research process.

For this research, the researcher used exploratory research as a way of getting new information on the effects of social media on consumer behaviour in the Zambian Tourism industry a subject that has very little information. It further gives room for future studies. Since Social Media and Consumer behaviour can be affected at any time by other parameters, the exploratory research method becomes ideal for this study as it can adapt to whatever changes that may occur in the future.

3.3. Data Collection

The collection of data is regarded as the core activity in social research. It is essential to specify the methods to be utilized to generate and record data, and to justify why these methods are considered to be the most appropriate. Data can be collected at one point in time or at a series of points over time Blaikie [6].

For this research, the researcher used semi-structured questions which were put in a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first part gave the biographical data of the respondent while the second part looked at the types of social media, the third part, at the effects of social media on consumer behaviour and the fourth part looked at Social media and the influence on consumer behaviour in the tourism industry in Zambia and the last part looked at the challenges affecting the use of social media in the tourism industry in Zambia. The researchers distributed 50 questionnaires to both local and international tourists using the drop and pick method. The researcher managed to get a 100% (50) response rate.

4. Results of the Study

The researcher presents the demographics of the sample that took part in the research. These involve; gender, age, educational background, and the last time they undertook a holiday. A total number of 50 respondents were targeted with 50 responses that comprised, 31 women at 62% and 19 men who represented 38%. The demographic questions in the questionnaire were all from Section A. The response rate from the respondents was 100% i.e. 58.70% for women and 41.30% for men. The age group of the respondents was between a minimum of 26 to a maximum of 66 years old. The lowest educational qualification of the respondent was a diploma while the highest was a PhD. The majority of the respondents held Bachelor's degrees. The research also highlighted the last time that the respondents undertook a holiday. The majority of the respondents went on holiday three months ago while others have not been on holiday for over one year.

From the gender analysis, it can be concluded that more female respondents took part in the survey than the male forks. See the Tables below for gender demographics.

Table 1. *Summary of Gender Tabulation for Respondents in the Survey.*

Gender	f	%
Females	31	62
Males	19	38
Total	50	100

We can safely conclude that women were more interested in the research than their male counterparts may be because the research questions were on Holiday, Social Media, and Consumer behaviour. Women were more likely to go on holiday than their male counterparts. Table 2 shows the age of the respondents that took part in the survey. Further, the research revealed that most people who took part in the survey are between the ages of 36 to 66 years old.

Table 2. *Summary Tabulation of the Age of Respondents.*

Age	f	%
Less 25 years	0	0
26 years to 30 years	5	10
31 years to 35 years	7	14
36 years to 40 years	7	14
41 years to 45 years	13	26
46 years to 50 years	10	20
56 years to 60 years	5	10
61 years to 65 years	2	4
66 years & above	1	2
Total	50	100

Table 3. *Summary Tabulation of Educational Qualification.*

Qualification	f	%
Grade 12 Cert.	0	0
Diploma	11	22
Bachelor's Degree	20	40
Master's Degree	16	32
PhD.	3	6
Others	0	0
Total	50	100

The highest level of education that most respondents obtained was a bachelor's degree at 40%, followed by a Master's degree at 32% with the diploma holders at 22 and the PhD qualification at 6.

The respondents were further asked, when was the last time they undertook a holiday. The following were the responses as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary Tabulation of the time the last Holiday was undertaken.

Period	f	%
3 months ago	19	38
6 months ago	14	28
1 year ago	12	24
More than I year ago	5	10
Total	50	100

5. Research Discussion

The researcher followed a qualitative research methodology using the exploratory method. Aspers et al. [1], defined qualitative research as "an interactive process in which improved understanding of the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied". The exploratory research method was used to understand and explore the experiences of the respondents and make meaningful conclusions. Exploratory research has been defined as a methodological approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth. Exploratory research is often qualitative Aspers et al., [1]. For this research, the researcher identified thematic areas which related to the research objectives. These were further analyzed and conclusions made. Data collected by the researcher was analyzed using thematic analysis with an inductive approach. Terry et al [29], thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts such as interview transcripts. The method of thematic analysis involves a six-phase analytic process.

The first phase of thematic analysis is the familiarization with the dataset. This may begin right at the beginning of the data collection stage.

The second phase involves coding so that the researcher is immersed in the dataset and begins to create themes of analysis. The researcher can start to see similarities and notice patterns across the dataset during coding.

The third phase is the construction of themes. The themes the researcher develops at this point are like draft versions of a piece of writing – not fixed, and flexibly open to change.

The fourth phase involves the reviewing of potential themes.

The fifth is the development of techniques and questions to guide progress to defining and naming themes.

And the sixth, developing the entire analysis which is the final phase and producing the report.

The researcher further used the inductive approach in which data obtained determined the themes that were identified. The following themes emanated from the research questions.

5.1. Type of Social Media Tools

The question was asked about the type of social media tools that respondents were using. The majority of the respondents indicated that Facebook was the most used social media tool for sharing and searching for information with 31 respondents representing 62% while the second most used social media tool was WhatsApp with 11 respondents, at 22% and the third most common social media tool was YouTube with 8 respondents representing 16%.

5.2. Use & Skills for Social Media

Section part of section B of the questionnaire asked about the Use and Skills of Social media. This section was divided into four questions each with a specific focus.

5.2.1. Use of Social Media
The researcher asked respondents whether they have used social media before. Out of the 50 respondents, 42 have used social media before while 8 have never used social media. This represented 84% of people who have used social media before and 16% not used social media before.

5.2.2. Necessary Skills to Use Social Media
The second question in section B, the second part asked whether the respondent had the necessary skills to use Social Media tools. Out of the 50 respondents, 39 respondents had the necessary skills to use social media while 11 did have. representing 78% and 22% of those without skills.

5.2.3. Skills by Professional Training or Through Experience
From the people that responded yes to question 4.2.2. on having necessary skills to use Social Media, 35 of the respondents acquired skills through experience or exposure while 15 went through formal training on how to use social media. Representing 90% and 10% respectively.

5.2.4. Number of Hours Spent on Social Media
The fourth question in part (b) of section B, asked about the number of hours that respondents spent on social media. The most hours spent on social media by respondents were 2 to 5 hours with 32 respondents, while 0 to 2 hrs. had 13 respondents and above 5 hours had 5 respondents. Representing a percentage of 64%, 26%, and 10% respectively.

5.3. Social Media and Consumer Behavior

This section examined the use of Social Media and how it has influenced consumer behaviour. The section was divided into three parts with different subsections of each question area.

5.3.1. Buying Products and Services Online Using Social Media Platforms
The respondents were asked how often do they buy products and services online? Respondents were given options to the response with "So often", being the more

frequent purchase of products and services online, "Once in a while" being not so regular but they do use Social Media tools to purchase products and services online, and "Not at all", meaning they have never used Social Media tools to purchase products and services online. From the results obtained, 4 respondents answered, "So often" representing 8% of the respondents, while 35, responded, "Once in a While", representing 70% and 11 respondents responded, "Not at All" representing 22%.

5.3.2. Rate How Social Media Has Influenced Your Consumer Behavior

The second question in Section 3 was concerned with the rating of how Social Media has influenced the consumer behaviour of the respondents. Respondents were invited to respond with 1 or 2 by indicating their preferred answer against the sentences provided. The sentences provided included;

1) In Product or Service selection;
2) In Product or service retention;
3) In Product or service use;
4) During and after service or use.

38 respondents answered that Social Media influenced their consumer behaviour in the product and service selection representing 76% while 6 responded that Social Media has influenced their consumer behaviour in Product and Service retention, while 4 respondents said Social Media has influenced their consumer behaviour in product and service use and lastly, 2 respondents indicated that Social media has influenced their consumer behaviour during and after service use. Representing; 12%, 8% and 4% respectively.

5.4. Which of the Following Can Influence Your Decision to Purchase a Product or Service Online

Question three in section 3 asked about a decision that can influence a respondent to purchase a product or service online. Six categories of answers were proposed and the respondent was asked to pick one from the six. The following were the categories;

1) Knowledge or awareness of the product or service;
2) Previous experience;
3) Information from the internet (e.g. users, forums, networks);
4) Product or Service reputation;
5) Information from Mass or Mobile media (TV, radio, phones);
6) Information from Friends.

The respondents responded as follows; 32 respondents indicated being influenced by the knowledge or awareness of the product or service, representing 64% and those influenced by previous experience were 2 at 4%, information from the internet was 6 at 12%, those influenced by product or service reputation were 4 at 8%, information from Mass or Mobile media (TV, radio, Cell phones) stood at 1 representing 2% and the lastly those influenced by information from Friends had 5 respondents representing a 10%.

5.5. Social Media and Influence on Consumer Behavior in the Tourism Industry

The fourth section of the research questionnaire had five questions each with a focus on Social Media and Consumer Behaviour in the Tourism industry. The first question in this section asked the respondent to answer yes or no to the question "Do you agree that social media influences the consumer behaviour in the tourism industry". 42 of the respondents agreed that Social Media influences Consumer Behaviour in the tourism industry. This represented 84% of the respondents. 8 out of the 50 respondents answered no to the question, representing 16%.

In the second question, respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree with the statement that "Social Media is extensively being used in the Tourism Industry in Zambia?" The following were the responses; those that strongly agreed with the statement were 26, while those that agreed were 9, those who were not sure or neutral were 4 while those who disagreed with the statement were 4 and those strongly disagreed were 6, representing 52%, 18%, 8%, 8%, and 12% respectively.

The third question in section four was on the challenges that affect the use of social media in the tourism industry in Zambia. Respondents were asked to tick from the following;

1) Skills;
2) Cost;
3) Coverage;
4) Inconsistency ICT Policy;
5) Accessibility;
6) Infrastructure.

The following were the responses to question three, 9 respondents indicated that skills were the most challenging effect on the use of Social Media in the tourism industry in Zambia, representing 18% while cost was the major challenge at 52% representing 26 respondents. 7 respondents indicated that internet coverage was equally an issue when it comes to the use of Social Media with 7 respondents at 14%, while inconsistency in ICT policies was at 4% representing 2 respondents and lastly infrastructure was at 12% representing 6 respondents.

6. Discussion of the Research Results

6.1. Types of Social Media Tools

Social Media has become a means of searching and sharing information. It has become important to many users, especially those undertaking Holidays. Wendy [33], in her research on "the Effects of social media networks in the hospitality industry", identified Facebook as the most used and common social media tool that most consumers of tourism products or services use. Further, Facebook is used as a preferred marketing tool for many hospitality businesses. This is because of its visibility to most customers or consumers. It is the most used social media tool across the globe with over 500 million active users. This is confirmed by the responses given during the research by respondents. A

question was asked, "what type of social media tool have you used to search for information about a particular destination?". Out of the 50 respondents, 31 respondents indicated that Facebook was their preferred Social Media tool representing 62% of the respondents. This validates what Wendy [33] also mentioned in her research paper. Therefore, it can be concluded that Facebook has become the most preferred social media platform for searching and sharing information, especially in the tourism industry.

6.2. Use & Skills for Social Media

A question was asked whether the respondents had used Social Media before. From the responses, 42 respondents out of 50 confirmed having used Social Media before representing 84%. This shows how Social Media has become important as a medium of communication. Further respondents were asked to confirm if they had skills to use Social Media and how they acquired those skills. Out of the 50 respondents, 39 respondents had the necessary skills to use Social Media representing a 78%, and 90% of those who responded have Social Media skills, acquired through experience.

6.3. Number of Hours Spent on Social Media

The survey revealed that most respondents spend between 2 to 5 hours on social media. This represented 64% of the entire sample population. Dwivedia., K. Y et al. [12], in their research on "Setting the future of Digital and Social Media Marketing Research: Perspectives and Research Propositions", highlighted that the Internet, Social Media, Mobile Apps, and other digital communications technologies have become part of everyday life for billions of people around the world. According to recent statistics for January, 2020, 4.54 billion people are active internet users, encompassing 59 % of the global population with over 5 hours spent every day on Social Media. This, therefore, validates the survey results that indicated that 32 respondents representing 64% spent more than 2 hours daily on social media making it a source of searching and sharing of information. Therefore, social media usage has become an integral element in the lives of many people and businesses across the world.

6.4. Social Media and Consumer Behavior

Social Media influences Consumer Behavior. Fotis [15], in his study on "the use of social media & its impacts on Consumer Behavior, the Context of Holiday Travel" indicated that Social media has influenced Consumer Behavior, especially in the travel and hospitality industry. He highlights that the impacts of social media in the travel and hospitality industry have been described as tremendous, because of the experiential nature of tourism products, and especially of holiday trips. Social Media impacts Consumer Behavior throughout the different stages of the travel process that is before, during, and after the trip. This has been confirmed by the research results that indicated that Social

media has an influence on Consumer Behavior in the tourism industry. Further, the research revealed that 70% of the respondents once in a while engaged in online shopping using Social Media Platforms and 76% confirmed that Social Media influenced their Consumer Behavior, especially in Product or Service selection.

6.4.1. Which of the Following Factors Can Influence Your Decision to Purchase a Product or Service Online

On online shopping influenced by Social Media tools, respondents identified that knowledge or awareness of products or services can influence their purchase of products or services online, especially in the tourism industry. This is synonymous with the study of Ellisavet, Lazaros, & Dimitrios [13]. Who studied the "Consumer characteristics and their effect on accepting online shopping, in the context of different product types". The study revealed that tourism being information-based, many consumers are influenced to get products or services online due to the knowledge or awareness about a particular product or service.

6.4.2. Social Media and Influence on Consumer Behavior in the Tourism Industry

Social Media has Influence on Consumer Behavior in the Tourism Industry. According to Gururaja [17], the tourism industry and vacation travel-related products or services are experiential. The purchase of such products or services is considered complex and involves high risk. Social Media influences travellers to extensively gather information about a particular vacation or holiday. In some cases, Consumers rely therefore on other travellers' experiences to plan vacations and decrease uncertainty. Online vacation feedback is perceived as similar to recommendations by most friends and families. 23% of US internet users are significantly influenced by social media for their travel/holiday-related decisions. Gururaja [17], has further indicated that Social media has become increasingly important in planning vacations. This is validated by the research results obtained by the researcher. From the survey, 42 of the respondents representing 84%, agreed that social media influences consumer behaviour in the tourism industry. Further, the survey explored the extensiveness of the use of Social Media in the Zambian Tourism Industry. 26 respondents strongly agreed that Social Media is extensively used in the Zambia Tourism Industry, while 9 agreed with the same statement too. This represented 70% of those who strongly agree and those who agree that Social Media is extensively used in the Zambian Tourism Industry. The survey also identified the challenges related to the use of Social media in the Zambian Tourism Industry. 52% of the respondents identified cost as the major challenge in using Social Media. The second challenge was identified as being Skills at 18% and infrastructure at 12%.

7. Conclusion

Social Media has become critical in our modern business environment. Many organizations, companies, and

individuals have taken to Social Media for brand awareness, marketing, promotions, search, and information sharing. The advent of the internet has enabled the increase in the use of Social Media tools. From the research results, Facebook was identified as the most used social media tool by both individuals and companies and accounts for over 500 million users across the globe. This is evident enough to confirm the influence of Social Media tools such as Facebook in the daily undertakings of individuals and businesses. For most businesses, Social Media presence has become a must-do business. If Social Media is to work to its maximum output and be results-oriented, formal training in the management and use of Social Media is needed. For many individuals and businesses, Social Media is not just a tool or tool for social interaction, it's a platform for business or individual growth by ensuring that the company has its presence on Social Media. For this to happen, individuals and companies need to acquire minimum training on how to manage Social Media platforms, especially for businesses. Social Media is now a means of communication and interaction with Customers. The research, however, showed that many people do not have formal skills or training in Social Media. Many acquired their skills through experience. While this may be welcome, formal short training courses on how to handle Social Media are very important considering the dynamic changing business environment. Social Media has therefore become the main trending issue among individuals especially those to plan for a vacation or Holiday.

Consumers in modern society search for information that aids their decision-making on whether to purchase a product or service. Since the advent of the internet, Social Media has been globally used. It has been used for different business purposes such as, promoting, marketing, and branding new products or services and communicating and interacting with potential customers. Consumers of different products especially those in the tourism sector have seen Social Media influence their way of buying or purchasing the products or services. Therefore, the adoption of Social Media has affected the Behavior of Consumers especially those in the Tourism Industry. Consumers have used Social Media to search and share information with other Consumers. This has led to the creation of Consumer pressure groups that advocate for the rights and dignity of Consumers, especially those online. This research, therefore, showed that Social Media has a great influence on Consumer Behavior.

8. Recommendations

Social Media plays a very important role in modern business and individual advancement due to its vast volumes of data and information that can be searched and or shared. Many companies and individuals use Social Media today to promote products or services that they offer. Companies and businesses that don't embrace Social Media, are headed for difficult times because Social Media has become part and parcel of the entire business management strategy and ensures that companies or businesses are up to date with the happenings in the modern business environment. The use of Social Media in the promotion of tourism products or services in Zambia must take centre stage. The Zambian tourism industry has great potential but it's not been explored because of poor marketing and promotional strategies. Social Media can therefore unlock the potential that the Zambia Tourism Industry possesses. For this to happen, different stakeholders in the tourism industry need to come through and find resolutions on how Social Media can become a nerve centre of the marketing and promotion of the Zambian Tourism Industry. One way of doing this is by ensuring that stakeholders in the tourism sector get tax waivers according to the number of articles or information published on their Social Media platforms. By so doing, a lot more players in the sector will move online and make use of Social Media as a tool for their marketing and promotion of products or services. Information Communication and Technology (ICTs) play a very big role in the advancement of e-commerce. The government must ensure that the cost of ICTs in the country is kept at a minimum to promote usage and investment. Startup companies in internet services must be helped with incentives that will trickle down to the end-users of internet services. Currently, Zambia is one of the most expensive destinations in the tourism sector due to costs related to the internet or ICTs. Many internet providers charge huge amounts to use their services as such a lot of Tour operators are prevented to use such facilities and are not able to tap into the global market.

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