Into the Wild: The Role of Social Media in the Marketing of Tented Camps and Lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve

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Into the Wild: The Role of Social Media in the Marketing of Tented Camps and Lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve

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Abstract

This research looks into the use of social media in the marketing of tented camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya, which is the most important wildlife tourism destination in the country. As elsewhere in the world, the Covid-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the tourism industry in Kenya. Tourism recovery is facing additional challenges in Masai Mara National Reserve with regard to the sustainable tourism development goals. This study is a descriptive cross-sectional research with content analysis as the main data collection method. The sample includes 54 permanent tented camps and game lodges located within and near the Reserve. Their websites and social media profiles were assessed to provide an insight into the current role of social media in their marketing strategies as well as into the use of social media for raising the awareness about sustainable tourism. The results of the research show that major social media platforms are well incorporated into the marketing of these accommodation facilities. However, the data indicates high variability in the role that social media has in their marketing strategies. The findings also show that the majority of the camps and lodges are actively contributing to the awareness about sustainable tourism development in the region by the means of social media.

Keywords: digital marketing, social media marketing, sustainable tourism

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Foreword

The Swahili word *safari* means journey, and working on this research project has not been anything less than that. From having a glimpse of the idea through many hours of reading and writing and to the final touches to this report, it has been a real academic adventure and a valuable learning experience. Being in Masai Mara National Reserve, one of the most breathtaking places in the world, has given me inspiration, and personal experience with the challenges of social media from the business perspective has led me to the theme of the thesis. I can definitely say that this work has been of great personal significance to me.

Writing this thesis would not be possible without the help and support I have received from others. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Terje Ingebrigt Våland. I would also like to thank the University of Stavanger, Faculty of Social Sciences and Norwegian School of Hotel Management for the opportunity to work on this research and all the valuable knowledge I have acquired during my studies.

I want to say thank you to my personal support team. To my friend Iryna, for your valuable feedback, motivational messages and kind reminders to keep on working. To my mother Rusmara, I appreciate your support on my long educational path which has finally led me to writing this thesis. And last but definitely not least, I want to thank my husband Fin, for showing the wild lions to me and for being my partner on this and other adventures.

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Introduction

The chapter starts with a background to the problem which this research project is focused on. It proceeds with the statement of the problem and of the research questions. The scope of the study is also defined. This chapter contains a discussion of the research purpose and significance.

Background of the study

International tourism industry was one of the sectors of the economy that struggled the most due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) data, the world saw one billion fewer international tourists in 2021 compared to 2019, while the loss in total export tourism revenues is estimated to be one trillion USD. The industry is currently on its way to recovery - the number of international tourists increased by 172% in January-July 2022 over 2021. However, it is still 43% below the results of 2019. Kenya lost 72% of the international tourists in 2020 compared to 2019, and the number of visitors to the country is still 30% lower than it was before the pandemic (UNWTO, 2022).

In response to the new challenges the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife of Kenya worked out New Tourism Strategy for Kenya 2021-2025. The primary goal is recovery and growth of tourism which is an important sector of the economy of Kenya as it stood for 10% of the country's gross domestic product before the Covid-19 crisis. The suggested measures include optimizing the adoption of digital and technological innovations while promoting Kenya as an upmarket and sustainable destination. Kenya has long relied on the traditional marketing approaches, but the new strategy states that digital marketing is especially important and requires expanding (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2022).

Kenya is a world-renowned destination for wildlife tourism, and Masai Mara National Reserve is one of the major wildlife tourism destinations in the country. The Reserve is located in southwestern Kenya, bordering Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. It was originally established in 1961 as a wildlife sanctuary and received the status of a national reserve in 1974. Today Masai Mara National Reserve covers an area of over 1500 square kilometers and is home to "the big five" and hundreds of other species of animals and birds. It offers prime viewing spots for the annual wildebeest migration, resulting in a high tourism season during the same time. The economy of the Maasai tribe communities, living in the areas around the Reserve, significantly depends on tourism. There are no fences surrounding Masai Mara National Reserve, but access to the Reserve is only allowed through one of the official gates, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Sekenani Gate at Masai Mara National Reserve

Masai Mara National Reserve is surrounded by a number of conservancies, forming what is known as the Greater Mara ecosystem. These conservancies together with the Reserve contain approximately 25% of Kenya's wildlife, therefore also being popular tourist attractions. The Reserve is managed by Narok County, a local government authority, which is also the beneficiary of the incomes generated by the tourism industry. The conservancies are owned by Maasai landowners and managed by companies financed by the tourism investors. In this case the revenues from tourism go directly to the landowners. There are also several differences in the regulation of tourism in the Reserve and the conservancies. For example, night game drives allowed in the conservancies are prohibited in Masai Mara National Reserve. It is worth mentioning that river crossings during the migration, which many tourists aim for, are possible to witness only in the Reserve.

According to the data provided by the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA), there were not more than ten lodges in and around Masai Mara National Reserve in the late 1970s. Until 2004 a moratorium on new construction in the Reserve limited the expansion of tourism, and the number of accommodation facilities was still less than 40. But after 2004 the area experienced a massive explosion of tourism, partly due to the fact that many of the landowners outside the Reserve leased their land to the tourism investors. By 2008 there were already 140 camps and lodges, although most of them in the conservancies surrounding the Reserve. An audit of the tourist facilities within Masai Mara National Reserve was conducted in 2016 and established that the Reserve had a total of 31 permanent accommodation facilities including 29 lodges and two camps (Kamau et al., 2017). MMWCA estimates that today the number of accommodation facilities in the Greater Mara ecosystem is around 200. This

estimation is also supported by the search on Google and Tripadvisor performed for this research.

The accommodation facilities in Masai Mara National Reserve were greatly affected by Covid-19, as was the industry worldwide. While the businesses are looking for recovery pathways, some new trends emerge. For example, the study by Chiawo et al. (2022) established a growing interest in domestic and regional tourists among the owners of the accommodation facilities and tour operators in the Reserve. It is important to note that recovery of tourism in Masai Mara National Reserve as a wildlife destination has also additional challenges considering the goals of sustainable tourism development and preservation of local nature, wildlife and cultural heritage.

Problem statement

Hotel facilities were among the first actors in the tourism industry to embrace digital marketing strategies and are familiar with the effect that social media has on their operations. Reviewing the implementation of social media in the marketing by the accommodation facilities in Masai Mara National Reserve is therefore considered by the author of this thesis to be a promising field of research. To the best of the author's knowledge, the particular chosen theme for this research has not been investigated in previously submitted studies. Therefore, the results of this research can be beneficial for the stakeholders and for the relevant research fields.

The main purpose of this research is to look into the use of social media in marketing strategies among the tented camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve. The study intends to provide an insight into the current role of social media as a marketing tool for these accommodation facilities as well as to investigate their use of social media in raising awareness about sustainable tourism development in the region. The purpose of the research is also to

provide the basis for the recommendations to the stakeholders about the future digital and social media marketing strategies with regard to sustainability of wildlife tourism in Kenya.

Research questions

This study aims to prove the answers to the following research questions:

- What is the extent of social media use in the marketing of the tented camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve?

- What is the current role of social media in the marketing strategies targeting international, regional and domestic tourists in Masai Mara National Reserve?

- Does the use of social media by the tented camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National reserve seek to contribute to the sustainable development of wildlife tourism?

Literature Review

The literature review in this chapter aims to provide a relevant conceptual framework for the study. The focus of the review is on digital marketing and social media marketing applied to the tourism industry as well as on the most recent research exploring the use of social media within the wildlife tourism sector in Kenya. Sustainability in tourism and the significance of social media regarding it are also discussed in this chapter.

Overview of social media applications

Numerous definitions of social media can be found in existing literature. These definitions are changing with the evolution of social media itself as well as with regard to the context in which the term is being used (Aichner et al., 2021). For the purpose of this study, and as summarized from the article by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014), the term social media refers to a variety of online applications and platforms that provide interactive communication channels and enable collaborative creation and sharing of different forms of media content such as text, images, audio and video files.

Social media applications and platforms are often divided into more specific categories. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggested such classification of social media into rather general categories of blogs, collaborative projects (such as Wikipedia), social networks (such as Facebook), content communities (such as YouTube), and virtual social and game worlds. The literature review shows that this classification is widely adopted in various publications, but also emerging new types of social media and specific contexts often call for more nuances when social media is discussed. For example, Safko (2012) describes 15 categories of social media tools and applications, addressing in detail the benefits which each of them can provide to business owners and managers.

In all the variety of social media applications and platforms some have become extremely popular, having millions and billions of active users worldwide. According to the statistics report by DataReportal (2023), the first place on the list of the world's biggest social media platforms in April 2023 belongs to Facebook, which is followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Telegram, Pinterest and Twitter (country specific applications omitted). From the marketing perspective, it is important to note that the audiences of different social media platforms overlap. Therefore, a company's presence on the larger ones provides the potential to reach the majority of people actively using social media (DataReportal, 2023).

Discussions of social media in the context of tourism often lead to Tripadvisor, which is the world's largest social media travel platform. It contains millions of user-generated reviews of accommodations, restaurants, experiences and other travel services and service suppliers. Tripadvisor and its effect on the tourists and the industry is a frequent topic of various studies. In addition, the reviews on this platform have become a popular research data source. Although recent data indicates that some people are discontinuing their usage of this platform, Tripadvisor is still the leading user-generated content platform in the tourism industry (Filieri et al., 2021).

Social media marketing in tourism

Social media is based on the use of information technologies and social interaction, and it forms a dynamic online environment affecting many aspects of real life (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). From the marketing perspective, social media is an environment which is controlled by customers and not by businesses, contrary to the traditional marketing channels (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Integrating traditional, digital and social media marketing is a beneficial and efficient strategy, as emphasized by Safko (2013). Customly connecting different marketing tools

can increase the effectiveness of each of them as separate channels. Within this marketing mix social media is the most recent addition.

Numerous publications exist on the theory and practice of social media marketing in the tourism industry (Minazzi, 2015; Nadda et al., 2015; Christou, 2016; Sigala & Gretzel, 2019). Social media has significantly influenced tourism from both the consumer and the business perspective. Travelers represent a specific group of consumers, as they, due to the very nature of tourism, cannot assess the product before buying it. That entails that they actively search for available information and rely on it greatly when making a decision in favor of a destination or a service provider. In this process social media plays a particularly important role as the contemporary word-of-mouth channel.

As social media has become an integrated part of marketing communications of numerous companies worldwide, the adequate measurement of its efficiency has started to be a concern for business managers and researchers as traditional media marketing analytics differ greatly from social media marketing (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). The use of social media requires considering marketing objectives and relevant customer behaviors, which does not necessarily imply direct calculation of the return on investment. Increasing brand awareness, brand engagement and generating positive word-of-mouth are key social media marketing objectives. Depending on a particular social media application category (blogs, microblogging, social networks, video and photo sharing and more), different metrics can be used to assess its effectiveness in reaching these objectives. For example, the number of followers on Twitter is a measurement of its performance in increasing brand awareness and engagement, while the number of retweets is an indicator of generated word-of-mouth (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Social media applications provide marketers with almost endless opportunities to reach and engage new potential customers. It can be used in public relations and customer support. It also provides extensive data for market research and product development (Safko, 2012). Social media analytics is easily available to managers with owner's or administrator's rights to a given social media account, but it requires an understanding of the highly dynamic social media world. Successful social media campaigns lead to the rapid spread of information by the users, their participation in creation of additional information about the brand and sharing of the experiences (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Sustainable tourism and social media

Sustainability in tourism is directly related to the sustainable development goals set by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The definition of sustainable tourism given by UNWTO states that it is "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (WTO, 2005, p. 12). The principles of sustainability in development of tourism include efforts to conserve natural resources and biodiversity, to protect cultural heritage of local communities and to provide fair distribution of socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders. The significance of such policies is emphasized by the fact that sustainable development is listed as one of the main focus areas of UNWTO on its website, and that the UN declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

However, Hall (2019) argues that the tourism industry at the global scale is now less sustainable than ever with regard to the use of resources, and many concerns appear about its actual positive contributions, or lack of those, at various destinations around the world. At

nature-based tourism destinations, such as Masai Mara National Reserve, it can raise especially complex issues with numerous parties involved, whose interests are not always in agreement.

Sustainable development of the industry depends on the support of the authorities as well as on the willing participation of the providers of tourism services. It is important to note that sustainable tourism also implies raising awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable practices among tourists (WTO, 2005).

Tourists today are concerned about sustainability and their personal impact on the future of the planet. When searching for accommodation on Google, Booking.com or Agoda, available filters allow viewing only eco-rated facilities. There are also a number of booking websites specifically dedicated to sustainable tourism. Thus, commitment to sustainable development goals has become a competitive feature in the hotel industry. Integrating such information into marketing campaigns can, therefore, not only promote sustainable tourism development, but also attract customers who are conscious about sustainability contributions of their choices.

Social media can also be a valuable source of information with regard to sustainable tourism development. For example, it can be used as a complementary data source for management of nature-based tourism. Although having some limitations, the data on social media is easily available and provides complementary insights when visitation to natural areas is being assessed (Teles da Mota & Pickering, 2020).

Social media and tourism in Kenya

A recent literature review by Sotiriadis (2017) states that the majority of research articles about the influence of social media on tourism originate in North America, Europe and Asia, while the interest in the subject in emerging economies is relatively new. The review was based on academic publications between 2009 and 2016 and included 146 relevant articles which were

published in peer-reviewed journals during this period. The studies conducted in the USA and Western Europe account for 58,2% of them, while only two articles or 1,4% considered the effect of social media on tourism in African countries, namely Ghana and South Africa. The main themes of the studies were divided between the tourists' point of view and the perspective of the tourism businesses, and the hotel industry was in main focus in 41,1% of all the relevant studies. It is therefore evident that the implications of the expanding role of social media are of particular importance to the hotel industry (Sotiriadis, 2017).

The results of the literature review by Sotiriadis (2017) indicate that there is an established interest in the topic among the researchers, but mostly in developed countries where the tourism industry has already experienced a noticeable effect of social media. However, in recent years the popularity and accessibility of social media have been significantly increasing in Kenya (Fwaya & Kesa, 2018), and the effects of it on tourism in this region has also gained more attention among researchers. Several recent studies conducted in Kenya in the field of tourism and hospitality provide insights into the role of social media in the industry.

A survey exploring the effects of social media marketing was conducted among travel agencies in Nairobi County (Karani, 2020). The research shows that social media is a popular tool used by the agencies to reach new audiences and communicate with clients as well as to direct potential customers to their websites. The survey also suggests that marketing through social networking and content sharing has a positive effect on the performance of the surveyed agencies.

The use of social media applications by employees in the tourism and hospitality industry became the topic of another recent research (Francis & Jilo, 2021). Another study was founded on social media content analysis to establish the attractiveness of various wildlife species to

international tourists (Willemen et al., 2015). Since most tourists always carry their mobile phones with them, there has been interest in developing new mobile applications which can be used by wildlife observers in Masai Mara National Reserve and possibly enhance their experience (Juma et al., 2022). The experience of Kenya in using social media for destination marketing was looked into by Muhoho-Minni & Lubbe (2017).

Meyoki and Kavindah (2019) looked into the resources affecting the implementation of information communication technologies by the camps in the conservancies in Narok County, with one of the premises being the fact that the majority of the seasonal and permanent camps had not yet adopted such technologies.

A study by Fwaya and Kesa (2018) looks into the implications of the digital and technological advancement for hotels in South Africa and Kenya. Both countries have seen a drastic increase in the number of travelers booking hotels online, and that requires the hotel industry to invest into acquiring new technological knowledge and solutions. The research also notes that social media use in South Africa and Kenya is expanding and brings new ways of promoting services and products. The authors point out that the local population browse social media primarily on their mobile devices. That is an important factor to consider when developing web-based booking solutions and e-marketing campaigns for domestic tourists. The research concludes that social media use represents a challenge for the industry.

Research Methodology

This chapter is a presentation of the research methodology applied in the study. The choices of the research design, sampling, data collection methods and analysis techniques are discussed and explained with regard to the particular objectives of this research. The chapter also provides a description of the obtained sample and collected data.

Design

This project is designed as a descriptive cross-sectional study. As explained by Neuman (2014), descriptive research seeks to provide a systematic and detailed overview of an already known phenomenon. Cross-sectional refers to the time dimension and is applied to studies where observations are made at one point in time. This research aims to present a detailed picture of the extent of the social media use in the marketing by the tented camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve and their focus on sustainable tourism development at the present time, therefore the chosen research design is considered to be appropriate with regard to the purpose of the study.

The stated research objectives require collection and analysis of quantitative as well as qualitative data. Based on both, this study applies a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data provides an insight into the extent of social media use by the tented camps and game lodges, while qualitative data gives an understanding about their orientation on sustainable wildlife tourism promotion. As described by Creswell & Creswell (2018), mixed methods research incorporates collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of the two types of data to provide an in-depth and complete picture of a research phenomenon, which corresponds to the purpose of this study.

Sample

The tented camps and game lodges for this study are chosen by purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability or nonrandom sampling approach which allows to gather detailed information about a specific group. The main idea behind the purposive sampling technique is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on the cases with particular characteristics (Etikan et al., 2016). This technique is often applied when the purpose of the research is to investigate a certain phenomenon in detail rather than to get results which can be generalized over a larger population (Neuman, 2014). Considering the purpose of this study, purposive sampling is considered to be an appropriate and efficient choice of a sampling technique.

Thus, the camps and lodges within the sample in this research project were chosen according to the particular characteristics they share. For the first, they are the tented camps and game lodges located within Masai Mara National Reserve and close to its boundaries.

Limiting the population of the research to the facilities strictly within the Reserve, despite being convenient and allowing total population sampling, was not considered beneficial for the research purpose as that would exclude units which essentially belong to the same group. Staying at the camps and lodges next to the Reserve provides the same safari experiences to the guests. These properties also generate the revenues for the Reserve and have similar characteristics as the accommodation facilities within the Reserve, many of them being just a few kilometers away from the gates. Therefore, for the purpose of this research the location of the camps and lodges inside Masai Mara National Reserve or next to it is one of the necessary attributes of the accommodation facilities included in the sample.

The other important criterion is that the accommodation facilities can be classified as permanent tented camps or game lodges, contrary to mobile camps and campgrounds or hotels.

Today these facilities in Masai Mara National Reserve and the neighboring conservancies are mostly luxury and mid-range properties providing accommodation along with game drives and other services for their guests. The permanent tented camps and lodges normally operate throughout the entire year and are not seasonal, although the operations of many were disrupted by Covid-19 as elsewhere in the world. Staying close to nature and wildlife while having access to the most amenities that modern upmarket hotels can offer is a signature quality and a distinctive characteristic of such accommodation facilities. An example of a tent at one of the camps is provided in Figure 2 for illustrative purposes.

Figure 2

Tent at Sarova Mara Game Camp

Data collection

The primary data collection technique in this study is content analysis. Content analysis is a type of nonreactive data collection. As described by Neuman (2014), this technique implies that the researcher gathers and analyzes the content of text, with text referring to any medium of communication, including websites or social media posts, and content referring to anything that communicates some meaning or message to others. In other words, content analysis is a data collection method which is used to observe and identify patterns in any given form of communication.

Content analysis can be applied to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. In this research content analysis was performed on the websites and the social media profiles of the tented camps and game lodges selected for the sample.

The current state of the use of social media by the tented camps and game lodges is assessed by investigating their presence and activity on the major social media platforms, and by analyzing social media integration with the facilities' websites. The solutions chosen by the properties are evaluated considering suitability for international, regional and domestic tourists. The content on the social media profiles is also analyzed with regard to the orientation on sustainable wildlife tourism development.

A survey among the managers of the tented camps and game lodges within the sample was planned as a complementary data collection method. However, this method was not applied in the current study, more details follow in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

Measurements

The instruments used in content analysis are referred to as coding worksheets, and the measurements rely on coding. As described by Neuman (2014), coding is a process meant to

convert raw data into a form suitable for analysis. Coding implies developing a set of rules or instructions, known as a coding system. This system allows systematic and careful assignment of categories and classification of observations. The information is recorded to coding worksheets. When the data collected by content analysis is coded and registered in coding worksheets, it can be analyzed as the data retrieved by other methods (Neuman, 2014).

For this research the coding worksheets were digital tables designed in Google Sheets. Each accommodation facility within the sample was assigned a line in a table next to a list of measurements that had to be registered. As content was assessed from several sources (websites, social media profiles), the table was divided into sections according to the data source. The coding process resulted in a database which contained the following information according to the units of content analysis:

- Website: available online booking options, presence of active links to social media profiles (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp) and eventual notes for other relevant information, namely presence of links to other social media platforms, blogs, newsletter subscription option, information about participation in sustainability oriented projects and initiatives.

- Facebook page: year of registration, number of likes, number of followers, monthly number of posts in the period from the 1st of January 2023 to the 31st of May 2023, active advertisements currently running on Facebook, presence of posts with focus on sustainable tourism with eventual notes about the exact theme of such posts.

- Instagram account: year of registration, total number of posts since registration, number of followers, monthly number of posts in the period from the 1st of

January 2023 to the 31st of May 2023, active advertisements currently running on

Instagram, presence of posts with focus on sustainable tourism with eventual

notes about the exact theme of such posts.

- Twitter account: year of registration, total number of tweets since registration, date of the last tweet, number of followers.

- YouTube channel: year of registration, number of published videos, number of subscribers.

The database also included general information about the sample such as contact details

for the facilities, their locations, affiliation with hotel chains, groups or collections, eventual

information about registration with regulatory authorities, industry associations and achieved

ecotourism certification.

Different coding methods were used in this study, namely manifest and latent coding.

These two methods refer to registration of predefined observations in content and to

interpretative analysis of content, respectively (Neuman, 2014). Both methods were applied due

to the nature of the data. For example, presence of social media links could be registered with

manifest coding, while evaluation of social media posts with regard to sustainable tourism goals

required latent coding.

The worksheets and the system were adjusted during the coding process as new data

emerged. For example, links from Facebook to WhatsApp, such information was also registered

with notes in the assigned fields in the coding worksheets. The inclusion and exclusion criteria

for the social media posts with focus on sustainable tourism development were defined based on

the sustainable tourism goals set by UNWTO. These criteria were consistently and carefully

followed during coding. The coded data was continuously rechecked, and when the coding process was finished this database was used for data analysis.

Data analysis

This research is based on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data attained by content analysis technique and registered in a digital database by implementing a coding system. The quantitative data was analyzed by the means of descriptive statistics, and the results are presented in the form of charts with commentary. The results of qualitative data analysis are presented with a narrative description.

Obtained sample and collected data

For the purpose of this research a total of 54 tented camps and game lodges were selected within Masai Mara National Reserve and near its boundaries. The list of the facilities within the sample is given in Appendix A. Out of the 54 facilities 19 are not members in any hotel chain, group or collection, 20 camps and lodges belong to various Kenyan chains, eight facilities are members of the chains with properties in several countries in Africa, and seven accommodation providers affiliate with international hotel chains. 18 properties appear in the listing of licensed accommodation facilities in Narok County provided by Tourism Regulatory Authority of Kenya (TRA), and 21 camps and lodges are members of the Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers (KAHC). 26 of the tented camps and game lodges in the sample are certified as eco-rated accommodation facilities by Ecotourism Kenya (EK).

Since this study is based on a nonreactive data collection method, the data for all the accommodation facilities within the sample was collected, analyzed and presented in the results of the research.

It is worth mentioning that there is no single official registry providing information about all the currently operating tourist facilities in the Greater Mara ecosystem. Therefore it was necessary to create an updated list of the tented camps and game lodges eligible for the sampling. This list was based on the data from several sources, including TRA, KAHC, EK, local tour operators, booking websites and maps. The acquired list of the accommodation facilities was then narrowed down based on the defined criteria for purposive sampling in this study.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the research along with the comments to the measurements, performed data collection and analysis. The results are grouped into sections according to the evaluated concepts and the research questions. For convenience of the readers of this report a summary of the key findings is given at the end of the chapter.

Website social media integration

Websites are fundamental for digital and social media marketing. With regard to marketing, social media integration with a website implies interconnection of a company's website and its social media profiles. This way social media platforms used by a company are accessible to its target audience via the website, and the users of social media applications are redirected to the company's website.

The websites of the tented camps and game lodges within the sample were assessed by content analysis technique. The analysis included identifying the presence of active links to the properties' social media profiles on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, and availability of WhatsApp as a contact option. Notes were also taken about the eventual content relevant to the research objectives such as website integration with other social media applications, presence of blogs and newsletter subscription possibilities. The results of the website analysis also provide information about the available online booking options and the presence of information about the involvement of the facility in conservation and preservation projects and initiatives.

Several camps and lodges within the sample belong to the same groups or collections of properties and share websites. However, in one group each facility has an individual website as well as a group website for all the members. This group website was also included in data analysis since it provides similar insights into the digital presence of the camps and lodges

selected for this research and their approach to digital marketing. Therefore, the total number of examined websites is 48.

The percent of the websites with active links to four social media applications (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube) is presented in Figure 3. The data clearly shows that Facebook is most frequently integrated with the websites. In fact, only three websites don't have an active link to this social network. Instagram follows with 39 out of 48 websites having an active link to it. Twitter is much less linked to, namely by 27 websites, and the lowest number of the links from the websites lead to YouTube - only 21 websites out of the total 48 have links to this video sharing platform. Just a few of the tented camps and lodges in the sample were also present on other social media platforms, namely LinkedIn, TikTok, Pinterest, Flickr.

Figure 3

Websites with active links to social media platforms
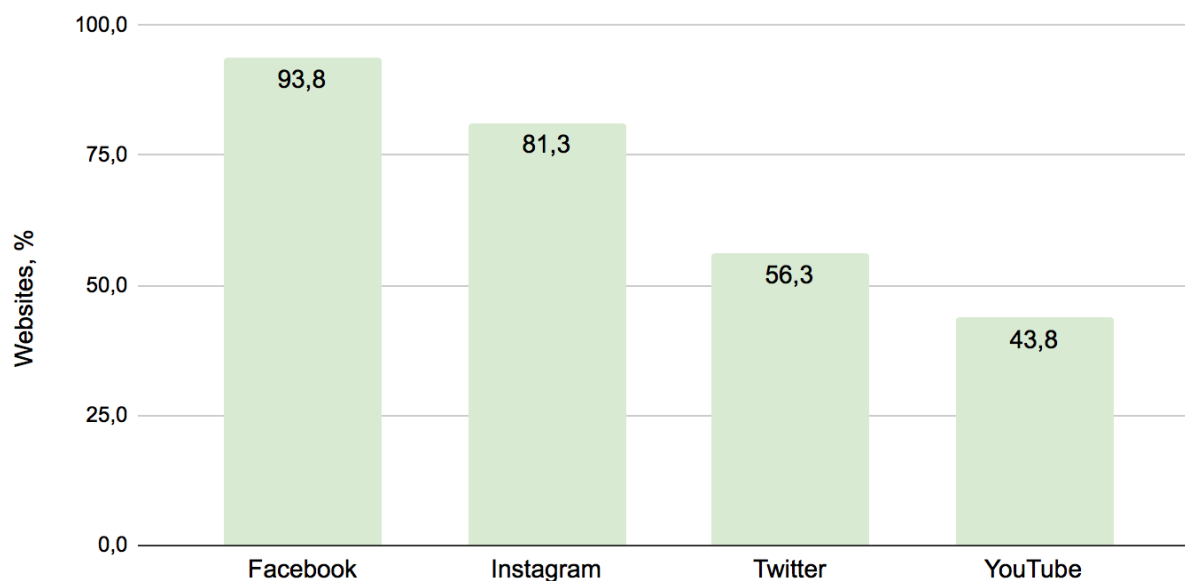
The prevalent use of Facebook and Instagram is also evident when analyzing the number of social media applications integrated with each website. The three websites without links to Facebook do not have any social media links at all. Two websites have only one link to a social media profile, and that is Facebook. 14 websites have links to two social media applications, and in 10 cases these applications are Facebook and Instagram. Another 14 websites contain links to three social media applications, all of them include both Facebook and Instagram. And the rest of the websites, that is 15, are integrated with all four social media applications.

The collected data also indicates that the majority of the studied tented camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve integrate their websites with the popular travel social media platform Tripadvisor. A total of 30 websites or 62,5% contain direct links to their profiles on Tripadvisor, import reviews from the platform to their websites or provide information about the received Tripadvisor awards. This shows that the importance of the existing travelers' reviews in the decision making process of potential guests is well recognized, and the influence that Tripadvisor has gained in the tourism industry is considered in the digital marketing strategy by the majority of the camps and lodges within the sample. Two of the facilities also had reviews from Google imported to their websites.

The research showed that such channels of digital marketing as blogs and newsletters are also used by the camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve. 10 out of the 48 websites offer company-generated content in the form of blogs, magazines or podcasts. 20 websites provide visitors with a possibility to subscribe to newsletters. Assigning this website data to the respective camps and lodges shows that 46,3% of the facilities use blogs, emails or both in their digital marketing.

Since most hotel bookings nowadays are performed online, providing potential guests with an option to book directly on the hotel's website has become a necessity. Almost all the tented camps and game lodges in this study allow booking a stay directly on their websites: 19 websites have an integrated booking system, and 25 websites offer booking by filling out an inquiry or a booking form available on the website. Four websites provide only contact information (phone numbers and emails) for making reservations, including one website being under construction at the time when the data for this study was collected.

Assigning the examined websites back to the properties shows that only 7,4% of the camps and lodges do not contain direct reservation options on their websites, and over half of the facilities prefer online inquiries over integrated booking systems. The types of available booking options at the camps and game lodges in percent to the total number of the properties within the sample are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Types of available booking options
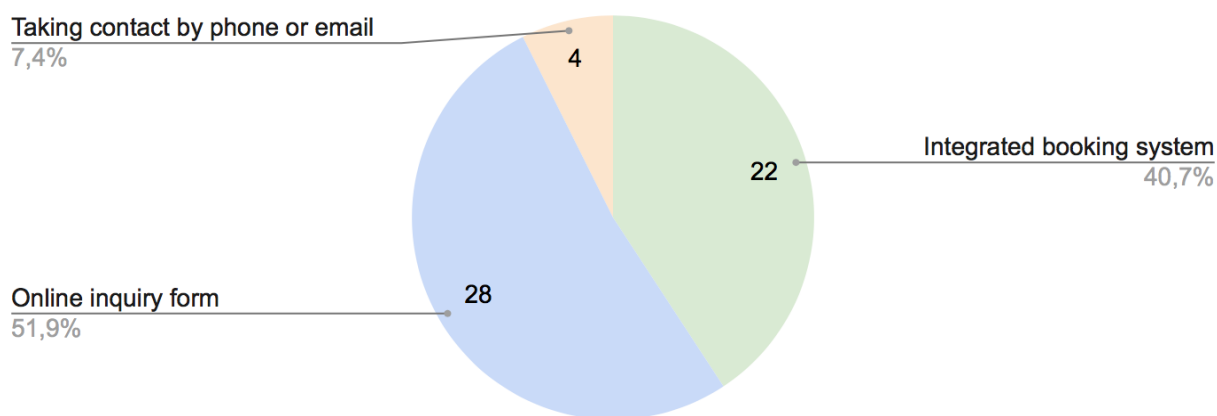
The analysis of the content of the websites also showed that many of the camps and lodges provide information about their involvement in wildlife and habitat conservation and preservation projects, community outreach programs, about implemented green practices, or state their commitment to the sustainable tourism path in the region otherwise, for example by displaying their Ecotourism Kenya certificates. This information suggests that many accommodation facilities in Masai Mara National Reserve have the potential to broadcast the message of sustainability also to the audiences on their social media profiles.

The primary data collection process and content analysis identified inconsistencies regarding the website social media integration within the sample. Some members of the hotel chains and collections place links to the group's accounts on social media platforms while there are also separate accounts for that specific property which are being regularly updated and closely followed up. In some cases the individual facility's accounts have more posts and followers. A number of the investigated camps and lodges do not place links to all of their social media profiles on their websites, however such profiles exist and are active. However, all the assessed social media profiles lead back to the properties' websites.

Use of social media applications

The 54 tented camps and game lodges within and near Masai Mara National Reserve were studied with regard to their presence on four major social media applications: Facebook, Instagram, microblogging platform Twitter and video sharing platform YouTube. The findings are presented in subsections for each social media application.
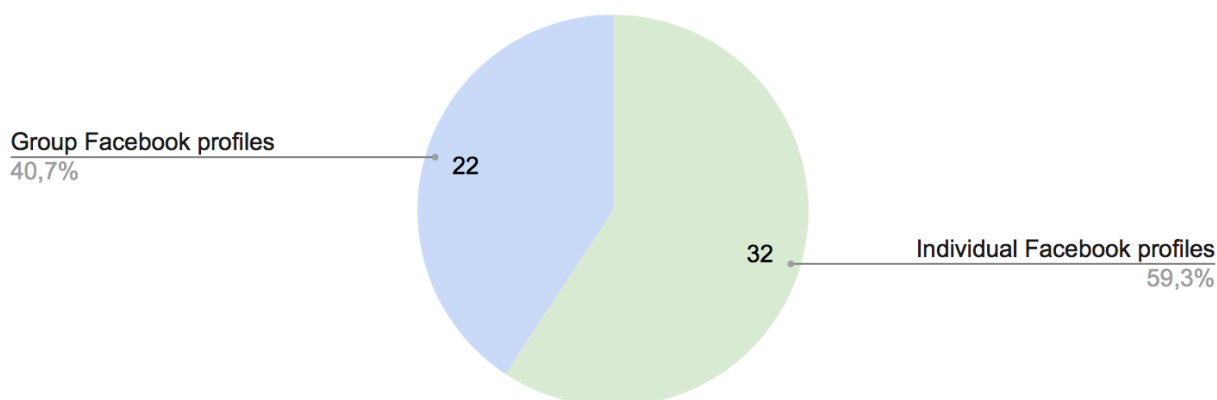
Facebook

The presence of the tented camps and game lodges on Facebook is shown in Figure 5. Although three of the accommodation facilities don't have links to Facebook on their websites,

they do have Facebook profiles, meaning 100% of the properties within the sample are present on this social network. Some members of hotel chains or collections have both an individual and a group profile, however, only one of them is being regularly updated at the present time, and therefore only the active profile is considered in the results in such cases.

Figure 5

Presence of the tented camps and game lodges on Facebook

These findings show that, despite being a part of a group or a collection of properties, 13 of the tents and lodges have opted for a separate account on Facebook. Three of them are members of international chains, another three belong to collections with accommodation facilities in several African countries, and seven are a part of groups of properties in Kenya. Nonetheless, most of the camps and lodges affiliated with other properties, namely 63%, are represented on Facebook by group accounts.
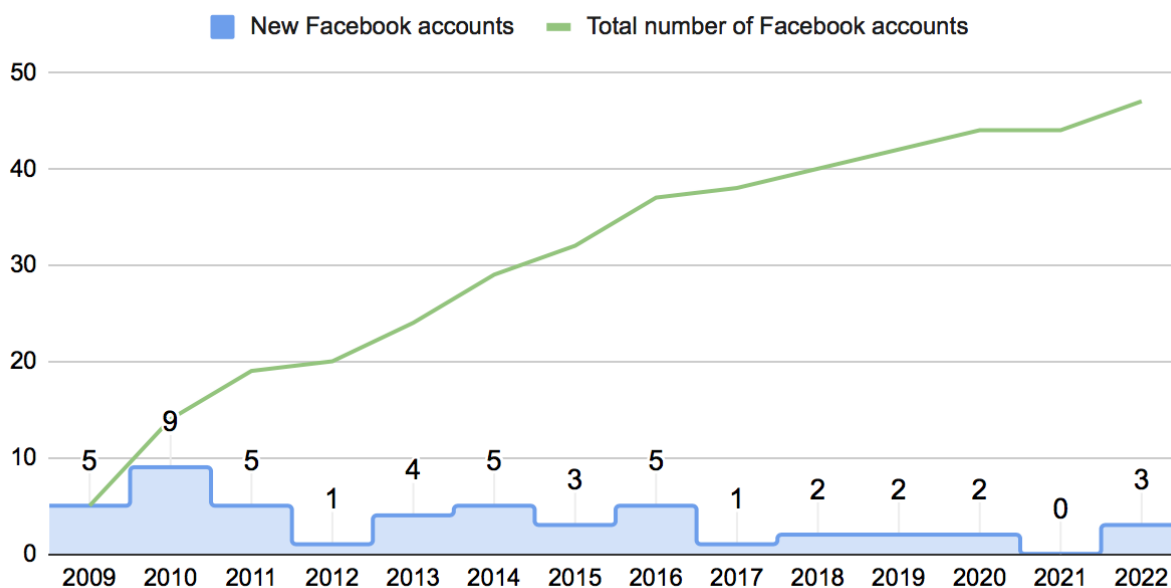
Further analysis included unique profiles with content relevant to the camps and lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve. Some of the camps and lodges within the sample are presented by

the same profiles on Facebook, and the total number of unique profiles is 48. One Facebook group account was excluded from analysis as its content was mostly designated to other hotels of the chain and insignificantly related to the accommodation facility in the Reserve, leaving 47 profiles.

The first Facebook profile was registered in 2009, the latest one was created in 2022. Figure 6 shows the timeline for the registration of the Facebook accounts with the number of new profiles and the total number of existing profiles for each year. Over one half of the accounts, namely 24, existed already in 2013. And by 2017 over 80% of the accounts were registered. This indicates that Facebook has been a significant part of the social media strategy of the camps and lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve for the past decade.

Figure 6

*Timeline for registration of Facebook accounts by camps and lodges*

Out of the 47 Facebook profiles only one has not been updated in 2023, the rest 46 accounts are considered to be actively in use at the time of this research and were included in the further analysis.

The number of posts on the 46 profiles was registered for the period from 1st of January 2023 until 31st of May 2023. The distribution of the Facebook accounts according to the average number of posts per month is shown in Figure 7. Posts without content, such as updates of profile or cover pictures, were not included in the analysis. The results show that 27 Facebook profiles or 59% are not updated more often than 10 times per month, and only two accounts or 4% post new content every day or even several times a day. Thus, the majority of the tented camps and lodges follow similar strategies with regard to frequency of Facebook posts.

Figure 7

Frequency of Facebook posts
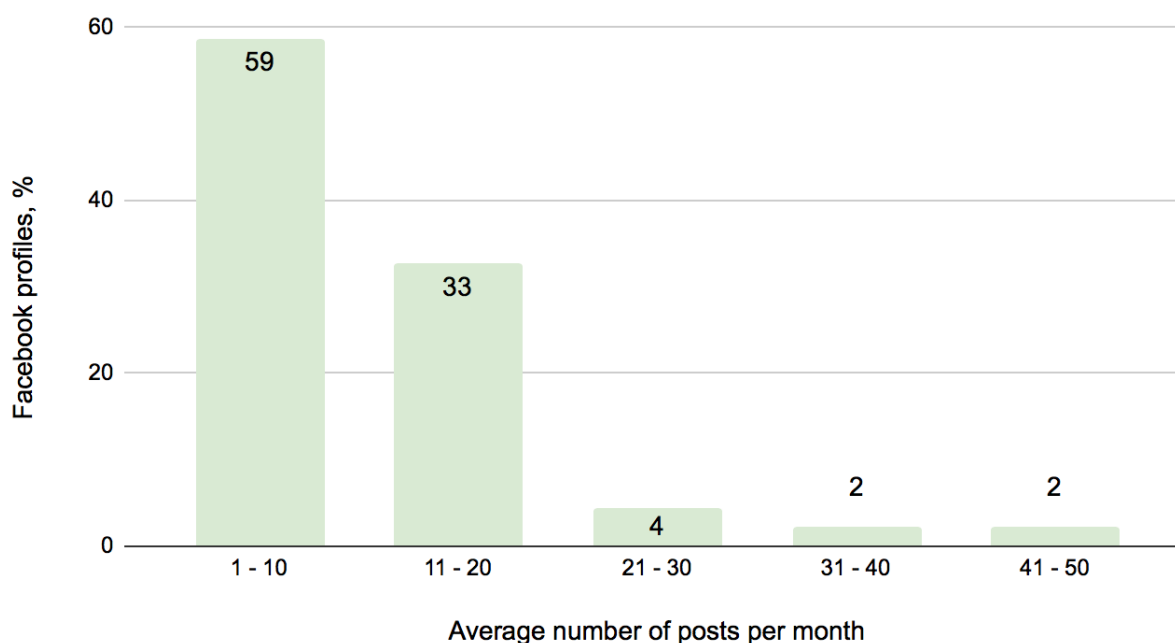
The number of likes and the number of followers was registered for the examined Facebook accounts as they are considered to be important metrics for this social network performance with regard to marketing. The number of likes shows how many people have publicly supported or shown interest in a business Facebook page, while the number of followers indicates how many people are interested in receiving content updates from a company or an organization. The findings show high variability within the sample. The number of likes on the examined Facebook pages varies from just above two hundred to several hundreds of thousands, the median value being around 6000. The range of the number of followers extends from below 500 to almost three hundred thousand, and the median is nearly 7000. Such variability indicates that although all the camps and lodges in the sample are present on Facebook, their use of this social network is guided by different social media marketing strategies and is characterized by highly varying performance.

The role of Facebook as a social media marketing channel among the tented camps and lodges was also assessed by registering the pages which were running paid advertisement campaigns on this social network during data collection period. The Meta Ad Library was used as the data source. It was established that seven Facebook pages had active paid advertisements in the spring and summer of 2023. These seven Facebook pages correspond to 14,8% of the tented camps and lodges within the sample.

Since the advertisement tools on Facebook and Instagram are integrated, these results are also true for the use of Instagram as all the registered advertisement campaigns were running on both platforms.

Instagram

Figure 8 demonstrates how the tented camps and game lodges are presented on Instagram. Similar to the website integration inconsistencies observed for Facebook, 100% of the facilities have Instagram profiles, even though not all of them have links to this social media application on their websites.

Figure 8

Presence of the tented camps and game lodges on Instagram
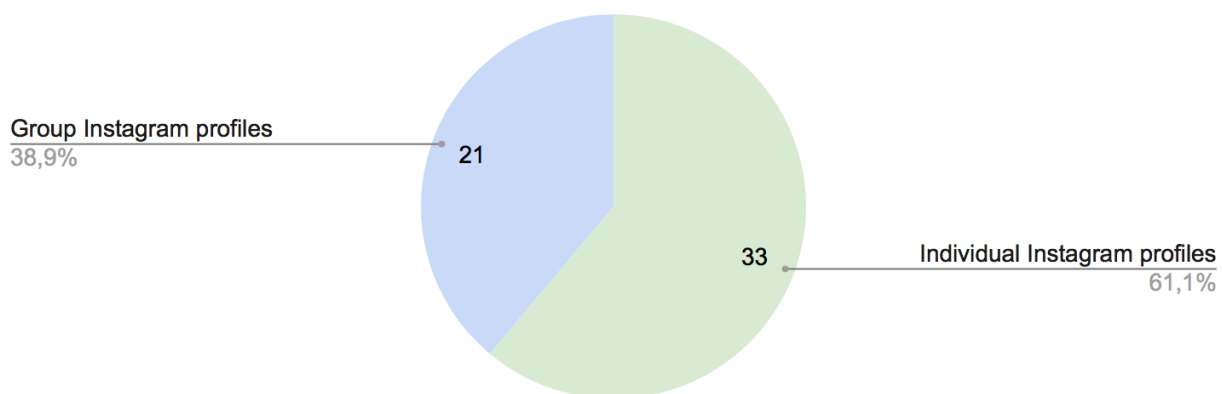
The numbers of individual and group profiles on Instagram are almost identical to the respective numbers of Facebook profiles, and almost all the properties are presented on these two social media platforms in the same way, that is either as a member of a certain group of properties or as a stand-alone accommodation facility. However, in four cases the type of the profiles on Instagram and Facebook is different. In addition, one camp has two actively updated Instagram profiles, an individual and a group one, the individual profile was counted in the

results in its case. Thus, 40% of the camps and lodges which are members of hotel chains and collections prefer to be presented as separate entities on Instagram.

A total number of 48 unique Instagram profiles were identified as some of the accounts are shared by several accommodation facilities within the sample. One account was excluded as irrelevant due to the same reasons as in the case with Facebook. This way a total number of 47 Instagram profiles were taken into further analysis.

The timeline for registration of these 47 profiles on Instagram is given in **Figure 9**. The earliest registered account was created in 2012, the newest one was registered in 2022.

Figure 9

*Timeline for registration of Instagram accounts by camps and lodges*
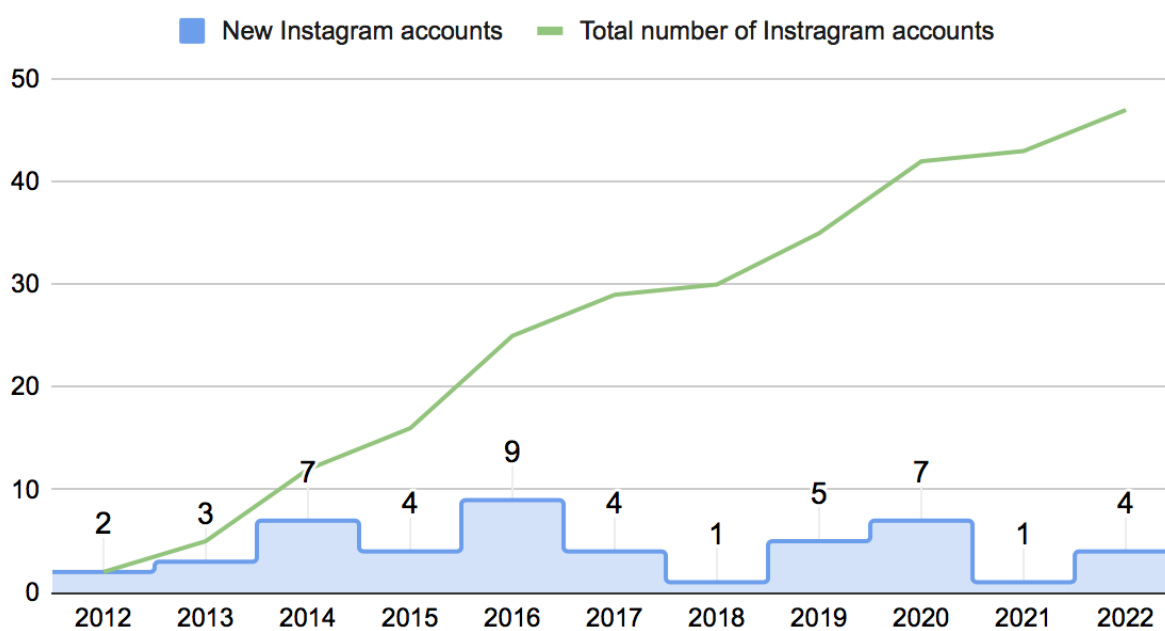
Four of the 47 profiles have not been updated in 2023, resulting in a total of 43 active Instagram profiles eligible for further analysis.

The frequency of Instagram updates was measured by registering the average number of new posts each month from 1st of January 2023 until 31st of May 2023, the results are presented in Figure 10. It is evident that the distribution of the Instagram profiles according to the posting frequency is almost identical to Facebook. This is explained by the high integration of these two social media platforms that allows posting simultaneously on both platforms. Observations made during data collection confirm that most posts on the Facebook and Instagram profiles of the majority of the camps and lodges are the same.

Figure 10

Frequency of Instagram posts
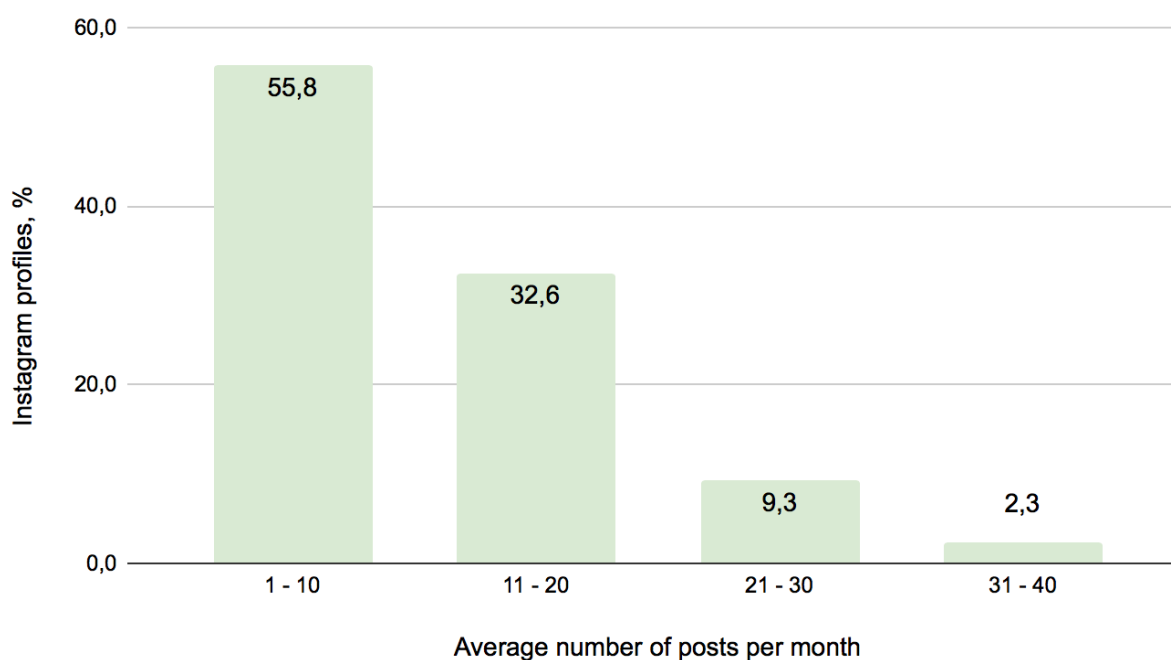
The Instagram accounts of the tented camps and game lodges were also evaluated with regard to the number of followers. The results show that this number ranges from over a hundred

to more than 150000, with most values at the low end, the median is just below 5000 followers. Ten of the profiles have over 15000 followers, and the number of followers for five of them exceeds 35000. That means that the majority of the examined Instagram profiles, namely 22 profiles or 51%, do not have more than 5000 followers at the present time, but have a potential to reach a larger audience.

As on Facebook, seven of the examined accounts were using the paid advertisement option on Instagram in the spring and summer of 2023. In addition, one account had information about a paid advertisement campaign only on Instagram in 2021. This indicates again that only a small number of the tented camps and lodges in and near Masai Mara National Reserve are currently using Facebook and Instagram as channels for advertisement. This number in percent with regard to the total number of the accommodation facilities within the sample is 14,8%, similar to the percent of the tented camps and lodges running paid advertisement campaigns on Facebook..

Twitter

Figure 11 shows the numbers of the accommodation facilities with and without accounts on the microblogging application Twitter. Out of the 54 tented camps and game lodges assessed in this study nine properties don't have Twitter accounts. The observations show that, among the other 45 facilities which are on Twitter, 22 have individual profiles, including seven members of hotel chains or collections. The other 23 camps and lodges have only group profiles for the brands that they are affiliated with.

Figure 11

*Presence of the tented camps and game lodges on Twitter*
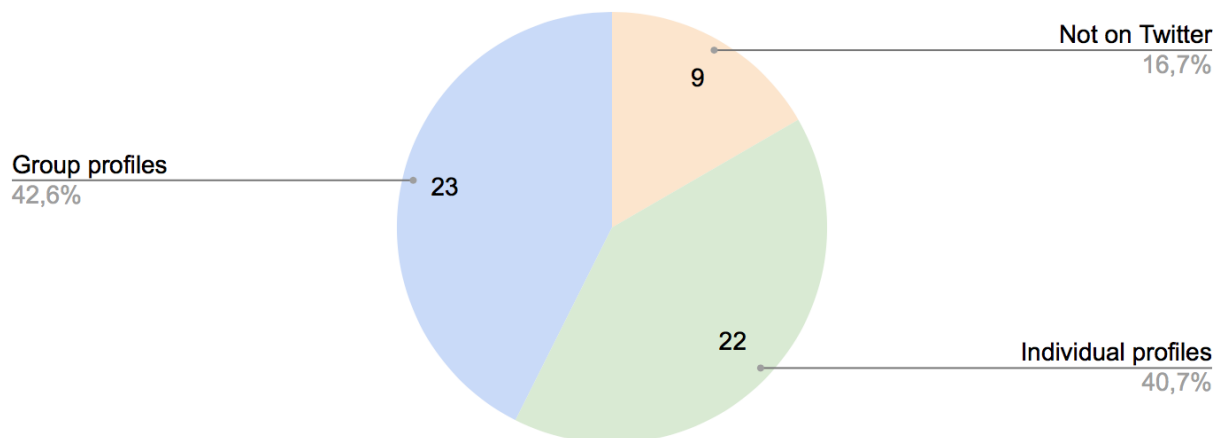
Several camps and lodges belong to the same hotel chains or collections and are presented on the same Twitter accounts, while some properties have both individual and group profiles. This brings the total number of Twitter accounts eligible for further analysis to 40.

The first Twitter account was registered in 2009, the most recent - in 2021. The number of new accounts as well as the total number of existing profiles for each year between 2009 and 2021 are given in Figure 12. It is noticeable that the companies registered on Twitter evenly through these years, and one half of all the assessed Twitter profiles already existed in 2013. This shows that Twitter is not a recent addition to the social media strategy of the camps and lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve, but has already been in use for over a decade.

Figure 12

Timeline for registration of Twitter accounts by camps and lodges
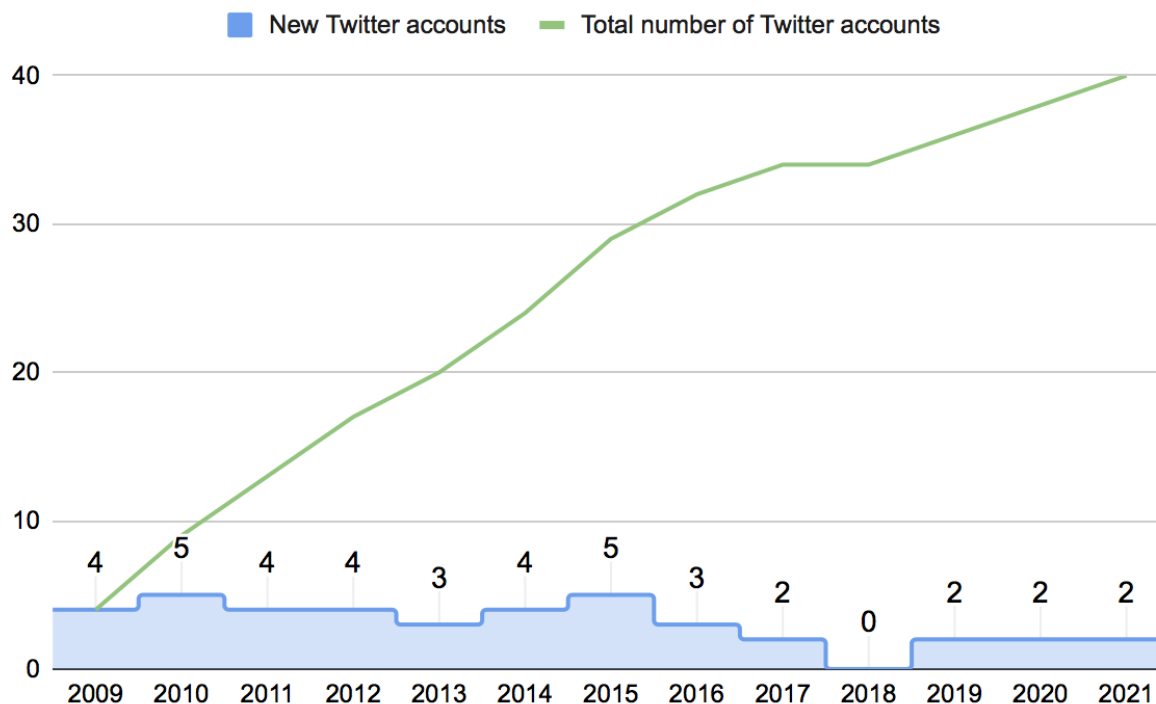
However, out of the 40 profiles only 20 were updated in late 2022 and in 2023 and can be considered currently active. Only six active Twitter accounts belong to individual properties, the other 14 are profiles for chains, groups or collections. Thus, out of the 54 assessed tented camps and game lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve only 50% are actively using Twitter at the time of this research, and 11,1% are present on this social media platform as separate entities.

Taking into account properties with the same websites, a total of 33 facilities or 61,1% had links to Twitter. This number is significantly higher compared to the results of the analysis of the Twitter accounts and clearly indicates that many of the links lead to Twitter profiles which

have not been updated since 2021 or even longer. It also supports the conclusion that Twitter is much less used by the camps and lodges than Facebook and Instagram.

The active Twitter profiles were further evaluated regarding the number of tweets and the number of followers. The data shows great variation in the number of tweets and the number of followers within the sample. The registered number of tweets varies from below ten to over 15000, the median value being just below 2000. The number of followers ranges from 20 to over a hundred thousand, with half of the accounts having less than 5000 followers. Such variation indicates that the examined accommodation facilities, even though present and active on this microblogging application, have different views on its importance and place in their marketing mix.

Number of tweets is an indicator of the company's investment into this social media application. Number of followers is an indicator of brand awareness. However, further information is required to make any conclusions about the performance of the examined Twitter profiles. For example, it is important to note how long the company has been present on Twitter in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing strategy. Since such evaluation is not a part of this study, it was not performed.

YouTube

The numbers of the tented camps and game lodges registered and not registered on video sharing platform YouTube are presented in Figure 13. Eight out of the 54 accommodation facilities examined in this study are not present on YouTube. 33 of the camps and lodges have group channels featuring all the properties in the respective portfolios, and the other 13 have individual YouTube channels. Unlike the other social media applications, in case with YouTube none of the members of hotel chains and collections have a separate individual channel.

Figure 13

Presence of the tented camps and game lodges on YouTube
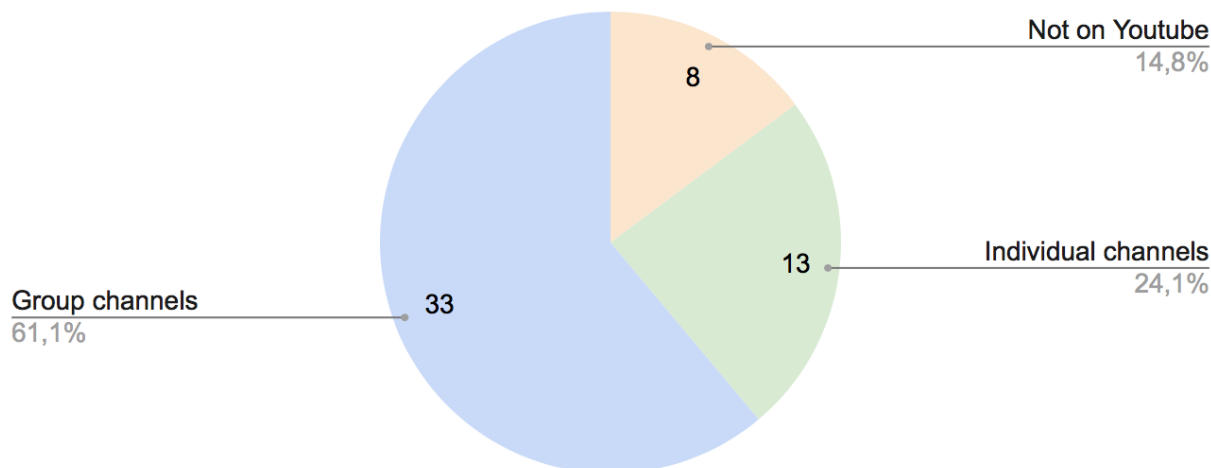
Since several facilities within the sample belong to the same groups or collections, they share the same YouTube channels. Therefore, further evaluation included a total of 37 YouTube channels.

The first YouTube channel was created in 2007, and the most recent registrations happened in 2022. The number of new channels as well as the total number of existing channels for each year between 2007 and 2022 are presented in Figure 14. More than half of the channels, namely 24, were created by 2015. This implies that this video sharing platform has long been a part of the social media strategies of the camps and lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve.

Figure 14

Timeline for registration of YouTube channels by camps and lodges
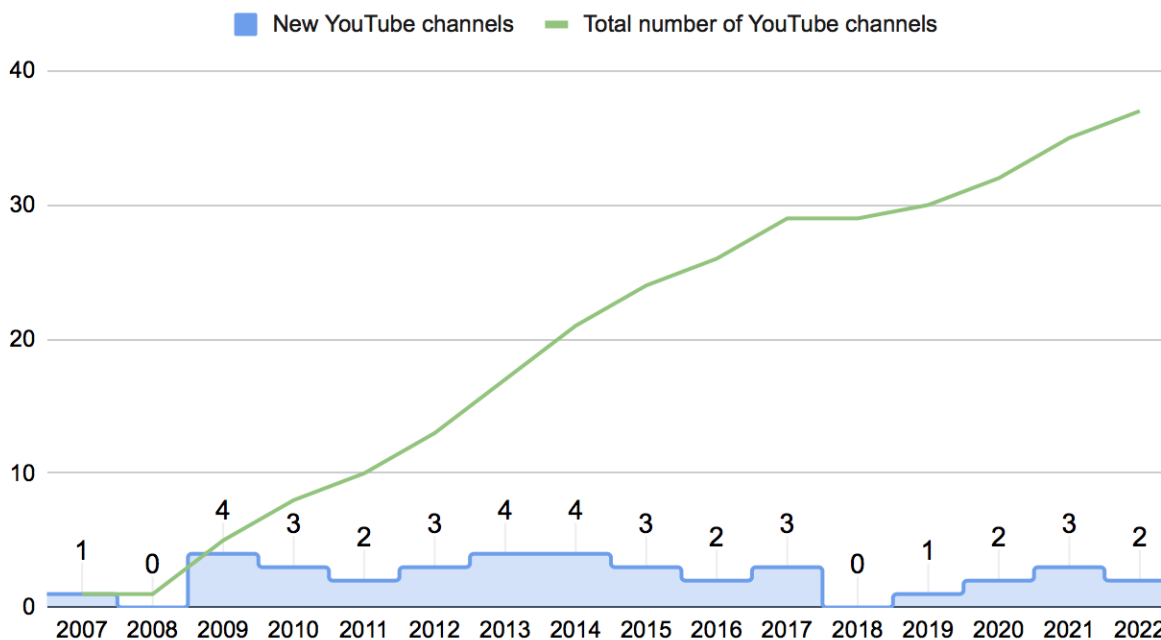
The number of published videos and the number of subscribers to the channels vary to a great degree. Some channels have only one video, while others have several hundreds. The range of the number of subscribers extends from just a few people to tens of thousands. This variability shows that, despite being present on YouTube, not all the accommodation facilities actively incorporate this social media platform into their marketing strategies.
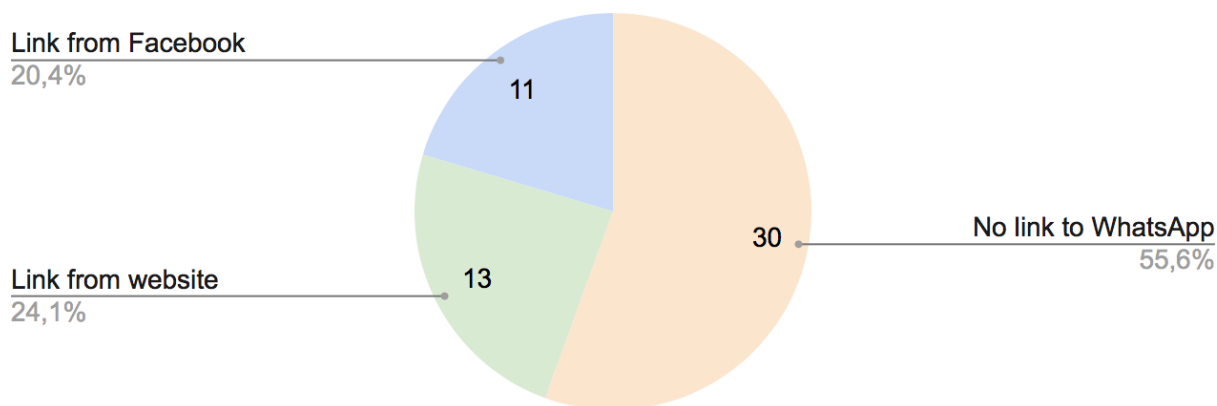
WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a popular messenger worldwide, and its use is especially widespread in many African countries, including Kenya. WhatsApp allows creating business accounts, and taking contact with a company by WhatsApp is an option that many local and regional customers would consider useful. This messenger is a part of Meta and can be integrated with Facebook

pages as a contact option. The analysis of the websites and the Facebook pages of the tented

camps and lodges revealed the facilities which provide WhatsApp contact option, and the results

are shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15

Presence of the tented camps and game lodges on WhatsApp

Less than half of the tented camps and game lodges within the sample provide an option

to contact them by WhatsApp. The rest of the facilities, that is 44,5%, are offering this option

either directly on their websites or from their Facebook pages. It is important to note that these

results do not state that the majority of the camps and lodges do not use this social media

application, barely that they do not have a link to WhatsApp present either on their websites or

the Facebook pages.

Sustainability focus on social media

Sustainability focus was assessed on the social networks Facebook and Instagram as

these are the most used social media applications within the sample. Content analysis was

performed on the posts of the tented camps and lodges in the period from the 1st of January 2023 until the 31st of May 2023. The results of analysis indicate that the majority of the tented camps and lodges in Masai Mara National Reserve do not only pledge to sustainable tourism and provide information about their efforts on their websites, but also actively promote this message through social media.

The content of the Facebook and Instagram posts was assessed with regard to information about wildlife and habitat conservation and preservation projects, protection of cultural heritage, support of the local communities, integration of green practices and other contributions to the development of sustainable tourism in the region. The results, as demonstrated in Figure 16, show that over 50% of both Facebook and Instagram active profiles contained at least one post featuring sustainability efforts and initiatives in 2023.

Figure 16

Sustainability focus on Facebook and Instagram

Due to the large number and high variety of the posts related to sustainable and responsible tourism only some examples are provided in this report. These examples aim to provide an overview of the issues raised by the camps and lodges on their Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Community outreach and giving back initiatives were featured in the social media posts that mentioned sponsoring education of the children in Narok county, distributing milk at the local schools, providing clean water supply for the neighboring communities, employing staff members and guides from local communities.

Content related to the importance of land preservation in Masai Mara National Reserve included posts featuring camp employees or camp guests planting trees as a part of the habitat restoration initiative. This also indicates that tourists are encouraged to actively participate in the sustainability projects in the Reserve along with the camps and lodges.

Many wildlife conservation projects were featured in the analyzed posts. Some accommodation providers advertise not only their own, but also others' wildlife conservation efforts, including posting information about documentaries addressing issues relevant to the wildlife in Masai Mara National Reserve.

Content addressing global issues such as climate change and carbon footprint of a traveler was also present on the examined social media profiles. Women's empowerment was mentioned in the posts featuring female guides working at the camps and lodges. Posts about green practices included information about the use of solar power, including solar powered safari vehicles, reusable water bottles for the guests and zero waste policies.

When the social network accounts are assigned back to the 54 tented camps and lodges in the sample, the results indicate that 30 of the facilities or 55,6% make a statement related to

sustainability goals by the means of social media. It is necessary to mention that the rest of the accommodation facilities which are also active on social media generate content about the animals that can be seen on game drives, about the Reserve itself and about the Maasai culture and traditions. This way they make indirect contributions to increase the awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation and protection of cultural heritage in Masai Mara National Reserve.

Summary of key findings

The research sample in this study included 54 tented camps and game lodges located within Masai Mara National Reserve and next to its boundaries. Their websites and social media profiles were examined, and the results of the conducted research show that:

- 100% of the camps and lodges have accounts on social media platforms Facebook and Instagram, which makes these two applications the main channels of the social media marketing within the sample

- 14,8% of the facilities are currently running paid advertisement campaigns on Facebook and Instagram

- 85,2% of the camps and lodges have Youtube channels

- 61,1% of the camps and lodges have links to Twitter on their websites, but only 50% have been updating their Twitter accounts in 2023

- 44,5% of the camps and lodges offer WhatsApp as a contact option

- 62,5% of the camps and lodges have references to Tripadvisor on their websites

- 55,6% of the camps and lodges use their social media profiles to promote sustainable tourism development

Discussion

This chapter discusses reliability and validity with regard to this study as well as limitations of the conducted research. It includes critical evaluation of the answers to the stated research questions which the conducted research provides.

Reliability and validity

As explained by Neuman (2014), reliability refers to consistency of the data obtained by a measure, in other words high reliability implies that the same results would be achieved under similar circumstances if the measurements were repeated. Validity, on the other hand, refers to the question of whether the research is actually measuring the concept it is intended to examine. High levels of both reliability and validity are desirable in any research as that gives credibility to the findings, however estimating them in a non-quantitative study, such as this one, can be problematic for the researcher (Neuman, 2014).

Concepts measured in this research project were specific and easy to observe directly, thus making it easier to achieve high reliability (Neuman, 2014). On the other hand, this research used social media metrics in analysis which is a sort of secondary data, and, according to Neuman (2014), reliability in this case can be an issue. However, social media metrics provided directly by respective social media applications are widely used for various purposes, and the reliability of the specific metrics analyzed in this study does not raise any concerns.

Neuman (2014) states that reliability of content analysis, which this research project is mainly based on, depends largely on the applied coding. Manifest coding (simply registering presence of certain content) tends to have high reliability, but may lack in validity. Latent coding (identifying and registering underlying meaning in content), on the other hand, is considered to have lower reliability and higher validity (Neuman, 2014). It is reasonable to state that a

combination of manifest and latent coding systems was used in this study. The coding procedures were followed consistently and carefully, and the measured concepts were of visible and easy to identify nature, which implies higher reliability. In addition, the analysis was performed by a person and not a computer program, which made content analysis more reflected and increased validity.

Higher reliability and higher validity of a study can be also achieved by implementing various verification techniques (Morse et al., 2002). Such techniques imply systematic data checks and keeping focus during the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. This way it is possible to adjust the research process for eventual errors and obtain higher reliability and validity. In this study the sources were examined systematically, consistency within the data set was constantly monitored and necessary additional checks were done when required.

Validity is also affected by the sampling technique. Purposive sampling is intended to provide in-depth information about a certain group of people or cases. Being a nonrandom sampling technique, its potential for generalization of the research results is highly limited (Etikan et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the results in this study are applicable to the same type of accommodation facilities located further from the Reserve in the Greater Mara ecosystem. They form a rather homogeneous group with the camps and lodges within the sample in this study.

Limitations

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. The first of them is related to the time sensitive nature of the analyzed data. The results of this study are answering the research questions based on the data that was available when it was collected. However, some social media content and metrics used as data inputs in the analysis are subject to fast changes. It is especially true for the data from Meta Ad Library as companies may, although

unlikely, start and stop running ads at any point in time. It would be beneficial to use another source of information to estimate the extent of use of paid advertising options on Facebook and Instagram.

The second limitation is caused by the nonreactive research design. Although content analysis provided answers to the research questions, adding other data collection methods would greatly complement the study by providing deeper insight in addition to increasing its reliability and validity. The original research project included a survey administered to the managers at the accommodation facilities within the sample, however, the sufficient response rate was not achieved. Given the time-consuming nature of the content analysis, the decision was made to focus on this data collection method. Therefore, the received answers from the managers, despite providing valuable information, could not be incorporated in this study to the full potential of the data. The survey would provide an insight into the business managers' perspective towards the role of social media marketing in their operations, and is highly recommended to be conducted in future research.

Conclusion

This final chapter provides recommendations for the stakeholders, which might be of interest to the managers of the tourist facilities in Masai Mara National Reserve and in the neighboring conservancies, Kenya government departments, including Narok county, and other agencies and associations involved in the tourism industry in the region. Recommendations for the future research based on the results of the present study are also presented in this chapter.

Recommendations for interested parties

This study showed that the extent of social media use among the tourist facilities in Masai Mara National Reserve is very high. Considering the current influence of social media on the travelers' decision making, it is a marketing channel of great importance. The camps and lodges in the region not implementing social media marketing are therefore at disadvantage compared to their competitors. It is recommended that managers not yet familiar with the world of social media marketing consider its benefits, and those already present on social media evaluate the effectiveness of their strategy and make necessary adjustments.

The research revealed some inconsistencies with regard to the integration of social media with the websites of the tented camps and game lodges. The recommendation is for the managers to look into it in more detail.

The tented camps and game lodges proved to be great contributors to the promotion of sustainable tourism in Masai Mara National Reserve. They are not only providing information about various partnerships and projects on their websites, but also actively use social media to broadcast the message about the importance of wildlife, habitat and cultural heritage in the Reserve to the larger audiences of their followers. It is recommended that other stakeholders

consider their level of expertise in using social media and continue collaboration with that in mind for greater common benefits in the future.

Recommendations for future research

This research project provides an insight into the extent to which social media is present in the marketing by the accommodation providers in Masai Mara National Reserve. Investigating the performance of the applied social media marketing strategies is suggested as a further field of research that would benefit the tourism industry locally as well as in other wildlife destinations in the country.

Considering that Masai Mara National Reserve is a part of the Greater Mara ecosystem, and that this study implemented purposive sampling with geographical criteria, it would be beneficial for future research to include the accommodation facilities in all the conservancies in the region to provide a better overview of the current use of digital and social media marketing by the local camps and lodges.

It is also recommended to conduct further research to get an insight into the managers' perspective on the use of social media and the challenges they are facing when implementing social media marketing strategies. Such research would contribute to the industry and other interested parties in the region by mapping a path to more efficient use of resources and facilitating future investment planning.

With regard to sustainable tourism development, future research is recommended in assessing the impact of company-generated social media content on the perceptions of sustainability among the travelers. The present study showed that the message of sustainability is being actively communicated by the accommodation facilities, the question remains about the actual influence of this message on the tourists.

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Appendix A - List of the tented camps and game lodges in the sample

1. &Beyond Bateleur Camp
2. &Beyond Kichwa Tembo Tented Camp
3. AA Mara Lodge
4. Amani Mara Camp
5. Amazing Mara Camp
6. Angama Mara Lodge
7. Ashnil Mara Camp
8. Basecamp Masai Mara
9. Cottar's 1920s Safari Camp
10. Elewana Sand River Masai Mara Camp
11. Emboo River
12. Enaidura Luxury Camp
13. Enkewa Camp
14. Entim Camp Mara
15. Fairmont Mara Safari Club
16. Fig Tree Camp
17. Governors' Il Moran Camp
18. Governors' Camp
19. Governors' Private Camp
20. Ilkeliani Camp
21. Ishara Mara Camp
22. Julia's River Camp
23. Keekorok Lodge
24. Little Governors' Camp
25. Lorian Safari Camp
26. Mara Crossings Luxury Camp
27. Mara Duma Bush Camp
28. Mara Eden Safari Camp
29. Mara Engai Lodge
30. Mara Expedition Camp
31. Mara Explorer Camp
32. Mara Intrepids Camp
33. Mara Legends Camp
34. Mara Leisure Camp
35. Mara Ngenche Safari Camp
36. Mara Plains Camp
37. Mara Serena Safari Lodge
38. Mara Simba Lodge
39. Masai Mara Sopa Lodge
40. Matira Bush Camp
41. Naibor Camps
42. Rekero Camp
43. Sala's Camp
44. Sanctuary Olonana Safari Lodge
45. Sarova Mara Game Camp
46. Sekenani Camp Masai Mara
47. Sentinel Mara Camp
48. Serian Nkorombo Camp
49. Soroi Luxury Migration Camp
50. Soroi Mara Bush Camp
51. Soroi Mara Bush Private Wing
52. Tangulia Mara Camp
53. Tayari Luxury Tented Camp
54. Tipilikwani Mara Camp