

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN THE DECISION PROCESS OF VOLUNTEER TOURISTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Volunteer tourism involves tourists volunteering for part of or all their travels and includes direct interaction with the natural environment within a specific social setting. Non-promotional material has a greater impact on the volunteer tourist's ultimate decision to volunteer than promotional material (Easton & Wise, 2015). This research addressed the impact of social media in influencing volunteer tourists to participate in volunteer programmes in a developing country context, i.e. Namibia. Primary, qualitative data collection with the use of in-depth interviews from five selected volunteer tourism organisations (VTOs) in Namibia was undertaken. Volunteer tourists and VTO representatives were interviewed. This is a pioneer study of the influence of social media marketing on volunteer tourists and their decision (-making process) to participate in selected volunteer programmes in a developing country, i.e. Namibia. Main findings of the study include both volunteer tourists and VTOs considering social media presence and online interaction as a valuable platform to connect and share information. Facebook is considered as the most popular social media platform. VTOs strongly believe that social media marketing influences volunteer tourists' decision-making in participating in volunteer programmes and that it gives a definite competitive advantage over other VTOs who do not participate in social media marketing efforts. The majority of the volunteers interviewed, believe that past volunteers' reviews did influence them to participate in the programme and VTOs are encouraging volunteers to share experiences. The findings of the study may assist selected VTOs in developing countries in the development of social media marketing strategies.

Key terms in this study include:

- *Social Media* defined as, "... Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers ..." (Blackshaw, 2006).
- *Volunteer Tourism* defined as, "... individuals who are seeking a tourist experience that is mutually beneficial, that will contribute not only to their personal development but also positively and directly to the social, natural and/or economic environments in which they participate ..." (Wearing, 2001:1).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 BACKGROUND.....	1
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT	4
1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	4
1.5 ACADEMIC VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY.....	5
1.6 DELIMITATIONS.....	6
1.7 ASSUMPTIONS	7
1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS	8
CHAPTER 2: STRUCTURE FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW....	10
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
2.2 VOLUNTEER TOURISM.....	10
2.2.1 VOLUNTEER TOURISM DEFINED	10
2.2.2 VOLUNTEER TOURISM AS PART OF ALTERNATIVE TOURISM....	11
2.2.3 VOLUNTEER TOURISM TODAY	12
2.3 VOLUNTEER TOURISTS	14
2.3.1 VOLUNTEER TOURISTS DEFINED	14
2.3.2 VOLUNTEER TOURIST MOTIVATIONS.....	14
2.4 VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS	16
2.4.1 VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS DEFINED	16
2.4.2 VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS MARKETING APPROACHES	17
2.5 THE INTERNET	18
2.6 SOCIAL MEDIA.....	19
2.6.1 SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY	20
2.6.2 SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES	21
2.6.3 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING	22
2.6.4 SOCIAL MEDIA IN TRAVEL INFORMATION SEARCH	24
2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE VOLUNTEER TOURISM INDUSTRY	26
2.8 THE TRADITIONAL PURCHASING FUNNEL AND THE CONSUMER DECISION JOURNEY MODEL.....	27
2.8.2 THE CONSUMER DECISION JOURNEY MODEL.....	28

2.8.1 THE TRADITIONAL PURCHASING FUNNEL	30
2.8.3 THE ZERO MOMENT OF TRUTH.....	31
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS	34
3.1 CASE STUDIES OF THE SELECTED VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS.....	34
3.1.1 AMANI DEVELOPMENT CENTRE NAMIBIA IN WINDHOEK.....	35
3.1.2 ELEPHANT HUMAN RELATIONS AID IN SWAKOPMUND.....	36
3.1.3 HARNAS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION NEAR GOBABIS	37
3.1.4 N/A'AN KU SÊ WILDLIFE FOUNDATION NAMIBIA.....	38
3.1.5 OKUTALA AFRICAN QUEST	39
3.1.6 CONCLUSION	39
3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM / PHILOSOPHY	40
3.3 DESCRIPTION OF ENQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN	41
3.3.1 A DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY'S STRATEGY OF ENQUIRY	41
3.3.2 THE BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ...	41
3.3.3 THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY	42
3.4 SAMPLING.....	43
3.4.1 TARGET POPULATION, CONTEXT AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS.....	43
3.4.2 SAMPLING METHODS.....	44
3.4.3. SAMPLE SIZE.....	45
3.5 DATA COLLECTION.....	46
3.5.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS.....	46
3.5.2 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS.....	47
3.5.3 MEASUREMENT	48
3.5.4 PRE-TESTING OF DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS.....	49
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN.....	49
3.7 ASSESSING AND DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN	50
3.7.1 ERRORS IN DATA COLLECTION.....	50
3.7.2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	50
3.8 RESEARCH ETHICS	51
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS ON VOLUNTEER TOURISTS AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS	53

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	53
4.1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ANALYSIS	53
4.2 INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE INFORMATION OF THE VOLUNTEER TOURISTS.....	57
4.2.1 INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ANALYSIS	57
4.3 DATA COLLECTED FROM THE VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS' REPRESENTATIVES.....	68
4.3.1 QUESTION 1: DO YOU CONSIDER SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AS A USEFUL BUSINESS TOOL?.....	68
4.3.2 QUESTION 2: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INFLUENCES VOLUNTEER TOURISTS' DECISION-MAKING IN PARTICIPATING IN VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES?	69
4.3.3 QUESTION 3: DO YOU MAKE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TO ATTRACT PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEERS OR TO RETAIN PAST VOLUNTEERS?.....	70
4.3.4 QUESTION 4: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PAST VOLUNTEERS' INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION (E.G. SOCIAL MEDIA SHARED MATERIAL, FACEBOOK REVIEWS, TRIP ADVISOR COMMENTS, BLOGS, ETC.) CAN INFLUENCE THE VOLUNTEER TOURIST TO PARTICIPATE IN AN OFFERED VOLUNTEER TOURISM PROGRAMME?	71
4.3.5 QUESTION 5: ON WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE YOU CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN?.....	72
4.3.6 QUESTION 6: WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM DO YOU CONSIDER AS MOST EFFECTIVE?.....	73
4.3.7 QUESTION 7: WHAT IS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY?	74
4.3.8 QUESTION 8: WHAT CONTENT ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DO YOU FIND USERS ENGAGE MORE IN?	75
4.4 DISCUSSION.....	76
4.4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TYPICAL VOLUNTEER TOURIST IN NAMIBIA.....	77
4.4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	78
4.4.3 PROPOSED SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY CONTEXT WITH REFERENCE TO NAMIBIA.....	80
4.5 CONCLUSION	82
4.6 RECOMMENDATIONS	83
CHAPTER 5: LIST OF REFERENCES	85

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: List of all volunteer tourism organisations in Namibia	97
APPENDIX B: Ethical Considerations	99
APPENDIX C: Extractions of the selected VTO websites	101
APPENDIX D: The Consumer Decision-Making Journey Model	104
APPENDIX E: The In-Depth Interview Schedule for the volunteer tourist currently participating in the programme	106
APPENDIX F: The In-Depth Interview Schedule for the volunteer tourism organisation's representative	111
APPENDIX G: Informed consent form for the in-depth interviews.....	114
APPENDIX H: Signed request to conduct research at organisations: Amani Development Centre Namibia, Elephant Human Relations Aid, Harnas Wildlife Foundation, N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation and Okutala African Quest	116
APPENDIX I: Application for Research Ethics Clearance	118

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Abbreviations used in this document.....	vii
Table 2: Sample sizes achieved by selected VTOs and their volunteer tourists	45
Table 3: Research questions matched with the in-depth interview schedules.....	48
Table 4: Content on social media platforms that influence volunteer tourists.....	66
Table 5: Content that VTOs believe engages volunteer tourists more with	75
Table 6: Social media marketing and application in the study context	81

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Contributions to transformative experiences from main tourism sectors ...	12
Figure 2: Social Media marketing platforms	23
Figure 3: Purposes of Social Media	24
Figure 4: The General Consumer's Decision-Making Process.....	25
Figure 5: The Consumer Decision Journey Model	30
Figure 6: The Traditional Purchasing Funnel	31
Figure 7: The New Consumer Decision Journey Today	32
Figure 8: 'Act of Sharing' in the New Consumer Decision Journey Today Model.....	33
Figure 9: Namibia's position on a World map.....	34
Figure 10: Map of Namibia indicating the wildlife VTOS selected for this study	35
Figure 11: Gender distribution amongst participant volunteer tourists	53
Figure 12: Frequency of the different age group intervals of participants.....	54
Figure 13: The distribution of the participants based on their nationality.....	55
Figure 14: Highest qualification obtained by the participants	56
Figure 15: Current occupational situation of the participants.....	56
Figure 16: Channels where the volunteer tourist found out about the selected VTO	57
Figure 17: Length of time volunteer tourists spent at the VTO (per volunteer)	58
Figure 18: Various social media pages of selected VTOs that have been consulted	59
Figure 19: When the volunteer tourist consulted the VTO's social media pages.....	60
Figure 20: Past volunteers' information influencing volunteer tourists to participate	62
Figure 21: Content on social media platforms participants find most influential	65
Figure 22: Different social media platforms used by the selected VTOs	72

Listed in table 1 below are the descriptions of the abbreviations used consistently throughout this document.

Table 1: Abbreviations used in this document

Abbreviation	Meaning
ADC	Amani Development Centre
EHRA	Elephant Human Relations Aid
UGC	User-generated content
VTO	Volunteer Tourism Organisation

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN THE DECISION PROCESS OF VOLUNTEER TOURISTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

The volunteer tourism industry has received significant growth in the past two decades as people have become more willing to make a difference in the locations (environments, communities, towns) and the relationships they make (animals and humans). Volunteer tourism has grown substantially throughout the world and various definitions have emerged from the literature over this period. In a study conducted by Wearing (2001:1), he referred to volunteer tourism as an emerging form of “alternative tourism” where tourists volunteer for part of or all their travels and involves direct interaction with the natural environment or the local community within a specific social setting. Wearing (2001:1) also defined volunteer tourism as a combination of travel and work, attracting individuals who “... are seeking a tourist experience that is mutually beneficial, that will contribute not only to their personal development but also positively and directly to the social, natural and/or economic environments in which they participate ...”. The concept of volunteer tourism is to provide a reciprocal beneficial form of travel where the host community and the volunteer are able to gain from this experience.

Tourism is an information-intensive industry (Sheldon, 1997) and it is therefore, critical to understand how consumers access travel-related information and how technological changes impact on how tourism-related organisations conduct business (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). The information search of a tourist forms a significant part of the decision-making process and with the emergence of the Internet, tourists can reduce uncertainty and perceived risk, while enhancing the quality of their tours (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Volunteer tourists are increasingly motivated by specific

content or images in marketing material used by service providers in promoting their tourism product offerings (Grimm & Needham, 2012).

The volunteer tourism industry has been under much criticism regarding "... unrealistic marketing promotions focusing on the altruistic aspects of volunteering ..." (Smith & Font, 2014:943). Volunteer tourism service providers have the ability to shape volunteer tourists' perceptions, expectations and ultimately, their purchase decision through their marketing communications (Easton & Wise, 2015). To meet prospective volunteer tourists' needs, careful consideration must be given to specific marketing methods that influence the constantly changing trends within the industry. Volunteer tourists make use of traditional promotional material (managed by the volunteer tourism organisation) and non-traditional promotional material on "... social networking and media sites..." (also known as 'social media'; that includes electronic word of mouth, social networking websites, social media platforms and online service provider reviews) to find out about volunteering opportunities (Grimm & Needham, 2012:22). Social media includes the use of online information communication technologies (ICTs) by tourism organisations to improve the process of the information search, to destination/product consumption and post experience engagement (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Social media includes business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing and consumer-to-consumer (C2C) marketing. It is important to understand how different tourists perceive different tourism products and services as it enhances the possibilities to put suitable products forward (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Few researchers have explored the impact of social media on volunteer tourists' decision to travel.

This study aimed to explore the social media strategies used by volunteer tourism organisations in communicating with prospective and past volunteers and how these strategies impact the overall decision process of volunteer tourists to participate in specific volunteer programmes. The social media strategies and their impact is further discussed in the findings section.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Past research (Coghlan, 2007; Grimm & Needham, 2012) has studied the relationship between volunteer tourists' motivations and promotional material but does not include non-traditional promotional material in their studies. Easton and Wise (2015) found that non-promotional material, such as social media and user-generated content, has a greater impact on the volunteer tourist's ultimate decision to volunteer than promotional material, such as, the websites of volunteer tourism organisations. Therefore, the concept of social media marketing was explored in this study. Grimm and Needham (2012) specifically call for future research on perspectives from both the volunteer tourism organisations and the volunteer tourists through qualitative research methods for a better understanding of how non-traditional promotional materials impact on the entire volunteer tourism experience. Coghlan (2007) suggests future research through considering information gained by other sources, such as news reports, books and more specifically, opinions of friends and family. Munar and Jacobsen (2013) and Wearing and McGhee (2013) call for future research on the diversity of social media use among different cultures and the examination of dimensions of interactivity, reach and social cues. Hudson and Thal (2013) suggest future research through exploring consumer responses to digital media as it provides insights for the tourism provider (in this case, the volunteer tourism organisation) to enhance social media marketing communications. Van Zyl, Inversini, and Rega (2015) call for future research in the field of online representation of voluntourism, focussing on the social perimeters in the online domain, especially in the context of economically developing countries.

This research aimed to address the knowledge gap of the impact of social media (i.e. non-traditional promotional material) in influencing volunteer tourists' decisions to participate in selected volunteer programmes in a developing country, i.e. Namibia. The first objective (refer to par 1.4) endeavoured to determine whether social media platforms have an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme in Namibia.

1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT

This study explored the phenomenon of the volunteer tourism industry and its key role players, namely the host community who benefits from the volunteer activity, the volunteer tourism organisation who organises the different volunteer programmes and the volunteer tourist who participates in the volunteer programme. More concretely, the volunteering tourists were explored regarding their perceptions of social media marketing (e.g. social media platforms, electronic word-of-mouth, blogs, previous volunteers' reviews). Furthermore, in pursuit of a more detailed insight into volunteer tourists' perceptions in volunteer tourism marketing, the present study also developed an integrated social media marketing communications strategy for volunteer service providers. Few researchers have specifically addressed the influence of social media marketing in motivating volunteer tourists to decide to participate in volunteer tourism programmes. This study aimed to explore the different perceptions of volunteer tourists towards social media marketing in deciding to participate in selected volunteer tourism programmes in a developing country, i.e. Namibia.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study was guided by the following specific research objectives:

- To determine whether social media platforms have an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme.
- To determine whether social media marketing of the selected five volunteer tourism organisations had an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme.
- To determine whether past volunteers' reviews (e.g. social media shared material, Facebook reviews, Trip Advisor comments, blogs, etc.), as an information source, of the volunteer tourism organisation, has an influence on the decision-making of the prospective volunteer tourists.

- To develop an integrated social media marketing communications strategy for the selected volunteer tourism organisations.

1.5 ACADEMIC VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study made two valuable contributions to the existing body of knowledge in the field of volunteer tourism: Firstly, previous studies tended to only focus on promotional material's influence on the volunteer tourist's decision-making process to participate. This study provided a view of the volunteer tourist's experience through exploring their information search and decision-making process for a volunteer programme and through the consideration of non-traditional marketing material (e.g. social media platforms, online service provider review website). Secondly, this is a pioneer study of the influence of social media marketing on volunteer tourists and their decision (-making processes) to participate in selected volunteer programmes in a developing country, i.e. Namibia.

From a practical perspective, the findings may assist selected volunteer tourism organisations in developing countries (i.e. Namibia) in developing a social media marketing communications strategy for better communication of their programmes and conservation efforts. This strategy aims to attract, enrol, and retain loyal volunteer tourists through social media marketing. Volunteer service providers will be in the position to adapt, plan and manage the volunteer tourism marketing experience by understanding social media marketing communications that influence volunteers to participate in their programmes. Volunteer tourism organisations may also benefit from the strategy through the implementation of set methods to engage with past volunteers to share their experiences and engage with prospective volunteer tourists who want to participate in the offered programmes.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS

The study contained several delimitations related to the context, constructs and theoretical perspectives of the study. Delimitations of social media marketing include considering academic literature relating to volunteer tourism organisations' social media marketing. Two types of social media marketing were considered, namely, user-generated content and public applications and services. From the theoretical perspective, the Consumer Decision Journey Model (Hudson & Thal, 2013:157) was considered for this study. As mentioned previously, motivational functions and traditional marketing methods (e.g. websites) were not considered. This research only considered user-generated content and public applications and services as part of social media marketing.

Volunteer tourism forms part of the SAVE (Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Education) industry (Kask, Kline & Lamoureux, 2011) and is considered as a component of "alternative tourism" (Wearing, 2001:1). Specific consideration was given to selected volunteer tourism organisations in Namibia as a developing country. A range of programmes, such as, wildlife volunteering, medical volunteering, conservation volunteering and educational volunteering are offered by the different volunteer organisations; however, only wildlife volunteer programmes was explored in this study. The following wildlife volunteer tourism organisations in Namibia, as a developing country, have been selected for this study, namely, Amani Development Centre (ADC) Namibia, Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA), Harnas Wildlife Foundation, N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation, and Okutala African Quest. These organisations offer a range of programmes to any person who is willing to lend a helping hand in aid of wildlife conservation. The selected wildlife volunteer tourism organisations are significant to this study, because of the online presence and social media marketing efforts of the organisation. The volunteer tourism organisations in Namibia without any online presence or social media marketing were excluded from the study. The VTOs were also selected based on the criteria to ensure that the 'tourism' element was present and that the individual organisations engage in social media marketing and incorporate an online presence in general. Careful consideration was given when selecting VTOs for this study as the researcher is based in Windhoek,

Namibia. Due to distance constraints and the economic resources that accompany the travelling costs to the organisations, not all of the organisations in Namibia as a developing country, were explored (see Appendix A for the full list of volunteer tourism organisations in Namibia).

The study was conducted through collecting data from both local volunteering tourists and international volunteer tourists. The case studies discuss the selected volunteer tourism organisations, their programmes, and their volunteering efforts in terms of wildlife conservation.

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS

The study made certain assumptions about the volunteer tourist, the selected volunteer tourism organisations, and the use of social media platforms among volunteer tourists. As such, the following basic assumptions were made within the study:

- Volunteer tourists understand what is expected from them and what the goals of the volunteer tourism programme are;
- Qualitative research is an appropriate means to explore the phenomenon of volunteer tourism activities among currently participating volunteers and the volunteer tourism organisations enabling the activities;
- Qualitative data will be based on meanings expressed through words;
- Participants will be able to communicate in basic English, as the in-depth interviews will be conducted in English;
- The selected volunteer tourism organisations are aware of the impact of their social media marketing efforts in the online communities.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The study contains several key concepts, namely, consumer decision journey model, developing country, user-generated content (UGC), social media, social media marketing, social media platforms, volunteer tourism, volunteer tourism organisation (VTO) and Web 2.0. The key constructs used in this study are described in alphabetical order below.

Key terms include:

- *Consumer Decision Journey Model* developed by Hudson and Thal (2013:157) provides a "... sophisticated view on how consumers engage with brands through social media and digital marketing communication platforms ...".
- *Developing country* defined as, "... a country in decreasing order of economic growth or size of the capital market. Therefore, the least developed countries are the poorest of the developing countries. Developing countries have some characteristics, such as, health risks, low levels of access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, [low levels of energy resources], high levels of pollution, high proportion of people with tropical and infectious diseases and a high number of road traffic accidents. Often, there is also widespread poverty, low education levels, inadequate access to family planning services, corruption at all government levels and a lack of good governance ..." (Wikipedia, 2018).
- *User-generated content (UGC)* defined as, "... a mixture of fact and opinion, impression and sentiment, founded and unfounded titbits, experiences, and even rumour ..." (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006:4).
- *Social Media* defined as, "... Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers ..." (Blackshaw, 2006).
- *Social Media Marketing* defined as, "... an online marketing tool that enables marketers to efficiently and effectively communicate a brand's benefits, value

proposition and personality to its target audience ...” (Akar & Topcu, 2011:36; Tuten, 2008:56).

- *Social Media Platforms* include, “... social networks (e.g. Facebook), microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter), blogging sites (e.g. Travelblog) and review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor) ...” (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013:5).
- *Volunteer Tourism* defined as, “... individuals who are seeking a tourist experience that is mutually beneficial, that will contribute not only to their personal development but also positively and directly to the social, natural and/or economic environments in which they participate ...” (Wearing, 2001:1).
- *Volunteer Tourism Organisation* defined as, “... a wide range of organizations that are involved in engaging the volunteer tourist, including, tour operators, environmental and humanitarian Non-Government Organizations (NGO’s), and academic groups who offer volunteer tourists the opportunity to undertake projects that can assist in community development, scientific research, or ecological and cultural restoration ...” (Wearing & McGhee, 2013:124).
- *Web 2.0* defined as, “... developments in technology employed online that enable interactive capabilities in an environment characterised by user control, freedom and dialogue ...” (Tuten, 2008:3).

CHAPTER 2: STRUCTURE FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing efforts by volunteer tourism organisations (VTOs) influence volunteer tourists' perceptions and decision-making processes, therefore, careful consideration must be given to how programmes are promoted in a developing country, i.e. Namibia. The literature review will begin with the exploration of the volunteer tourism industry and how it can enhance sustainable development of volunteer programmes in the tourism industry. Secondly, the concepts around volunteer tourism, volunteer tourists and volunteer service providers will be discussed. Thirdly, the use of the Internet and social media marketing by volunteer tourism organisations will be explored. Lastly, the theoretical foundation of the study, the Consumer Decision Journey Today model (Hudson & Thal, 2013) will be discussed.

2.2 VOLUNTEER TOURISM

2.2.1 VOLUNTEER TOURISM DEFINED

The concept of volunteer tourism is a growing trend in the tourism industry (Brown, 2005; Nyahunzvi, 2013; Wearing, 2001; Wearing & McGhee, 2013). Various definitions of volunteer tourism exist today. Literature on volunteer tourism firstly focused primarily on the volunteer (Wearing & McGhee, 2013), the 'self' in volunteering (Wearing, 2001), volunteer motivations to participate (Benson & Seibert, 2009; Brown, 2005; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014; Pan, 2012; Pegg, Patterson & Matsumoto, 2012; Reynders, 2015; Smith, Cohen & Pickett, 2014), and profiling volunteers to certain destinations (Olivier, Davies & Joubert, 2015; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014). Thereafter, the literature focused on the destination where the volunteer tourism activities took place. The positive and negative impacts of volunteer tourism on host communities (Guttentag, 2009; Wearing, 2001), cross-cultural (mis)understanding (Raymond & Hall, 2008) and building effective relationships of

understanding between the VTO and tourists (Hammersley, 2014), have been explored.

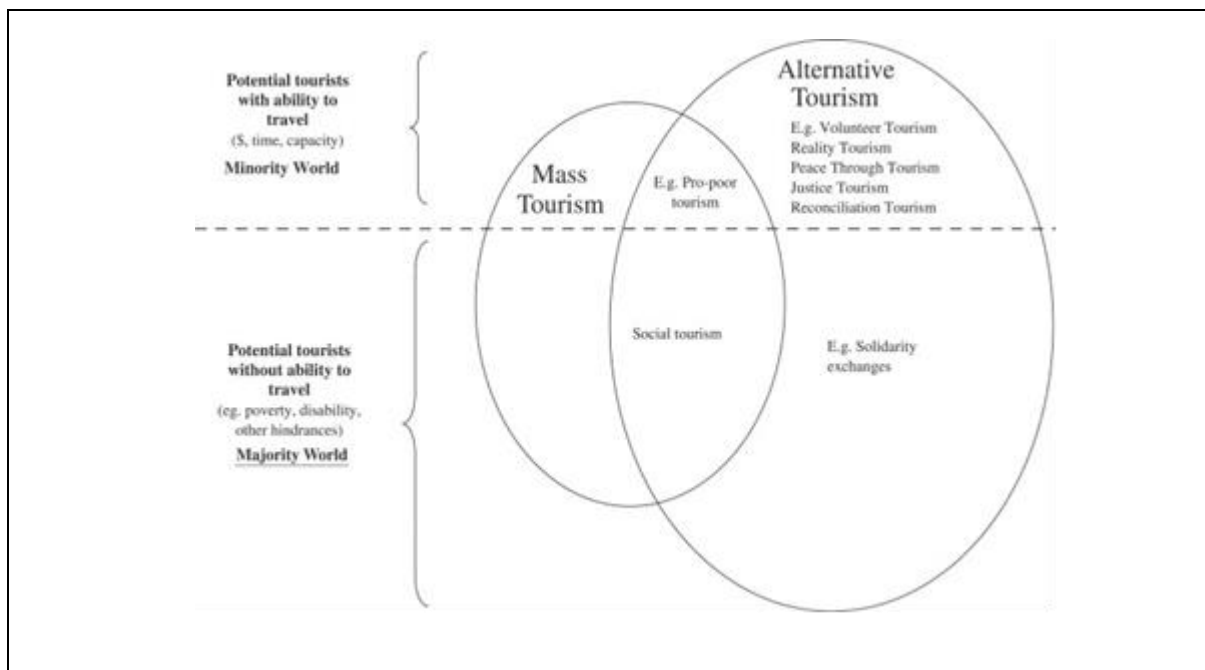
Many researchers have defined volunteer tourism, however there continues to be a lack of a universally accepted definition (Easton & Wise, 2015). Callanan and Thomas (2005:184) define volunteer tourism as an 'eclectic' tourism product and is 'multi-dimensional' in nature. Tomazos and Butler (2009:196) agree by defining volunteer tourism as a hybrid concept that brings together international volunteering and tourism with "... the practise of individuals going on a working holiday, volunteering their labour for a worthy cause ...". Wearing (2007:1) defines the purpose of volunteer tourism as "... aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society; the restoration of certain specific environments or research into aspects of society or environment ..." and involving volunteer tourists in some touristic activities. The first and most widely cited definition of volunteer tourism is by Wearing (2001:1) and is "... those tourists, who for various reasons, are seeking a tourist experience that is mutually beneficial, that will contribute not only to their personal development but also positively and directly to the social, natural and/or economic environments in which they participate ...". This definition of volunteer tourism acts as a useful interpretation of contemporary volunteer tourism and will be used in this study.

2.2.2 VOLUNTEER TOURISM AS PART OF ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

In the previous section, the concept of volunteer tourism was defined. In this section, the focus will be placed on the role that volunteer tourism plays in the tourism industry as a whole. Wearing (2001:12) views volunteer tourism as a "... development strategy leading to sustainable development and [that focusses on] the convergence of natural resource qualities, locals and the visitor that all benefit from [the] tourist activity ...". Volunteer tourism offers an alternative direction to direct profit objects by attracting tourists who seek to travel to destinations and engage in altruistic experiences while assisting the local communities in that destination (Wearing, 2001). Coghlan (2006) agrees with Wearing (2001) and adds that volunteer tourism can also fall within the realm of ecotourism. Wearing (2004:210) states that volunteer tourism existed long before the terms 'alternative tourism' and 'ecotourism' emerged, as the phenomenon

of travelling overseas to volunteer began nearly a century ago. In the late 20th century, international tourism grew to the point of mass tourism where international cultures were exposed to tourists in an exploited and uncontrolled manner. During this time period, the voluntary sector was also found to be growing. It was only until the 1980s that concepts such as, 'ecotourism', 'responsible tourism' and 'sustainable tourism' emerged as an alternative to mass tourism (Novelli, 2005). Figure 1 below illustrates volunteer tourism as part of the alternative tourism sector in which very few prospective tourists can participate in if they have the time, money, and capacity to do so (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006:1202).

Figure 1: Contributions to transformative experiences from main tourism sectors



Source: Higgins-Desbiolles (2006:1202).

Now that it has been established where volunteer tourism fits into the tourism industry, ways in which volunteer tourism impacts the industry today, can be evaluated.

2.2.3 VOLUNTEER TOURISM TODAY

The volunteer tourism industry brings positive impacts to the tourism destination, such as, revenue that the host community or volunteer tourism organisation generates, the completed work of the volunteers, environmental conservation efforts made, the

volunteers' personal growth and sense of achievement and the intercultural interaction between the host community and the volunteer tourists (Brown, 2005; Hammersley, 2014; McGhee, 2014; McIntosh & Zahra, 2008; Wearing, 2001; Wearing & McGhee, 2013). Although volunteer tourism is said to be a mutually beneficial relationship between volunteers and the organisations (Wearing, 2001), volunteer tourism has been receiving increasingly negative recognition (Barbieri, Santos & Katsube, 2012; Guttentag, 2009; Smith & Font, 2014; Tomazos & Cooper, 2012). Barbieri, Santos and Katsube (2012) found that there is a lack of carefully developed and facilitated structured volunteer work plans and tasks. This resulted in volunteers not knowing what to do and tasks being left incomplete. Guttentag (2009) identified some critical aspects of volunteer tourism that impacts negatively on the host community, such as, the neglect of the host community's needs, the hindering of work progress, the probability of unsatisfactory completed work, the decrease in local labour demand and the promotion of dependency on volunteers to do all the work. Smith and Font (2014:16) focused their research on the responsible marketing of volunteer tourism projects and concluded that the industry focuses mostly on "... choosing to communicate not what is arguably most important, but what is easiest and most attractive ...".

Nevertheless, volunteer tourism facilitators are growing, and volunteering programmes are expanding (Coghlan, 2007), especially in Africa and Central and South America have been identified as popular volunteering tourist regions (Barbieri *et al.*, 2012; Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism has made a large impact on the tourism industry and how we understand sustainable tourism practises, but for volunteer tourism to succeed, "... it has to be sustainable for both the social and natural environments of the area visited, while also not becoming another form of tourism based mainly on the commodification of at least partly altruistic intent ..." (Wearing & McGhee, 2013:127). The following section will discuss the different volunteer tourists that exist today and how they are motivated to participate in various volunteer tourism programmes, but firstly, the main component of the volunteering activity, the volunteer tourist, needs to be clearly defined.

2.3 VOLUNTEER TOURISTS

2.3.1 VOLUNTEER TOURISTS DEFINED

Volunteer tourists are “... persons seeking a tourist experience that is mutually beneficial, that will contribute not only to their individual development, but also positively and directly to the social, natural and economic context in which they are involved ...” (Wearing, 2004:214). Volunteer tourists see physical locations in developing countries as motivation in itself, but are simultaneously attracted by the many elements that make up the mainstream tourist experience and the introduction of the concept of making a difference (Blackman & Benson, 2010). Volunteer tourists form part of the all-important niche market in tourism, the SAVE (Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Educational) market (Kask, *et al.*, 2011). The SAVE market is distinct from the typical mass tourism market as activities are closely aligned to the improvement of the cultural and natural environment of a destination and therefore, requires close interaction with the local community (Kask, *et al.*, 2011). The SAVE market is important to a destination due to their general commitment to sustainable tourism practices (Kask, *et al.*, 2011), therefore, VTOs should carefully consider the motivations of volunteer tourists, in order to successfully attract and retain prospective volunteer tourists. These motivations to participation will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

2.3.2 VOLUNTEER TOURIST MOTIVATIONS

The study of motivation has been extensively researched by academics in the tourism, recreational and leisure fields, with emphasis on motivation as the “... driving force behind all behaviour ...” (Fodness, 1994:555). The volunteer tourist has generally been accepted by previous research as individuals seeking altruistic experiences, differing from the type of experience that the mass tourist seeks (Wearing & McGhee, 2013). Past research concluded that volunteer tourists consider the following four motives for volunteering whilst travelling: cultural immersion, a desire to give something back, seeking camaraderie during volunteer experiences and educational and bonding experiences (Brown, 2005; Chen & Chen, 2011; Grimm & Needham,

2012). Reynders (2015) concluded in her study of community and wildlife volunteer tourists' motivational factors in South Africa, that they are primarily motivated by internal motivational factors such as altruism. Wearing and McGhee (2013) add that the volunteer tourists' motivations centre around the 'self-interest versus altruism' issue. Blackman and Benson (2010) agree by adding that the volunteer tourism industry, as a niche market in tourism, differs from mainstream tourism and therefore, changes over time, place and experience. Consensus is reached by concluding that volunteer tourist motivations can take on an altruistic pursuit (Callanan & Thomas, 2005), and some maintain any position on the continuum between pure altruism and pure egotism (Tomazos & Butler, 2010). Wearing and McGhee (2013) state that organisations that offer volunteer tourism programmes should consider volunteer tourists who might possess multiple motivations simultaneously.

Volunteer tourists can take on two different forms by which their volunteering objective is to be achieved (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). "Deep" volunteer tourism programmes primarily focus on the needs of the local community and the volunteering programme's impact on achieving its intended objectives. "Shallow" volunteer tourism programmes are more focused on the needs of the volunteer tourist than the local community's development (Callanan & Thomas, 2005:185). Brown and Morrison (2003) refer to these programmes as a mindset of the participants when deciding to participate. The authors refer to "volunteer-minded" participants as participants who aim to devote most of their vacation time to volunteering activities. On the other hand, "vacation-minded" participants spend only a small portion of volunteering work at the organisation (Brown & Morrison, 2003:73). Wearing and McGhee (2013) suggest that VTOs should market themselves according to the needs of the volunteer tourist.

The rise of the volunteer tourism industry has given VTOs the opportunity to market the correct programmes to the willing and able volunteer tourists. These volunteer tourism organisations will be explored in the following section.

2.4 VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

2.4.1 VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS DEFINED

The previous section discussed the volunteer tourism industry and the volunteer tourist who participates in the different programmes made available by the VTO. The following section will discuss the VTOs who facilitate the programmes in which the volunteer tourists participate. There are many organisations who offer volunteer tourists the opportunity to participate in various programmes, ranging from developing to developed countries that offer programmes of social, economic, and environmental importance to volunteer tourism development. These organisations can be located locally to globally and in all regions around the world (Brown, 2005; Wearing & McGhee, 2013). The different VTOs assist in creating programmes that both benefit the needs of the local community together with the objectives of the volunteering tourist. The different objectives of the tourists can be associated with the goals of the specific organisation and the outcomes that they want to achieve with the programmes. The community VTOs can offer volunteer tourists the opportunity to participate in community development activities, cultural restoration programmes, medical assistance, and social development projects such as educational activities and teaching in local communities (Tomazos & Butler, 2009; Wearing, 2001). The wildlife VTOs offer slightly more environmental conservation activities, such as, ecological and environmental restoration programmes, scientific research (wildlife, land and water), economic development (construction and agriculture) and wildlife conservation projects (Tomazos & Butler, 2009; Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism programmes can differ in terms of how long the programme is available to participate in. Most VTOs offer programmes for a minimum time period of two weeks to a maximum of six months. The following section will elaborate on how these VTOs manage and market the different volunteer tourism programmes to prospective volunteering tourists.

2.4.2 VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS MARKETING APPROACHES

Volunteer tourism organisations aim to differentiate their volunteer tourism programmes through marketing approaches. Barbieri *et al.* (2012) found that the relationship between the volunteer tourism facilitators and the volunteering tourists is of importance in order to address the issue between volunteer tourists' experiences and facilitators' practices. The authors recommended that facilitators assist in monitoring prospective and current volunteers' attitudes for better understanding of their needs.

Volunteer tourism experiences can extend from short-term programmes of a few weeks to extended periods of many months (but less than a year) (Tomazos & Butler, 2009). Grimm and Needham (2012) found that volunteer tourists' decision-making to participation depends on buzzwords when considering different marketing materials from VTOs. These buzzwords include 'conservation', 'reforestation' and 'community development'. Volunteer tourist motivations are also driven by self-centred attributes, such as the desire to learn and the potential for personal development. Understanding what motivates tourists to volunteer is key to a VTO's strategic marketing approaches (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). Facilitators can also assist in the case of communication strategies (language barriers) between participating individuals and enhancing the programme through careful planning in order to enable volunteers to experience the fundamental rewards of volunteering to the fullest (Barbieri *et al.*, 2012).

VTOs can market themselves through traditional marketing methods such as, brochures, radio and television advertisements, but according to Buhalis and Law (2008), the Internet has influenced tourists overall travel behaviour. Making use of more traditional marketing materials, Coghlan (2007) found that volunteer tourists consider the characteristics of the organisation (price, length of programme), brochure attributes (quality, outlay) and elements in brochures (programme focus, organisation role) when choosing the organisation. Callanan and Thomas (2005) found that more volunteer tourism programmes are advertised on the Internet and many volunteer tourists rely on the Internet in searching for these opportunities. Grimm and Needham (2012) found that a VTO's website layout influences a volunteer decision to participate at a selected organisation. The authors identify ease of navigation, appearance

(professional look) and content (photographs, testimonials and information) as factors influencing this decision. Keese (2011) adds that a VTO's website should contain a high element of tourism excursions or experiences, dramatic language and evoking destination imagery, pictures depicting either adventure or assisting the organisation with its intended goals. Kim and Lee (2004) examined web service quality according to six dimensions: ease of use, usefulness, information content, security, responsiveness and personalisation. Notwithstanding the importance of promotional material in the marketing of VTOs and their available programmes for volunteer tourists, volunteer tourists increasingly base their decision-making to participate according to peer recommendations or camaraderie (Smith & Font, 2014). The following section will discuss the importance of the Internet and social media marketing by VTOs in the pursuit of motivating volunteer tourists to participate in their volunteer tourism programmes.

2.5 THE INTERNET

The Internet has become an indispensable channel for people seeking to access tourism information (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Inversini, Cantoni & Buhalis, 2009). Potential travellers have the ability to access information provided by travel principals, private organisations or other consumers from the information search process, to the actual destination or product consumption stage and the post engagement experience (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The Internet offers potential travellers an information rich 24/7 online environment for easily seeking relevant information at a relatively low cost, interacting with virtual communities and ultimately, engaging in an e-commerce environment (Ho, Lin & Chen, 2012). Akehurst (2009) explains that the Internet increases the effectiveness and efficiency of traditional marketing functions, for example, more efficiently planned and implemented promotion, distribution and pricing of tourism products. The author adds that the Internet enables international partnerships and creates new global markets through building new business models that in turn, add customer value and increases profitability, and enables more effective segmentation, targeting and positioning strategies.

Tourism products and services are generally intangible and cannot easily be displayed or experienced beforehand through traditional marketing mechanisms. Xiang, Wöber and Fesenmaier (2008) state that interaction in online tourism information search exists between an online tourism information searcher, a search engine, and the online tourism domain. The online tourism domain exists of industry suppliers, intermediaries or destination marketing organisations. The Internet enables this, for example, "... through virtual experiences, potential customers can review travel products and services through the use of new media ..." (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan & Ranchhod, 2009:38). The Internet has been transforming in terms of the locus of control from a Web 1.0, that was mainly controlled by organisations, towards a more inclusive Web 2.0 that enables the end-user to participate in creating and sharing travel information and experiences online (Ho, *et al.*, 2012; Munar & Jacobsen, 2013).

According to Kiráľová and Pavlíčka (2015:359), "... the Internet has revolutionised the tourism industry both as a source of information and as a sales channel ... the Internet has the ability to bring tourism businesses closer to the potential tourists regardless of where in the world they are located ... this is achieved through the use of visitor's reviews, photographs, video's, stories and recommendations on the Internet ...". Therefore, social media marketing is an essential platform for a tourism organisation in terms of an information source to prospective tourists.

The following section will discuss how volunteer tourism organisations make use of social media.

2.6 SOCIAL MEDIA

Academically, a great deal of research has been conducted regarding the use of social media in the tourism industry (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Ho *et al.*, 2012; Howison, Finger & Hauschka, 2015; Inversini, Cantoni & Buhalis, 2009; Kiráľová & Pavlíčka, 2015; Leung, Law, van Hoof & Buhalis, 2013; Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015; Nyahunzvi, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Ye, Law, Gu & Chen, 2011; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). A brief review of some of the social media

strategies, social media marketing approaches and impacts of social media on travel information search in previous studies, follow in the discussion below.

2.6.1 SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Social media have taken tourism and travel booking experiences to a new level (Kiráľová & Pavlíčka, 2015). Social media enables not only tourism businesses to communicate with potential tourists over the world, but prospective tourists themselves can also communicate to past tourists if they are considering travelling to a specific destination. The concept of social media has been under discussion as an increasingly emerging research topic. Social media plays a significant role in many aspects of tourism: from where the potential tourist undertakes information search and decision-making behaviours, to the role of tourism promotion and best practises for interacting with consumers (Inversini, Cantoni & Buhalis, 2009; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). The term social media can be described according to its characteristics as follows (Cohen, 2011): 1) social media are online tools, applications, platforms, and media; 2) social media enables peer-to-peer communication and interaction through the web's content creation, collaboration and exchange between organisations, communities and individuals; 3) social media forms a virtual community that affects the behaviour of users in real life. Today, a company's brand message can reach more people through social networking sites than through people's direct visit to the company's webpage (Ledford, 2012). According to Rickly-Boyd (2013), user generated content, such as social media websites and past tourists' reviews, can be considered as a more trustworthy and up-to-date indication of information on the volunteer tourism experience and the VTOs as it is based on opinion and perceived authentic experience. A few benefits of social media include increase in brand awareness, brand engagement, word-of-mouth, friends/liking on social networking sites, trust and social validation (Kiráľová, 2014).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) conclude that social media allows tourism businesses to communicate with tourists at a relatively lower cost and higher levels of efficiency that can be achieved with more traditional communication tools, for example, print media, radio and television advertisements and billboards. Unlike traditional marketing

methods, social media offers more customisable content, through lower costs and more focussed messages to their audience. Social media can not only benefit large multinational firms, but also small and medium sized companies, along with non-profit organizations and governmental agencies (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014). Now that the importance of social media in the tourism industry has been discussed, social media strategies will be explored in the following section.

2.6.2 SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES

“... The intention of consumers to participate in online [communities have] positive effects on their intentions to use the firm’s products [or] services and their intention to recommend the host firm to others ...” (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2010:30, cited in Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Királ’ová and Pavlíčka (2015) found that a well-developed social media marketing communications strategy should be implemented in order for a tourism destination to be successful. This strategy should consider the information-rich marketing tool with careful consideration in order to attract attention through: novelty, a chance to win, celebrity involvement, uniqueness, unexpectedness, competition and interesting graphical design. Social media enables the user to create, share, participate and interact with information online. Tourism organisations have the ability to use information created or shared by users online to their benefit through creating brand awareness, brand engagement, word-of-mouth, friends/liking, trust and social validation (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Howison *et al.*, 2015; Királ’ová & Pavlíčka, 2015; Leung *et al.*, 2013). The development of a social media marketing strategy should entail a plan that encompasses the planning, development, management and marketing of strategic priorities, direction, long-term success and sustainability for the tourism organisation (Királ’ová & Pavlíčka, 2015).

Social media methods are grouped by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as follows: blogs (web logs), content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, virtual social worlds, social forums, ratings, reviews, micro-blogging sites, podcasts, video-sharing sites and photo-sharing sites. “... Specific tourism sites such as Tripadvisor.com and Travelpod.com enable consumers to exchange information, opinions and recommendations about destinations, tourism products and services,

with occasional diaries of travel experiences and ratings of a particular product or hotel ...” (Akehurst, 2009:54).

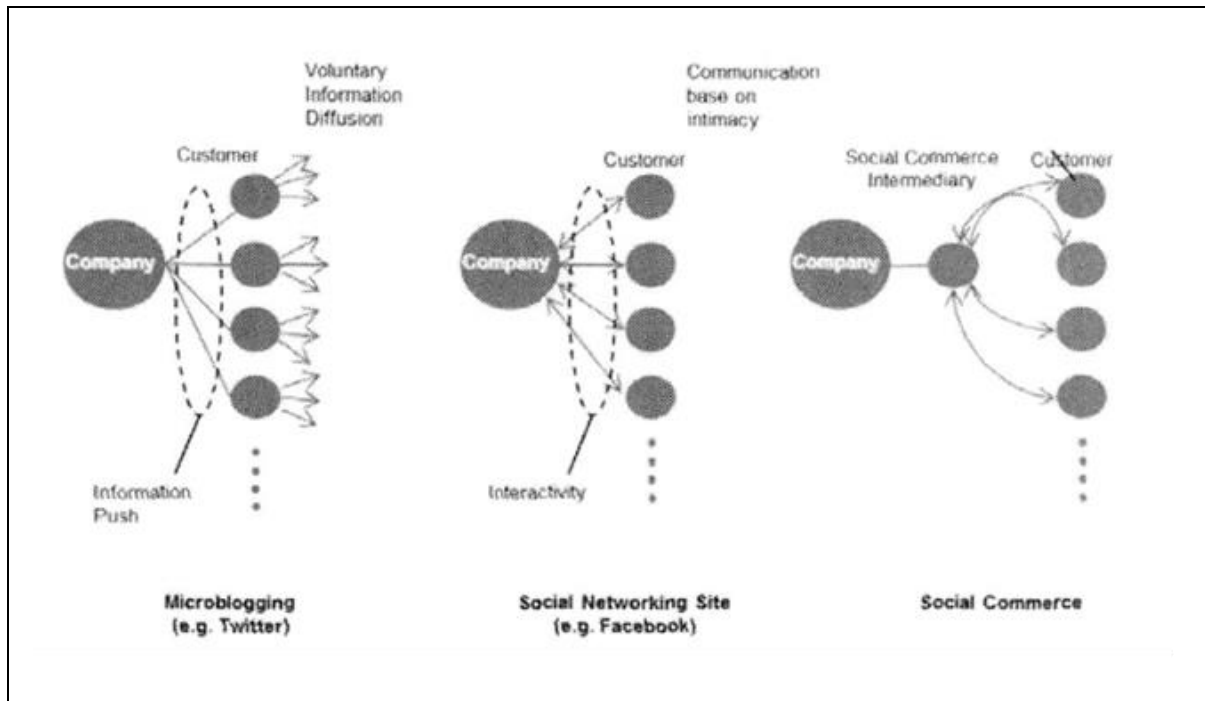
Different social media platforms call for different communication strategies. For example, a study conducted by Cox, Burgess, Sellitto and Buuljens (2009) among Australian travellers who use the Internet as part of their travel planning process, found that consumers are open to businesses responding to comments made online by independent travellers, provided that they do so in a “... transparent and honest manner ...” (2009:761). Akehurst (2009) found that blogs (web logs) need to be interesting, entertaining, provide good information and good networking opportunities, need regular maintenance, updating and bright new content. Hudson, Roth, Madden and Hudson (2015) found that consumers who engage with brands on social media platforms, have stronger relationships with those brands compared to consumers who do not interact with them via social media. The authors suggest that organisations should build strong relationships with customers on social media platforms, but warned that the emotional content used, should be used very subtly. The following section encompasses the concept of social media marketing and its impact on the overall marketing strategy.

2.6.3 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media is changing the way how tourism organisations are marketing their product offerings to potential customers. Traditionally, marketing has involved information exchange in a one-way direction, for example, brochures, TV commercials and radio advertisements. Social media marketing is defined as “... a form of online advertising that uses the cultural context of social communities, including social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube), virtual worlds (Second Life, Kaneva), social news sites (Digg, del.icio.us), and social opinion-sharing sites (TripAdvisor, Epinions[.com]), to meet branding and communication objectives ...” (Tuten, 2008:19). Therefore, social media marketing provides an opportunity for timely dissemination of information in a simple, informal manner, which also enables consumers to participate in spreading the information (Park & Oh, 2012). Figure 2

visually illustrates how different social media marketing platforms are used to provide information to the consumer.

Figure 2: Social Media marketing platforms



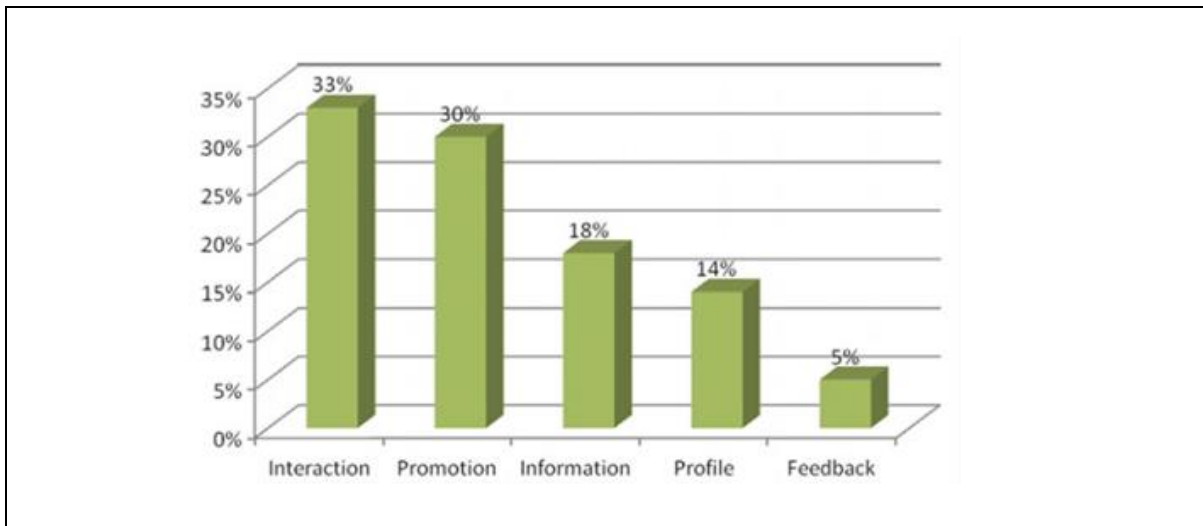
Source: Park and Oh (2012:95).

The first diagram (from the left) in figure 2 illustrates how tourism organisations use micro-blogging services (for example, Twitter) to provide marketing information to customers. This information is in a push-format, meaning that the information is one-directional, but that end receivers could quickly share the information to their ‘followers’ (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009; cited in Park & Oh, 2012). The middle diagram in figure 2 illustrates how tourism organisations can use social networking sites (for example, the organisation’s Facebook page) to maintain a positive relationship with customers by allowing intimate interaction with customers (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; cited in Park & Oh, 2012). The third diagram (on the right) in figure 2 illustrates how a tourism organisation can make use of a third party that acts as an intermediary between the organisation and its customers via a social commerce site (for example, Pinterest) (Stephen & Olivier, 2010; cited in Park & Oh, 2012).

Howison *et al.* (2015) found in their study among 79 tourism operators in Dunedin, New Zealand, that the main purpose of social media was to interact with past and

potential customers, secondly, for promotional purposes, thirdly, for information and fourthly, to maintain a profile on social media and lastly, receiving feedback (see figure 3). The following figure (3) sheds light on the aims of tourism operators used in social media, but Howison *et al.* (2015) have encouraged some future research on the use of online marketing and social media in the tourism industry and in other markets.

Figure 3: Purposes of Social Media



Source: Howison *et al.* (2015:277).

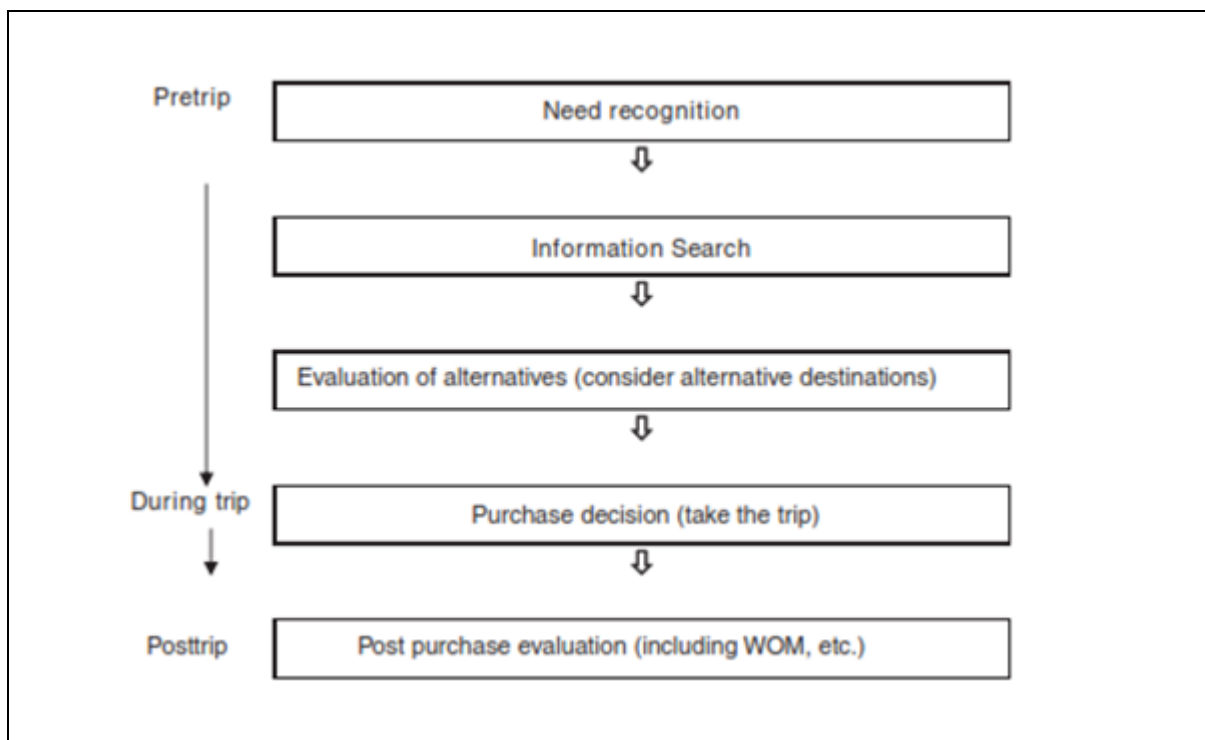
Social media marketing enables consumers to be active participants and recipients of information; therefore, they actively use and distribute information via social media platforms. The following section discusses the use of social media in the travel information search process.

2.6.4 SOCIAL MEDIA IN TRAVEL INFORMATION SEARCH

Travel information search forms an integral part of decision-making on where to travel. More concretely, social media plays a significant role in information search, consumer decision-making, tourism promotion and tourism organisation interaction with consumers (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Information search is possible through the travel business's website, networking sites, blogging, and experience sharing sites or personal internet sites of past visitors (Királ'ová & Pavlíčka, 2015).

According to Cox *et al.* (2009:745), the five stages in the general consumer decision-making process (see figure 4) can be applied to the hospitality or travel context. The first stage commences with the need recognition, information search and evaluation of alternatives phases during the “pre-trip” travel planning process. The second stage of the travel planning process forms part of the “during the trip” stage, as the trip is taken, and the purchase decision is made. The last stage takes place after the trip and entails the post purchase evaluation through the use of word-of-mouth. It is very important for tourism organisations to understand how their prospective consumers make use of different information sources at the various stages of the consumer travel planning process. According to Pan and Fesenmaier (2006), there are 10 key sub decisions regarding the trip when conducting online travel planning: travel partners, the destination, expenditure required, activities, travel dates, attractions to visit, transportation providers, length of trip, rest stops and food stops. The use of the Internet and social media serves as a particularly crucial information source for prospective travellers when they are in the research phase of the travel planning process (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006).

Figure 4: The General Consumer’s Decision-Making Process



Source: Cox *et al.* (2009:745); Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1990); Woodside and Lyonski (1989).

“... prospective travellers often heavily rely on advice from friends, family, and other peer groups, particularly planning an intangible travel experience to a destination which they have not previously visited ...” (Litvin *et al.*, 2007; cited in Cox *et al.*, 2009:746). The same authors found that consumers tend to trust and be influenced by word-of-mouth recommendations more than by commercial sources, as there is no financial gain by sharing experiences and views from this information source. “... Online reviews and [electronic] word-of-mouth recommendations are a growing and important information source because of the perceived independence of the message source ...” (Litvin *et al.*, 2007; cited in Akehurst, 2009:55). Prospective travellers find that the recommendations of a tourism product (experiential product) are more important than the recommendations of a tangible product (Senecal & Nantel, 2004).

Given the intangible nature of the hospitality and travel industry, prospective travellers are embracing the information supplied by other travellers through the use of social media and user-generated content to a large extent. The following section will discuss the use of social media marketing in the volunteer tourism industry.

2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE VOLUNTEER TOURISM INDUSTRY

The VTO can make use of social media marketing in order to recognise their volunteers' efforts, relieving tension and strengthen relationships. Barnett, Mullins, Rodgers and Scutt (2016) suggest that VTOs create a social media album, sharing volunteer experiences with past and prospective volunteers and to make videos of the volunteers at work or enjoying themselves and share these experiences with online communities such as, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter or on the organisation's website via an e-newsletter. Although there is a growing body of literature on the use of social media in the tourism industry (Leung *et al.*, 2013), very little research has been done on the use of social media in the decision process in the volunteer tourism industry. Miller (2017) suggests that VTOs should leverage social media in order to 'sell without selling' and in letting the 'product' speak for itself. The author suggests active presence on different social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Some examples by Miller (2017) of incorporating social media strategies in the volunteer tourism industry include: creating a Facebook Page that posts photos, shares video and enables past volunteers to rate the organisation based on first-hand testimonials. The volunteer organisation's YouTube channels can be used to share information on what it's like to be a part of their organisation and to visually illustrate what will be done in the programme. The author suggests that VTOs can create a hashtag that encompasses the goals of the programme and that can be used on social media platforms in order to create awareness around the project. It is beneficial for a VTO to incorporate their hashtag as well as their logo to the bottom corners of their photos, in order for their brand to always be seen when any photos, videos or content are shared in online communities. LinkedIn can be used to feature useful resources like a guide to volunteering, steps to do so as well as a sample application. This social media platform can list all the different programmes available, testimonials of past volunteers and videos about the different destinations (if applicable to the organisation's brands).

2.8 THE TRADITIONAL PURCHASING FUNNEL AND THE CONSUMER DECISION JOURNEY MODEL

The model that will form the theoretical foundation of the decision-making process for this study is based on The Consumer Decision Journey model that was first developed by Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik (2009) and later modified by Hudson and Thal (2013). Both models introduce the four stages of the consumer decision journey: consider, evaluate, buy and enjoy/advocate/bond, whereas the model modified by Hudson and Thal (2013), includes the term "Zero Moment of Truth" (ZMOT), that describes the new reality of organisations having to compete for travellers' attention online, long before the purchase (or in this case, participating) decision is made. This modified model by Hudson and Thal (2013) will be used for this study as it incorporates the travellers' decision journey to participate in selected volunteer tourism programmes. The model developed by Court *et al.* (2009) was derived from the traditional purchasing funnel, as seen in figure 5. The funnel will be discussed in further detail.

2.8.2 THE CONSUMER DECISION JOURNEY MODEL

The marketing of tourism products involves one goal: reaching consumers at the moment that most influences their decisions (Court *et al.*, 2009). The journey is established through examining how marketers align marketing elements such as strategy, spending, channel management and the message. The marketer should understand this journey and “... direct their spending and messaging to the moments of maximum influence ... reaching consumers in the right place at the right time [and] with the right message ...” (Court *et al.*, 2009:1). The authors found that marketers should not consider their marketing strategy as a one-way communication channel (from the marketer to the consumer), but rather as a two-way communication conversation that enables the consumer to interact with the brand. The authors also found that although traditional marketing remains important, consumers make decisions based on consumer-driven marketing for example, word-of-mouth, online research, and reviews.

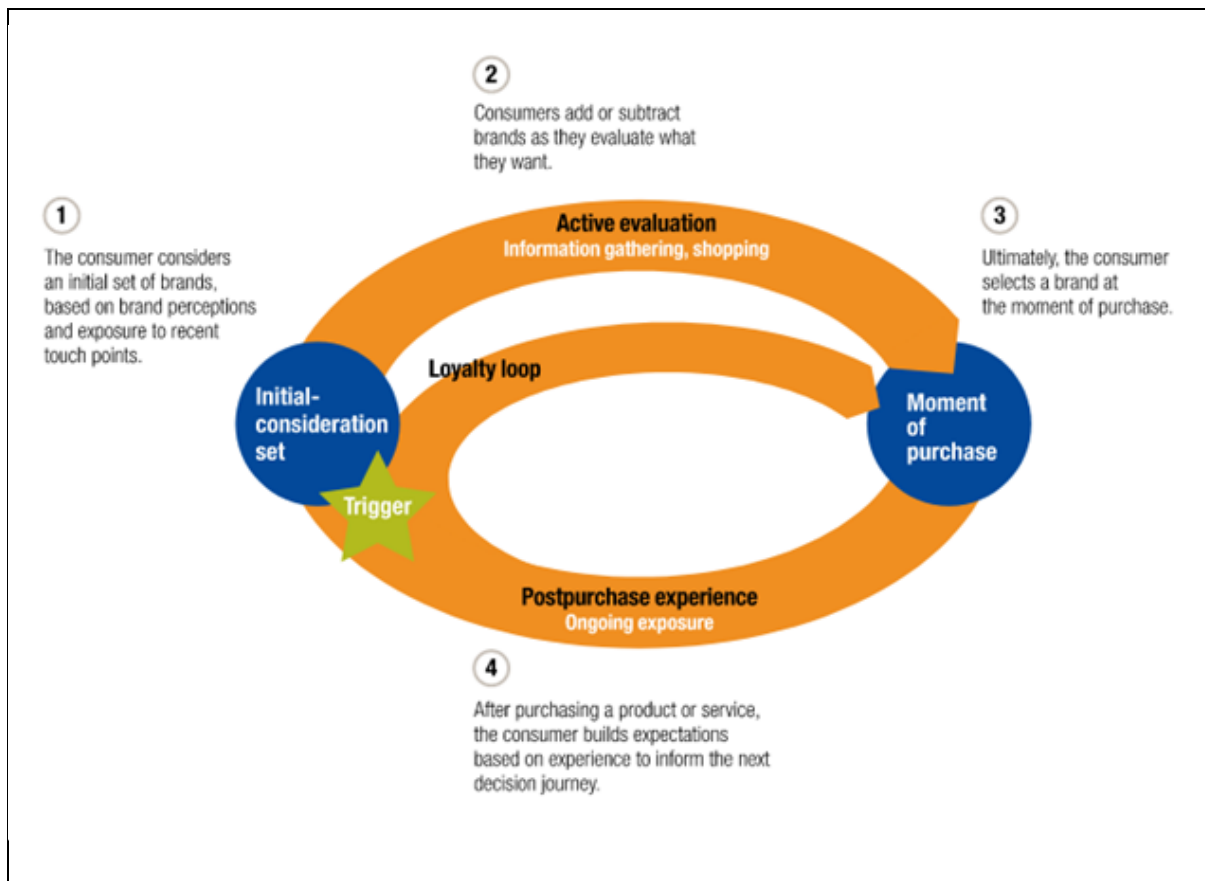
The first stage in the Consumer Decision Journey model (the initial consideration set; see figure 5) involves the consumer gathering brands (or considering existing perceptions on different brands) that are regarded as potential purchasing options. Court *et al.* (2009) suggest that marketers should focus on sharing positive experiences of past consumers at this stage. These experiences show loyal and satisfied consumers, which generates positive word-of-mouth and ultimately increases the likelihood of other potential consumers including the brand in their initial consideration set.

The second stage includes the active-evaluation phase where the weighing of the different options is made and considered decisions occurs. The Internet is a crucial marketing tool to use as consumers are actively seeking information, considering product reviews and looking at product recommendations online. This tool enables marketers to customize information to potential consumers, to enable consumers to learn more about the product/s on offer and all this through creative content and making use of media rich applications.

The third stage includes the consumer making the ultimate decision and purchasing the product (or in this case, deciding to participate in a volunteer tourism programme at a specific VTO). This stage becomes a test phase where the consumer's customer loyalty might be determined and his/her likelihood to repurchase the product (or rather, revisiting and participating at the same VTO for a second time). The post-purchase experience indicates the following opinion when making the next purchasing decision in that product category. Therefore, the consumer decision journey follows an on-going cycle.

The trigger comes in when the consumer either recognises a need or when the consumer reflects on the post-purchase experience. Skok (2011) defines the trigger as "... an event that causes a buyer to have a clear need, which usually converts into a sense of purpose and urgency in their buying process ...". The trigger is set off by the consumer internally by recognising the specific need or it can also be set off by marketing efforts from the brand (Skok, 2011). The VTO's marketing efforts have the ability to set off the consumer's trigger in recognising a specific need that can only be satisfied by the specific VTO. This enables the VTO to gain direct advantage even before an initial set of options are pointed out for consideration.

Figure 5: The Consumer Decision Journey Model



Source: Court *et al.* (2009).

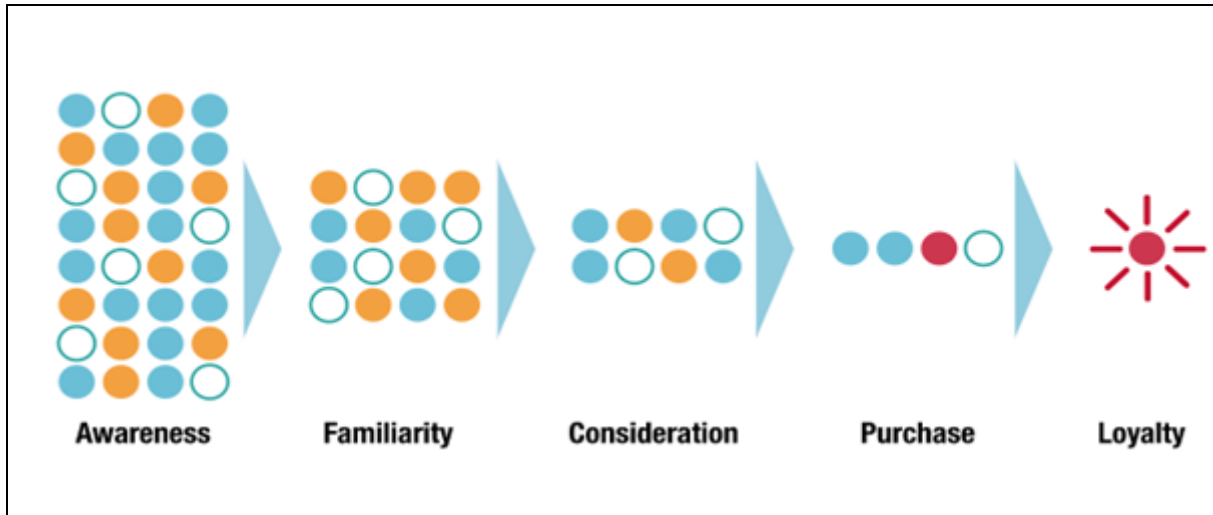
As the consumer decision journey becomes increasingly complex, organisations will have to adapt to the purchasing process by incorporating innovative ways of measuring consumer attitudes, brand performance and the effectiveness of their marketing efforts in all stages of the journey (Court *et al.*, 2009).

2.8.1 THE TRADITIONAL PURCHASING FUNNEL

Firstly, the purchasing funnel exist where consumers begin their purchasing decision when they have an initial consideration of a set of options (consisting of the awareness, familiarity and consideration stages). Marketers aim to reduce this number of options through the use of advertisements, news, reports and product experiences. As the consumer moves through the funnel, the amount of options is reduced until the ultimate purchasing decision is made at the end of the funnel (Court *et al.*, 2009). The traditional purchasing funnel fails to include important aspects such as, well-informed

consumers, the explosion of new product choices and increasing innovative methods of purchasing through digital channels.

Figure 6: The Traditional Purchasing Funnel



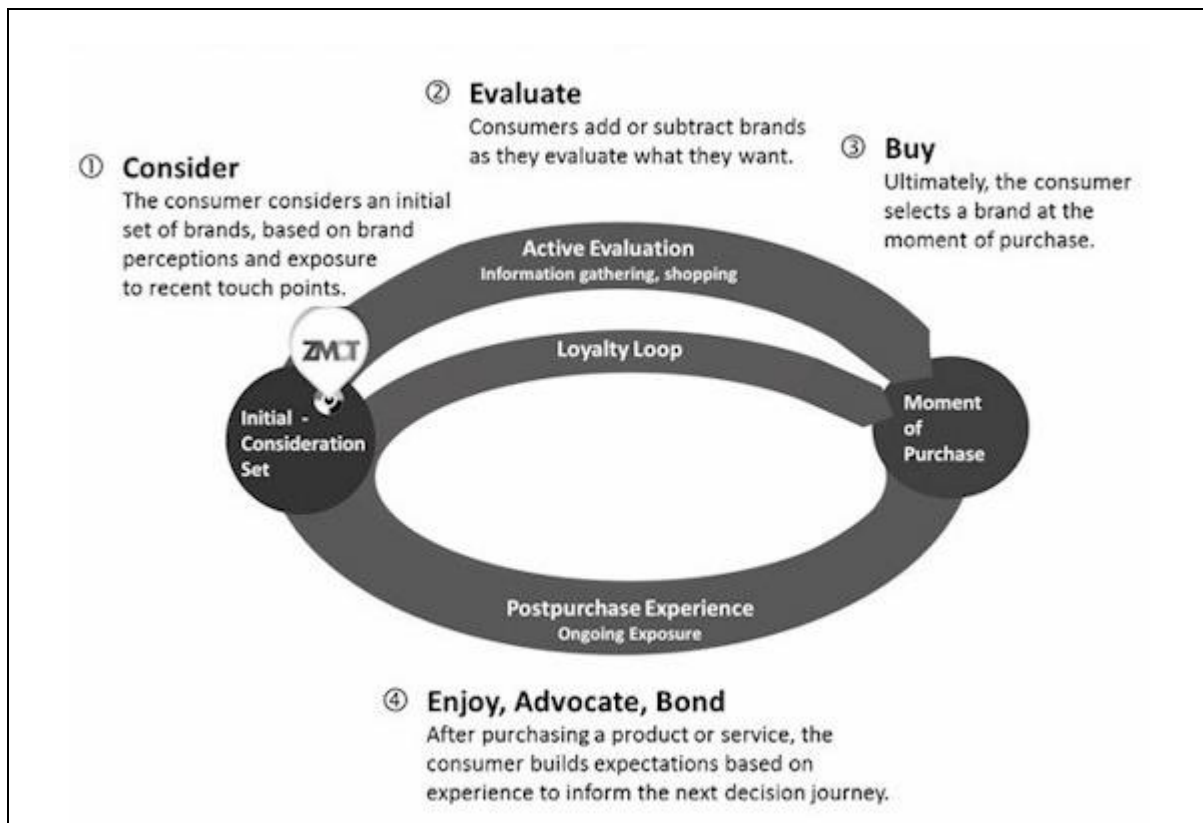
Source: Court *et al.* (2009).

The same authors developed a new model called The Consumer Decision Journey Model that aims to address these shortcomings mentioned in the traditional purchasing funnel. This model can be applied to any geographical market, together with different kinds of media, on a wide range of product choices and includes emerging markets, such as China and India (Court *et al.*, 2009) and is relevant to the southern Africa region including Namibia. This model will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

2.8.3 THE ZERO MOMENT OF TRUTH

As the consumer decision journey became more complex, a new consumer decision journey model was introduced by Hudson and Thal (2013:157). The new model introduced the 'Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)', a term identified by Lecinski (2011:7). The ZMOT indicates the "... reality where marketers have to compete for shoppers' attention online long before a purchase decision is made ..." (Lecinski, 2011; as cited in Hudson & Thal, 2013:157). The ZMOT takes the place of the trigger, as used by Court *et al.* (2009).

Figure 7: The New Consumer Decision Journey Today



Source: Hudson and Thal (2013:157); Court *et al.* (2009).

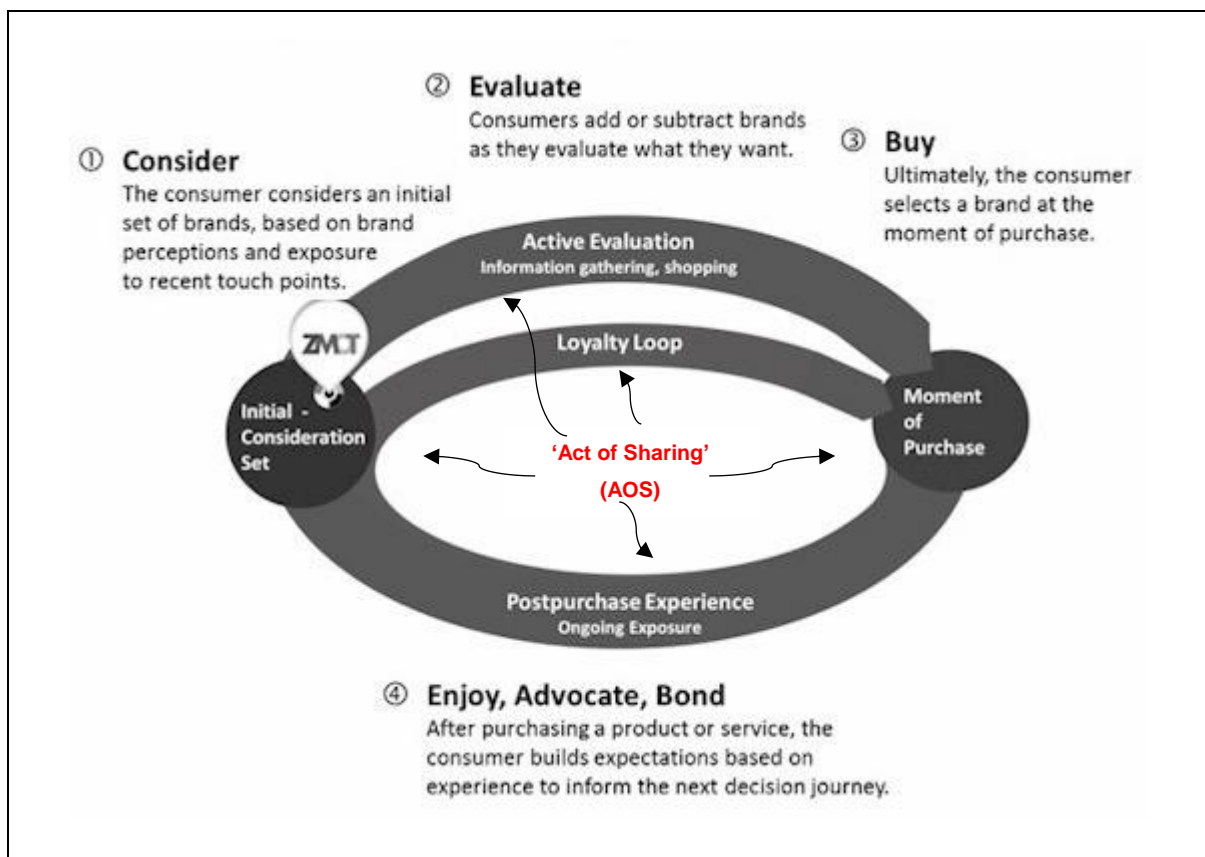
Hudson and Thal (2013:157) addressed the problem identified by Court *et al.* (2009) and found ways in which marketers can use social media in order to engage with consumers throughout the new consumer decision journey (see figure 7).

The 'Active Evaluation' phase involves three stages namely, 'Consider', 'Evaluate' and 'Buy'. In the first stage, 'Consider', social media campaigns can be used in driving traffic towards tourism websites. This enables more potential consumers to be made aware of the product offering. The second stage, 'Evaluate', newly well-informed consumers seek information from marketers, rather than marketers persuading consumers to buy. For instance, consumers seek reviews online in order to evaluate whether a product will satisfy their need. Social media marketers have control over online reviews and are able to make use of positive reviews as a cost-free, convincing advertising tool or to address and lessen the impacts of a negative review. The third stage, 'Buy', is where an increasing amount of tourism organisations are using social media not only for building customer relationships alone, but also as a platform for conducting e-commerce. Yet, it is suggested by Chan and Guillet (2011) that tourism

organisations should avoid hard selling on social media websites. The ‘Post Purchase Evaluation’ phase consists of the ‘Enjoy, Advocate and Bond’ stage. Hudson and Thal (2013:158) state that “... a deeper brand connection begins [at this stage] as the consumer interacts with the product and with the new online touch points ...”. Social media information sharing enables the consumer to recommend, share experiences, bond with the brand or aid in innovative ideas for the organisation through feedback (Hudson & Thal, 2013).

The New Consumer Decision Journey Today model fails to include an all-important purpose of making use of social media amongst users – the ‘Act of Sharing’ (AOS). Social media users ultimately make use of social media in order to share, whether it be sharing information, experiences, news, updates, recommendations or feedback. The AOS can be incorporated in all of the stages of the model by Hudson and Thal (2013). The amended model below (figure 8) illustrates the AOS amongst all the stages of the model. This will be discussed with reference to the findings of the study in section 4.3.

Figure 8: The ‘Act of Sharing’ in the New Consumer Decision Journey Today Model



The following section will discuss the geographical and organisational context in which the study is conducted.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 CASE STUDIES OF THE SELECTED VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

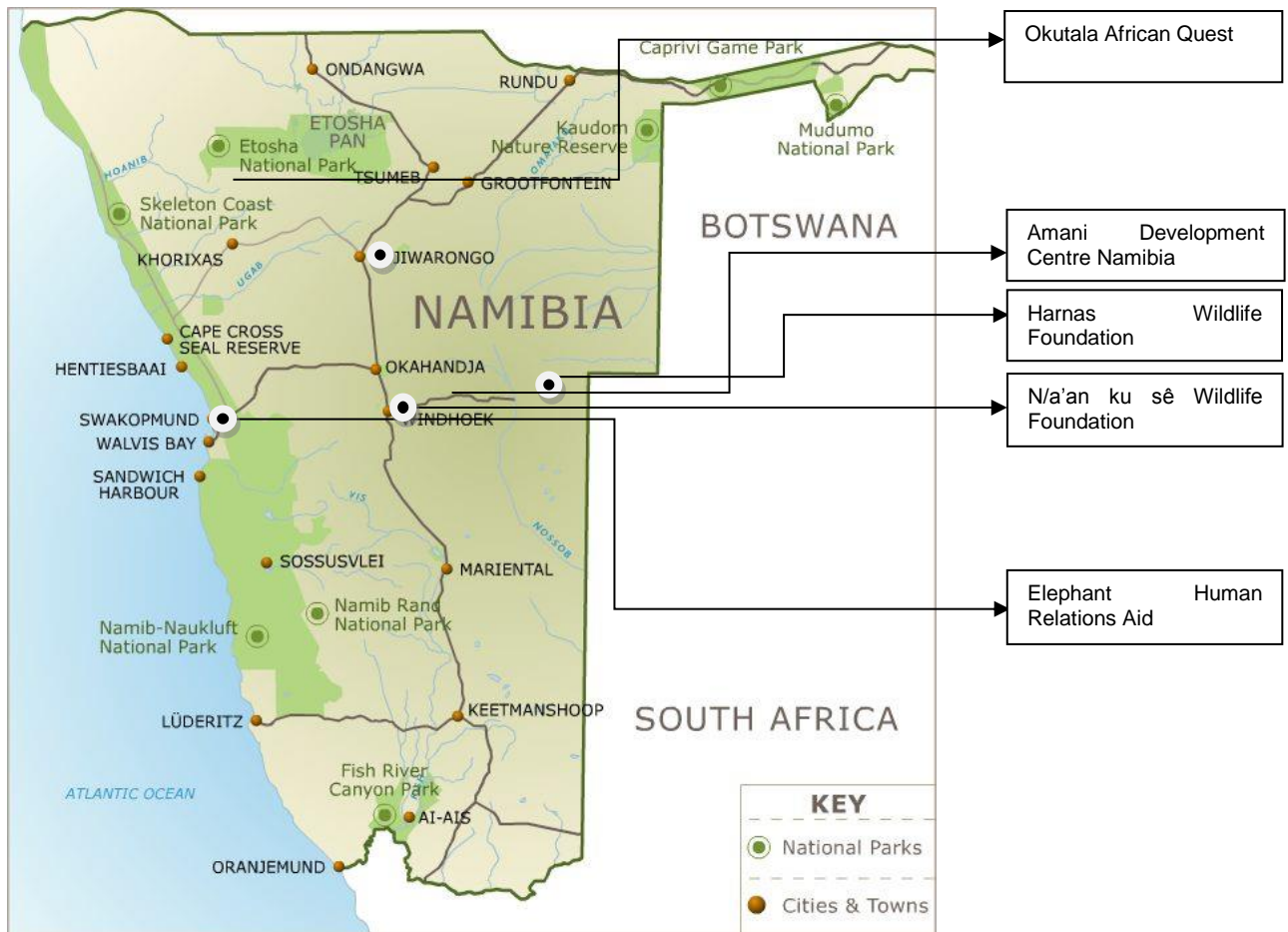
Namibia is a developing country located in southwestern Africa, home to some of the world's most spectacular landscapes, culture, wildlife and local communities. The World map and the map of Namibia below indicates the locations of the selected wildlife volunteer tourism organisations for this study. Appendix C indicates the extractions from all the selected VTO's websites.

Figure 9: Namibia's position on a World map



Source: Wikipedia (2018b).

Figure 10: Map of Namibia indicating the wildlife volunteer tourism organisations selected for the research for this study



Source: Tshokwanesafaris (2017).

3.1.1 AMANI DEVELOPMENT CENTRE NAMIBIA IN WINDHOEK



Amani Development Centre (ADC) Namibia is located 25.3 kilometres from the capital city, Windhoek. The main aim of ADC is to protect and prevent rhino-, elephant- and lion-poaching and also to create awareness of the negative effects of poaching on a global scale. ADC introduces volunteers to the beautiful landscapes of Namibia and they are given "... specialised, practical and theoretical training that includes air-to-

ground formations, information on poaching methods, sweeping formations, map-reading, as well as GPS and basic survival skills ...” (Lange, 2017). Once the theoretical and practical training has been completed (usually around four weeks), the volunteers are distributed to various farms to start the programmes. According to a hosting website, The Culture Trip (2017), ADC’s project “... aims to allocate well-equipped protection specialists not just in Namibia, but also to the rest of the world ...”. ADC closed down in June 2018. The owner has shut down the website and listed ADC as permanently closed on the VTO’s Facebook Page. The owner has informed the researcher that she is now working on another volunteering programme on anti-poaching in Namibia, but cannot elaborate on the project as it is confidential.

3.1.2 ELEPHANT HUMAN RELATIONS AID IN SWAKOPMUND



Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA) is situated in Swakopmund, Namibia. The organisation’s main aim is elephant-human relation management and there are three objectives with the volunteer programmes. Firstly, to track and monitor desert elephants in the Southern Kunene Region of Namibia, in order to warn farms and homesteads ahead of time to seek for protection in case an elephant is near. This also enables the team to gain accurate data on elephant numbers and movements for anti-poaching and over-hunting efforts. The second objective- a programme called the ‘Water Point Protection Programme’ where volunteers work directly with local communities in building walls to protect valuable water storage tanks in remote areas. Thirdly, EHRA believes in educating local schools on safe-guarding the future and conservation of the desert-dwelling elephants in Namibia. The organisation introduced the PEACE (People and Elephants Amicably Co-Existing) Project that focuses on empowering community members and school learners with knowledge on elephant behaviour so that they can live without fear of the desert elephants. Volunteer efforts

range from rebuilding classrooms, dormitories, toilets and showers, to building a computer network from donated computers and installing a library.

The two-week wildlife volunteer programme offered by EHRA consists of a building week where the walls around valuable water tanks or water holes for elephants, are built, or rebuilt. The volunteers are also given the opportunity to explore the EHRA base camp until week two commences. Week two consists of elephant tracking, recording data on births, deaths, and new born elephants. Accurate and up-to-date information on these elephants enables EHRA to effectively manage and conserve the elephants. The volunteers sleep at a new location every evening and this gives them an interesting view of the different Namibian landscapes. The VTO's website URL is: www.desertelephant.org.

3.1.3 HARNAS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION NEAR GOBABIS



Harnas Wildlife Foundation is located 304 km east of the capital city, Windhoek. Harnas aims at protecting animals through welfare projects and nature conservation projects. Harnas has different programmes for different types of volunteers. The organisation offers the following volunteering programmes: Go Wildlife, Go Medical, Go Caretaker, Go Veterinary, Go Research and Go Exclusive. All the programmes are offered for a minimum period of two weeks and a maximum of three months. The Go Wildlife programme involves food preparation, feeding, cleaning of enclosures, animal interaction, game counting, animal studies and fence patrol. The Go Medical programme focuses on giving qualified individuals, such as, medical graduates and professionals in the industry, the opportunity to apply their skills at the 'Nick and Nico van der Merwe Memorial Clinic'. There they consult a diverse range of patients and help organising and structuring the clinic and leading a health-related project. The Go

Caretaker programme involves volunteers working with qualified professionals, learning new skills and gaining experience in animal health. The Go Veterinary Programme offers qualified veterinary professionals or students in the veterinary health profession to “... engage with a diverse range of animal species ... while being immersed in the life of a working animal sanctuary in the heart of the Kalahari ...” (Harnas Wildlife Foundation, 2017a). The Go Research Programme enables researching volunteers to establish or maintain a working database on the different wild animals at Harnas. The Go Exclusive Programme is a 14-day volunteering programme that offers volunteers the opportunity to participate in activities such as, bushwalks, animal walks, caretaking of various animals, teambuilding activities, a cultural day, research and some lectures. The VTO’s website URL is: www.harnas.org.

3.1.4 N/A’AN KU SÊ WILDLIFE FOUNDATION NAMIBIA



The property is named N/a’an ku sê which means ‘God will protect us’ in the Khoisan Bushmen language. N/a’an ku sê consists of five different sites throughout Namibia: N/a’an ku sê Lodge and Wildlife Sanctuary (55.5 km out of Windhoek), Neuras Wine and Wildlife Estate (southern Namibia), Kanaan Desert Retreat (south west of Namibia), Mangetti Cattle Ranch (northern Namibia) and Lifeline Medical Clinic in Epukiro (eastern Namibia). The last two mentioned sites are volunteering-only sites. N/a’an ku sê believes in wildlife conservation, landscape preservation and supporting communities. Volunteers at N/a’an ku sê can participate in a variety of activities such as, “... rehabilitation and dedicated captive animal care, as well as crucial research at the N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary ... carnivore conservation research at Neuras and Kanaan ... wild dog and elephant conservation at Mangetti ... primary healthcare to

the San community at Lifeline Medical Clinic ... educating San children at the Clever Cubs School at the N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary ..." (N/a'an ku sê, 2017). N/a'an ku sê volunteers can decide which programme they wish to participate in and at what site they would like volunteer. The volunteers can stay a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of three months. The VTO's website URL is: www.naankuse.com.

3.1.5 OKUTALA AFRICAN QUEST



Okutala Etosha Lodge is situated on a 24 000-hectare piece of land which is 409 km north of Windhoek, just below the world renowned Etosha National Park. Okutala focusses on releasing wild animals within their natural habitat and they have several different holding facilities for the rehabilitation of animals. Okutala offers prospective volunteer tourists to participate in their Xplorers programme available for a minimum of a two week stay or up to a maximum stay of 3 months. The programme offers participants to experience the Farmhouse accommodation, wild elephant tracking and behaviour, animal experiences with hand-raised and rehabilitated animals and educational activities, such as discussions, practicals and statistics on diverse cultures, landscapes and wildlife. The VTO's website URL is: www.okutala.com.

3.1.6 CONCLUSION

The selected wildlife volunteer tourism organisations share a common goal: wildlife conservation through volunteer tourism in a developing country in southern Africa, i.e. Namibia. The volunteer tourism programmes offered by the selected organisations appear to have similar and generic characteristics in a developing country in southern Africa. Reynders (2015), who has conducted research on volunteer tourism in South Africa, states that volunteering conducted formally or informally, has the potential to

develop a volunteering culture within a developing country and ultimately, stimulating tourism through increased participation in volunteer programmes.

Brown & Morrison (2003:75) quote the CEO of Global Volunteers who firmly believes that "... volunteer service engenders hope and friendship, both of which are critical to waging peace ... the more people volunteer over the world and make friends with local people, the more peaceful the world will be ...". This statement agrees with the different aims of the selected organisations chosen for this study. This agrees with Amani Development Centre's aim of not only focussing on training Namibians, but also volunteers around the world in order to spread awareness around wildlife conservation and protection. In EHRA's case, the organisation aims to educate nearby communities to co-exist with the desert elephants, thus aiding with local community upliftment and training. Harnas' goal of making new friends and having "...friendships to last a lifetime..." (Harnas Wildlife Foundation, 2017b) while protecting animals through welfare and nature conservation projects, also agrees with this statement.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM / PHILOSOPHY

The study of social media in the tourism and hospitality domain has been significantly researched in the past decade (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013). The emergence of Web 2.0 enabled consumers to contribute to user-generated content (UGC) websites such as social networking sites, online travel communities, blogs (web logs) and review sites such as TripAdvisor (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013). UGC provides organisations with "... valuable market intelligence and ongoing market research opportunities ..." (Akehurst, 2009:52). The perceptions of volunteer tourists on social media marketing approaches by selected VTOs is the main focus of this research.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF ENQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 A DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY'S STRATEGY OF ENQUIRY

For this study, a qualitative research approach is found to be the most appropriate method for exploring the complex process of decision-making and information search among volunteer tourists. The qualitative research approach includes two sets of participants; namely, the volunteering tourists and the volunteer organisations' representatives. The qualitative research approach employs interviews with volunteer tourists, as well as the volunteer organisations' representatives. This strategy of enquiry is most appropriate as the authors, Grimm and Needham (2012), specifically call for future research on perspectives from both the volunteer tourism organisations and the volunteer tourists through qualitative research methods for a better understanding of how non-traditional promotional materials impact on the entire volunteer tourism experience.

The Consumer Decision Journey Today model modified by Hudson and Thal (2013) is used for this study as it incorporates the travellers' decision journey to participate in selected volunteer tourism programmes (see Figure 7). This model is used through the evaluation of the four stages of the volunteering tourists' decision-making journey to participating in the selected volunteering programme (refer to Appendix D).

3.3.2 THE BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A qualitative research approach and its basic characteristics, which forms part of the broad research design and, that is used in this study, will be discussed in further detail. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) describe what qualitative research entails with the following definition;

“... qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practises that makes the world visible. These practises ... turn the world into a series of

representations including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them ..." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3).

Qualitative research will be conducted by collecting descriptive data from participants. Volunteer tourists, as well as the volunteer organisation representatives of the selected volunteer organisations will be participating in this study. Data collected from the participants will be analysed and used to achieve the research objectives of this study. The validity of the in-depth interview schedules' will be ensured by the use of pilot testing techniques. Descriptive data will be collected through in-depth interviews with the volunteer tourists, as well as the volunteer organisations' representatives.

3.3.3 THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The following are appropriate descriptors that best describe the broad research design of the study:

- *Empirical study* – The research and data collection by the researcher will be primary in format therefore, the research can be described as empirical research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).
- *Basic research* – "... basic research is undertaken purely to understand processes and their outcomes as a result of an academic agenda for which the key consumer is the academic community ..." (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:588). The research is conducted to understand whether social media influences the volunteer tourists' decision to participating in volunteer tourism programmes in Namibia. The results will not directly inform managerial decision-making or public policy formulation.

- *Descriptive* – The volunteer tourists, the volunteer organisations, the volunteer programmes and the marketing of the programmes will be described by identifying social media marketing approaches therefore, a descriptive approach to the research is called for (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The main aim of this study is to allow for a detailed understanding of social media marketing and its use by volunteer tourism organisations, as well as the use of social media by volunteers themselves.
- *Cross-sectional* – Cross-sectional research entails the study of the phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Cross-sectional research is used in this study as the in-depth interviews will capture and represent the data given by the volunteer tourists and the volunteer tourism organisations' representatives at the time of response.
- *Primary data* – Primary data refers to data that is collected to specifically serve the research involved (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In this study, the research is primary since it is empirical in nature and the data captured will specifically achieve the research objectives involved.
- *Textual* – This research is qualitative research. Qualitative research is required and consists of data capturing in textual form. The data will be captured through the use of qualitative in-depth interviews.

3.4 SAMPLING

3.4.1 TARGET POPULATION, CONTEXT AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism organisations' representatives are the target population for this study. The selected volunteer tourism organisations are: Amani Development Centre Namibia, Elephant Human Relations Aid, Harnas Wildlife Foundation, N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation and Okutala African Quest.

The VTOs were selected based on the criteria to ensure that the 'tourism' element was present and that the individual organisations are engaging in social media marketing and incorporate an online presence in general. 'Tourism' is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation as "... a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes ..." (UNWTO, 2014). Therefore, the organisations offering one-day or weekend volunteer projects, were excluded from this study. There will be no demographical or sociographical parameters within the units of analysis. All individuals (volunteers who have participated, who are currently participating and volunteer tourism organisation representatives) acquainted with one of the five selected VTOs, regardless of their age, gender and experience, will be included in this study.

3.4.2 SAMPLING METHODS

The entire population of currently participating volunteers, volunteers who have participated and volunteer tourism organisation representatives are used in this study therefore, no sample will be drawn. This is due to the fact that the population of volunteers who have participated, who are currently participating and the representatives of the volunteer tourism organisations included in this study are relatively small samples. Therefore, due to this relatively small sample, the entire population will be used in the research.

The volunteer tourists currently participating in the programmes were approached at the volunteer organisation and the volunteer tourists who have participated in the programmes were interviewed electronically (through an interview schedule sent via email). Both groups were requested to participate in the study via an in-depth interview invitation. The volunteer tourism organisation representative participated after consent was given, in the form of an in-depth interview between the researcher and the participant.

3.4.3. SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size includes the volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism organisation representatives and is limited to the five selected organisations [Amani Development Centre Namibia, Elephant Human Relations Aid, Harnas Wildlife Foundation, N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation and Okutala African Quest]. The sample size therefore only offers a limited number of participants to research.

The volunteer tourism organisation's representative is considered comparable between the owner of the organisation (in the case of a small organisation), social media marketing manager (in the case of a large organisation with a separate social media marketing manager) and the digital marketing manager (in the case of a large organisation with a separate digital marketing manager). All three positions deal directly with the social media marketing and volunteer tourist involvement and interaction of the organisation. All three representatives are directly relevant in the same way for the purpose of the study.

The size of available participants from the selected volunteer tourism programmes are as follow:

Table 2: Sample sizes achieved by selected volunteer tourism organisations and their volunteer tourists

VTO	Volunteer (Local)	Volunteer (Foreigner)	VTO representative
Amani Development Centre Namibia	0 local volunteer tourist participants	4 foreign volunteer tourist participants	Owner of the organisation
Elephant Human Relations Aid	0 local volunteer tourist participants	35 foreign volunteer tourist participants	Social media marketing manager of the organization
Harnas Wildlife Foundation	0 local volunteer tourist participants	32 foreign volunteer tourist participants	Owner of the organization
N'a'an ku sê wildlife Foundation	0 local volunteer tourist participants	31 foreign volunteer tourist participants	Digital marketing manager of the organization
Okutala African Quest	0 local volunteer tourist participants	15 foreign volunteer tourist participants	Sales and marketing manager of the organization
Total amount of volunteer tourist responses recorded	117 participants		

Total amount of volunteer programme social media marketing managers responses recorded	5 participants		
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The sample size of the study consists of (zero) 0 local volunteer tourist participants, 117 foreign volunteer tourist participants and 5 volunteer tourism organisation representative participants. The number of local volunteers is significant and raises the question as to why local volunteers are not participating in volunteer programmes in the country.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

3.5.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Volunteer tourists who are currently participating and who have participated in different programmes made available by the selected VTOs in Namibia, are the units of analysis for this research, as well as the representatives from the selected VTOs who enable these programmes (refer to Appendix E, F and G for the data collection instruments and informed consent form).

Primary, qualitative (textual) data collection will take place with the use of two sets of in-depth interviews to relevant participants. Participants to the in-depth interviews include Namibian nationals (volunteers) as well as foreign nationals (volunteer tourists). Participants to the first set of in-depth interviews include volunteers and volunteer tourists, because locals may also decide to participate in the offered programmes (refer to Appendix E). The second set of in-depth interview participants are limited to each representative of the selected volunteer tourism organisations (refer to Appendix F).

The qualitative data collection method is advantageous as the method enables the researcher to "... understand the meaning that people ascribe to events, processes or other aspects of the world they live and function in ... [and] seeing the world through

the eyes of those being studied, is often accompanied by a related goal of probing beneath surface appearances to discover the underlying reasons and motivations for people's behaviour ..." (Bryman & Bell, 2007:416). Another advantage to making use of qualitative data collection is the emphasis the method places on processes as "... qualitative researchers tend to view social and organizational life in terms of processes ... [this] reveals itself in a concern with how events or patterns unfold over time, and by an emphasis on understanding the processes leading up to and following on an event ..." (Bryman & Bell, 2007:418-419).

A disadvantage of qualitative data collection method is that the subject matter (if deeply rooted in studied phenomena and complex in nature) needs to be clearly understood by the participant before it can be measured (Ritchie, 2003). The author adds that qualitative data might uncover "... the elusive nature of feelings or thoughts that an event or circumstance provokes ..." (Ritchie, 2003:33). Therefore, carefully framed and responsive questioning should be implemented for participants to relay the delicacy of their responses. The textual data is collected by means of the researcher and the two different in-depth interview schedules and a tape recorder. The data were recorded, transcribed, summarized and analysed.

3.5.2 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data collection instrument is in-depth interview schedules. There are two different schedules; the first is used to interview the volunteer tourists who are currently participating and who have participated at the selected VTO, and the second is used to interview the VTO representative. The in-depth interviews with both participant groups were recorded, transcribed, summarized and content analysed.

Table 3 below matches the two in-depth interview schedules with the research objectives of the study.

Table 3: Research questions matched with the in-depth interview schedules

Research Question	Question(s) in in-depth interview schedule with volunteer tourists	Question(s) in in-depth interview schedule with VTO representative
To determine whether social media platforms has had an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme.	Section A - Question 8	Question 2
To determine whether social media marketing of the selected five volunteer tourism organisations has had an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme.	Section A – Question 10	Question 1
To determine whether past volunteers' reviews (e.g. social media shared material, Facebook reviews, Trip Advisor comments, blogs, etc.), as an information source, of the volunteer tourism organisation, has had an influence on the decision-making of the prospective volunteer tourists.	Section A – Question 11	Question 4
To develop an integrated social media marketing communications strategy for volunteer tourism organisations.	Section B – Question 1 + Section B – Question 2	Question 5, 7 and 8

3.5.3 MEASUREMENT

For qualitative research, the appropriate measurement questions were used. In the qualitative survey, open-ended and probing questions were used that ensures thorough description of the situation and an understanding of the response to this situation. Specific and closed questions add focus and direction to responses to obtain specific data.

3.5.4 PRE-TESTING OF DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The research instruments (Appendix E and F) were pretested and completed by five persons familiar with the volunteer tourism industry of a developing country in southern Africa, i.e. Namibia. As the volunteer tourism organisations' representatives have extensive knowledge of the volunteering programmes, they were also asked to review the research instruments prior to the distribution thereof in order to obtain consent to commence the data collection process.

The pre-testing of the research instruments is crucial as this advised the researcher to make changes to the instruments if the participant does not understand the question or is not applicable to the organisation or its programme.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

The two data collection instruments are shown in Appendices E and F respectively. The first in-depth interview schedule was conducted individually with the currently participating volunteer tourists and previously participated volunteer tourists and refers to Appendix E. Appendix F, the second in-depth interview schedule, was conducted with the researcher and the volunteer tourism organisation representative. These interviews were audio-recorded, "... reproduced as a written (word-processed) account using the actual words ..." (transcribed; Saunders *et al.*, 2009:485), summarised and analysed. During the analytical process, the data obtained was analysed by unitising the data according to specific categories with similar themes. A manual approach was used to arrange the different units of data with key ideas into the categories with similar themes. As stated by Saunders *et al.* (2009:495), the researcher will subsequently generate a hierarchical approach to the categorisation of data and move towards an explanation to the research objective in question. The different categories were kept up to date and new categories were identified in order to maintain consistency of themes amongst the units of data captured. Charts and graphs were used in the findings section (Chapter 4) to display the data accordingly. Pie charts and bar charts were used in this study to illustrate the data.

The researcher personally travelled to the selected VTOs to conduct research with the two groups through in-depth interviews, as all the participants were present at the various organisations. The use of in-depth interviews for qualitative research attempted to achieve the various research objectives in this study.

3.7 ASSESSING AND DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.7.1 ERRORS IN DATA COLLECTION

Errors in qualitative research data collection do exist. A major potential error in qualitative research data collection involves the willingness of the interviewee to participate in the interview due to the time-consuming nature of the process (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The researcher approached both sample groups through thorough explanation of the research objectives and the amount of time it will take to complete the interview. The researcher acknowledged that the findings derived from making use of non-standardised research will not be intended for repeated use as they reflect reality at the time the data were collected. The time the data were collected forms a situation that is a subject of change (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The researcher makes notes, observes, and records the interviews on tape to reanalyse the data obtained for greater understanding of the process used and the findings for interpretation.

3.7.2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), the concern about reliability with in-depth interviews is related to issues of the lack of standardisation, interviewer bias, participant bias and generalisability. The in-depth interview schedules are reliable as there are observation techniques used, notes made, and the process is recorded on tape for recollection and reanalysing of the data. The majority of the in-depth interviews were conducted at the various volunteer tourism organisation's premises, where all participants were comfortable and at ease. The reliability of the two data collection instruments was ensured by pre-testing on relevant persons familiar with the

volunteer tourism industry of a developing country in southern Africa. The reliability of the data collection technique used, and the analysis procedures were consistent by ensuring that no subject or participant error, subject or participant bias, observer error or observer bias was present. The researcher ensured that one-on-one and anonymous interviews were conducted during consistent interviewing times, as well as, ensuring that the researcher herself only conducted these interviews. The validity of the data collection technique was ensured by careful explanation of the particular research setting, as the study might not be equally applicable to other research settings (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

3.8 RESEARCH ETHICS

The following section will discuss specific ethical principles and potential ethical problems that apply to the study. The researcher adheres to the policies related to plagiarism and this is managed by the examiners involved. Participants involved in the data collection, had the right to decline or withdraw from participation at any time as this research is completely voluntary in nature. The participant's decision to decline or stop participating in the research only affects the researcher's response rate. There were no financial or material incentives used to encourage participants to take part in this research.

There were no physical or psychological harm done to participants during the research process as the method and type of research conducted was empirical research, qualitative research methods are used such as, two different in-depth interviews. Each data collection instrument was presented with the choice to participate or not. If the participant accepted the offer to participate in the study, a consent form was signed by the participant. All the information and data obtained from the research remains confidential and if the participant requests, the summary of the findings can be made available to them.

The in-depth interviews remain anonymous. The in-depth interviews will be kept confidential and only the signature of the participant is requested. The consent form

allows for participants to remain anonymous throughout and no personal information is recorded.

Permission from the VTOs was obtained in order to approach the organisation's currently participating volunteer tourists and also the representatives of the volunteer tourism organisation. The permission to conduct research at these organisations [Amani Development Centre Namibia, Elephant Human Relations Aid, Harnas Wildlife Foundation, N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation and Okutala African Quest] are presented through a signed letter of consent (Appendix H).

The researcher conducted this research based on set ethical standards. The researcher understands that the data was be collected with integrity, honesty and in an ethical manner. The researcher accepts the responsibility to behave ethically from designing the research, to accessing the organisation, conducting the data collection through the use of two different data collection schedules and lastly, data analysis techniques and reporting the findings.

Copyright is limited to the University of Pretoria since this is the institution through which the research will be passed. A declaration of plagiarism is signed by the researcher prior to the commencement of the research.

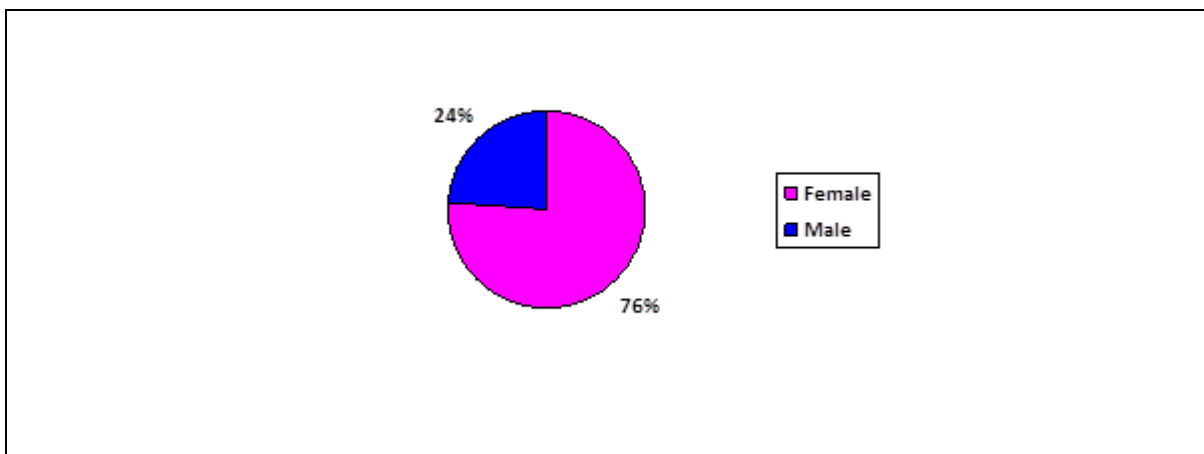
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS ON VOLUNTEER TOURISTS AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

4.1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ANALYSIS

The demographic data analysis gives an indication of the volunteer tourists' demographic information, such as gender, age, nationality, relationship status, highest education obtained and current employment situation.

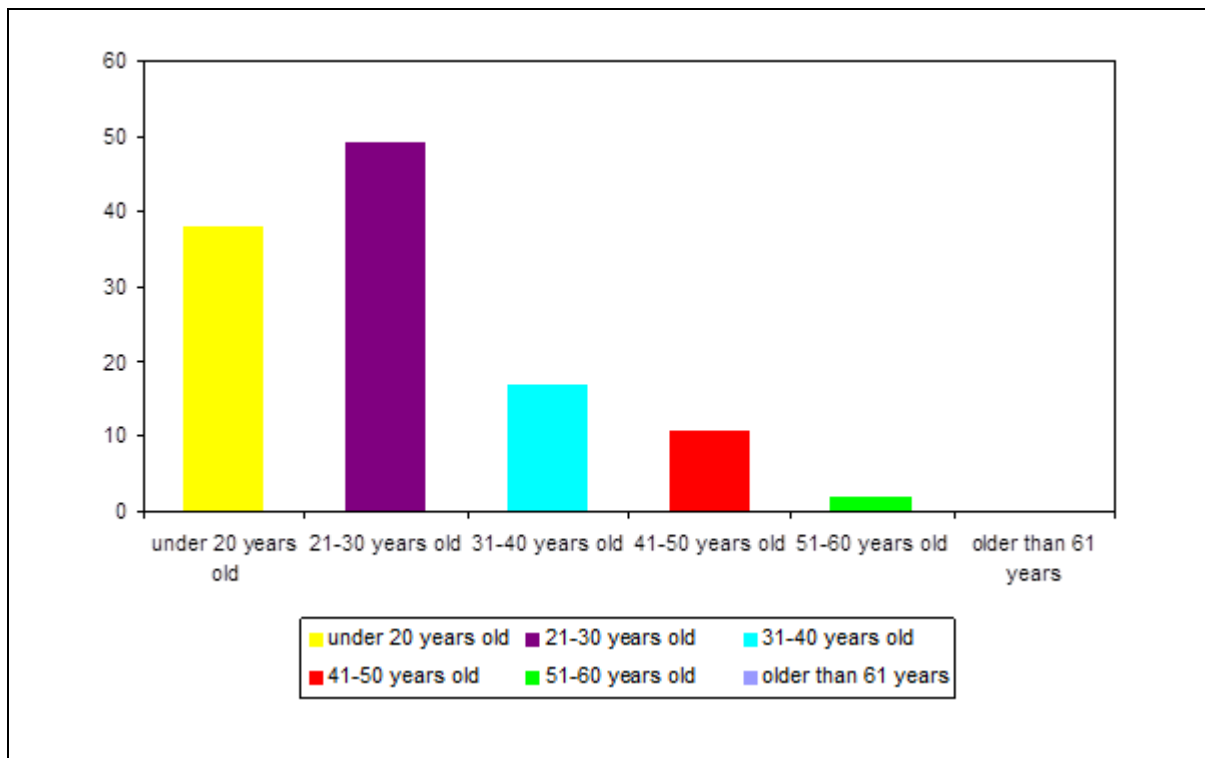
Figure 11: Gender distribution amongst participant volunteer tourists



The gender information gathered from the participants indicated that 76% were female and 24% were male. Musick and Wilson (2008) also found that females are more likely to engage in volunteer work than males. The authors have concluded that this might be attributed to females being more compassionate than males.

The below bar chart illustrates the frequency of the different age group intervals of participants.

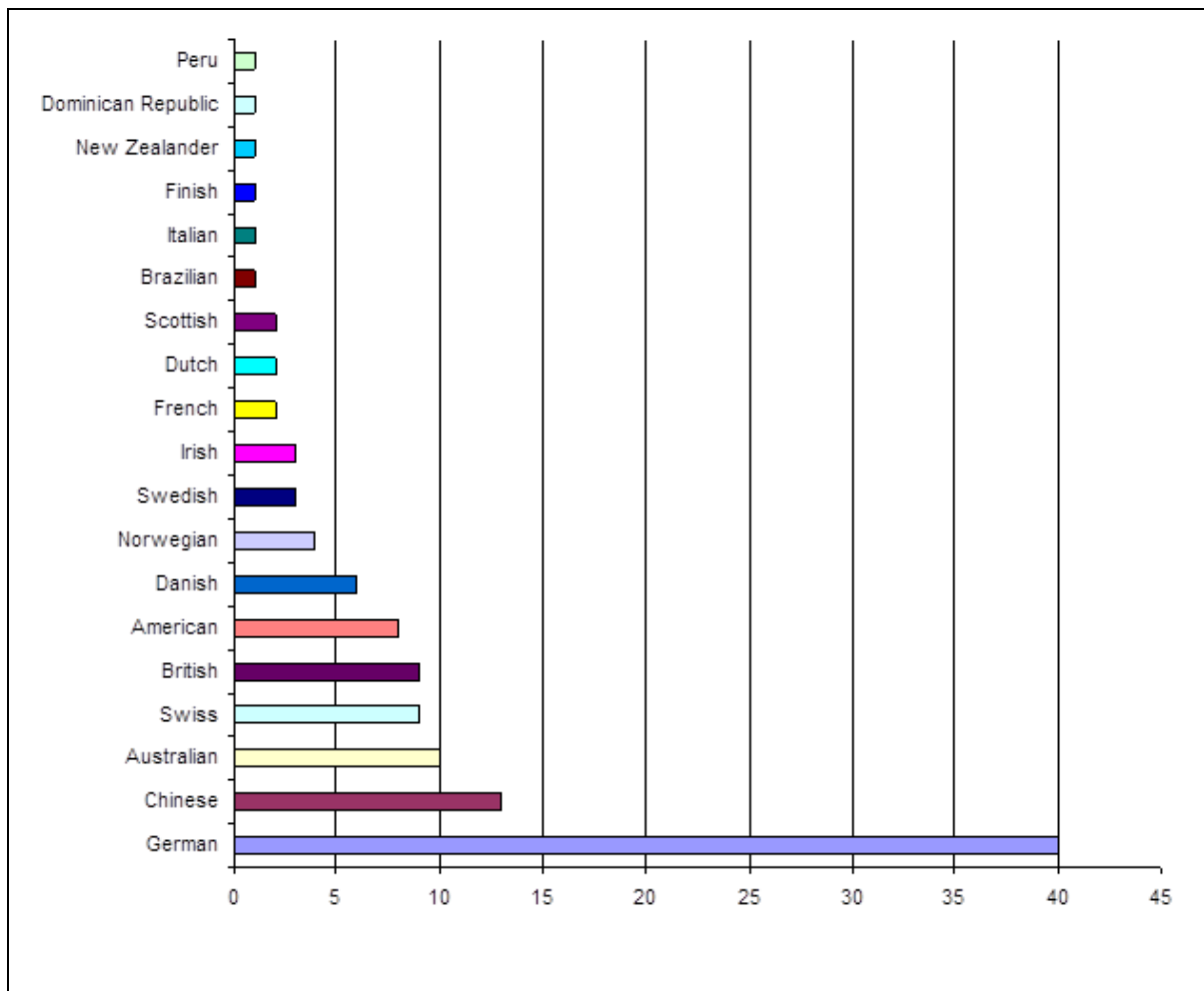
Figure 12: Frequency of the different age group intervals of participants



The most popular age group interval is 21 to 30 years of age. According to Chumakov (2008; cited in Florya, 2014:10), persons born in the years 1983-2000 are considered the Generation Y / “network”- / “Millennial” -generation and they are all currently entering “... the phase of active life ...”. Generation Y is born into a world of virtual computerized realities, they engage in artificial computer worlds and share experiences online through the use of blogs, posts and computer networking sites. Pendergast (2010:5) adds that this generation is the most educated, confident, self-focussed and liberal generation of them all and that they value “... brands, friends, fun and digital culture ...”. This gives insight to the VTO to ensure that their online networking sites and social media presence should not only be actively involved in creating an image of the entire volunteer tourist experience (making friends, having fun, learning new things), but also to create a brand that the volunteer can interact with before and after participating at the VTO.

The bar chart below illustrates the distribution of the participants based on their nationality.

Figure 13: The distribution of the participants based on their nationality



As depicted above, the German nationality forms the majority of participants responses based on their nationality. This can be greatly attributed to the fact that Namibia has been ruled under the German Empire from 1884 to 1919, known then as German South West Africa. The German legacy still lives on and many street names, buildings, radio stations, television channels and businesses exist in the German language. The results from the participants might indicate some tourists wanting to experience the country for its rich history in their language, the impact of the German Empire's rule or to explore the people of German descent in Namibia.

Furthermore, the responses from the participants indicated their current marital status of 77% being single, 14.5% are in a relationship, 6.8% are married, 1.7% are separated, divorced or widowed and 0% said other. The results would assume that the majority of participants fall into the Generation Y (born 1983-2000; aged approximately 18-35) category and agrees with Pendergast (2010) that these

members are greatly dependent on their parents for financial support. This generation is also nicknamed the “... helicopter kids ...”; hovering about the family home much later than previous generations (Salt, 2006; cited in Benckendorff, Moscardo & Pendergast, 2010:8). This may lead to most participants indicating a single relationship status.

The bar chart and pie chart below indicate the participant’s highest qualification obtained and current occupational situation respectively.

Figure 14: Highest qualification obtained by the participants

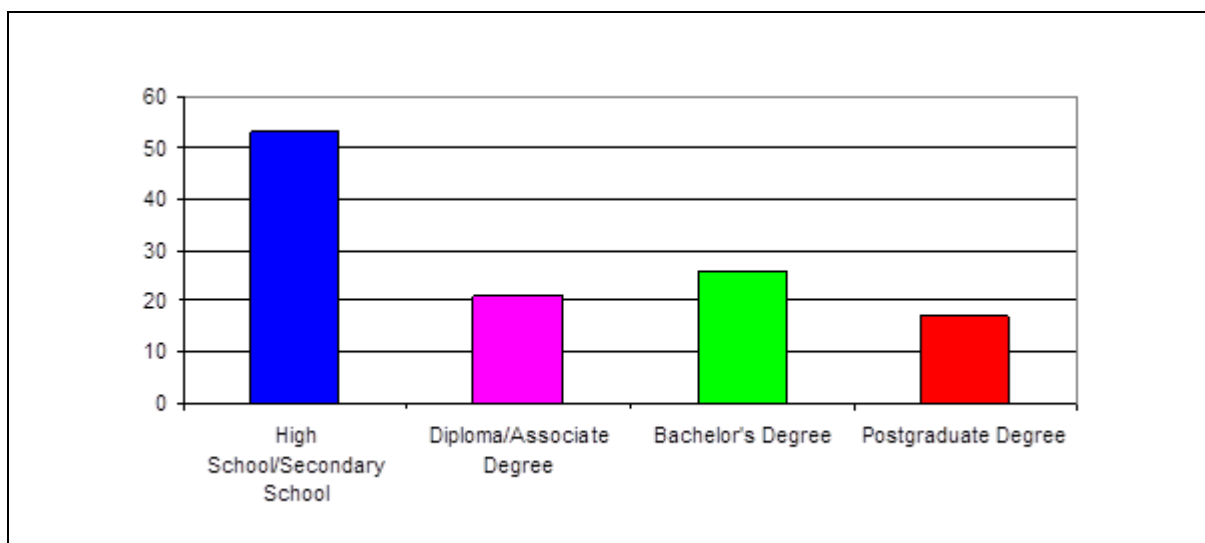
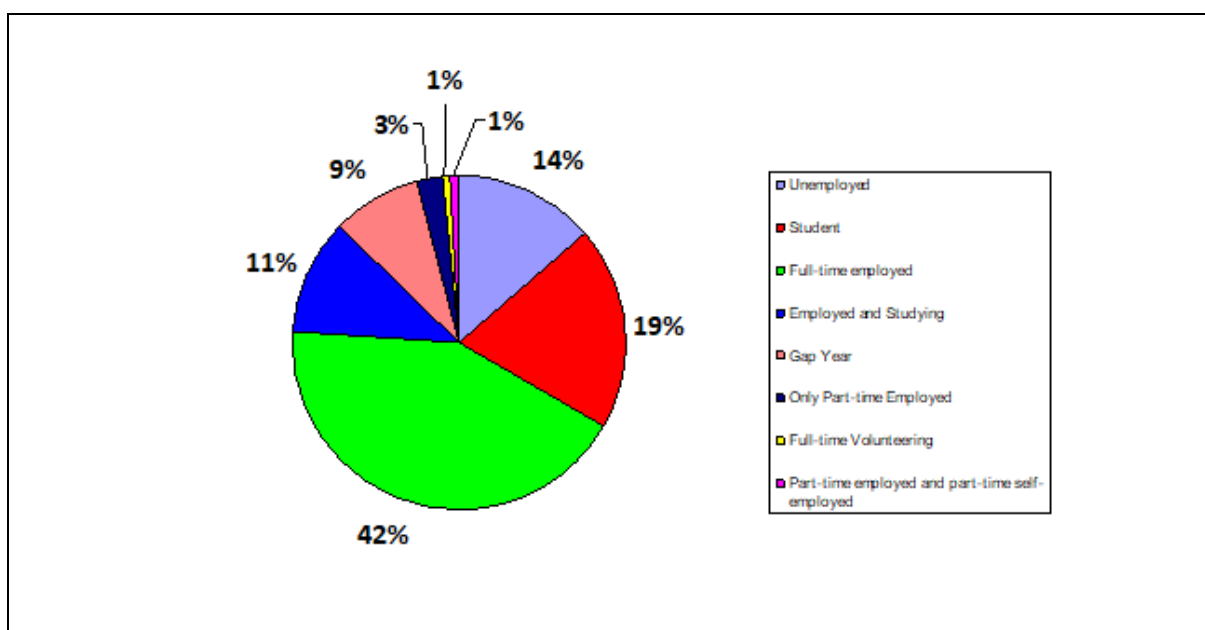


Figure 15: Current occupational situation of the participants



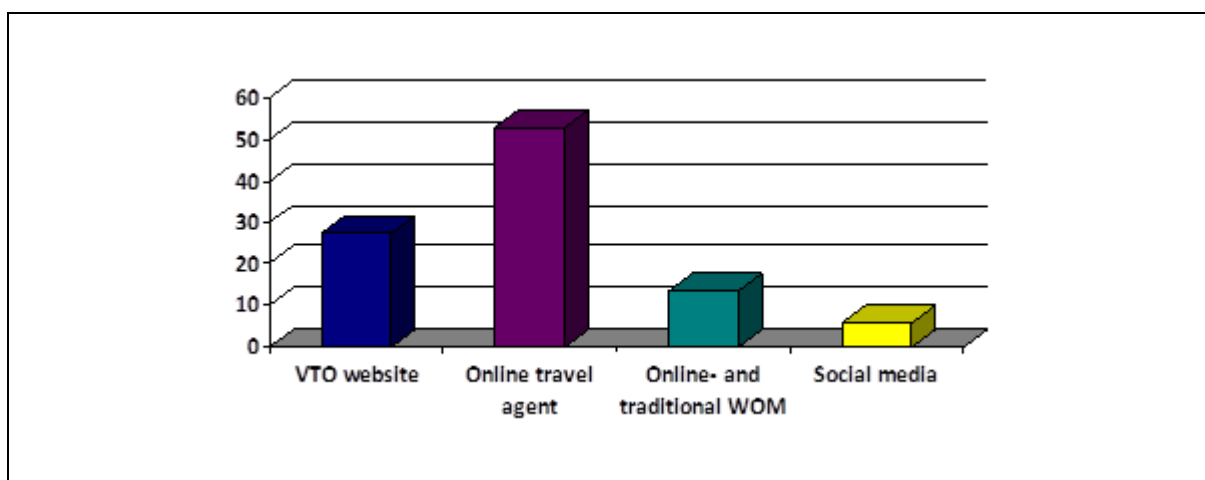
The majority of participants indicated high school and secondary school as their highest qualification obtained and the majority of participants indicated full time employment as their current occupational situation. This indicates that the majority of volunteer tourists aged between 21 – 30 have already entered the workforce, yet they are travelling more often and will still make time for “... different experiences often involving everyday life ...”, making them the “experience hungry” generation (Pendergast, 2010:11).

4.2 INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE INFORMATION OF THE VOLUNTEER TOURISTS

4.2.1 INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ANALYSIS

The internet usage information gathered from the participants proved that 100% had access to the internet when planning to participate in a volunteer tourism programme and that 97% make use of the internet on a daily basis in their home country. The bar chart below illustrates the various channels where the participants found out about their selected volunteer tourism organisations.

Figure 16: The various channels where the volunteer tourist found out about the selected volunteer tourism organisation

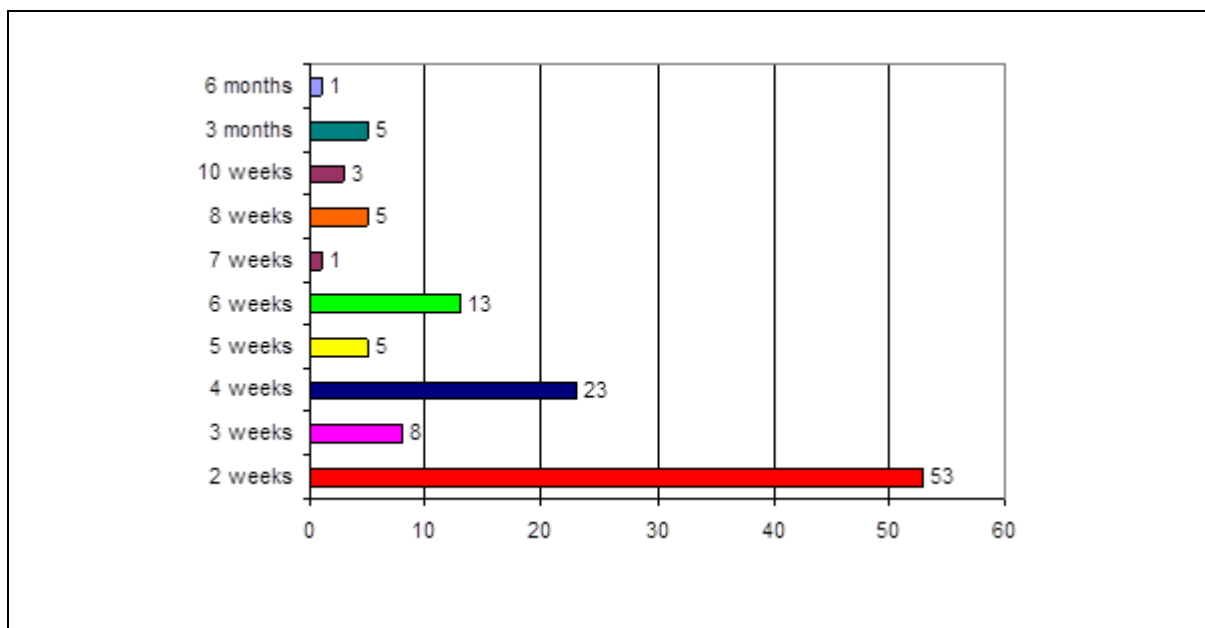


Of all the participants, 27.3% found out about their selected volunteer tourism organisation through their website, 53% of all participants found out about the volunteer tourism programme via an online travel agent, 13.6% found out through

online and traditional word-of-mouth and 5.9% found out purely through social media coverage of the volunteer tourism organisation.

The bar chart below indicates the length of time spent at the volunteer tourism organisation per volunteer.

Figure 17: Length of time volunteer tourists spent at the volunteer tourism organisation (per volunteer)

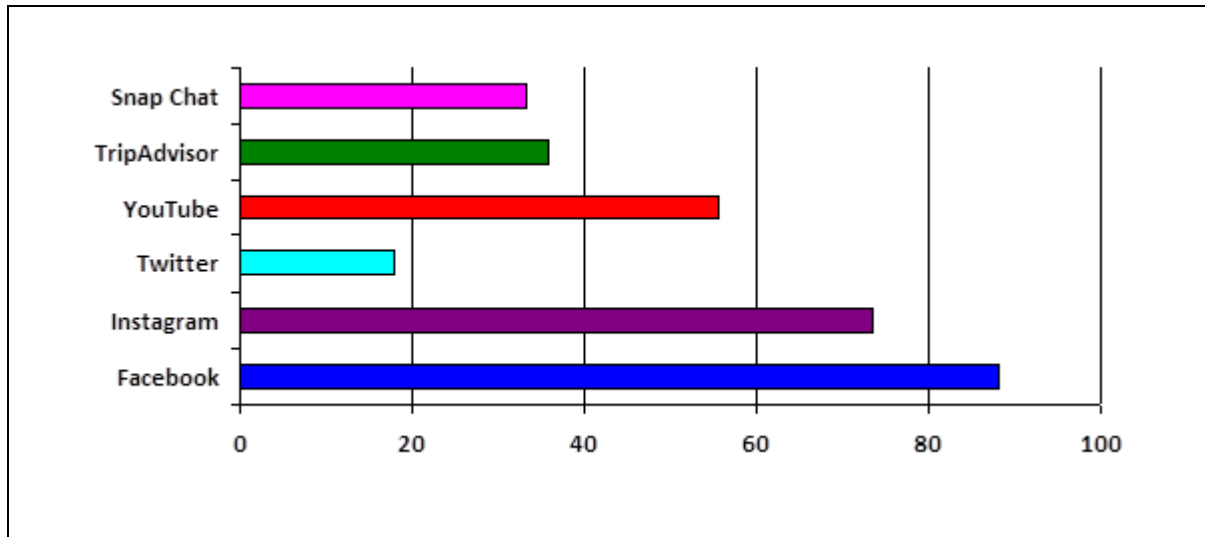


Most volunteers spent two weeks, the second most volunteers spent 4 weeks and the third most volunteers spent 6 weeks. There are volunteer tourists who spent up to 3 – 6 months volunteering at one of the selected volunteer tourism organisations. The majority of volunteer tourists only spent 2 weeks at the VTO. According to Hernandez-Maskivker, Lapointe & Aquino (2018), this can have negative impact on the volunteer tourism industry as there is not enough time given to train and introduce the volunteers to the goal of the organization and its programme. This can ultimately lead to wasted and underutilized volunteers, a negative impact on the host community and a bad reputation for the VTO and the destination as a whole (Hernandez-Maskivker, Lapointe & Aquino, 2018).

Participants were asked whether they had engaged on their social media platforms while participating in the volunteer tourism programmes and 52.1% of them responded that they had and 47.9% responded that they had not. The bar chart below indicates

the various social media pages of selected volunteer tourism organisations that have been consulted.

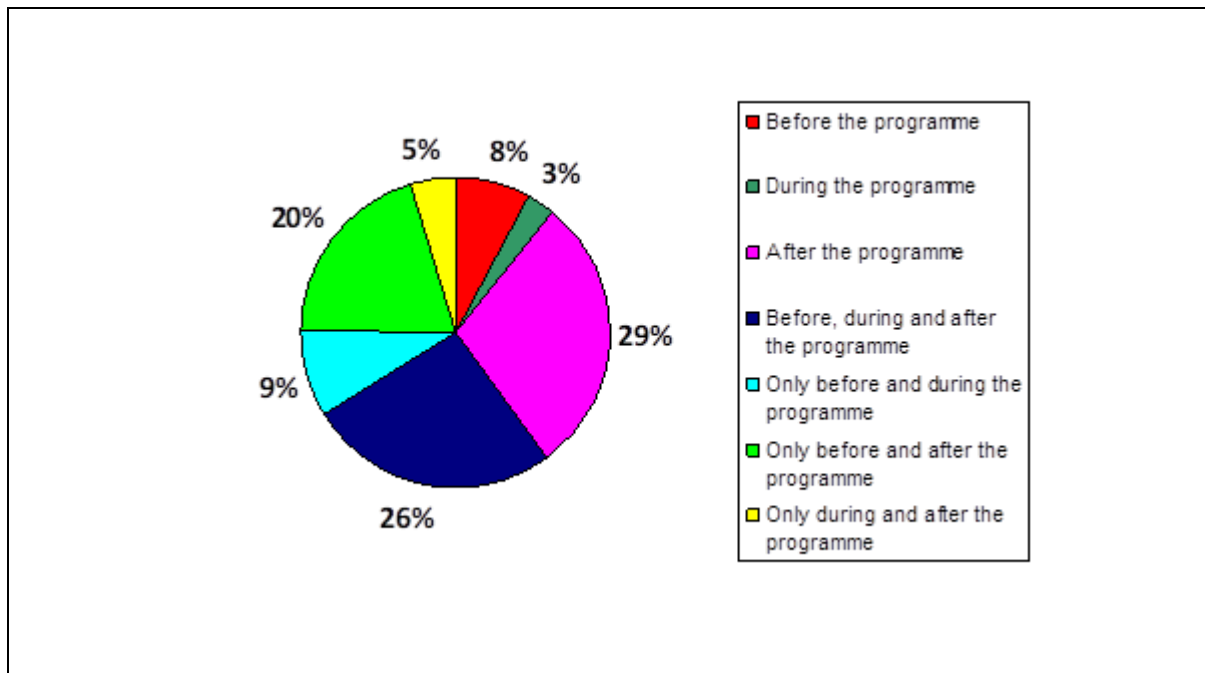
Figure 18: The various social media pages of selected volunteer tourism organisations that have been consulted



Although, 46.6% of the participants haven't consulted the volunteer tourism organisations social media pages, the other 53.4% have. They have consulted the organisation's Facebook Page (36%), its Instagram profile (33.3%), its Twitter feed (1.3%), its YouTube videos (17.3%) and its TripAdvisor reviews (4%). This can be attributed by the fact that Facebook is one of the largest social media websites with more than 2 billion users. There is no debate as to whether VTOs should have a Facebook Page or not, as the platform dominates the social media competition by audience reach and engagement (Allen, 2017). Miguéns, Baggio and Costa (2008) highlights the importance of developing and expanding the usage of all available online interactive technologies in order to improve a destination's and organisations' position in the tourism market.

Of all the participants who have consulted the selected volunteer tourism organisation's social media pages, they were asked whether this happened before the programme, during the programme, after the programme or multiple options, if applicable. The pie chart below illustrates the outcome.

Figure 19: When the volunteer tourist consulted the selected volunteer tourism organisation’s social media pages



Of all the participants, 29% of the volunteer tourists indicated that they will only consult the VTOs social media platform/s after participating in the programme. This indicates that volunteer tourists were either not interested nor informed by the VTOs to connect with them on their social media platforms before participating in the programmes.

Each participant was asked whether he or she believes that social media marketing by the volunteer tourism organisation influenced them to participate in the selected programme. 47% of the participants believe that it did influence them to participate in the programme, 51.2% do not believe that it influenced them and 1.7% answered that social media played a relative role in influencing them to participate. Although more than half of the participants believe that social media marketing did not influence them, a substantial 47% of all the participants believe that it did. This indicates that social media plays a role in the decision-making process to participate in the selected volunteer tourism programmes. This statement agrees with the findings of Miguéns, Baggio and Costa (2008), as online information is freely available, it may help with the planning process and ultimately, assist in the decision-making process.

One participant clearly described how she felt when considering video material on social media and how it had influenced her to participate in a programme.

“... I think that I would’ve come either way, but it made me feel more secure about the place and that it was a real thing. I know that it made my family feel better checking out their page. So, I definitely think that it played a role ...” (VTO: N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Foundation)

and another:

“... you feel comfortable when you see that people are really having fun here ...” (VTO: N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Foundation)

and another:

“... if you’re unsure, you go to the page and if they [the organisation] are well done, you decide to come ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid)

and another:

“... I could see where I went [what to expect] ...” (VTO: Amani Development Centre)

and another:

“... one can tell that they are real by looking at [the organisation’s] Facebook page and Instagram ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid)

and another:

“... I think it made my will stronger to go here ...” (VTO: Harnas Wildlife Foundation)

The comments from volunteer tourists agree with the authors, Stoeckl, Rohrmeier and Hess (2007), who found that when comparing text content with video content, that video content is more likely to contain emotional attributes experienced by the tourist and that the text content is more information-dense.

This attributes to the fact that volunteer tourists react positively to the video content as they connect online with the organisation on a more emotional level, rather than textual content as only an information source.

On the contrary, some participants do not believe that social media has influenced them as:

“... it was purely through word-of-mouth from a friend. I did go on and looked at pictures on their Facebook page, but I’ve already decided that I want to come. It certainly got me excited to do it ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid)

and another:

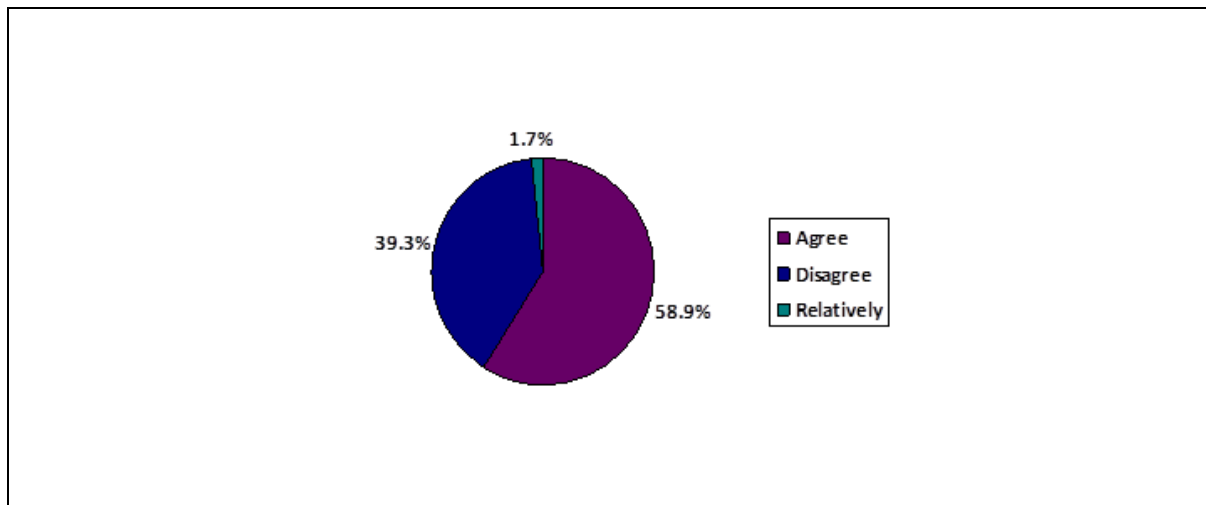
“... made up my mind already ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid).

Two participants mentioned that they haven’t felt particularly influenced by social media or not by stating:

“... it would’ve probably just reassured me, but I would’ve gone both ways ...” (VTO: N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Foundation).

Each participant was asked whether he or she believes that past volunteers’ information about the volunteer tourism organisation, influenced them to participate in the selected programme. The below pie chart illustrates the results.

Figure 20: Volunteer tourists who believe that past volunteers' information influenced them to participate in the selected programme



Of all the participants, 58.9% believe that past volunteers' information did influence them to participate in the programme, 39.3% do not believe that it has influenced them and 1.7% answered that past volunteers' information played a relative role in influencing them to participate. This indicates that the majority of the volunteer tourists are influenced by what past volunteers say about the VTO. This indicates, and agrees with Easton and Wise (2015:155), that there is an "... increasing acceptance of UGC [User-generated content] and social media sites as a credible source of eWOM [electronic word-of-mouth] ...".

A few participants briefly described how they felt when considering past volunteers' information on social media and how it has influenced them to participate in a programme:

"... I looked at a lot of reviews ..." (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid)

and another:

"... we were reading the reviews and reading what other experiences [of the place] were ..." (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid)

and another:

“... it made me feel sure, what to expect and what to prepare for ...” (VTO: Harnas Wildlife Foundation)

and another:

“... that really helped me [to decide] ...” (VTO: N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Foundation)

and another:

“... it helped a lot just to see what people thought about it ...” (VTO: N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Foundation).

On the contrary, some participants do not believe that past volunteers’ information about the organisation has influenced them as:

“... I didn’t want their influence...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid)

and another:

“... good to have, but did not influence my decision ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid)

and another:

“... I read some, but I think like the ones that they are posting themselves are like, you cannot be 100% sure, like you need to be critical, because they are going to like post the best ones, you know ...” (VTO: Harnas Wildlife Foundation)

and another:

“... no, it didn’t, but it is nice to read other opinions ...” (VTO: Harnas Wildlife Foundation)

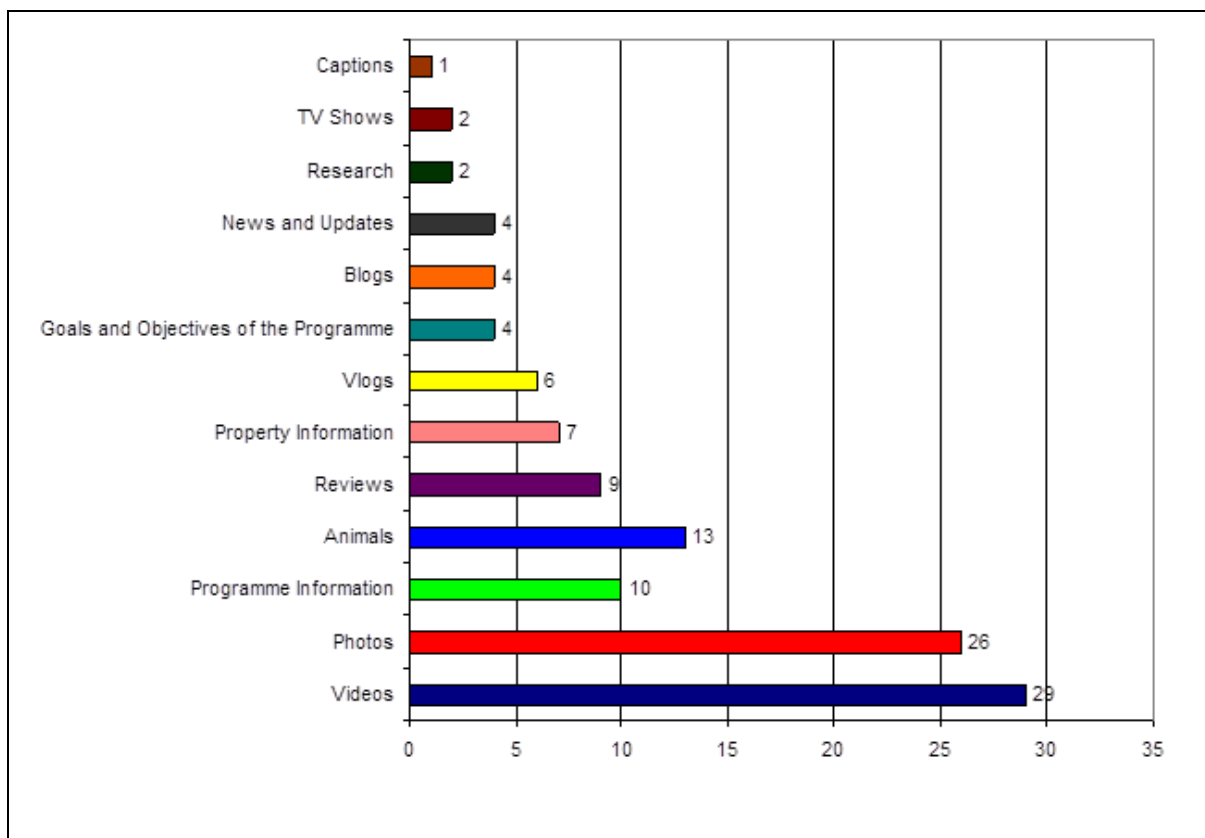
and another:

“... I don’t think it did [influence me], because a lot of people come here and think that they’re just going to be playing with animals and there are a lot of negative reviews because of that and that didn’t deter me at all ...” (VTO: N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Foundation).

Two participants only replied with a simple answer “... a little bit ...” (VTO: N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Foundation).

All 117 participants were asked which type of content on social media platforms they found most influential to participate in a volunteer tourism programme. The bar chart below illustrates a few categories.

Figure 21: Type of content on social media platforms the participants find most influential to participate in a volunteer tourism programme



According to Perrine (2015:53), visual content on social media enables the brand (or rather, VTO) to showcase the “human side” of the organisation through the use of pictures and videos. The author suggests making use of visual content on social

media as this communicates with users much quicker than text-based content, it also connects with the user on an emotional level and acts as a tool to break through the overwhelming volume of content shared online (Perrine, 2015).

The table below lists all the attributes relating to the type of content on social media platforms that influenced volunteer tourists to participate. Akehurst (2008) mentioned a few of the following types of content as facilitators to decision making: user generated content (reviews), online travel blogs, vlogs (online videos) and web forums.

Table 4: Attributes to the type of content on social media platforms that influence volunteer tourists to participate in selected volunteer tourism programmes

Type of Content:	Attributes content should consist of:
1. Videos	Less than 3 minutes long
	Face-to-face experiences
	Short version of what to expect
	Do not give too much away
	Show the fun part of volunteering
	Personal referral review
2. Photos	Good quality
	Introduce animals
	Past volunteers
	Volunteers and organisers / facilitators working together
	Interaction with people during entire trip
	Volunteers taking care of the animals
3. Programme Information	Explain thoroughly what to expect
	Information pack on everything of the programme
	Introduction to the team of organisers / facilitators
	How many volunteers will be joining are where they come from

4. Animals	Catch and release videos
	Updates on their lives
	Introducing new animals
5. Reviews	Good reviews and bad reviews
	Past volunteers should be tagged in reviews
6. Property Information	Structure and buildings itself
	Accommodation, food and costing
7. Vlogs	Authentic experiences captured by past volunteers themselves
	What was done during their programme
8. Goals and Objectives of the Programme	Professional and serious in nature
	Understanding the bigger picture and ultimate reason why the volunteers are there
9. Blogs	Stories of authentic experiences
10. News and Updates	Updates on new, sick, grown up animals and also those that have passed away
	News on rehabilitated animals where volunteers were directly involved in
11. Research	What information was found, tried and tested
	Recent developments in the respectful fields of study
12. TV Shows	Celebrities showcasing authentic experiences outside of their usual environment
13. Captions	Funny, sharp and authentic captions with video and photo content

Videos are found in this study as the most effective type of content to influence volunteer tourists to participate in a volunteer tourism programme. Not only do volunteers feel that videos are most influential to their decision-making, but that the video should also consist of specific attributes. The volunteers suggested videos should be less than three minutes long, should consist of face-to-face experiences, should be a short version of what to expect during the programme without giving too much detail away and should incorporate the fun part of volunteering as well. One

volunteer mentioned that a short video created by an actual volunteer at the selected organisation, telling and visually showing what he or she is doing, would be very influential to her and her decision-making.

The following section will analyse the data collected from the selected volunteer tourism organisations' representatives and give recommendations with relation to the loophole, the 'Act of Sharing' (AOS), as illustrated in Figure 8.

4.3 DATA COLLECTED FROM THE VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATIONS' REPRESENTATIVES

4.3.1 QUESTION 1: DO YOU CONSIDER SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AS A USEFUL BUSINESS TOOL?

All five of the volunteer tourism organisations agreed that social media marketing is a useful business tool. This agrees with Ali (2011), stating that social media attributes to many positive outcomes in order to reduce the digital divide in developing countries. Social media enables organisations to attract a wider range of potential markets, stimulate content creation, promote basic online marketing and communication skills and to increase interest and participation (Ali, 2011:212).

The AOS (Act of Sharing) can be incorporated in the social media marketing strategy of online presence by ensuring updated, up-to-date and newsworthy information on relevant social media platforms. This forms part of the 'Active Evaluation' stage in figure 8. The VTO should be present on social media platforms where their target market is actively communicating and getting information from. The VTO can share basic day-to-day updates, weekly goals obtained, feedback from past volunteers, enquiries from prospective volunteers (Frequently Asked Questions – FAQs) and their ultimate long-term vision.

4.3.2 QUESTION 2: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INFLUENCES VOLUNTEER TOURISTS' DECISION-MAKING IN PARTICIPATING IN VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES?

All five of the volunteer tourism organisations agreed that social media marketing influences volunteer tourists' decision-making in participating in volunteer programmes. One social media marketing manager added:

“... Yes, I do. Even though I think some only join on social media afterwards funn[il]y enough, but definitely it would influence them, because it is live and it is not a[n] outside body advertising us- it is us. So I'm sure its quite a serious thing to join up, it is not some holiday. So I think that they would find value in seeing what language we talk in terms of our cause and that they [the volunteer tourists] are on the same course. Are they prepared to put money and time into a place that offer the way [cause] what we do and it is the best way to get that information out to them from our website and social media ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid).

The AOS can be incorporated in the social media marketing strategy of managing marketing objectives. Sharing the ultimate experience of participating in a volunteer tourism programme. This also forms part of the 'Moment of Purchase' stage in figure 8. Social media marketing should be interesting, informative, obtainable and should contain the element of 'fun'. The objectives of the programme should be highlighted in order for the volunteer tourist to fully understand what is expected of him/her, what he/she can prepare for and the logistics of the programme should be clear. Social media marketing should be honest and trustworthy in order for prospective volunteer tourists to be willing (and excited) to travel long distances and spent money to participate in the offered programmes.

4.3.3 QUESTION 3: DO YOU MAKE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TO ATTRACT PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEERS OR TO RETAIN PAST VOLUNTEERS?

According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010:186), "... tourism marketers can no longer ignore the role of social media in distributing travel-related information without risking to become irrelevant ...". All five of the volunteer tourism organisations agreed that they make use of social media marketing for both functions, but also added the following:

"... Absolutely. I have posted a sales post about what their [the followers on Facebook] plans are for the following year. There were 3 types of comments: people saying that they are coming back [to participate again at the selected volunteer tourism organisation] in May (therefore, a past volunteer), they are booked for June (therefore, a new volunteer) and tagging a friend and asking their opinion (therefore, a prospective volunteer). More engagement comes from past volunteers, because they can join in on the conversation and the new followers can be shy to share, but they might tag someone and contribute to a closed conversation ..."
(VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid).

And another:

"... Our volunteers share their experiences on social media pages and this is what attracts new volunteers and grows the family of volunteers. We have many volunteers returning regularly ..."
(VTO: Okutala African Quest).

And another:

"... For both. We use social media marketing to continue our engagement with past volunteers, and to market to prospective volunteers ..."
(VTO: N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation).

And another:

“... Yes, I do. Also, to promote the project and give feedback ...” (VTO: Amani Development Centre).

The AOS can be incorporated in the social media marketing strategy of marketing to attract prospective volunteers and to retain past volunteers by catering to their specific online needs. This also forms part of the ‘Post Purchase Evaluation’ and ‘ZMOT’ stages in figure 8. Sharing specific content that will attract prospective volunteers’ attention, motivate them to participate and engage in conversation and ultimately influencing their decision to participate in a volunteer tourism programme. Sharing content that will encourage past volunteers to return include reminding them of their experiences during the programme, updates and news on what is currently happening at the VTO and incorporating testimonials and stories into the social media platform feeds.

4.3.4 QUESTION 4: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PAST VOLUNTEERS’ INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION (E.G. SOCIAL MEDIA SHARED MATERIAL, FACEBOOK REVIEWS, TRIP ADVISOR COMMENTS, BLOGS, ETC.) CAN INFLUENCE THE VOLUNTEER TOURIST TO PARTICIPATE IN AN OFFERED VOLUNTEER TOURISM PROGRAMME?

All five of the volunteer tourism organisations believe that past volunteers’ information about the organisation can influence a volunteer tourist to participate in a selected programme. A few comments about this question include:

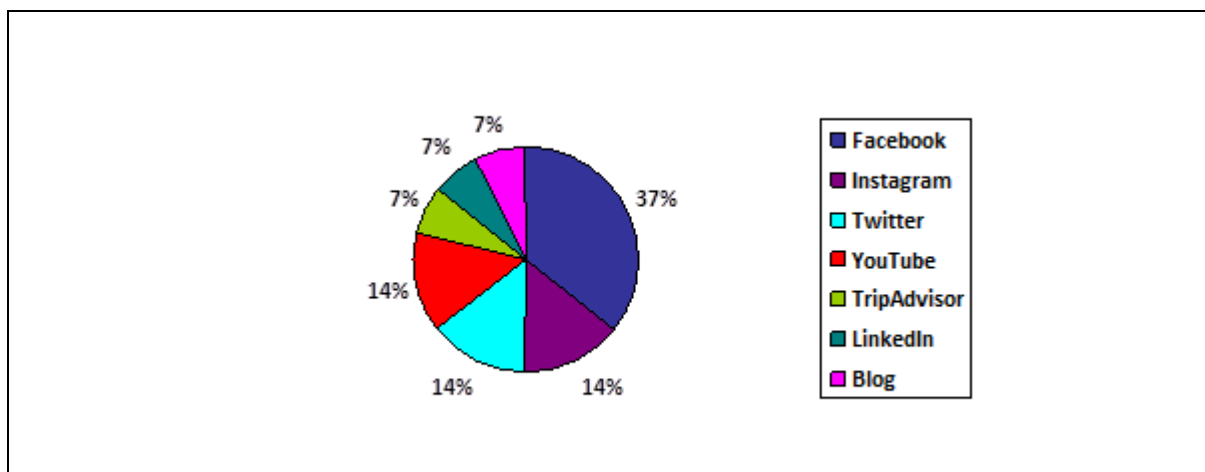
“... Absolutely, if people talk badly about you [the organisation], and they do, people tend to talk more badly about you publicly than positively. It is direct access to any negative feedback ... shared photos and stories by past volunteers (blogs included) and reviews add to information about us [the organisation] and helps potential volunteers from all ages ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid).

The AOS can be incorporated in the social media marketing strategy of managing past volunteers' information about the VTO as it has a direct impact on the VTOs online image and reputation. This strategy involves VTOs encouraging past volunteers to share reviews on the VTO, whether it be positive or negative. This forms part of the 'Active Evaluation' stage in figure 8. Too many positive reviews might lead to the reader or prospective volunteer not trusting the review or might even discourage them completely if there are too many negative reviews. Online reviews should be shared by the VTO in order to influence prospective and past volunteers to form an opinion and make an informed decision to participate in the offered programme or not.

4.3.5 QUESTION 5: ON WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE YOU CURRENTLY ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN?

The below pie chart illustrates the different social media platforms used by the selected volunteer tourism organisations.

Figure 22: The different social media platforms used by the selected volunteer tourism organisations



All of the selected VTOs have a Facebook Page. Of all the selected VTOs, only 2 have an Instagram profile, a Twitter profile and a YouTube channel, respectively. Only one of the selected VTOs have a TripAdvisor profile, a LinkedIn profile and a Blog, respectively. This indicates that all the VTOs also find Facebook as the most important social media platform. Nevertheless, Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga and Bronner

(2018:50) state that all social media platforms have their own strengths, weaknesses, features and characteristics, such as "... media richness, degree of self-disclosure, type of self-presentation, nature of the relationships, and nature of information ...". The VTO should assess the social media platforms together with its identified social media marketing strategies (this will be discussed in further detail in the next section).

4.3.6 QUESTION 6: WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM DO YOU CONSIDER AS MOST EFFECTIVE?

One volunteer tourism organisation who makes use of multiple social media platforms states the following:

"... Facebook - louder platform, allows to voice our opinions and growing at a faster rate (much more tools available: events sharing, article sharing). Instagram is growing at a much slower rate, yet it is our [the organisation's] target market and it is incredibly visual. Twitter has a different market and we only auto-feed from Facebook to Twitter (limited characters). Facebook feeds are created with the amount of Twitter characters in mind. Twitter is used mainly for fundraising initiatives ..." (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid).

Another volunteer tourism organisation, who has 23906 likes and 23606 followers on Facebook and 19000 followers on Instagram, stated:

"... Currently Facebook is our biggest platform in terms of followers, as this is our most established platform- which we have been using for the longest. However, Instagram is proving to be an effective platform- as even though we only been using it for less than 2 years, our relative engagement on Instagram is higher than on Facebook. But currently, Facebook is the most effective ..." (VTO: N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation).

One volunteer tourism organisation who is less popular, with only 147 likes and 151 followers, states:

“... I think Twitter, and what's that one where you put the block? Instagram? Instagram, ja [yes]. But like I said, I'm not into the technology. Facebook is my only and most effective platform ...” (VTO: Amani Development Centre).

All five of the volunteer tourism organisations consider Facebook to be the most effective social media marketing platform.

4.3.7 QUESTION 7: WHAT IS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY?

Two of the five volunteer tourism organisations have formal social media marketing strategies in place.

One social media marketing manager answered the following:

“... Our [the organisation's] social media objectives [are] to gain more volunteers, to gain more support, to be newsworthy and to represent ourselves as a reputable group that is ethical and offer a sustainable solution. Our marketing strategy also has to embrace the fact that we need to be a representative of Namibia and work hand-in-hand with the people who are dealing with the elephants that we are dealing with. We are professional and are trying to work with the real cause and that is what we need to represent and grow to gain more volunteers and to further the amount of financial gain for elephant collaring. We [the organisation] is currently working on a new website for the upcoming year ...” (VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid).

While another stated:

“... Weekly videos and updates loaded and timers set to download ...” (VTO: Okutala African Quest).

And another (vague) strategy:

“... Yes, I'm not very much involved in the promotion part. I'm just the coordinator. AT this stage I only give feedback by posting some pictures and stories so that future volunteers can see what we're doing ...” (VTO: Amani Development Centre).

The AOS can be incorporated in the overall social media marketing strategy as a tool for marketing to friends/followers/subscribers online. The AOS changes the way in which marketing is conducted online at every stage of the consumers' decision-making process. The AOS contributes to the VTOs online presence through sharing information in a conversation-like fashion, and not push-marketing as previously mentioned in section 2.8.2.

4.3.8 QUESTION 8: WHAT CONTENT ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DO YOU FIND USERS ENGAGE MORE IN?

Table 5 below lists different content which volunteer tourism organisations found to engage users more in.

Table 5: Type of content that volunteer tourism organisations believe engages volunteer tourists more to interact on social media platforms

Type of Content:	Attributes content should consist of:
1. Videos	Baby animals: 'cute content'
2. Photos	Drama/incidents during the programme
	Photos of baby animals
	Pictures of new baby animals arriving at the sanctuary
3. Programme Information	Information of achievements during the programme
4. Animals	Stories of well-known animals that volunteers have met
5. Reviews	Volunteers giving feedback in writing on your [the organisation's] profile

	Past volunteers should be tagged in reviews
6. Other	Articles of interest

One social media marketing manager added the following when answering this question:

“... We cannot be too controversial with what we post, because we are not extremists. If there is something controversial, we do get a lot of opinions, but we tend to try and avoid it. Informative, yet strategic engagement ...”
(VTO: Elephant Human Relations Aid).

And another:

“... Volunteers liking or tagging themselves in photos and stories give an expression of how they are feeling towards the project. [It shows how] emotionally connected they are toward the project ...” (VTO: Amani Development Centre).

The VTO’s representatives only mentioned the attribute of having videos, the importance of videos and its ability to catch the volunteer tourists’ (prospective, current or past) is not emphasised enough. Consensus is reached on the importance of videos, photos and visual content on the VTO’s social media platforms, but many more attributes (programme information, reviews, vlogs, research and news and updates) to influence the volunteer tourists’ decision-making is of concern to the VTO and its social media marketing strategies (see Table 4).

4.4 DISCUSSION

The study was focused on the impact of social media (i.e. non-traditional promotional material) in influencing volunteer tourists’ decisions to participate in selected volunteer programmes in Namibia. The first section of the discussion includes the demographic profile of the typical volunteer tourist in a developing country in southern Africa, i.e. Namibia. Thereafter, the research objectives of the study are explored together with future trends within the industry in developing countries in southern Africa. Then, a

social media marketing strategy is proposed in a developing country context with reference to Namibia. Lastly, the conclusion of the study and recommendations for future studies are discussed.

4.4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TYPICAL VOLUNTEER TOURIST IN NAMIBIA

The results found that a typical demographic profile of a volunteer tourist consists of the following:

- 76% were female and 24% were male (refer to figure 11)
- The most popular age group interval is 21 to 30 years of age (refer to figure 12)
- The most popular nationality is German (34%) (refer to figure 13)
- Majority of marital status as single (77%)
- High School or secondary school as the volunteer's highest qualification obtained (refer to figure 14)
- Full time employed (refer to figure 15)
- 53 out of 117 volunteers (45%) spent two weeks at the selected volunteer tourism organisation (refer to figure 17)
- 100% of the volunteers had access to the internet when planning to participate in a volunteer tourism programme
- 97% make use of the internet on a daily basis at their home country
- 88.1% of all the participants have a Facebook account
- 73.5% have an Instagram account
- 17.9% have a Twitter account
- 55.5% watch YouTube videos
- 35.8% check TripAdvisor reviews
- 33.3% use Snap Chat

4.4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

4.4.2.1 Objective 1: To determine whether social media platforms have had an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme. (refer to section 4.2.1)

The majority of volunteer tourists in this study have consulted the selected VTO's social media pages and all of the VTO's representatives agreed that social media marketing influences volunteer tourists' decision-making in participating in volunteer programmes. One out of 4 volunteers have consulted the VTO's social media platforms before, during and after participating in the volunteer tourism programme. The emphasises the importance of a VTO's social media presence online. As mentioned previously, Hudson *et al.* (2015) found that consumers who engage with brands on social media platforms, have stronger relationships with those brands compared to consumers who do not interact with them via social media. This emphasizes the importance of online interaction with prospective (and past) volunteers even before they start participating in a volunteer tourism programme.

Facebook is the most popular social media platform considered amongst the volunteer tourists, followed by Instagram and YouTube videos. Facebook is also the most widely used social media platform amongst the VTOs. As mentioned previously, Allen (2017), states that every organisation should have (at least) a Facebook Page, as it dominates the social media competition. This also aligns with the most participants consulting the VTO's Facebook page more than any other social media platforms.

4.4.2.2 Objective 2: To determine whether social media marketing of the selected five volunteer tourism organisations has had an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme.

Of the participants, 47% believe that social media marketing of the VTO did influence them to participate in the programme, 51.2% do not believe that it has influenced them and 1.7% answered that social media played a relative role in influencing them to participate. Yet, all of the volunteer tourism organisations strongly agree that social

media marketing influences volunteer tourists' decision-making in participating in volunteer programmes. The feedback from the participants is very constructive; one participant said that it clearly made her feel that the organisation is 'real' and that she saw the 'fun' element on their social media pages. This adds a definite competitive advantage over another organisation that does not have a clear social media marketing strategy or overall social media presence. This adds to the findings of the authors, Easton and Wise (2015), that there are significant disparities between communicated content via websites and social media websites and that both platforms have the ability to persuade volunteer tourists to achieve positive outcomes.

4.4.2.3 Objective 3: To determine whether past volunteers' reviews (e.g. social media shared material, Facebook reviews, Trip Advisor comments, blogs, etc.), as an information source, of the volunteer tourism organisation, has had an influence on the decision-making of the prospective volunteer tourists.

The majority of the participants believe that past volunteers' reviews did influence them to participate in the programme, while 39.3% do not believe that it has influenced them and 1.7% answered that past volunteers' information played a relative role in influencing them to participate. All of the volunteer tourism organisations believe that past volunteers' information about the organisation can influence a volunteer tourist to participate in a selected programme. This supports the suggestion made in section 3.4.2.2. The majority of volunteer tourists are active on social media; not only do they conduct research on the VTO, but they also use past volunteers' reviews and comments as an information source to influence their ultimate decision-making to participate in a specific volunteer tourism programme or not.

Now that the study has explored volunteer tourists' influence on social media marketing in deciding to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme, the fourth and final objective in this study will be proposed in the following section.

4.4.3 PROPOSED SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY CONTEXT WITH REFERENCE TO NAMIBIA

The final objective of the study draws the social media marketing strategy in a developing country context closer. According to Akar and Topcu (2011:36) and Tuten (2008:56), social media marketing can be defined as, "... an online marketing tool that enables marketers to efficiently and effectively communicate a brand's benefits, value proposition and personality to its target audience ...". A social media marketing strategy is defined as,

"... an integrated strategy that brings consumer experiences to the forefront, all whilst recognizing that Internet-based media does not replace traditional media. Internet-based media expands marketing's ability to move consumers from awareness to engagement, consideration, loyalty, and advocacy. While the use of traditional media constitutes a trade-off between reach and consumer engagement, social media enables both reach and engagement through judicious use of all formats and platforms. Marketers need both people and community platforms in order to create experiences that achieve the overarching goal of attention and influence ..." (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011:4).

Evidently in tables 4 and 5, the findings of this study align with the findings of Howison *et al.* (2015). The authors also found in their study that the main purpose of social media was to interact with past and potential customers, secondly, for promotional purposes, thirdly, for information and fourthly, to maintain a profile on social media and lastly, receiving feedback. It is evident through the use of videos and photos that the customers (or rather, volunteer tourists) would want to interact with the organisation. Thereafter, promotional marketing includes the organisation and its goals, the animals and what the volunteer tourist can expect and activities to be enjoyed at the organisation. Information regarding the accommodation, facilities and logistical arrangements can also be gathered online. Lastly, feedback regarding volunteer tourists' experiences and certain goals achieved during the programme or projects done, can be added on the VTO's social media marketing strategy. These purposes

of social media should be adapted by volunteer tourism organisations’ representatives and social media marketers in order to influence volunteer tourists to participate in their programmes. Now that the purpose of social media marketing is explained, the social media marketing strategies are discussed.

A social media marketing strategy is important in guiding the VTO and its online marketing efforts in achieving a platform to engage, network, share and socialise with prospective and past volunteer tourists. A formal social media marketing strategy is important and it must be implemented, as this sets the foundation for marketing efforts and the intended outcome thereof. Content should be allocated amongst the following 3 types with highest to lowest in order of importance: informational content, engagement content and promotional content (Paswan, 2018). All 3 types are important and should be created by means of using images, videos, user generated content, infographic posts and live videos. The author also sets the foundation for effective social media marketing strategy formulation. These strategies will be applied in the southern Africa context, namely Namibia, and in the case of volunteer tourism organisations’ social media presence.

Table 6: Social media marketing and application in the study context

Strategy by Paswan (2018:10-11):	Application in study context:
1. "... Strategically research your target audience ..."	Typical volunteer tourist profile as discussed in section 3.4.1 sets target audience for volunteer tourists in Namibia
2. "...Create your social media account ..."	Most popular social media platforms used by volunteer tourists and what platform was consulted most (figure 16 and 17 and section 3.4.2.1)
3. "...Create compelling content ..."	Compelling content will attract prospective volunteer tourists and will retain past volunteer tourists- content to be specific and applicable to both groups of volunteer tourists (as discussed in tables 3 and 4)
4. "...Distribute engaging content ..."	The right content is to be distributed at the right time. Volunteer tourists are most influenceable

	prior to their decision-making process (this will be discussed below)
5. "...Engage your target audience ..."	Content should be inviting and sociable – not too much promotional content as this will not engage the volunteer tourist to interact online
6. "...Evaluate or analyse your goals ..."	Social media platforms have analytical tools to be used by page administrators or business profile marketers. These tools are to be used in order to engage the market, at the right time and with the right content

The social media marketing strategies above should be incorporated by any volunteer tourism organisation in southern Africa, especially Namibia. The country boasts many volunteer tourism organisations with programmes that vary in scope and variety (wildlife volunteering programmes, cultural volunteering programmes, education volunteering programmes and community upliftment programmes). Each strategy can be applied to all the different organisations and their goals in terms of engaging and sharing content online.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Seth Godin said: "... marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell ...". This holds truth for any business on social media. Social media has made a tremendous impact on the marketing industry, the behavioural patterns of daily life, Internet usage and general information flow around the world. Although social media can be used by businesses to attract, retain and engage prospective, current and past consumers, the platforms still remains a domain where users can connect with friends, share everyday news and updates and socialize with fellow users. As suggested by Miller (2017), VTOs should leverage social media in order to 'sell without selling' and in letting the 'product' speak for itself (in this case, the volunteer tourism programme). This can be done by making use of rich media such as, videos and photos and compelling and interesting content.

Volunteer tourism in southern Africa, namely, Namibia, has the potential to grow even further with effective social media marketing to prospective and past volunteer tourists. The social media marketing efforts of a VTO have a great impact on the prospective volunteer tourists' image, as mentioned by a volunteer tourist: "... it made me feel sure, what to expect and what to prepare for ...". Yet, also on past volunteers' experiences and whether they will be returning or participate again: "... new younger animals and knowing how they grow up - news and updates ...".

4.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Insight regarding the volunteer tourism industry in southern Africa and the social media influence on the industry is evident in this study, yet some delimitations and future study recommendations exist.

It is crucial for a volunteer tourism organisation to be actively involved in social media marketing as it is equally important as traditional marketing (if not more, considering the VTO's target market). Social media communications should be directed to not only one type of friend/follower/subscriber, but rather to all prospective, present and past volunteer tourists who connect and engage with the organisation online. Another consideration with regard to targeting online marketing not only to Germany, by including various other countries in order to enrich the volunteer tourist experience by meeting new friends from different backgrounds and cultures. Special consideration should also be given to international volunteer tourists versus national tourists. As the needs of both of the two markets differ, it can be highlighted that future research may want to investigate what these markets' needs are, how they differ from each other and how to attract each with market-specific programmes, activities and volunteering goals.

Future studies call for the impact of Generation 'Y'-ers on the volunteer tourism industry. As Pearce and Coghlan (2008) argue, the Generation 'Y'-ers have an overwhelming concern for global issues and sustainability issues. As previously mentioned, this generation also born into a world of virtual computerized realities who share experiences online with brands, friends, fun and adding to the "... digital culture

...” (Pendergast, 2010:5). Future research in this field might give more detailed insight into the motivations and processes of social media sharing of volunteer tourism experiences.

As the marketing communications technology changes, the volunteer tourism industry might need to adapt its social media marketing strategies. Another call for future research involves the adaptability phases amongst developing and developed countries, with specific reference to southern African countries as developing countries. Future research in this field might give more detailed insight into the best practise methods used in the industry and to develop more effective and efficient marketing communications strategies in developing countries in southern Africa.

CHAPTER 5: LIST OF REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

- List of all volunteer tourism organisations in Namibia -

VTO	Type	Location (distance from base)	Online Presence	Selected for this study
VTOs used for conducting research for this study				
Amani Development Centre	Wildlife volunteering	Outside Windhoek (25.3 km from central Windhoek)	Limited	Yes
Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA)	Wildlife volunteering	Swakopmund (341 km from Windhoek)	Yes	Yes
Harnas Wildlife Foundation	Wildlife volunteering, conservation volunteering and educational volunteering	Gobabis (304 km from Windhoek)	Yes	Yes
N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary	Wildlife volunteering, medical volunteering, conservation volunteering and educational volunteering	Outside Windhoek (55.5 km from central Windhoek)	Yes	Yes
Okutala African Quest	Wildlife volunteering and conservation volunteering	Etosha (409 km from Windhoek)	Yes	Yes
VTOs not used for conducting research for this study				
Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF)	Wildlife volunteering, conservation volunteering and educational volunteering	Otjiwarongo, Otjozondjupa Region (294 km from base)	Yes	No, declined by director for research
Muller Stud Volunteers	Wildlife volunteering, conservation volunteering and educational volunteering	Outjo, Kunene Region (318 km from base)	Yes	No, declined by director for research
Oana Flora & Fauna	Wildlife volunteering, conservation volunteering and educational volunteering	Warmbad, Karasburg Region (762 km from base)	Yes	No, too far from researcher's base
Penduka Women Trust	Community Volunteering	Katatura, township outside Windhoek	Limited	No, not wildlife volunteering
The Dolam Childrens Home	Community volunteering	Central Windhoek	Limited	No, not wildlife volunteering

APPENDIX B

- Ethical Considerations -

The researcher adheres to the policies related to plagiarism.
Participants involved in the data collection, had the right to decline or withdraw from participation at any time as this research is completely voluntary in nature. The participant's decision to decline or stop participating in the research only affects the researcher's response rate.
If the participant accepted the offer to participate in the study, a consent form was signed by the participant.
There were no financial or material incentives used to encourage participants to take part in this research.
There were no physical or psychological harm done to participants during the research process as the method and type of research conducted was empirical research, qualitative research methods are used such as, two different in-depth interviews.
All the information and data obtained from the research remains confidential and if the participant requests, the summary of the findings can be made available to them.
The in-depth interviews remain anonymous. The in-depth interviews will be kept confidential and only the signature of the participant is requested. The consent form allows for participants to remain anonymous throughout and no personal information is recorded.
Permission from the VTOs was obtained in order to approach these organisation's currently participating volunteer tourists and also the representatives of the volunteer tourism organisation.
The permission to conduct research at these organisations [Amani Development Centre Namibia, Elephant Human Relations Aid, Harnas Wildlife Foundation, N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation and Okutala African Quest] are presented through a signed letter of consent (Appendix H).
The researcher conducted this research based on set ethical standards. The researcher understands that the data was be collected with integrity, honesty and in an ethical manner. The researcher accepts the responsibility to behave ethically from designing the research, to accessing the organisation, conducting the data collection through the use of two different data collection schedules and lastly, data analysis techniques and reporting the findings.
Copyright is limited to the University of Pretoria since this is the institution through which the research will be passed. A declaration of plagiarism is signed by the researcher prior to the commencement of the research.

APPENDIX C

- Extractions of the selected VTO websites -



Amani Development Centre Facebook Page – Permanently Closed



[HOME](#) |
 [ABOUT EHRA](#) |
 [VOLUNTEER FOR EHRA](#) |
 [SCHOOLS](#) |
 [ELEPHANT CONSERVATION](#) |
 [EHRA PHOTOS](#) |
 [BOOK/ENQUIRE](#)

[FIELD BLOG](#)

[Home](#)
[Harnas](#)
[Visitors](#)
[Wildlife Conservation](#)
[Media](#)
[Contact](#)

[Support Us! Donate, Adopt & Support](#)
[Subscribe Keep up to date!](#)
[Booking Book Online](#)







HARNAS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED


Welcome


Dear friend, welcome to the Harnas Experience. It is about caring and escaping. It is about sharing and delving into the wonders that make Harnas so unique. Explore its wild nature in all its untouched glory!

Harnas Wildlife Foundation is a place where man and nature get a brief window in time to unify. We can plan, we can calculate and we can rely on experience, but no matter how adept we get with our current environment, we never really know what could come next.

Nature has a way of telling us that the universe is really big and the essence of Harnas lies in always Expecting the Unexpected!





It's our dream to protect and care for what we respect! We invite you to share, respect, care and love our dream, because you too are part of it.



[About us](#)
[What we do](#)
[Get involved](#)
[Volunteering](#)
[Visit Us](#)
[Donate!](#)




Volunteering

Get Involved in our Volunteering Projects.


[Home](#)
[Our Story](#)
[Gallery](#)
[Location](#)
[Videos](#)
[Contact](#)






Okutala ETOSHA LODGE



Welcome to Okutala Etosha Lodge, a private lodge situated on a breath-taking piece of Namibian land, covering 24,000 hectares.

We focus on releasing wild animals within their natural habitat.

APPENDIX D

- The Consumer Decision-Making Journey Model -

A nominal scale is used to measure when during the consumer decision-making journey social media platforms were reviewed for decision-making. For each statement, the participants are to indicate “agree” or “disagree” at each stage of the decision-making process.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
1. When beginning to search for ideas on what programme to choose		
2. When I already chosen the programme, but looking for information on the selected volunteer tourism organisation		
3. When trying to narrow down my choice of different volunteer programmes		
4. When I was looking to confirm I had made a good programme choice		
5. During the programme when I was trying to find out about different activities		
6. After the programme when I was sharing my experiences		
7. After the programme to compare my experiences with those of other participants		

Indication:

Statement 1 and 2 make up the Consider Stage of the Consumer Decision Journey Model.

Statement 3 and 4 make up the Evaluate Stage of the Consumer Decision Journey Model.

Statement 5 make up the Buy Stage of the Consumer Decision Journey Model.

Statement 6 and 7 make up the Enjoy, Advocate and Bond Stage of the Consumer Decision Journey Model.

APPENDIX E

- The In-Depth Interview Schedule for the volunteer tourist -



IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE VOLUNTEER TOURIST

I hereby give consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

YES	NO
-----	----

Definition of Volunteer Tourists; "... individuals who are seeking a tourist experience that is mutually beneficial, that will contribute not only to their personal development but also positively and directly to the social, natural and/or economic environments in which they participate ..." (Wearing, 2001:1).

SCREENING QUESTION

Are you a Volunteer Tourist?

YES	NO
-----	----

If you answered no to this question, you do not have to participate in the rest of the in-depth interview, thank you.

A: THE SELECTED VOLUNTEER TOURISM PROGRAMME

1. Did you have internet access when you planned to participate in the volunteer tourism programme?

YES	NO
-----	----

2. How frequently do you make use of the Internet?

3. Where did you find out about the selected volunteer tourism programme that you are currently participating in?

4. Did you book with an agent or directly with the selected volunteer tourism organisation?

5. How long do you plan to participate in the selected volunteer tourism programme?

6. Do you have the following social media profiles?

Facebook	
Instagram	
Twitter	
YouTube	
TripAdvisor	
Other	

If other, please specify:

7. Do you make use of any social media while participating in the selected volunteer tourism programme?

YES	NO
-----	----

8. Did you consult the selected volunteer tourism organisation's social media pages?

Facebook	
Instagram	
Twitter	
YouTube	
TripAdvisor	
Other	

If other, please specify:

9. When did you consult the selected volunteer tourism organisation's social media pages?

Before participating in the programme	
During the programme	
After the programme	

10. Do you believe that the social media marketing (Facebook page, TripAdvisor review or e-word-of-mouth, etc.) influenced you to participate in the selected volunteer tourism programme?

YES	NO
-----	----

11. Do you believe that past volunteers' information about the organisation (e.g. social media shared material, Facebook reviews, Trip Advisor comments, blogs, etc.) influenced you to participate in the selected volunteer tourism programme?

YES	NO
-----	----

B: INFORMATION SEARCH

1. What type of content of the chosen VTO's social media platforms most influenced you to participate in the selected volunteer programme?

2. Please name any other content on some volunteer tourism organisation's social media platforms (which is not mentioned above) that you consider as important when selecting a volunteer programme:

C: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE VOLUNTEER TOURIST

1. Please indicate your age:

Under 20 years old	
21-30 years old	
31-40 years old	
41-50 years old	
51-60 years old	
Older than 61 years old	

2. Gender:

Male	
Female	

3. Nationality:

--

4. Current Marital status:

Single	
Married	
Separated, divorced or widowed	
Other	

If other, please specify:

5. Current Highest Qualification:

High School/Secondary School	
Diploma/Associate Degree	
Bachelor's Degree	
Postgraduate Degree	
Other	

If other, please specify:

6. Current Occupational Situation:

Unemployed	
Student	
Full-time Employed	
Employed and Studying	
Other	

If other, please specify:

Thank you very much for your time and for participating in this survey!

APPENDIX F

- The In-Depth Interview Schedule for the VTO representative -



IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE VOLUNTEER TOURISM ORGANISATION

I hereby give consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

YES	NO
-----	----

The purpose of the Volunteer Tourism Organisation; "... aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society; the restoration of certain specific environments or research into aspects of society or environment ..." and involving volunteer tourists in some touristic activities (Wearing, 2001:1).

SCREENING QUESTION

Are you a Volunteer Tourism Organisation?

YES	NO
-----	----

If you answered no to this question, you do not have to participate in the rest of the in-depth interview, thank you.

THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
--

1. Do you consider social media marketing as a useful business tool?

2. Do you believe that social media marketing influences volunteer tourists decision-making in participating in volunteer programmes?

3. Do you make use of social media marketing to attract prospective volunteers or to retain past volunteers?

4. Do you believe that past volunteers' information about your organisation (e.g. social media shared material, Facebook reviews, Trip Advisor comments, blogs, etc.) can influence the volunteer tourist to participate in an offered volunteer tourism programme?

5. On which social media platforms are you currently actively engaged in?

6. Which social media platform do you consider as most effective?

7. What is your social media marketing strategy?

8. What content on your social media platforms do you find users engage more in?

Thank you very much for your time and for participating in this survey!

APPENDIX G

- Informed consent form for the in-depth interviews -



**Informed consent for participation in an academic
research study**

Dept. of Tourism Management

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN THE DECISION PROCESS OF VOLUNTEER TOURISTS.

Research conducted by:

Ms. M.C. Nel (12224112)

Cell: +264 81 654 1093

+27 72 082 9442

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Marian Nel, a Masters student from the Department of Tourism Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to address the knowledge gap of the impact of social media (non-promotional material) in influencing volunteer tourists' decisions to participate in selected volunteer programmes in Namibia.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an anonymous in-depth interview. Your name will not appear on the in-depth interview schedule and the answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please respond to the questions asked by the interviewer as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 30 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof. F. Fairer-Wessels, on tel. +27 12 420 4374 (e-mail: felicite.fairer-wessels@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Interviewee's signature

Date

APPENDIX H

- Signed request to conduct research at organisations: Amani Development Centre Namibia, Elephant Human Relations Aid, Harnas Wildlife Foundation, N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Foundation and Okutala African Quest -



To whom it may concern,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby would kindly like to request permission to conduct research at your organisation with past volunteers who participated in the programme and the social media marketing manager at the organisation.

I am a Masters student from the Department of Tourism at the University of Pretoria with approved thesis entitled: "*Social media usage in the decision process of volunteer tourism*" under the supervision of Prof Felicité Fairer-Wessels and Dr Elizabeth Du Preez.

The purpose of the study is to address the knowledge gap of the impact of social media (non-promotional material) in influencing volunteer tourists' decisions to participate in selected volunteer programmes in Namibia. Research methodology will contain in-depth interviews with volunteer tourists and the social media marketing manager of the volunteer tourism programme.

Please note that this study involves an anonymous survey and participants' names will not appear on the in-depth interviews. The answers given will be treated as strictly confidential. Also attached to this letter, please find a copy of a summary of my study.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. A summary of my findings will be provided on request.

Kind regards,

Ms Marian Charlotte Nel
MCom Candidate at University of Pretoria

APPENDIX I

-Application for Research Ethics Clearance-



Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE

- Literature review and the research design should be completed prior to application.
- Electronic forms available on Faculty website > *Committees* > *Ethics Committee*.
- Supervisor to submit original application form to Marcel Deysel, EMS Building, Room 2-16.
- Incomplete applications cannot be reviewed.
- Documentation required before final approval can be granted, submit with application:

Approved Title Registration	Research study
Data collection instrument	Introduction, Permission, Informed Consent letter(s)
For proposed surveys amongst UP stakeholders, also complete the Registrar permission request attached hereto	

SECTION A: PROJECT INFORMATION					
Title, initials, surname	Miss M. C. Nel				
Student or personnel no.	12224112				
Degree	MCom Tourism Management				
Department	Tourism Management				
E-mail	mariannel.nel@gmail.com				
Application	First application	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Title of research	Social media usage in the decision process of volunteer tourists				
Supervisor/Co-supervisor	Professor Felicité Fairer-Wessels				
Proposed period for data collection	5 months				
Purpose of research					
Master's	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Doctoral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-degree	<input type="checkbox"/>

Problem statement

Past research (Coghlan, 2007; Grimm & Needham, 2012) has studied the relationship between volunteer tourists' motivations and promotional material but does not include non-traditional promotional material in their studies. Easton and Wise (2015) found that non-promotional material, such as social media and user-generated content, has a greater impact on the volunteer tourist's ultimate decision to volunteer than promotional material, such as, the websites of volunteer tourism organisations. Therefore, the concept of social media marketing was explored in this study. Grimm and Needham (2012) specifically call for future research on perspectives from both the volunteer tourism organisations and the volunteer tourists through

qualitative research methods for a better understanding of how non-traditional promotional materials impact on the entire volunteer tourism experience. Coghlan (2007) suggests future research through considering information gained by other sources, such as news reports, books and more specifically, opinions of friends and family. Munar and Jacobsen (2013) and Wearing and McGhee (2013) call for future research on the diversity of social media use among different cultures and the examination of dimensions of interactivity, reach and social cues. Hudson and Thal (2013) suggest future research through exploring consumer responses to digital media as it provides insights for the tourism provider (in this case, the volunteer tourism organisation) to enhance social media marketing communications. Van Zyl, Inversini, and Rega (2015) call for future research in the field of online representation of voluntourism, focussing on the social perimeters in the online domain, especially in the context of economically developing countries.

This research aimed to address the knowledge gap of the impact of social media (i.e. non-traditional promotional material) in influencing volunteer tourists' decisions to participate in selected volunteer programmes in a developing country, i.e. Namibia. The first objective (refer to par 1.4) endeavoured to determine whether social media platforms have an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme in Namibia.

Research objectives in bulleted format

The study was guided by the following specific research objectives:

- To determine whether social media platforms have an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme.
- To determine whether social media marketing of the selected five volunteer tourism organisations had an influence on the volunteer tourist's decision to participate in a selected volunteer tourism programme.
- To determine whether past volunteers' reviews (e.g. social media shared material, Facebook reviews, Trip Advisor comments, blogs, etc.), as an information source, of the volunteer tourism organisation, has an influence on the decision-making of the prospective volunteer tourists.
- To develop an integrated social media marketing communications strategy for the selected volunteer tourism organisations.

Research design

Qualitative	x	Quantitative		Mixed method	
-------------	---	--------------	--	--------------	--

To whom will the research results be made available?

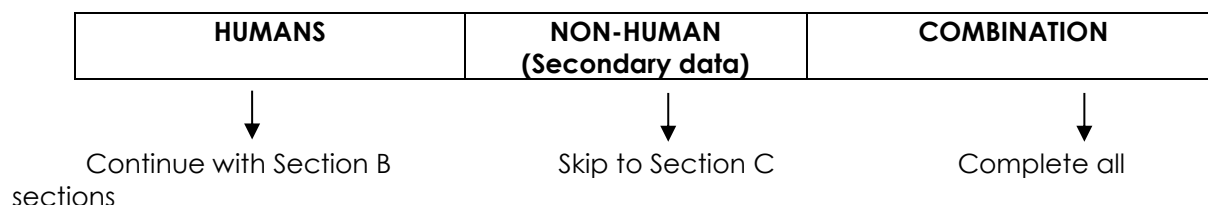
Academia	x	Popular media, etc		Other (provide detail)	
----------	---	--------------------	--	------------------------	--

In which format will the results be made available? (Mark all applicable)

UPeTD website	x	Scientific article journal(s)	x	Conference paper(s)	
Lay article		Research report		Other (provide detail)	

Research data should be stored for ten (10) years. The final electronic dataset of raw material (such as the completed survey questionnaires, interview transcripts and/or field notes and Letters of Introduction, Permission, Informed Consent) should also be stored. **Data storage is the responsibility of the researcher, supervisor and, ultimately, the Head of the Department.**

DATA COLLECTION



SECTION B: HUMANS AS PARTICIPANTS

Number of participants

Female Male Both

Age range18-65.....

Methods to be used to obtain data

Survey questionnaire Hard copy or electronic		Interview schedule In-depth personal interviews/focus groups	x	Other Please specify	
--	--	--	---	--------------------------------	--

PLEASE NOTE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FOLLOWING
(These documents may be combined – see example attached hereto)

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION	PERMISSION LETTER	INFORMED CONSENT
↓	↓	↓
Letter on UP letterhead to institution(s)/participants to introduce research. Approval must also be obtained from the Registrar when using UP staff or students.	Letter from the organisation (on official letterhead or per e-mail) granting permission to conduct research at their	Consent from participants to take part in research. Use a tick box at the top of a self-completion survey questionnaire.

	company, bank, school or NGO/NPO, etc.	
--	---	--

PERSONAL RECORDS *

* This may only be done in highly exceptional cases, if records are fully anonymous and application is brought in terms of Act 2 of 2000. Individual informed consent to access personal records is therefore preferred. Specify the nature of these records and indicate how these records will be selected.

RESEARCHER	
Name in capital letters	MARIAN CHARLOTTE NEL
Signature	
Date	
I, as researcher, undertake to ensure the appropriate archiving of the research data for a minimum period of ten (10) years .	
SUPERVISOR	
Name in capital letters	FELICITE FAIRER-WESSELS
Signature	
Date	
CHAIR: DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE	
Name in capital letters	
Signature	
Date	
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	
Name in capital letters	
Signature	
Date	

FINAL APPROVAL	
CHAIR: FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE	
Name in capital letters	
Signature	
Date	

