

Midocean University

College of Management

Department of Business Administration



Research Project

**Topic: The Impact of Social Media Engagement and Brand Loyalty on the
Tourism Industry of Saudi Arabia**

Prepared by:

Ziad Alhaqbani

232001647

Saad Aldosary

232001571

Supervised by:

Dr.Walid Solimann

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إعداد:

زياد الحقباني

232001647

سعد الدوسري

232001571

حت إشراف:

د. وليد سليمان

السنة: 2024

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The project aims to investigate the impact of social media engagement on brand loyalty within the tourism industry of Saudi Arabia. This research work employed the quantitative study approach and descriptive research design. The target population of this research work was people who have engaged with tourism-related firms in Saudi Arabia via social media platforms. This included domestic and foreign travellers who have employed social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok to interact with, get information about, or disseminate their experiences of tourism services and locations inside the country. This study employed a random sampling approach, and the sample size was 200 respondents. The main data-collecting strategy for this research consisted of distributing a well-structured questionnaire, and the survey was carried out online, using Google Forms as the preferred platform because of its versatility and user-friendly interface for creating and distributing surveys. The data analysis for this research was performed using SPSS and MS Excel 365. The major findings reveal a strong positive correlation between social media engagement and brand loyalty, indicating that individuals who actively interact with tourism-related content on social media platforms demonstrate a higher propensity towards brand loyalty within the tourism sector. This relationship is underscored by a Pearson Correlation coefficient of .795, suggesting a strong interdependency between engaging with tourism brands online and the subsequent loyalty to these brands. This research solely focused on Saudi Arabia's tourism industry, which offers valuable localized insights, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to other industries and the global tourism landscape. Future research could investigate how social media engagement influences consumer perceptions of sustainable and responsible tourism practices and how this, in turn, affects brand loyalty.

Keywords: *Brand Loyalty, Social Media Engagement, Saudi Arabia's Tourism Industry*

الملخص

يهدف المشروع إلى دراسة تأثير دور وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على الولاء للعلامة التجارية في صناعة السياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية. لقد استخدم هذا العمل البحثي منهج الدراسة الكمية وتصميم البحث الوصفي. كان السكان المستهدفون في هذا العمل البحثي هم الأشخاص الذين تعاملوا مع الشركات ذات الصلة بالسياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية عبر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي. وشمل ذلك المسافرين المحليين والأجانب الذين استخدموا منصات التواصل الاجتماعي مثل تطبيقات انستجرام وتويتر وفيسبوك وتيك توك للتفاعل معها أو الحصول على معلومات عنها أو نشر تجاربهم عن الخدمات والمواقع السياحية داخل الدولة. لقد استخدمت هذه الدراسة أسلوب العينة العشوائية، وبلغ حجم العينة 200 فرد مستجيب. وتمثلت الاستراتيجية الرئيسية لجمع البيانات لهذا البحث في توزيع استبيان جيد التنظيم، وتم إجراء الاستطلاع عبر الإنترنت، باستخدام نماذج جوجل كمنصة مفضلة بسبب تعدد استخداماتها وواجهتها سهلة الاستخدام لإجراء الاستطلاعات وتوزيعها. وتم إجراء تحليل البيانات لهذا البحث باستخدام الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية وميكروسوفت اكسيل 365. وكشفت النتائج الرئيسية عن وجود علاقة إيجابية قوية بين التفاعل مع وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والولاء للعلامة التجارية، مما يشير إلى أن الأفراد الذين يتفاعلون بنشاط مع المحتوى ذي الصلة بالسياحة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تُظهر المنصات ميلاً أعلى نحو الولاء للعلامة التجارية في قطاع السياحة. وقد تم التأكيد على هذه العلاقة من خلال معامل ارتباط بيرسون 0.795، مما يشير إلى وجود ترابط قوي بين التعامل مع العلامات التجارية السياحية عبر الإنترنت والولاء اللاحق لهذه العلامات التجارية. حيث ركز هذا البحث فقط على صناعة السياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية، والتي تقدم رؤية محلية قيمة، مما يحد من إمكانية تعميم النتائج على الصناعات الأخرى والمشهد السياحي العالمي. يمكن أن تبحث الأبحاث المستقبلية في كيفية تأثير مشاركة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تصورات المستهلكين لممارسات السياحة المستدامة والمسؤولية وكيف يؤثر ذلك بدوره على الولاء للعلامة التجارية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الولاء للعلامة التجارية، التفاعل عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، صناعة السياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

The convergence of social media participation and brand loyalty in the tourism sector is a complex and dynamic field of research that mirrors larger changes in consumer behaviour, marketing tactics, and the essence of travel experiences. With the evolving global tourist industry, driven by technological progress and shifting cultural norms, it has become clearer that social media plays a crucial role for companies to connect with, engage, and retain customers. This shift is supported by the rise of a more empowered and interconnected traveler who utilizes social platforms not only to exchange and collect travel experiences but also to make well-informed choices influenced by the digital network of reviews, influencers, and peer endorsements (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021).

Traditionally, the tourist business has heavily relied on personal referrals and conventional promotional methods. Nevertheless, the emergence of the Internet, subsequently accompanied by the rapid expansion of social media, has introduced a distinct age. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok have emerged as the next frontier for travel marketing. These platforms provide marketers with unparalleled chances to produce captivating and interactive content that connects with a worldwide audience. The digital revolution has prompted a new perspective on brand loyalty, shifting its focus from mere customer retention to the establishment of a community of brand champions. These advocates, via their social networks, share their experiences and exert influence on others (Barreda et al., 2020).

The importance of social media interaction in fostering brand loyalty within the tourist business is quite significant. Engagement refers to the significant engagement between the brand and its audience, which

includes various behaviours such as liking, commenting, sharing, participating in competitions, and joining hashtag campaigns. These interactions not only increase the extent of a brand's influence but also cultivate a feeling of inclusion and camaraderie among customers. Social media, in this situation, serves as a tool that has both positive and negative effects for companies. It allows them to establish stronger and more intimate relationships with their audience, but at the same time, it exposes them to the dangers of public criticism and the rapid spread of negative feedback (Ben-Shaul & Reichel, 2017).

Moreover, the notion of brand loyalty has developed to embrace a more intricate comprehension of customer behaviour. In the era of digitalization, loyalty is no longer just based on transactions but rather on emotions, influenced by the consumer's perception of the value they get from their engagement with the business. These aspects include customized experiences, responsiveness, and shared ideals, all of which are magnified by involvement on social media (Aydin, 2019). For tourist businesses, it is now essential to prioritize the creation of remarkable and easily shared experiences in addition to providing high-quality service. The visual and narrative capabilities of social media enable companies to not only promote a place but also to craft a compelling narrative that connects with the values and ambitions of their target audience. This, in turn, cultivates a stronger and longer-lasting feeling of loyalty (Chen et al., 2020).

The influence of social media on brand loyalty is apparent in its alteration of the feedback loop between customers and companies. The immediacy of social media enables companies to get feedback in real-time, empowering them to resolve problems, celebrate great experiences, and consistently modify their offers to cater to the changing requirements and preferences of their audience. This interactive engagement improves customer satisfaction and loyalty by ensuring that customers feel acknowledged and appreciated, therefore reinforcing their emotional attachment to the brand (Ebrahim, 2020).

Furthermore, the analytical and data-collection capabilities of social media platforms provide essential insights into customer behaviour, preferences, and trends. By using a data-driven strategy, tourist firms may customize their marketing tactics, enhance their offers, and forecast upcoming trends, thereby maintaining a competitive edge in the market. Segmenting audiences and personalizing marketing activities based on specific consumer data significantly improves the efficacy of social media in fostering brand loyalty. The advent of the digital era has brought about a significant change in the relationship between businesses and customers, mostly owing to the equalizing impact of social media. This transition encompasses both technical and psychological aspects, influencing customers' perception, interaction, and loyalty towards tourist businesses (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of social media in increasing brand loyalty may also be ascribed to its function in humanizing brands. By using narrative, behind-the-scenes video, and interactive interactions, companies undergo a transformation from impersonal entities to relatable characters. The process of humanization facilitates the development of emotional bonds, simplifying the formation of consumer attachments and, consequently, engendering loyalty. When a tourist brand publishes tales about local communities or initiatives to save the environment, it connects with the values that its audience cares about. This helps to strengthen the emotional connection between customers and the brand (Jayasingh, 2019).

Another crucial element of social media's influence on brand loyalty is the creation of customized experiences. Within the tourist sector, customization goes beyond customized offers and encompasses the full client experience, starting from the initial ideation and planning stages to the post-trip interaction. Social media platforms use sophisticated targeting and customization algorithms to allow marketers to give information that is both relevant and timely. This enhances the consumer's experience and pleasure. In a world where customers are constantly overwhelmed with information and options, this degree of customization is crucial. It enables

companies to differentiate themselves and cultivate a feeling of loyalty by making people feel distinctly understood and appreciated (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016).

Furthermore, social media enables a cooperative atmosphere in which customers have the opportunity to actively participate in shaping the brand's story. Brands may boost their credibility and attractiveness by using real experiences via user-generated content (UGC), such as reviews, images, and videos provided by tourists. This cooperative storytelling not only enhances the brand's content but also empowers customers, giving them a voice and a vested interest in the brand's narrative. The confirmation and acknowledgement of customer contributions solidify their commitment, as they see themselves as essential to the brand's triumph and essence (Li et al., 2020).

The significance of influencers in influencing brand loyalty is also worthy of consideration. Influencers, due to their loyal fan base and perceived genuineness, have the ability to greatly influence customer attitudes and actions. Tourism marketers may access existing networks of potential loyalists by collaborating with influencers who share similar values and aesthetics. An influencer's endorsement acts as a potent type of social validation, enhancing the brand's credibility and appeal. Nevertheless, the selection of influencers and the genuineness of their connection with the company are crucial in guaranteeing that this approach strengthens brand loyalty in a significant manner (Rather et al., 2018).

1.2. Problem Statement

The widespread use of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the way companies engage with customers, especially in the tourist sector. In this market, the selection of a location or service is progressively shaped by online content and interactions. Although the significance of social media involvement in influencing customer preferences and behaviours worldwide is acknowledged, there is a lack of comprehension of its precise effect on brand loyalty in Saudi Arabia's tourist industry (Abou-Shouk & Soliman,

2021). This disparity is notable considering the nation's recent efforts to expand its economy via tourism and its distinctive cultural and legal landscape, which may impact the efficacy of social media marketing in a distinct manner compared to other areas. The issue is exacerbated by the fast development of social media trends and the differing levels of user involvement on various platforms. Hence, tourist businesses in Saudi Arabia encounter the obstacle of planning through this intricate digital environment without a distinct comprehension of how social media involvement may be used to cultivate brand loyalty (Ben-Shaul & Reichel, 2017). This study seeks to address this deficiency by examining the relationship between social media involvement and brand loyalty in the Saudi Arabian tourist sector, considering the distinctive cultural, economic, and regulatory circumstances of the area. Gaining insight into these dynamics is essential for tourist firms seeking to use social media as a means of establishing and maintaining a devoted client base against growing competition and changing consumer demands (Chen et al., 2020; Harrigan et al., 2017).

1.3. Project Aim

The project aims to investigate the impact of social media engagement on brand loyalty within the tourism industry of Saudi Arabia. By exploring the relationship between tourists' interactions with tourism-related content on social media platforms and their loyalty to specific tourism brands, this study seeks to provide insights into how digital engagement influences consumer behavior and brand perception.

1.4. Research Objectives

The research objectives of this research work are:

- ❖ To find the impact of social media engagement in Saudi Arabia's tourism industry.
- ❖ To explore the influence of brand loyalty in Saudi Arabia's tourism industry.

1.5. Research Questions

The research questions of this research work are:

- ❖ What is the impact of social media engagement on Saudi Arabia's tourism industry?
- ❖ What is the influence of brand loyalty in Saudi Arabia's tourism industry?

1.6. Significance of Study

This study is crucial as it fills a significant gap in the current body of research by examining the influence of social media engagement on brand loyalty in Saudi Arabia's tourism sector. This region is undergoing rapid expansion in tourism as part of its Vision 2030 initiative to diversify its economy. The study provides useful information for tourism marketers, politicians, and researchers who are interested in understanding the link between digital engagement and customer loyalty in rising tourist economies, specifically within the context of Saudi Arabia. The results of this research might provide tourist businesses with evidence-based tactics to maximize social media involvement, ultimately improving brand loyalty and promoting sustainable development in a fiercely competitive sector (Harrigan et al., 2017). Policymakers may get valuable insights by comprehending the impact of social media on the loyalty of tourist brands. This knowledge can guide the creation of legislative frameworks and programs that promote the expansion of the sector while also assuring responsible and efficient use of digital platforms. Moreover, this study enhances the existing academic literature on social media marketing and brand loyalty by expanding the scope of research to a different geographical and cultural context. It provides a comparative viewpoint that enhances our comprehension of worldwide digital marketing patterns. The study's importance lies in its capacity to guide the creation of more efficient and culturally sensitive social media marketing strategies. These strategies would not only promote the expansion of the Saudi Arabian tourism sector but also improve the overall experience for tourists, thereby cultivating a favorable global perception of the country (Barreda et al., 2020; Chu et al., 2020).

1.6.1. Managerial Relevance

The results of this research are particularly relevant for managers in the tourist business of Saudi Arabia, as they provide crucial insights into the significant impact of social media on the development of brand loyalty. As digital platforms continue to dominate consumer involvement, it is crucial to comprehend the relationship between social media activity and brand loyalty in order to develop successful marketing strategies. The correlation between social media participation and brand loyalty highlights the need for managers and marketers to have a strong online presence. This not only serves as a means to promote tourism destinations but also to cultivate a feeling of community and belonging among prospective travellers (van Asperen et al., 2017).

Utilizing focused social media initiatives that promote engagement and active involvement may greatly bolster visitors' allegiance to a company. Using user-generated content, tourist businesses can construct genuine storylines that deeply connect with consumers, ultimately enhancing trust and dedication. Moreover, the research emphasizes the need to oversee and address social media engagements, as they might result in enhanced consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The report recommends that managers reallocate their marketing spending to prioritize social media channels that have been demonstrated to successfully engage the target audience. In addition, providing training to employees on how to effectively use social media tools and analytics would allow companies to customize their content and interactions with more accuracy, therefore matching the specific expectations and preferences of their target audience (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022). The primary significance of this study is its potential to provide guidance to tourism brands in Saudi Arabia, enabling them to adopt more strategic and data-driven social media practices. These practices should be in line with the objectives of Vision 2030, which seeks to enhance the tourism sector as part of the country's broader economic diversification endeavors (Abuhjeeleh, 2019).

1.6.2. Scientific Implications

This study has significant scientific consequences that go beyond the immediate results. It provides essential insights to the wider academic discussion on how social media involvement and brand loyalty are connected, especially in the tourist sector. The research strengthens the previous literature by finding a clear and direct relationship between these factors. It provides empirical data to support theoretical frameworks that connect digital consumer interaction with loyalty results (Li et al., 2020). This contributes to the expanding pool of information that emphasizes the significance of social media as a crucial element in contemporary marketing and customer relationship management methods. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for further scholarly investigation into the intricate processes by which involvement with social media leads to the development of brand loyalty (Perez-Vega et al., 2018). It necessitates a more thorough examination of the specific sorts of material and interactions that best promote loyalty, as well as the influence of cultural and geographical variables on these dynamics. This is especially pertinent in the context of Saudi Arabia, where the convergence of traditional values with contemporary digital behaviors creates a distinct environment for examination (Al-Mohammad & Butler, 2021).

The research highlights the importance of user-generated material and peer recommendations in online contexts, suggesting possible avenues for further exploring trust and credibility from a theoretical perspective. Moreover, the research initiates debate on the most appropriate methodological techniques for recording and evaluating the complex interactions between consumers and marketers on social media platforms (van Asperen et al., 2017). This highlights the possibility of using qualitative research methodologies to supplement quantitative data, providing a more comprehensive perspective on customer involvement and loyalty. The scholarly value of this study lies in its contribution to an ongoing discussion on the strategic importance of social media in the tourist industry and other areas. This statement promotes the idea of

continuous academic investigation into the factors in the digital realm that determine brand loyalty. It urges researchers to further analyze and comprehend the intricate digital environments that impact consumer behaviors and brand connections in the modern day (Perez-Vega et al., 2018).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter has thoroughly examined the many ever-changing roles that social media engagement and brand loyalty have in the tourist sector, specifically in the context of the shifting situation in Saudi Arabia. The article explored how digital platforms have had a significant impact on marketing locations and attracting prospective tourists. It emphasized the smart use of social media to promote the Kingdom's cultural heritage and ambitious tourism projects. The literature examined emphasized the distinctive status of Saudi Arabia as an emerging tourism hotspot, capitalizing on its religious importance and cultural resources to cultivate profound ties and allegiance among tourists. The chapter provided a deeper understanding of the difficulties and advantages involved in using social media in tourist marketing plans, including the need to navigate cultural sensitivities and use the most recent technical advancements. The chapter's discussions highlighted the crucial importance of social media influencers, user-generated content, and technology improvements in transforming visitor experiences and expectations. Furthermore, the chapter conducted a thorough evaluation of the influence of these techniques on brand loyalty, demonstrating how successful interaction may convert casual tourists into passionate supporters of Saudi Arabia's tourism industry. This chapter has established a solid basis for comprehending the intricate relationship between social media participation, brand loyalty, and the future direction of tourism in Saudi Arabia by thoroughly analyzing existing literature.

2.1. Social Media Engagement in the Tourism Industry

The advent of social media has fundamentally transformed the way consumers engage with companies in all sectors, including tourism. This has resulted in a substantial shift in the marketing, perception, and overall experience of vacation destinations for tourists (Dolan et al., 2019). The emergence of platforms

like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter has transformed the way we communicate with customers, moving away from conventional one-way communication to a more participatory and dynamic model of consumer interaction. This shift has given customers more influence, transforming them into advocates for brands who communicate their travel experiences via blogs, reviews, and photos, therefore impacting the travel choices of their peers. Han et al. (2017) argue that social media is a crucial source of information for travellers, and user-generated material is particularly influential in determining where people choose to go. This highlights the significance of engaging with social media to shape consumer views and choices (Han et al., 2017; Dolan et al., 2019).

The literature identifies many approaches by which the tourist sector might use social media to improve visitor engagement and satisfaction (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020). These strategies include the development of captivating content that deeply connects with the intended audience, actively interacting with users via comments and direct messaging to cultivate a feeling of community and using influencers to expand the reach of promotional messages. Li et al. (2020) highlights the importance of authenticity in social media marketing, stating that genuine and relevant material tends to elicit greater levels of user engagement and trust. Moreover, the inherent visual appeal of platforms such as Instagram renders them very potent for the tourism sector since captivating photographs and videos of various places have the potential to ignite a strong desire to travel and encourage people to make reservations (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020).

Social media enables interaction and plays a vital role in establishing and sustaining brand loyalty in the tourist industry. Brand loyalty, which refers to a consumer's consistent support and favorable perception of a brand, plays a vital role in ensuring the sustained success of tourist destinations and service providers. Harrigan et al. (2017) found that emotional and experiential variables substantially impact brand loyalty in the tourist industry. This suggests that by allowing locations to publish immersive and emotionally captivating

material, social media platforms may successfully contribute to these aspects. The interactive nature of social media platforms enables direct and individualized engagement with customers, which cultivates a stronger emotional connection and fosters loyalty. According to Mariani et al. (2018) social media involvement may improve brand loyalty by offering customized experiences, promoting good word-of-mouth, and boosting consumer satisfaction via interactive communication.

To foster brand loyalty, it is necessary to comprehend customer behavior and preferences and incorporate social media methods accordingly. The significance of examining social media analytics to comprehend customer interactions and feedback, as emphasized by Mkono & Tribe (2016) may provide valuable insights for focused marketing tactics and content development. Furthermore, including customers in the process of generating content increases their engagement level and fosters brand loyalty by instilling a feeling of ownership and connection to the company (Harrigan et al., 2017). The mentioned strategies highlight the mutually beneficial connection between social media involvement and customer loyalty. By effectively engaging customers through personalized and interactive content, loyalty is enhanced, resulting in positive social media engagement such as reviews and recommendations (Dolan et al., 2019).

Although social media has the potential to provide advantages, there are obstacles to overcome when using it for tourist marketing and improving brand loyalty. Challenges such as maintaining content excellence, handling unfavourable feedback, and guaranteeing uniform participation on several platforms need substantial resources and strategic foresight. Furthermore, the dynamic and ever-changing nature of social media poses a difficulty in staying updated with new patterns and algorithms of various platforms in order to achieve the best possible exposure and interaction (van Asperen et al., 2017). Social media has a profound impact on the tourism business, going beyond just marketing and brand awareness. It becomes an integral part of travel inspiration, decision-making, and sharing experiences after the trip. This movement represents a

transition towards a more egalitarian type of tourist marketing, in which the experiences of each visitor have the capacity to influence others, maybe on a worldwide level. Scholarly research suggests that social media platforms have a dual role, acting as both a source of inspiration and validation for future travelers, and as a crucial platform for tourism firms to manage their reputation and interact with their audience. Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022) contend that user-generated information on social media is often more credible than conventional advertising. This is because human narratives and experiences are seen as more trustworthy and relevant to prospective visitors (Han et al., 2017; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022).

Social media participation significantly impacts both the initial selection of a trip location and the whole travel experience, including inspiration, preparation, and the post-travel phase of sharing and reflecting on experiences. Perez-Vega et al. (2018) highlight the significance of social media during the period of seeking inspiration, emphasizing that visually appealing material may greatly influence one's desire to travel. The first stage is crucial, as the opinions established during this phase may influence the whole process of making travel decisions, emphasizing the need for tourism businesses to produce and distribute captivating, top-notch content that faithfully portrays the destination's attractions (van Asperen et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the incorporation of social media into the travel process is constantly changing, as platforms now not only provide inspiration and allow for sharing but also provide the ability to book directly and enhance the vacation experience. Mkono & Tribe (2016) emphasize the rise of social travel applications that combine social recommendations with practical travel features, indicating that the future of tourism marketing depends on the seamless integration of social media into every part of the trip experience. This integration highlights the potential of social media to not only impact brand loyalty but also to directly generate reservations and income for travel operators. Furthermore, the significance of analytics in social media marketing cannot be exaggerated. Tourism marketers may get valuable insights into customer behavior,

preferences, and trends via the analysis of the extensive data created by user interactions. According to Li et al. (2020) advanced data analysis methods enable marketers to customize their tactics for certain groups, improving the impact of their social media efforts and possibly boosting brand loyalty by providing more tailored and relevant material.

However, the increasing prominence of social media in tourist marketing also brings up noteworthy obstacles. Brands must carefully handle the problems of digital overload and the legitimacy of internet information. Deceptive reviews and edited information have the potential to undermine confidence in the platform and, therefore, the companies connected to it (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to maintain genuineness and openness in social media engagements to preserve customer confidence and allegiance. Perez-Vega et al. (2018) emphasize the significance of authenticity in social media communication, asserting that sincere engagements between businesses and customers may create a feeling of community and allegiance that goes beyond the transactional aspect of tourist services. Moreover, the environmental and socio-cultural consequences of tourism that are being pushed via social media have attracted growing attention. The occurrence of "over-tourism," intensified by the widespread appeal of certain places on social media, prompts questions about the long-term viability of these marketing strategies. Mariani et al. (2018) highlight the need to implement responsible social media marketing tactics that advocate for sustainable tourism practices and prioritize the enduring welfare of places (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022).

2.2. Brand Loyalty: Concepts and Theories

Brand loyalty is a fundamental idea in marketing and consumer behavior that refers to a customer's dedication to consistently buying or utilizing a brand's goods or services. The consumer's commitment to the brand is based on their view that the brand provides the appropriate product features, quality, or image at a competitive price compared to other brands. Brand loyalty is based on the distinct behavioral and attitudinal

aspects that define it. According to Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi (2017) brand loyalty is a strong and unwavering commitment to consistently repurchase or continue using a preferred product or service in the future. This leads to repetitive purchases of the same brand or set of brands, even when there are external factors or marketing strategies that could potentially influence a person to switch to a different brand. This term emphasizes the contrast between simple, repetitive buying actions and a more profound, steadfast kind of devotion that is impervious to alteration (van der Westhuizen, 2018).

A substantial body of work on brand loyalty primarily examines the psychological foundations of this phenomenon. AKBAR et al. (2020) theory of cognitive dissonance posits that customers actively seek coherence in their ideas and perceptions. After customers have made a purchase that meets their expectations, they are inclined to keep buying that product to avoid the psychological discomfort that comes with making a potentially conflicting decision. This concept is strongly linked to the notion of post-purchase rationalization when buyers validate their decisions by consistently purchasing the same brand to confirm their decision-making process. Another crucial element of brand loyalty examined in the literature is the influence of customer satisfaction. According to van der Westhuizen (2018) consumer satisfaction directly influences brand loyalty. According to their study, content consumers are more inclined to repeatedly buy products, spread favorable recommendations, and are less affected by fluctuations in prices. The correlation between satisfaction and loyalty highlights the significance of maintaining superior standards and fulfilling client expectations as a tactic for cultivating brand loyalty.

The notion of brand identity and its impact on loyalty has also been a central topic of academic discourse. Ahmad Mabkhot et al. (2017) presents the concept of brand personality, proposing that companies might possess certain personality characteristics that customers can identify with, similar to their interactions with other individuals. The relatability of a brand may cultivate a feeling of connection or emotional bond,

which in turn enhances customer loyalty. For example, a brand that constantly conveys principles of sustainability and environmental accountability may appeal to and maintain customers who align with such principles, resulting in a devoted client base (Garanti & Kissi, 2019). Furthermore, the significance of emotional ties in influencing brand loyalty cannot be exaggerated. Luo et al. (2015) examine the notion of emotional affinity towards brands, asserting that strong emotional connections may result in increased levels of loyalty. These emotional connections are often formed via encounters that elicit emotions like happiness, trust, or even a sense of longing for the past, so making the brand an essential component of the consumer's life and sense of self (Ahmad Mabkhot et al., 2017).

In the era of digitalization, the nature of brand loyalty is undergoing transformation. The emergence of social media and digital platforms has revolutionized the way customers engage with businesses and take part in brand communities. Cheng et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of brand communities in promoting loyalty. They point out that these communities provide customers with a platform to exchange their experiences, interact with the brand, and establish social relationships with other brand users. The shared experience may strengthen the individual's commitment to the brand as it gets integrated into their social identity. Moreover, the topic of loyalty programs and their efficacy in bolstering brand loyalty is extensively discussed in the literature. In their comprehensive analysis, Kaur et al. (2020) examine the effectiveness of loyalty programs in enhancing customer loyalty by incentivizing recurrent purchases. Nevertheless, they also emphasize the need for meticulous program design to guarantee that it enhances consumer value and does not just encourage behavior that would have happened regardless of the program (Jibril et al., 2019).

The affective aspect of brand loyalty is especially captivating, indicating that people often establish connections with businesses that evoke intense emotional responses, whether via shared beliefs, emotions, or experiences. Luo et al. (2015) argues that customers establish connections with brands that resemble their

relationships with other individuals, including emotions like passion, appeal, and connection. These connections are established via trust and reciprocal respect, as customers expect businesses to continuously fulfil not just product quality but also ethical and social obligations. Emotional involvement is a potent catalyst for loyalty, indicating that businesses that effectively establish a deeper, more intimate connection with their consumers are more likely to cultivate a devoted client base (Luo et al., 2015).

The notion of social identity also has a significant impact on our comprehension of brand loyalty. Braxton & Lau-Gesk (2020) propose that people incorporate their sense of self from their affiliation with social groupings, especially those centered around brands. This theory explains how customers might build allegiance to companies that they see as reflecting their own identities or desired selves. Kunkel et al. (2017) expand on this idea by introducing the concept of possessions and the extended self, in which brands play a crucial role in expressing one's identity and self. Brand loyalty encompasses more than simply the practical advantages of a product; it also involves the extent to which the brand corresponds to and reflects an individual's identity, beliefs, and goals (Kunkel et al., 2017; Braxton & Lau-Gesk, 2020).

The emergence of digital technology and social media has significantly altered the realm of brand loyalty, providing novel avenues for brand-consumer engagements that are prompt, tailored, and visible to a wider audience. Kaur et al. (2020) examine the development of online brand communities and how they contribute to the cultivation of a feeling of belonging among participants, ultimately strengthening their loyalty towards the brand. These online communities enable customers to participate in collaborative development processes, exchange experiences, and establish social connections with like-minded others who have similar brand preferences. The rise of digital technology highlights the significance of developing captivating and beneficial experiences that deeply connect with customers' way of life and principles, fostering a feeling of togetherness and attachment that strengthens loyalty (Jibril et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the significance of customer experience in fostering brand loyalty has become increasingly prominent, with developing the notion of the experience economy. They contend that remarkable experiences may provide more value for customers than physical things alone, implying that businesses that provide distinctive and engaging experiences are more likely to foster loyalty (Cheng et al., 2018). Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi (2017) supports this viewpoint by advocating for an emphasis on experiential marketing. He suggests that by generating comprehensive, brand-specific experiences, emotional connections and loyalty may be strengthened. Therefore, the transition towards experiential branding is a crucial tactic for organizations aiming to establish and sustain brand loyalty in a highly competitive and commoditized market (Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi, 2017; Cheng et al., 2018).

The literature also explores the difficulties and dangers linked to establishing brand loyalty in the contemporary market environment. Given the growing doubt among consumers about advertising and corporate intentions, the concept of authenticity has become a significant problem. Literature highlights the significance of authenticity in brand communications and activities, asserting that perceived authenticity may greatly augment customer trust and loyalty. Nevertheless, attaining and preserving this genuineness in an era of widespread marketing and scrutiny on social media is an intricate and continuous obstacle for companies (Ahmad Mabkhot et al., 2017; Braxton & Lau-Gesk, 2020).

Moreover, the always-changing and progressing customer tastes and technology improvements provide a considerable obstacle to maintaining brand loyalty. The abundance of options and the convenience of internet information have heightened competition and made customers more discriminating and less loyal to certain brands (Garanti & Kissi, 2019). Studies emphasize the significance of consistently adjusting to changes in consumer behavior and expectations. They propose that businesses must maintain agility and innovation to keep their loyal client base (Luo et al., 2015).

2.3. Integrating Social Media and Brand Loyalty in Tourism Marketing

The incorporation of social media and brand loyalty in tourist marketing is a significant and prominent area of research, reflecting the changing environment of consumer behavior and digital communication. The integration of online interaction and brand loyalty has become more vital for tourist destinations and enterprises aiming to navigate the competitive market landscape (van Asperen et al., 2017). Social media platforms provide tourist firms with unparalleled opportunities to connect with customers, exchange information, and participate in interactive communication, thanks to their extensive user bases and dynamic features. Studies emphasize the significance of social media in enabling a more individualized and immediate engagement between tourist businesses and customers. When correctly handled, these encounters have the potential to improve customer pleasure and strengthen emotional ties, ultimately promoting brand loyalty. The promptness and genuineness of social media content enables tourist firms to foster a feeling of inclusion and camaraderie among their target audience, which is crucial in establishing devoted client bases (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes the significance of user-generated content (UGC) in relation to tourist marketing and the establishment of brand loyalty. UGC, which encompasses reviews, images, and personal tales provided by travelers, has a substantial influence on others' travel choices. According to Han et al. (2017) UGC is considered more reliable and genuine than conventional marketing communications, which makes it a strong catalyst for brand loyalty. The genuineness and capacity to connect with UGC promote confidence and trust, which are essential elements of brand loyalty. Tourism businesses that actively include and use UGC in their marketing efforts may strengthen their reputation and attractiveness, resulting in heightened consumer loyalty (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2017).

The literature highlights the importance of co-creation, which emphasizes the cooperation between businesses and customers in generating value via social media. Ahmad Mabkhot et al. (2017) propose that customers have transitioned from being passive receivers of marketing messages to active participants in the brand experience. Within the realm of tourism, co-creation refers to the active participation of tourists in sharing their experiences and thoughts, so contributing to the development of the brand's story and products (Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi, 2017).

This cooperative strategy not only enhances the consumer's encounter but also cultivates a feeling of commitment and possession among customers, therefore reinforcing their allegiance to the brand (Kunkel et al., 2017). The literature also pays major attention to the role of social media influencers in tourist marketing and brand loyalty. Influencers, due to their substantial number of followers and perceived knowledge, have the ability to influence the travel choices of their audience, therefore making them very useful collaborators for tourism businesses. Studies investigate the effect of influencers on customer perceptions and behaviors, highlighting that endorsements from influencers may boost brand exposure, legitimacy, and loyalty. The genuine and captivating content produced by influencers has the ability to deeply connect with prospective visitors, generating enthusiasm and commitment towards the advertised places or services (Mkono & Tribe, 2016).

Nevertheless, the literature also recognizes the difficulties linked to using social media in tourist marketing and tactics for building brand loyalty. An important issue is the instability of social media trends and the ongoing changes in platform algorithms, which may affect the visibility and efficacy of marketing campaigns. In addition, the possibility of negative user-generated content (UGC), such as adverse reviews or comments, presents a danger to the reputation and loyalty of a business (Perez-Vega et al., 2018; Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2017).

The existing body of research on the influence of social media interaction and brand loyalty in the tourist sector contains a diverse range of studies that highlight the complex connection between digital platforms and consumer actions. The focal point of the discussion is the research conducted by Abou-Shouk & Soliman (2021), which investigates how social media contributes to the development of captivating stories that intensify the consumers' emotional attachment to businesses. Their study emphasizes the influential impact of storytelling in social media settings, where engaging material not only enhances brand exposure but also cultivates a more profound emotional commitment from the viewers. Aydin (2019) concurs with this view as they investigate the psychological processes by which social media content fosters brand loyalty. They highlight the significance of authenticity and personal relevance in captivating the contemporary traveller (Aydin, 2019; Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021).

Furthermore, the literature discusses the tactical use of social media platforms for targeted marketing endeavours. Barreda et al. (2020) explore the methods by which customization on social media may greatly enhance client happiness and loyalty. According to their research, customizing the material to match the user's previous actions and preferences results in increased rates of user engagement and a more pronounced feeling of brand loyalty. This is consistent with the research conducted by Bilgin (2018), which shows that customized interactions on social media platforms not only improve the perception of a company's worth but also encourage favourable word-of-mouth actions, therefore strengthening brand loyalty (Bilgin, 2018; Barreda et al., 2020).

Chen et al. (2020) thoroughly examine the relationship between customer involvement on social media and its impact on brand loyalty. They believe that engagement extends beyond simple exchanges and includes emotional and cognitive aspects. Research indicates that the degree of customer involvement with a brand on social media has a direct impact on their loyalty since highly involved consumers are more likely to

actively support and promote the brand. Ebrahim (2020) argues that social media involvement fosters a feeling of community and belonging among customers, which in turn enhances their brand loyalty.

The literature extensively discusses the major role of user-generated content (UGC) and its influence on brand loyalty. The research conducted by Helme-Guizon & Magnoni (2019) demonstrates the role of user-generated content as a reliable and influential information source that has a substantial impact on customer perceptions and actions. Advocates assert that good user-generated content enhances trust and loyalty towards the company since it showcases genuine experiences from other customers. On the other hand, handling unfavourable user-generated content is a difficult task for companies, requiring them to implement proactive tactics to minimize its negative effects on customer loyalty.

An important topic to consider is the effect of influencers in facilitating the connection between social media participation and brand loyalty. Influencers possess substantial followings and perceived expertise, enabling them to significantly influence customer attitudes and actions (Barreda et al., 2020). The study conducted by Huerta-Álvarez et al. (2020) indicates that when an influencer's image and values are in line with those of a business, their endorsements may result in increased levels of trust and loyalty towards the company. Nevertheless, the research advises against excessive dependence on influencers, emphasizing the need for genuineness and openness in influencer collaborations to preserve customer trust and allegiance (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020; Barreda et al., 2020).

Upon synthesizing these many strands of study, it becomes clear that participation in social media plays a crucial role in shaping and improving brand loyalty in the tourist sector. The literature emphasizes the significance of developing genuine, customized, and captivating content that deeply connects with customers on an emotional level (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Moreover, it emphasizes the need for companies to proactively oversee their online image by interacting with both favourable and unfavourable user-generated content in a

manner that strengthens trust and loyalty. The deliberate use of influencers who share the same brand values and beliefs also arises as a crucial element in harnessing social media to foster brand loyalty (Jayasingh, 2019).

An eminent body of literature centres on the influence of visual material on social media platforms. Jibril et al. (2019) found that the visual attractiveness of places shown on platforms such as Instagram has a substantial impact on customer perceptions and decision-making. This enhances the attraction of the destination and promotes a feeling of loyalty towards the brand or destination. Li et al. (2020) provide additional insight into the impact of Instagram on the formation of destination images and expectations. They propose that visually captivating content could immerse viewers and evoke emotional engagement, ultimately resulting in increased brand loyalty (Li et al., 2020; Jibril et al., 2019).

The notion of social media as a means of collaborative production between businesses and customers is another crucial area of focus. In their study, Kamboj & Rahman (2016) investigate the impact of customer participation in the development of material and narratives related to a brand on their perception of ownership and connection to the company, ultimately leading to increased loyalty. The interactive element of social media enables customers to immediately share their experiences, comments, and criticism with companies and their larger community, thereby facilitating the co-creation process. These interactions not only enhance the brand's storytelling but also cultivate a community of devoted followers who feel appreciated and listened to (Peco-Torres et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a recent study by Rather & Camilleri (2019) has placed great emphasis on the efficacy of social media in closing the disparity between customer expectations and real-life experiences. The study emphasizes the significance of social media in offering genuine perspectives on tourist experiences, which may assist in reducing disparities between expectations and actuality, a crucial element in consumer contentment and allegiance. Ensuring that expectations are aligned is of utmost importance in the tourism sector since the

fundamental offering is centred on experiences, and any disappointment may have a substantial effect on customer loyalty towards the brand (Rather & Camilleri, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2021).

The research highlights the significant role of social media analytics and big data in comprehending and improving brand loyalty. In this study, Jayasingh (2019) explores the use of large-scale data collected from social media platforms to get an in-depth understanding of consumer behaviour, tastes, and trends. This enables tourist businesses to customize their products in a more precise manner, aligning them with the specific requirements and wishes of their target audience. By using data, organizations may use a methodical approach to marketing that allows them to forecast customer behaviour, anticipate their desires, and cultivate loyalty by showing a high level of attention and response to client preferences (Rather et al., 2018; Tatar & Eren-erdoğmuş, 2016).

Furthermore, the significance of social media in handling crises and its influence on customer loyalty is a subject that is gaining increasing attention. In their study, Abou-Shouk & Soliman (2021) investigate the use of social media by tourist companies for communication purposes in times of crises, such as natural catastrophes or political unrest. The study also explores the impact of good communication on customer trust and loyalty, which may be maintained or even strengthened under trying circumstances. This facet of social media interaction emphasizes the platform's function not just in marketing but also in sustaining customer connections and loyalty throughout unfavourable circumstances (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019).

Investigating ethical issues and consumer skepticism about social media marketing methods is a crucial field of study. Recently conducted research on the ethical aspects of participating in social media, specifically focusing on issues related to privacy, data security, and the credibility of the material. These issues may impact customer trust and loyalty, indicating that openness, ethical procedures, and respect for consumer privacy are crucial elements of successful social media engagement tactics (Ben-Shaul & Reichel, 2017).

It is essential to recognize the always changing and dynamic nature of social media platforms and consumer behaviour in order to have a comprehensive literature evaluation. Chu et al. (2020) emphasize the significance of agility and adaptation in social media campaigns, highlighting that what is successful now may not remain so in the future owing to swift technological advancements, platform algorithms, and shifts in customer preferences. This underscores the need for continuous research and adjustment by tourist companies to remain relevant and retain customer allegiance in the digital era (Chu et al., 2020; Ebrahim, 2020).

2.4. Comparative Analysis of Global Trends in Social Media Usage and Brand Loyalty in Tourism

The research comparing worldwide trends in social media use and brand loyalty in tourism provides a persuasive account of the changing dynamics of travel behavior, marketing techniques, and consumer interaction in various locations. In the digital age, it is essential for industry players in tourism to comprehend the worldwide trends and effects on brand loyalty caused by the changing landscape of social media platforms (van Asperen et al., 2017; Ahmad Mabkhot et al., 2017).

2.4.1. Social media in tourism: a global perspective

Social media has revolutionized the tourist sector on a global scale, presenting both obstacles and opportunities for destinations and enterprises globally. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WeChat play a crucial role in providing inspiration, information, and opportunities for connection among visitors. However, their use and influence fluctuate substantially across various locations (Mariani et al., 2018). Studies observe that visual material has a significant impact on platforms such as Instagram in Western countries. In these areas, captivating images and partnerships with influencers are crucial for promoting destinations and establishing brand identity. In contrast, in Asian markets, platforms like WeChat and Sina Weibo are the dominant players. These platforms provide a wide range of services, including social networking,

payment systems, and booking features. As a result, they have a more diverse impact on travel choices and brand perceptions (Kim et al., 2018). The variation in platform selection and use highlights the need to customize social media strategy to match regional habits and preferences. The success of social media in attracting and retaining customers in the tourist industry depends on understanding these cultural subtleties and using the distinct characteristics of each platform to produce captivating, localized content that deeply connects with the intended audience (Han et al., 2017).

2.4.2. Cross-cultural Influential Factors and Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty in the tourist industry is impacted by a multitude of variables that go beyond the basic practical advantages of a product or service. Consumer loyalty to tourist brands is significantly influenced by emotional connection, cultural values, and social factors. Research conducted by Liu et al. (2020) emphasizes the importance of emotional connection and perceived value in influencing brand loyalty among European tourists. The study suggests that firms that succeed in providing outstanding value and emotional resonance are more likely to develop loyal client bases. Conversely, the impact of social and cultural elements on brand loyalty is more evident in a collectivist society, particularly in Asian countries. The significance of social endorsements and community opinions in travel selections is highlighted, with user-generated content (UGC) and peer evaluations exerting significant influence over brand perceptions and loyalty (Chen et al., 2020).

Moreover, the notion of Guanxi, which refers to the significance of personal connections and networks in China, exemplifies the significant influence of social interactions on brand loyalty. In this context, trust and relational ties between customers and brands are of utmost importance (Lee et al., 2018). The difficulty of fostering brand loyalty in the global tourist industry is highlighted by these conflicting variables. This requires a detailed comprehension of cultural values, emotional motivations, and social influences that shape consumer behavior and brand strategy (Lee et al., 2018).

2.4.3. Environmental Awareness and Social Media Advocacy

The increasing worldwide focus on sustainability and environmental accountability has had a considerable effect on the behaviors and expectations of tourists, which in turn has influenced their loyalty to brands (Camilleri, 2017). Tourists are increasingly looking for firms that not only provide great experiences but also show a dedication to protecting the environment and being socially responsible. Social media has become an essential medium for tourist firms to display their sustainability efforts, interact with environmentally aware customers, and cultivate brand loyalty by emphasizing shared values. Nunkoo et al. (2020) emphasize the significance of social media in promoting a conversation between companies and customers about sustainable practices, allowing brands to align themselves with the values of their intended audience. This alignment cultivates a more profound emotional connection and allegiance as customers choose businesses that mirror their own convictions and objectives for sustainability (Nunkoo et al., 2020; Camilleri, 2017).

2.4.4 Technological Advancements and Personalized Experiences

The rapid progress of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR), has revolutionized the manner in which tourist companies engage with customers on social media (Jeong & Shin, 2019). These technologies provide innovative opportunities for developing customized and engaging experiences that may greatly improve brand loyalty. Pai et al. (2020) explore the possibilities of using VR and AR in tourist marketing. These technologies allow customers to have virtual experiences of places and services, which might influence their travel intentions and brand preferences. Artificial intelligence-powered chatbots and customized content distribution on social media platforms improve the customer experience by offering timely, relevant, and personalized information, fostering a more intimate connection between the company and the consumer. These technological advancements not only

improve the attractiveness of tourist businesses but also foster loyalty by enhancing the customer experience and raising expectations (Dorcic et al., 2019; Jeong & Shin, 2019).

2.4.5. Leveraging Local Culture and Experiential Marketing

Within the realm of global tourist marketing, the incorporation of indigenous culture into social media tactics is of utmost importance in the effort to acquire and maintain a devoted client base. Consumers are progressively seeking genuine and culturally immersive travel experiences that establish a connection between them and the core of the location (Ferreira & Sousa, 2019). Social media platforms facilitate the showcasing of local culture, customs, and experiences by tourist firms, which appeals to the need for authenticity and immersion. Mainolfi & Marino (2018) highlight the significance of experiential marketing in the tourist industry, whereby firms use social media to narrate tales and exhibit events that deeply connect with customers on an emotional level. Tourism businesses may distinguish themselves in a competitive market, cultivate a feeling of connection and belonging among customers, and establish robust brand loyalty by using local culture and prioritizing experiential marketing (Mainolfi & Marino, 2018; Ferreira & Sousa, 2019).

2.4.6. Challenges and Opportunities in Global Social Media Engagement

For tourist companies aiming to establish and sustain loyalty among international audiences, navigating the worldwide social media environment poses a range of problems and possibilities. Brands must be flexible and creative to keep up with the fast rate of technological advancements and changes in platforms (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020). They need to adjust their tactics to align with the changing tastes and behaviors of a wide range of consumers. The task of producing material that is attractive to a wide audience while still being relevant to specific local cultures is rather difficult. It requires finding a careful equilibrium between maintaining a worldwide brand image and adapting to local customs and preferences (Harrigan et al., 2017).

Although there are difficulties, the potential for increasing brand loyalty via social media is considerable. Social media platforms have a worldwide presence and allow tourist businesses to communicate with customers instantly, creating a feeling of community and connection that goes beyond physical distances (Braxton & Lau-Gesk, 2020). Using data analytics and AI-powered insights, companies may acquire a more profound comprehension of customer preferences and behaviors. This enables them to implement marketing strategies that are more focused and individualized, resonating with a wide range of audiences (Luo et al., 2015). Furthermore, the widespread use of social media platforms on a worldwide scale provides tourist businesses with the chance to utilize user-generated content (UGC) and collaborate with influencers (Han et al., 2017). This allows them to enhance their message and expand their reach into new areas while maintaining an authentic and credible image. Social media has enabled the democratization of content production and sharing, giving users the capacity to become brand ambassadors. This has a significant impact on establishing brand loyalty worldwide (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2017; Han et al., 2017).

2.5. The Role of Social Media Engagement and Brand Loyalty in Shaping the Tourism Industry of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is now experiencing a period of significant change in its tourist industry as part of its larger Vision 2030 project. This effort seeks to reduce the country's reliance on oil and promote economic diversification. In this revolutionary vision, the tourist sector of Saudi Arabia is being reshaped by the crucial aspects of social media engagement and brand loyalty. The convergence of these variables is shaping a fresh storyline for the Kingdom, establishing it as a prominent participant in the global tourist arena (Suhail Ajina, 2019).

2.5.1. Social media as a catalyst for tourism growth

Saudi Arabia has used the influential capabilities of social media to effectively advertise tourist attractions and captivate prospective travellers. The Kingdom has a youthful and technologically adept population, which ranks among the top internationally in terms of social media use. This demographic presents an advantageous environment for implementing digital marketing tactics that seek to reshape the nation's reputation and entice visitors. According to Arous et al. (2024) the Saudi government and commercial sector actively use platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat to promote the country's varied cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and natural scenery. These endeavours are a component of a more extensive plan to use digital platforms for the purpose of storytelling, constructing a captivating storyline that attracts both local and global visitors (Bahurmuz & Al-Kubaisy, 2022).

2.5.2. Building Brand Loyalty with Cultural and Religious Significance

Saudi Arabia has a distinctive role in the Islamic world as the guardian of the Two Holy Mosques, making it a prominent destination for religious tourism. The religious and cultural importance of this event provides a unique chance to cultivate brand loyalty (Basendwah & Rahman, 2021). Wu & Mursid (2019) examine the correlation between emotional and spiritual bonds formed during religious tourism and the resulting high brand loyalty, which increases the likelihood of tourists returning or recommending the place to others. The Saudi tourist brand goes beyond conventional leisure tourism and includes spiritual and cultural aspects that strongly appeal to a major portion of its target audience (Sudigdo & Khalifa, 2020).

2.5.3. Effective use of social media platforms and targeted international engagement efforts

Saudi Arabia's method of using social media in its tourist marketing initiatives is both deliberate and diverse. In light of the worldwide reach of the tourist sector, the Saudi government, in collaboration with private sector entities, has initiated comprehensive social media campaigns with the objective of presenting the

kingdom as an essential destination for travelers (Alqahtani, 2020). These advertisements showcase Saudi Arabia's rich cultural history, breathtaking natural settings, and contemporary tourism attractions. Binsawad (2020) state that the Saudi tourist Authority's use of social media influencers from other nations demonstrates the kingdom's dedication to connecting with an international audience. This approach allows them to present its tourist services via genuine and relevant material (Al sari et al., 2022). Furthermore, the introduction of the Saudi Seasons, a collection of cultural and entertainment events held throughout the year, is extensively advertised on various social media platforms, attracting attention to the kingdom's wide range of attractions. The purpose of these efforts is not just to attract visitors but also to create a compelling story that appeals to both international and local audiences, with the aim of building a strong feeling of brand loyalty towards Destination KSA (Abuhjeeleh, 2019).

2.5.4. Leveraging Cultural Assets and Religious Tourism

The distinctive cultural and religious attributes of Saudi Arabia provide a strong basis for cultivating brand loyalty. The kingdom's guardianship of the Two Holy Mosques in Makkah and Madinah establishes it as a crucial destination for Muslims globally, providing profound spiritual encounters that foster deep emotional connections and devotion (Wu & Mursid, 2019). In addition to religious tourism, Saudi Arabia's efforts to publicize its UNESCO World Heritage sites, such as Al-Ula and the At-Turaif District in Diriyah, via social media, are essential in attracting visitors with a strong interest in culture and history (Alahmadi, 2021). The combination of religious importance and cultural richness is a powerful means of strengthening brand loyalty, as it engages with visitors on a level that goes beyond simply leisure or amusement (Bhatti & Alshiha, 2021).

2.5.5. Challenges and Opportunities in Digital Engagement

Although social media offers substantial prospects for marketing tourism in Saudi Arabia, it also entails obstacles that need to be overcome. An example of a problem is finding a balance between contemporary

marketing strategies and respecting cultural sensitivity. In order to comply with the conservative cultural standards of the Kingdom, it is important to use a cautious strategy while creating social media material. This involves making sure that the content is in line with local values while still being attractive to a worldwide audience (Al-Shammari & El-Sawy, 2020). Studies highlight the significance of culturally sensitive marketing tactics that uphold the traditions and values of the Kingdom. This implies that effective social media interaction requires careful navigation of these intricacies (Aldakhil, 2020). Another obstacle is the swiftly evolving digital environment, necessitating continual adjustment and ingenuity in social media tactics. To maintain competitiveness and attract a varied global audience, the Saudi tourist industry must align itself with current global digital marketing trends, such as the incorporation of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and tailored content. Although there are difficulties, the potential for using social media to increase brand loyalty and bring visitors to Saudi Arabia is enormous (Mir & Kulibi, 2023). The government's substantial allocation of funds towards tourist infrastructure, together with smart collaborations with international tourism and entertainment companies, establishes the foundation for a strong marketing strategy powered by social media. Saudi Arabia should enhance its brand loyalty among visitors by demonstrating its dedication to cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and cutting-edge tourism offerings. This would encourage travelers to return again and spread favorable recommendations (Mir & Kulibi, 2023).

Utilizing social media for tourist marketing and improving brand loyalty is filled with difficulties. A major obstacle is the lack of digital literacy and the failure of local tourist operators to embrace best practices in social media. In order to fully harness the power of social media, it is crucial for small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the tourist sector to successfully use these technologies alongside the government and big industry players (Al-Mohmmad & Butler, 2021). In addition, Al-Ghaith (2019) highlights that the legislative framework and internet censorship provide obstacles to the development and distribution of material, which might

possibly restrict the effectiveness and influence of social media campaigns. Another obstacle arises in preserving the genuineness of the Saudi brand amidst rapid development and worldwide integration (Al-Mohammad & Butler, 2021). The delicate task at hand is to strike a balance between promoting a contemporary and tourist-friendly Saudi Arabia, while simultaneously safeguarding the kingdom's traditional identity and values. Social media, with its focus on openness and genuineness, may have both positive and negative effects, magnifying any perceived inconsistencies between promotional communications and real-life visitor encounters (Alqahtani, 2020).

2.5.6. Future Prospects: Innovation and Engagement

The future of social media engagement and brand loyalty in Saudi Arabia's tourist business seems promising, characterized by prospects for innovation and enhanced involvement. Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are innovative technologies that provide immersive narrative experiences. These technologies enable prospective visitors to virtually explore Saudi sites, creating curiosity and loyalty even before their actual visit (Mir & Kulibi, 2023). The kingdom's young population, who are very engaged on social media, strengthens the implementation of these creative methods, creating a foundation for a technologically advanced tourist marketing plan. Furthermore, the growing use of data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) in social media campaigns might facilitate the implementation of more individualized and focused marketing endeavors, hence augmenting the efficacy of these campaigns in fostering brand loyalty (Perez-Vega et al., 2018). According to Al Al-Shammari & El-Sawy (2020) personalization has a major impact on tourist behavior, leading casual visitors to become devoted champions for Saudi tourism (Al-Mohammad & Butler, 2021).

2.6. Theoretical Framework

The study employs a theoretical framework that integrates various fundamental theories and concepts from the fields of communication, marketing, and psychology to investigate the effects of social media

engagement and brand loyalty on the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. The Benefits and Applications

Theoretically, media platforms are chosen by people to fulfil particular requirements, including information searching, identity development, social integration, and amusement. This method is very useful for figuring out why travellers use social media to get ideas and make decisions about their trips. This concept is further enhanced by Social Influence Theory, which examines how social norms and other people's opinions affect people's behaviours and attitudes, especially in online environments where travel decisions are heavily influenced by peer recommendations and evaluations (Li, 2013).

The theories of brand equity and loyalty are essential to comprehend the connection between travellers' devotion to a destination and their opinions of it. While brand equity theory highlights the value provided to a business by its favorable image, associations, and perceptions in customers' minds, brand loyalty theory contends that pleasant experiences and perceptions play a role in a tourist's recurrent choice of a place. Within the Saudi Arabian tourism sector, these theories contribute to the understanding of how social media interaction management done well may improve the nation's reputation, draw visitors, and cultivate a sense of loyalty (Deslonde & Becerra, 2018).

Additionally, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides information on how people's acceptance and usage of technology, such as social networking platforms for travel, are influenced by their opinions of its utility and simplicity of use. This model can assist in comprehending the elements that motivate travellers to use social media while making travel plans to Saudi Arabia (Rafique et al., 2020). Last but not least, comprehending the impact of online evaluations and suggestions on travellers' attitudes and actions requires a knowledge of the notion of the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). Social media helps electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) propagate information about vacation locations quickly, which has a big influence on prospective visitors' decision-making. By incorporating these ideas and concepts, the theoretical framework

seeks to investigate how visitors' impressions of and brand loyalty to Saudi Arabia's tourism industry are influenced by social media interaction. It aims to comprehend the relationship between favorable destination perceptions and online interactions, which can boost visitor numbers and retention, ultimately supporting the expansion and sustainability of Saudi Arabia's tourism industry (Kamal et al., 2020).

2.7. Theoretical Premises of Study

The study is based on communication, marketing, and psychological theories. It uses the Uses and Gratifications Theory to understand travellers' social media use for trip information, identity development, and social integration. Social Influence Theory also examines how social media peer reviews affect travellers' decisions. Brand Equity and Loyalty Theories explain how a destination's image and associations affect tourists' loyalty and impressions. Based on utility and convenience of use, the Technology adoption Model (TAM) assesses travellers' adoption and use of social media for travel planning. Finally, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) shows how online reviews and suggestions affect visitors' attitudes and behaviours, underlining social media's significance in travel destination knowledge. These theoretical principles address how social media participation and brand loyalty affect passengers' opinions of Saudi Arabia's tourism industry, boosting its growth and sustainability.

2.8. Research Hypothesis

- ❖ **H₁:** Social media engagement has a significant impact on Saudi Arabia's tourism industry.
- ❖ **H₂:** Brand loyalty has a significant influence on the Saudi Arabian tourism industry.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research work employed the quantitative study approach, which is a thorough scientific approach that focuses on gathering and analyzing numerical data to get insights into patterns, correlations, and occurrences within settings. This study used descriptive research design, which is a technique that focuses on providing a systematic description of the features, behaviours, and interactions of a particular phenomenon in each population. The target population of this research work was people who have engaged with tourism-related firms in Saudi Arabia via social media platforms. This included both domestic and foreign travellers who have employed social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok to interact with, get information about, or disseminate their experiences of tourism services and locations inside the country. This study employed a random sampling approach, and the sample size was decided to be 200 respondents, all of whom had used different social media platforms for tourism-related activities. The main data-collecting strategy for this research consisted of distributing a well-structured questionnaire, particularly created to acquire detailed information on the extent of engagement with social media and the levels of brand loyalty among visitors in Saudi Arabia. The survey was carried out online, using Google Forms as the preferred platform because of its versatility and user-friendly interface for creating and distributing surveys. The data analysis for this research was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and MS Excel 365.

3.1. Research Approach

A quantitative study approach was used to investigate the dynamics of social media interaction and its influence on brand loyalty in the tourist sector of Saudi Arabia. This methodology allowed a methodical analysis of the impact of social media interactions on visitors' brand loyalty. The inquiry was centered on the

gathering and statistical examination of numerical data, with the objective of quantifying variables and discerning noteworthy correlations (Daniel, 2016). Quantitative research is a thorough scientific approach that focuses on gathering and analyzing numerical data to get insights into patterns, correlations, and occurrences within settings. This research paradigm utilizes measurable data to provide empirical evidence and reveal recurring trends in the study. It is often identified using organized instruments like surveys, questionnaires, and statistical software, which enable researchers to objectively measure and evaluate factors. Quantitative research in the field of social sciences enables the thorough examination of hypotheses using statistical methods, offering a systematic framework for empirical study (Doyle et al., 2020).

The study technique included disseminating questionnaires to persons who have engaged with tourism-related firms via social media platforms. The questionnaires were carefully crafted to gather data on several aspects of social media involvement. This involved evaluating the frequency of interactions between consumers and brands, the type of these engagements (whether they were passive, such as consuming content, or active, such as commenting and sharing), and the consumers' perceptions of the value of the content provided by the tourism brands on these platforms. In addition, the surveys aimed to assess crucial indications of brand loyalty. The indications included the respondents' plans to return, their inclination to endorse the brand to others (advocacy), and their degree of confidence in the brand. The research attempted to use statistical analysis methods, namely regression analysis, to identify significant connections between the level and kind of social media involvement and the level of loyalty towards a brand among visitors (Nassaji, 2015). This study aimed to give empirical data on the efficacy of different social media methods in promoting loyalty among visitors in Saudi Arabia. The research aims to provide helpful insights for tourist marketers and brand managers by establishing significant correlations between social media involvement and brand loyalty. These observations might be used to shape specific social media tactics aimed at improving customer loyalty to a

brand, therefore supporting the expansion and long-term viability of the tourist industry in Saudi Arabia. This research used quantitative methods to enhance our comprehension of the digital factors that influence customer behavior in the tourist sector (Xiong, 2022).

3.2. Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design, which is a technique that focuses on providing a systematic description of the features, behaviors, and interactions of a particular phenomenon in each population. This research aimed to analyze the intricacies of social media interaction and its impact on brand loyalty among travellers interacting with Saudi Arabian tourism firms. The research aimed to get a comprehensive understanding of the current trends, attitudes, and views within the study's population by implementing this design. This would shed light on the intricate relationship between digital engagement and customer loyalty in the tourist industry (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

The study design's descriptive character enabled a systematic method to collect and analyze data. The research used a well-designed questionnaire sent via Google Forms to collect quantitative data on participants' social media usage habits, their interactions with tourist businesses, and their loyalty indicators. This methodological approach was well-suited to the study's objectives, since it enabled the combination of extensive and varied data sets, resulting in a comprehensive and deep understanding of the research topic. The questionnaire's use of both closed-ended and Likert-scale items was crucial in gathering a diverse range of answers, allowing the study to measure the extent of social media involvement and customer loyalty among the studied population (Nassaji, 2015).

Additionally, the descriptive research approach was selected due to its efficacy in detecting and evaluating patterns and associations within the gathered data. The research aimed to provide significant insights into how digital interactions impact visitors' views and behaviors by examining several components of

social media involvement and comparing them to markers of brand loyalty. This technique not only emphasized the present condition of social media's influence on brand loyalty in the tourist sector of Saudi Arabia but also provided a solid groundwork for future study to expand upon (Doyle et al., 2020). The descriptive research design thoroughly analyzed the phenomena under investigation, resulting in a comprehensive comprehension of the complex connection between social media engagement and brand loyalty. This research provided valuable insights for both academic discussions and practical implementations in the field of tourism marketing (Kim et al., 2017).

3.3. Target Population of the Study

The target population of this research work was people who have engaged with tourism-related firms in Saudi Arabia via social media platforms. This included both domestic and foreign travellers who have employed social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok to interact with, get information about, or disseminate their experiences of tourism services and locations inside the country. Due to Saudi Arabia's ambitious efforts to establish itself as a top tourist destination, as described in Vision 2030, the demographic makeup of its tourism market has grown more varied. The variety encompasses a wide range of age groups, ethnicities, and travel interests, which demonstrates the growing popularity of the country as a worldwide tourist destination. The diverse demographic composition provided a unique chance to evaluate the influence of social media participation on brand loyalty among various divisions of Saudi Arabia's tourist industry. The researchers sought to comprehend fully how social media interactions impact visitors' opinions and loyalty towards companies by including a diverse range of people in the study. The importance of this method rests in its ability to provide subtle insights into the different impacts of social media marketing tactics on various tourist groups (Daniel, 2016).

Due to the strategic significance of Vision 2030 for Saudi Arabia's tourist industry, it became essential to comprehend the dynamics of social media engagement and its relationship with brand loyalty. Given the nation's successful endeavors to improve its tourism infrastructure and attractions, it is crucial for firms to use social media to establish stronger relationships with a diverse range of visitors from around the world. The research aimed to provide important advice for tourist marketers and brand managers by examining the social media engagement patterns of a diverse demographic. The purpose of these insights was to provide information for the creation of specific social media tactics that may foster loyalty and promote repeat visits, ultimately leading to the sustainable expansion of the tourist sector in Saudi Arabia (Bujang et al., 2018).

3.4. Sample Characteristics

The research included a diverse sample of people who actively interacted with tourist companies in Saudi Arabia on social media channels through a random sampling approach. This comprehensive methodology included participants from a wide range of age groups, genders, nations, and travel habits, guaranteeing that the results were indicative of the larger audience of travellers engaging with Saudi tourism companies online (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). The sample size was decided to be 200 respondents, all of whom had used different social media platforms for tourism-related activities. The actions included performing research on locations, discussing travel experiences, and actively interacting with information produced by tourism businesses. The research was meant to get a thorough knowledge of how interactions on social media might impact brand loyalty by including people with diverse experiences of social media participation. This method was crucial in comprehending the whole extent of social media's influence, enabling a detailed examination that could discern minor trends and differences across various tourist groups (Pace, 2021).

The study's dedication to include a wide range of participants was crucial in providing insight into the intricate patterns of social media involvement in the tourist industry of Saudi Arabia. The study focused on

analyzing the subset of visitors that engage with companies on social media sites like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok. Its objective was to reveal the complexities of how these online interactions influence the development and strengthening of brand loyalty. This was especially pertinent considering the kingdom's planned endeavors to augment its allure as a tourism hotspot under the Vision 2030 project. The incorporation of a diverse array of demographic factors in the sample enabled a more comprehensive analysis of how various groups perceive and interact with tourist businesses on social media (Pace, 2021). Conducting this degree of study was essential in comprehending the efficacy of different social media marketing methods among various groups of the tourist population. The study aimed to analyze these interactions in order to provide practical insights for tourism marketers and brand managers. The goal was to utilize social media to establish a stronger connection with tourists, promote repeat visits, and contribute to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia (Rahman et al., 2022).

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

The main data collecting strategy for this research consisted of distributing a well-structured questionnaire, particularly created to acquire detailed information on the extent of engagement with social media and the levels of brand loyalty among visitors in Saudi Arabia. The survey was carried out online, using Google Forms as the preferred platform because of its versatility and user-friendly interface for creating and distributing surveys. Participants were recruited using a focused strategy, which included using social media advertisements, internet forums dedicated to tourism, and email databases of travellers who had previously engaged with Saudi Arabian tourism organizations (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). The purpose of this deliberate recruiting was to ensure a responder pool that was actively involved and accurately reflected the study's intended demography. The questionnaire had a combination of closed-ended Likert-scale questions, including a broad spectrum of subjects. The study examined different aspects of social media usage, different levels of

interaction with tourism brands (ranging from simply observing to actively participating), perceived signs of brand loyalty (such as the likelihood of recommending the brand or returning to the destination), and detailed demographic information (Lu et al., 2021).

The decision to use Google Forms for survey administration had a crucial role in easing several areas of the data-gathering process. It provided simple accessibility for respondents, allowing them to take the survey at their own convenience and from any place. The technology facilitated real-time data collecting, guaranteeing prompt and efficient capture and organization of replies. The prompt arrangement of data greatly facilitated the next stages of analysis, resulting in a shorter time span between data collection and the creation of insights (Taherdoost, 2022). The questionnaire's thorough design, the strategic approach to recruiting participants and the efficient use of the digital platform guaranteed a productive data-collecting procedure that maximized the potential for generating valuable and actionable insights. The use of this technique was crucial in attaining a profound comprehension of the complex correlation between social media involvement and brand allegiance among visitors in Saudi Arabia, establishing a strong basis for the study's analytical goals (Aithal & Aithal, 2020).

3.6. Data analysis

The data analysis for this research was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and MS Excel 365. Both software programs are renowned for their powerful analytical features, which allow for the effective management and examination of large datasets. SPSS was mostly used for its advanced statistical testing capabilities, while MS Excel 365 aided the initial data arrangement, coding, and early analysis (Arkkelin, 2014).

3.6.1. Data cleaning and data coding

The first phase of the investigation consisted of data cleansing, a crucial procedure aimed at guaranteeing the precision and dependability of the results. The dataset was thoroughly examined in MS Excel

365 to identify any discrepancies, missing numbers, or outliers that might possibly affect the accuracy of the findings. Identified duplicate items were eliminated, and missing data were handled by either exclusion or imputation based on the amount and type of missingness. After completing the cleaning procedure, data coding was carried out to prepare the dataset for statistical analysis in SPSS. The survey responses were assigned number codes, which made it easier to quantify and analyze them (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021). As an example, Likert scale answers, which spanned from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, were assigned numerical codes ranging from 1 to 5, correspondingly. The process of numerical coding converted qualitative data into a format that is appropriate for quantitative analysis, enabling the use of statistical tests to investigate relationships and trends within the data (Ose, 2016).

3.6.2. Descriptive Statistics

After the data underwent cleaning and coding, the study proceeded to the computation of descriptive statistics, which was carried out using SPSS. This stage presented a summary of the data distribution, including measurements of central tendency (mean), variability (standard deviation and variance), and the form of the distribution (skewness and kurtosis). The mean scores of the variables pertaining to social media involvement and brand loyalty in tourism provided valuable insights into the overall patterns and attitudes of the respondents. The standard deviation and variance measure the extent to which replies are spread out, reflecting the degree of agreement or disagreement in viewpoints (Nassaji, 2015). The use of skewness and kurtosis measures facilitated the detection of any deviations from a normal distribution, hence emphasizing possible biases or anomalies present in the data. The descriptive data provided the basis for further analytical investigations, allowing correlation analysis to examine the connections between social media participation and brand loyalty in the tourist sector of Saudi Arabia. This step of the study provided a thorough grasp of the

dataset by giving a detailed statistical overview. This allowed for informed interpretations of future inferential statistical tests (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021).

3.6.3. Frequency analysis

Frequency analysis is an essential first process for comprehending the distribution of answers in a dataset. This approach calculates the frequency of each response or category, providing a clear and concise overview of the data's attributes. Frequency analysis is a useful tool for studying social media engagement and brand loyalty in the tourism industry. It helps to find the most prevalent actions or attitudes among the respondents. It provides insight into the number of participants who prefer certain tourist brands or consistently interact with these brands on social media. Frequency analysis transforms abstract replies into concrete counts and percentages, offering an initial level of understanding that paves the way for more intricate statistical investigations. The significance of this technique is not apparent from its simplicity alone. It provides a concise overview of data patterns, which in turn guide subsequent analytical choices and conclusions (Denis, 2018).

3.6.4. Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha is an essential metric for evaluating the dependability of scales used to gather data on themes such as social media engagement and brand loyalty. This statistic assesses the degree of internal consistency within a group of questions in a survey or questionnaire, determining whether respondents understand and answer these items consistently. Cronbach's high alpha number (usually over 0.7) implies that the items effectively measure the underlying construct, guaranteeing that the conclusions made from the data are reliable. Within the scope of this research, computing Cronbach's Alpha for the group of questions pertaining to social media involvement and brand loyalty would confirm that these items provide a reliable assessment of each concept, enhancing the overall credibility of the study (Bujang et al., 2018).

3.6.5. KMO and Bartlett's Test

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are the first assessments used to prepare for factor analysis. The KMO test evaluates the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis by quantifying the extent to which variables share common variance. A KMO number approaching 1 indicates that a factor analysis may be suitable, whereas a value below 0.5 often shows that there are not enough shared characteristics for a useful factor analysis (Shrestha, 2021). The Bartlett's Test, however, examines the existence of sufficiently significant correlations between items that may serve as a foundation for component analysis. A result with a p-value less than 0.05 provides strong evidence in favor of the factorability of the correlation matrix. These tests collectively assess whether the data structure is suitable for identifying underlying characteristics, such as distinct aspects of social media participation or brand loyalty, that account for the pattern of correlations among the observed variables (Shrestha, 2021).

3.6.6. Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis examines the connection between two variables, assessing the intensity and direction of their relationship. Correlation analysis in this research investigates the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty, measuring the extent to which changes in one variable are associated with changes in the other (Pereira et al., 2018). The Pearson Correlation Coefficient, a frequently used metric resulting from this research, varies between -1 and 1. Values closer to 1 or -1 indicate a significant positive or negative association, respectively. A substantial positive association between social media involvement and brand loyalty suggests that increased levels of participation are linked to greater loyalty towards tourist businesses. This analytical methodology offers crucial insights into the intricacies of consumer behavior, providing guidance for strategic decision-making in marketing and brand management within the tourist sector (Pereira et al., 2018).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ensuring ethical considerations is of utmost importance in research to keep the study's integrity and protect the rights of participants. When analyzing the effects of social media participation and customer loyalty on Saudi Arabia's tourist sector, several ethical criteria were rigorously maintained. Initially, obtaining participant agreement was a fundamental aspect of the technique. Individuals were provided with information about the goal of the research, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their prerogative to withdraw at any point without facing any negative consequences. The utmost care was taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, with the data being anonymized to avoid any possibility of identifying the respondents, thereby protecting their privacy. Furthermore, the study refrained from using any kind of deceit, instead providing participants with explicit and truthful information on the research. Stringent data security protocols were enacted to safeguard the gathered information from unwanted intrusion or improper use. Finally, the study was carefully planned to minimize any possible negative impact on the participants, guaranteeing that the questions were kind, unobtrusive, and culturally appropriate. The study's dedication to ethical rigour, which is shown by its consideration of human autonomy, privacy, and well-being, enhances its credibility and the trustworthiness of its results.

CHAPTER - 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the conclusion of this study's empirical investigation into the intricate relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty within Saudi Arabia's tourism industry. This chapter has thoroughly compiled and analyzed the data obtained from a diverse cohort of respondents, examining the extent to which digital interactions on social media platforms influence tourists' allegiance to tourism brands. The findings articulated here are stranded in rigorous statistical analyses, encompassing frequency distributions, measures of central tendency and variability, as well as advanced inferential techniques such as correlation analysis and tests of reliability and validity. The chapter initiates a thorough examination of the demographic characteristics of the sample population, providing context for the subsequent analytical sections. It then transitions into an exploration of the reliability of the scales used to measure social media engagement and brand loyalty, underpinning the study's foundational constructs. Moving forward, it details the outcomes of the KMO and Bartlett's Test, assessing the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis. This is followed by a comprehensive correlation analysis, probing the strength and nature of the associations between the key variables. Overall, this chapter has synthesized the data to extract meaningful insights, delineating the statistical narrative that supports the study's overarching hypotheses and research objectives.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 18 Years	15	7.5	7.5	7.5

18-34 Years	137	68.5	68.5	76.0
35-54 Years	42	21.0	21.0	97.0
55 or Above	6	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

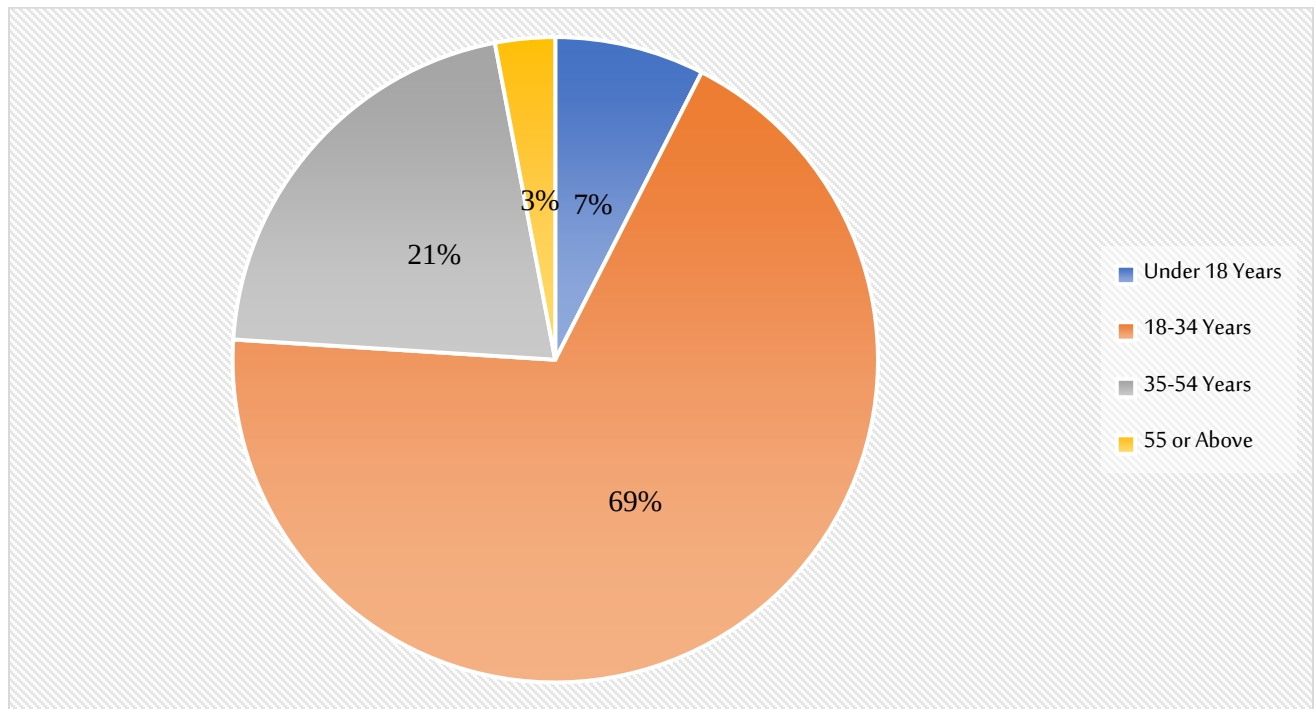


Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

The figure illustrates the distribution of participants by age group. The share of age categories among the participants indicates that the majority, 69%, were from the 18-34 years age group, demonstrating a strong representation of young adults. Those in the 35-54 years age bracket comprised 21% of the participants, signifying a significant presence of middle-aged adults in the study. The chart also shows that 7% of the participants were under 18 years of age, representing a smaller but noteworthy inclusion of younger respondents. Finally, the smallest group was participants aged 55 or above, making up 3% of the total, suggesting limited participation from this age group.

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	137	68.5	68.5	68.5
	Female	63	31.5	31.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

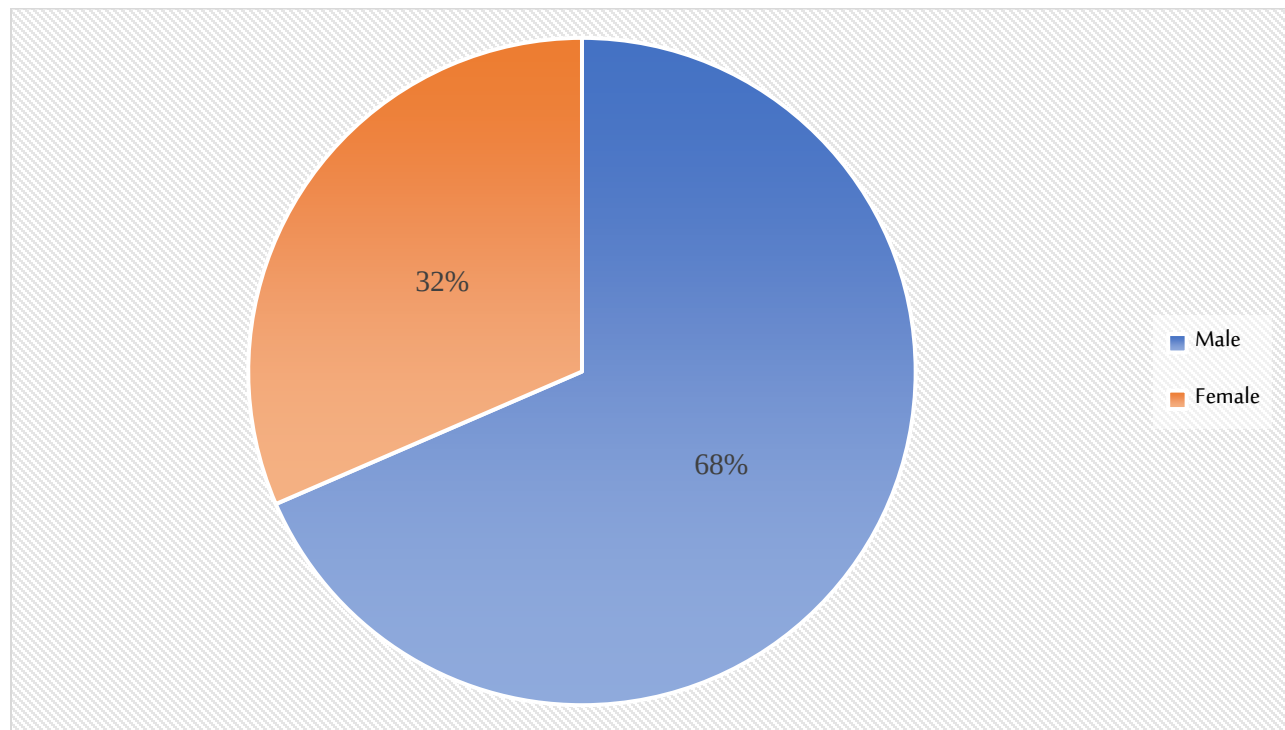


Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents

The above presented figure illustrates the gender distribution of the study's participants. It indicates that 68% of participants were male, while 32% were female, suggesting a majority male representation within the sample population.

Table 3: Nationality of the Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Saudi	176	88.0	88.0	88.0
	Other GCC Country	2	1.0	1.0	89.0

Western	18	9.0	9.0	98.0
Asian	2	1.0	1.0	99.0
Other	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

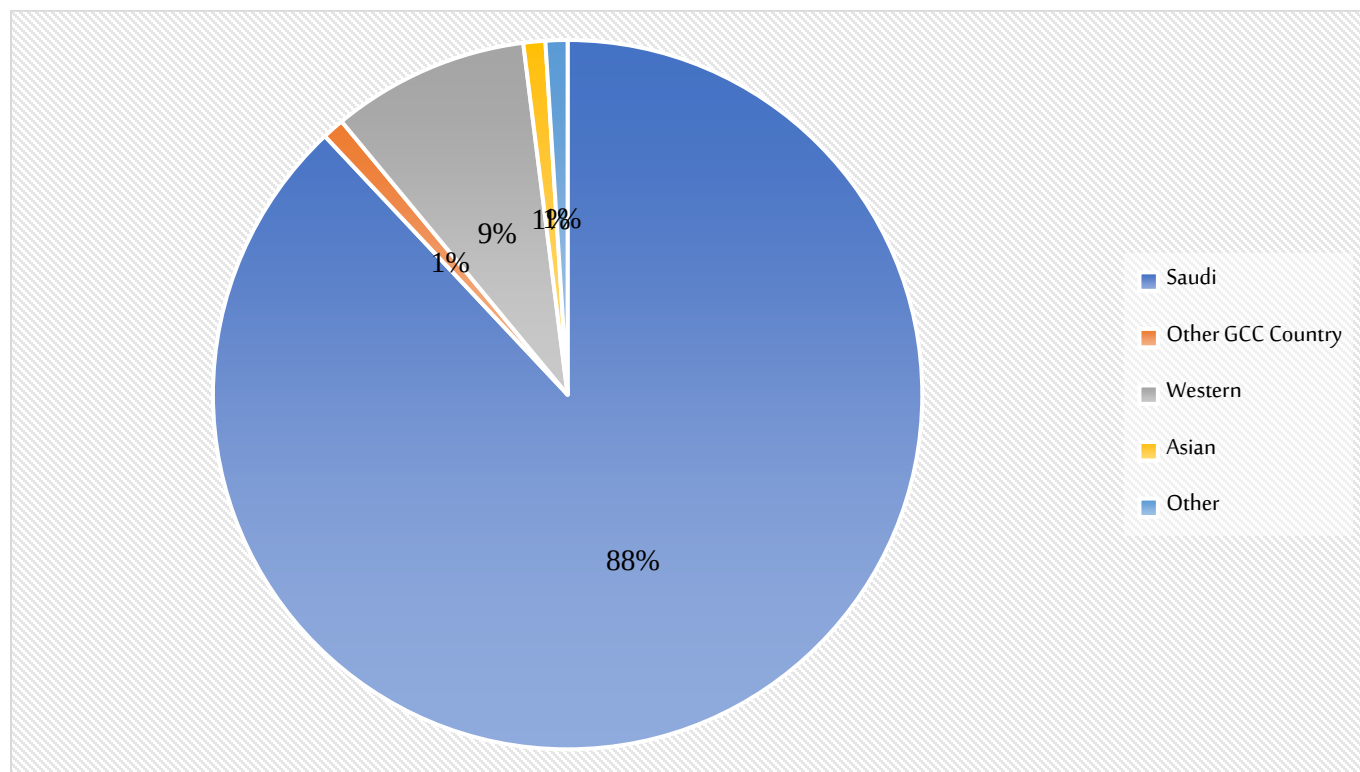


Figure 3: Nationality of the Respondents

The table and figure presented above depict the participants' nationality distribution, with a dominant share of 88% identified as Saudi. This is followed by 9% representing participants from other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, 1% from Western countries, 1% from Asian countries, and a final 1% categorized under 'Other', encompassing participants from various other nationalities. This distribution highlights the study's significant focus on Saudi nationals, with limited representation from other regions.

Table 4: Educational Level of the Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School or Lower	55	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Some College	41	20.5	20.5	48.0
	Bachelor's Degree	90	45.0	45.0	93.0
	Master's Degree	14	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

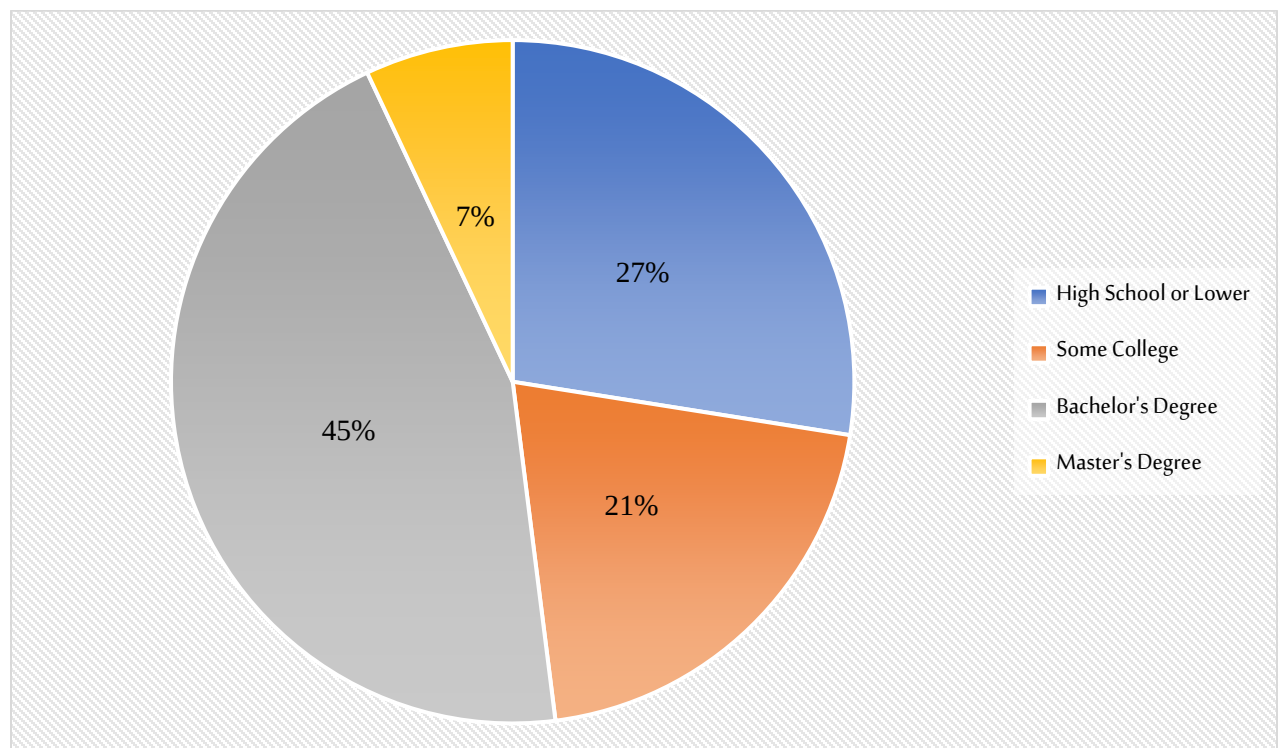


Figure 4: Educational Level of the Respondents

The above figure details the educational background of the participants. A majority, 45%, hold a bachelor's degree, suggesting that the respondent pool is highly educated. Those with some college education, possibly including associate degrees or partial college coursework, represent 27% of the sample. A further 21%

have attained a master's degree, indicating an even higher level of education among a significant portion of the participants. The smallest segment, 7%, reports having a high school education or lower, which indicates that the least number of participants are at this educational level.

Table 5: Occupation of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	43	21.5	21.5	21.5
	Employed	117	58.5	58.5	80.0
	Self-Employed	7	3.5	3.5	83.5
	Unemployed	26	13.0	13.0	96.5
	Retired	7	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

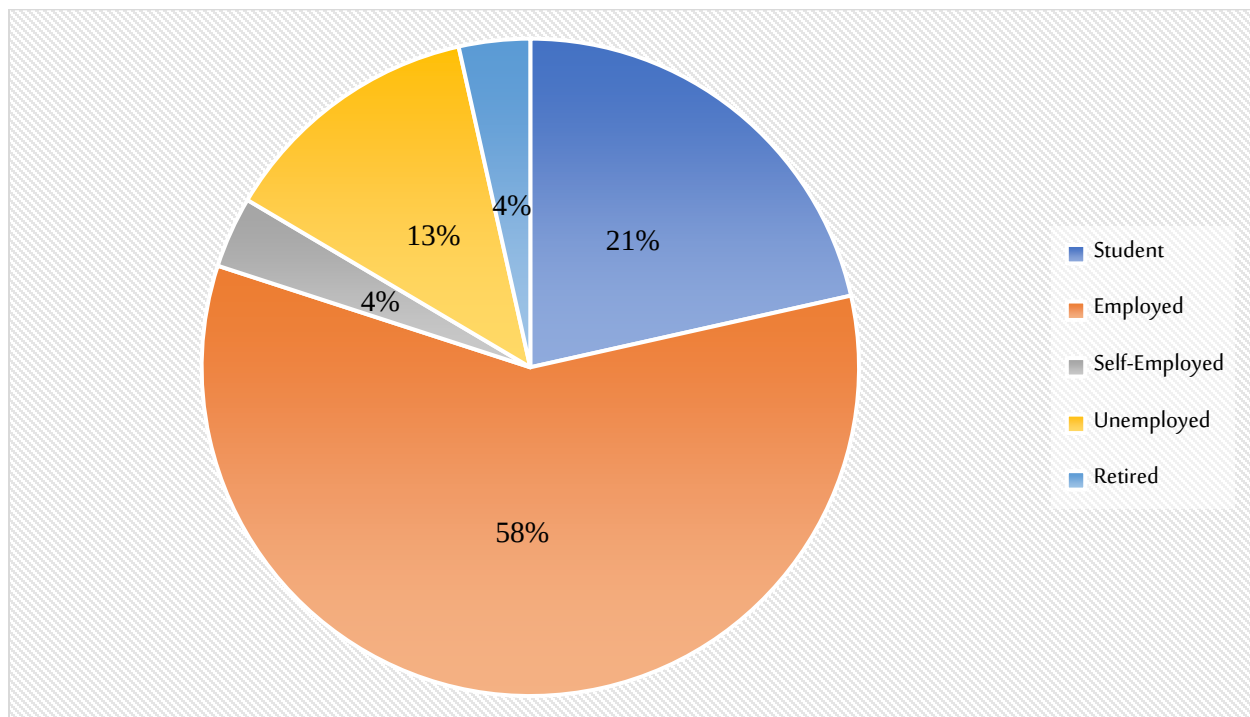


Figure 5: Occupation of the Respondents

The above table and figure present the employment status of the participants. The largest group, making up 58%, is employed, indicating most participants are in the workforce. Students represent the next significant category at 21%, which suggests that a good number of participants are likely at an age where higher education is a primary occupation. Self-employed individuals account for 13%, showing a notable entrepreneurial presence within the participant pool. Those who are unemployed constitute 4% of the respondents, equal to the percentage of retired individuals, highlighting the smallest segments in the employment distribution of the sample.

4.2. Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

Table 6: Frequency Analysis of Social Media Engagement in Tourism

	I regularly use social media to explore new tourist destinations.	I trust social media recommendations on tourist destinations more than traditional advertising.	Social media significantly impacted my choice of tourist destinations.	I often share my travel experiences on social media.	I engage with content related to travel and tourism on social media.
Strongly Disagree	3	7	5	13	8
Disagree	7	16	14	33	19
Neutral	26	43	35	49	54
Agree	87	79	88	64	80
Strongly Agree	77	55	58	41	39

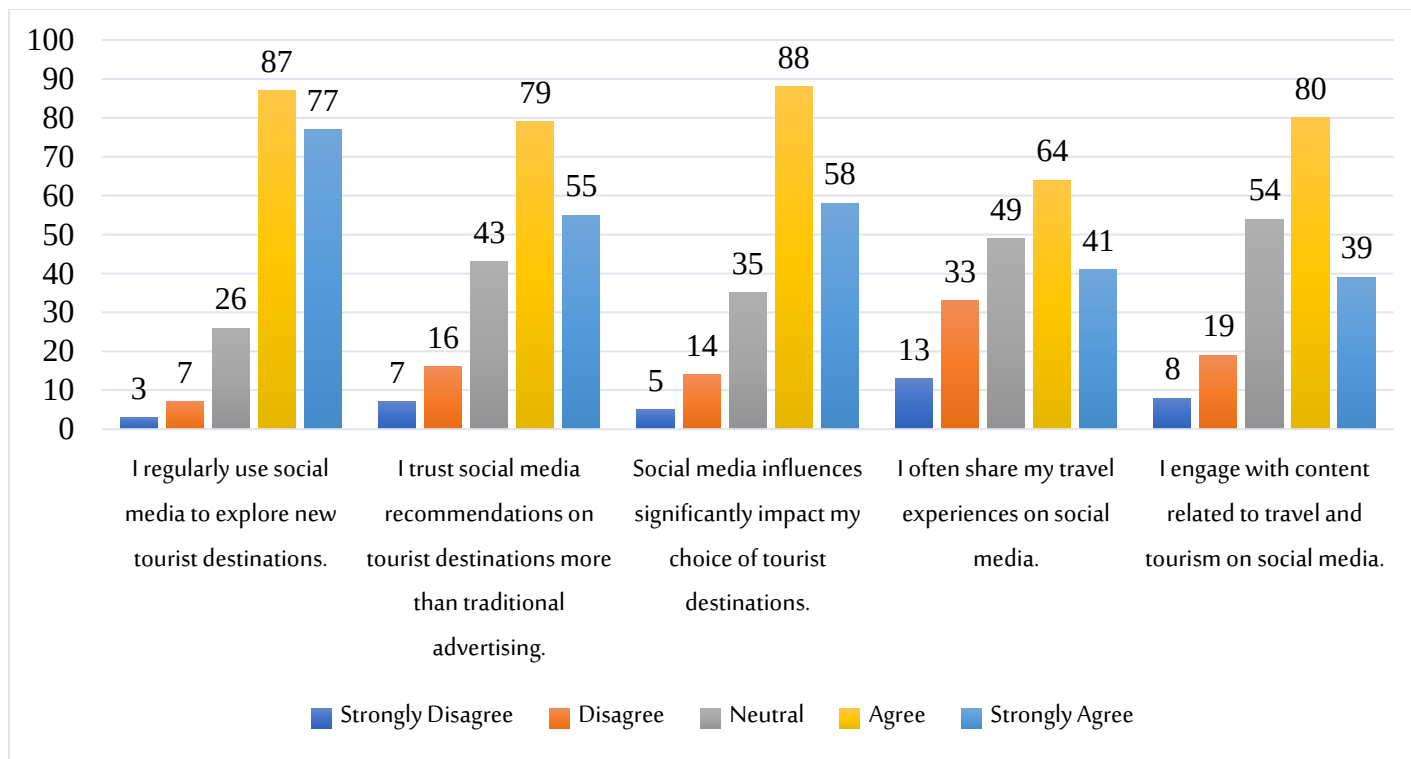


Figure 6: Frequency Analysis of Social Media Engagement in Tourism

The analysis of social media engagement in tourism, as presented in Table 6, offers insightful revelations into contemporary travel behaviour shaped by digital platforms. The survey results, indicating a significant reliance on social media for discovering new tourist destinations, show that a combined total of 164 respondents either agree or strongly agree with using social media for this purpose. This suggests that the vast majority view social media as an indispensable tool in the quest for new travel experiences, highlighting its efficacy in uncovering hidden gems and popular spots alike. Furthermore, the survey underscores a pronounced trust in social media recommendations over traditional advertising, with 134 respondents affirming this preference through their agreement or strong agreement. This trend is indicative of a shift in the trust dynamics within the tourism industry, where personalized, user-generated content on social media platforms is deemed more reliable and influential than conventional marketing messages. This transition points towards a growing demand for authenticity and peer reviews in the decision-making process of potential

travellers. Moreover, the influence of social media on the choice of tourist destinations cannot be overstated, with a combined 146 respondents acknowledging its significant impact on their travel decisions. This response rate, the highest among the categories, underscores the pivotal role of social media in shaping and guiding tourist preferences, confirming that for many, the inspiration for their next holiday destination begins with a scroll through their social feeds.

The propensity to share travel experiences on social media also received notable concurrence, with a total of 105 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this practice. This behavior reflects the desire to document and share travel experiences with a wider community, further fueling the cycle of inspiration and influence within social media networks. Lastly, engagement with travel-related content on social media is evidently high, as evidenced by 119 respondents who agree or strongly agree with actively engaging with such content. This level of interaction not only highlights the interest and enthusiasm for travel among social media users but also underscores the role of these platforms as vital sources of information and inspiration for travel planning.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Social Media Engagement in Tourism

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
I regularly use social media to explore new tourist destinations.	200	4.14	.880	.774	-1.127	.172	1.485	.342
I trust social media recommendations on tourist destinations more than traditional advertising.	200	3.79	1.043	1.088	-.760	.172	.131	.342

Social media significantly impacted my choice of tourist destinations.	200	3.90	.982	.965	-.890	.172	.537	.342
I often share my travel experiences on social media.	200	3.44	1.176	1.383	-.376	.172	-.740	.342
I engage with content related to travel and tourism on social media.	200	3.62	1.031	1.062	-.591	.172	-.032	.342
Valid N (List Wise)	200							

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for social media engagement in the context of tourism, based on a sample of 200 respondents. This analysis offers a quantitative insight into how individuals interact with social media for tourism-related purposes, including exploring new destinations, trusting recommendations, and sharing their experiences. The following paragraph synthesizes the data from the table into a coherent narrative. The descriptive statistics reveal that respondents regularly use social media to explore new tourist destinations, with a high mean score of 4.14 and a standard deviation of .880, indicating a strong tendency towards this behaviour among the sample population. This activity also shows a negative skewness (-1.127), suggesting that most respondents lean towards agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, and kurtosis of 1.485, indicating a relatively peaked distribution. Trust in social media recommendations over traditional advertising also scored relatively high, with a mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 1.043, although the distribution is less peaked (kurtosis of .131) and slightly skewed to the left (-.760), implying a moderate to high trust level among respondents.

The impact of social media on choosing tourist destinations is similarly significant, with a mean of 3.90, showing that social media is a critical factor in decision-making for many. Sharing travel experiences on social

media and engaging with travel-related content have lower mean scores of 3.44 and 3.62, respectively, indicating a varied level of activity in these areas among the respondents. These activities have higher standard deviations (1.176 for sharing and 1.031 for engaging), pointing to a wider spread of responses, and their distributions are less skewed to the left, suggesting a more balanced spread of agreement across the sample. Overall, the statistics indicate a pronounced engagement with social media for tourism purposes, with a particular emphasis on exploring new destinations and trusting social media recommendations. The slightly lower engagement levels for sharing personal travel experiences and content engagement may suggest opportunities for tourism marketers to encourage more interactive and participatory behaviors among social media users. The variance and skewness in responses across different aspects of social media use highlight the diverse ways in which individuals engage with these platforms for travel-related activities.

Table 8: Frequency Analysis of Brand Loyalty in Tourism

	I have a preferred tourism brand that I consistently use.	My positive experiences with a tourism brand greatly increase my loyalty to it.	I recommend my preferred tourism brands to others.	I am willing to pay more for services from my preferred tourism brands.	I follow my preferred tourism brands on social media and engage with their content.
Strongly Disagree	22	11	11	11	11
Disagree	44	19	15	29	26
Neutral	62	40	49	50	58
Agree	50	89	82	72	72
Strongly Agree	22	41	43	38	33

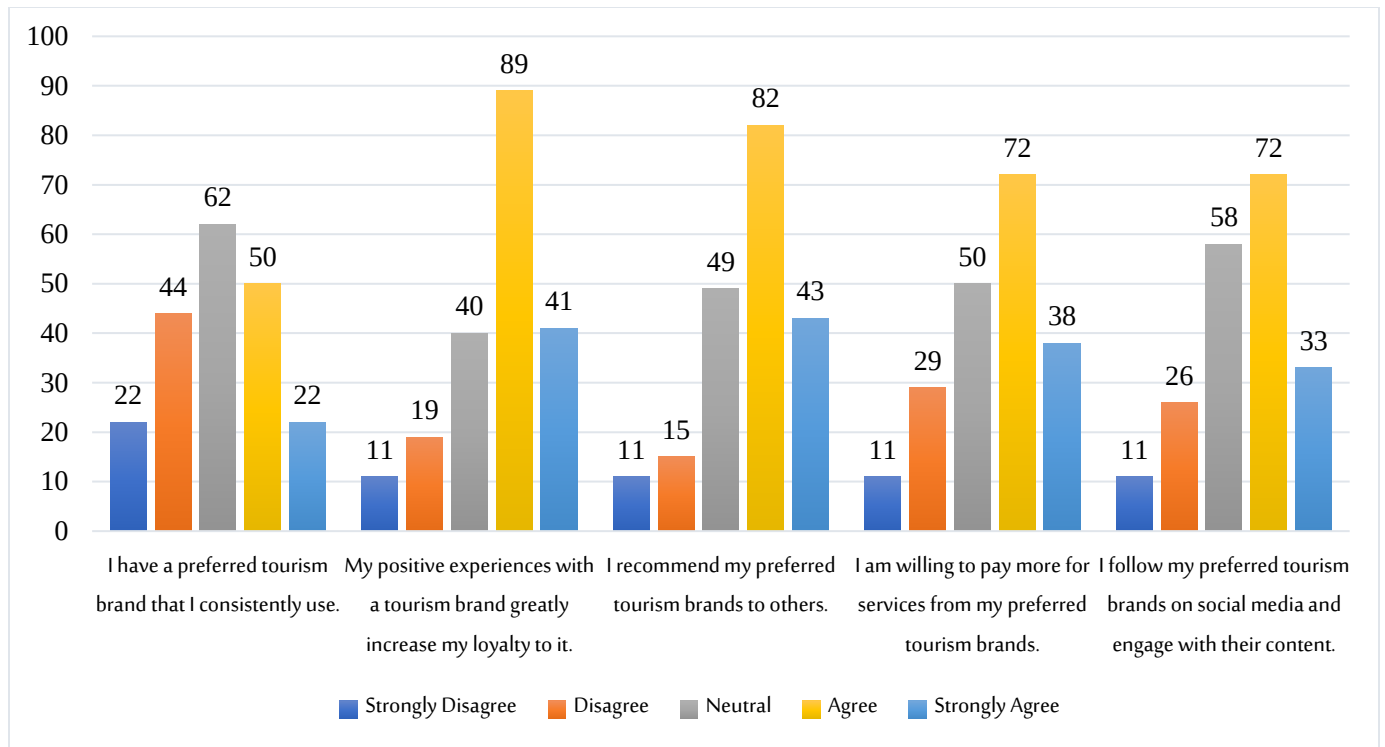


Figure 7: Frequency Analysis of Brand Loyalty in Tourism

The data reveals a nuanced picture of brand loyalty in tourism. A notable proportion of respondents (72 respondents agree and 22 strongly agree) acknowledge having a preferred tourism brand they consistently use, indicating a baseline level of brand loyalty. This suggests that while a significant number of consumers have developed a preference for certain brands, there remains a substantial portion of the audience that either remains neutral (62 respondents) or expresses varying degrees of disagreement (66 respondents combined for strongly disagree and disagree) towards this loyalty notion. The influence of positive experiences on loyalty shows a stronger consensus, with 130 respondents (89 agree, 41 strongly agree) affirming that such experiences significantly boost their brand loyalty. This underscores the critical role that customer satisfaction and positive interactions play in cultivating a loyal customer base in the tourism industry.

When it comes to recommending preferred tourism brands to others, a combined total of 125 respondents (82 agree, 43 strongly agree) indicates that customers who have developed brand loyalty are likely to act as brand advocates, sharing their preferences and experiences within their social circles. This recommendation factor is a key aspect of brand loyalty, serving as an organic form of marketing for tourism brands. Willingness to pay more for services from preferred tourism brands, a critical indicator of brand loyalty strength, shows that 110 respondents (72 agree, 38 strongly agree) are open to higher expenses for perceived value, signifying a considerable degree of loyalty where customers value brand experience over cost. Finally, engagement with preferred tourism brands on social media is highlighted, with 105 respondents (72 agree, 33 strongly agree) actively following and interacting with their content. This demonstrates the importance of social media as a platform for maintaining and enhancing brand loyalty among consumers.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics of Brand Loyalty in Tourism

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
I have a preferred tourism brand that I consistently use.	200	3.03	1.164	1.356	-.059	.172	-.796	.342
My positive experiences with a tourism brand greatly increase my loyalty to it.	200	3.66	1.065	1.134	-.789	.172	.148	.343
I recommend my preferred tourism brands to others.	200	3.65	1.068	1.142	-.747	.172	.173	.342
I am willing to pay more for services from my preferred tourism brands.	200	3.49	1.121	1.256	-.460	.172	-.523	.342
I follow my preferred tourism brands on social	200	3.45	1.083	1.173	-.445	.172	-.372	.342

media and engage with their content.								
Valid N (List Wise)	200							

Table 9 provides a detailed statistical overview of responses regarding brand loyalty within the tourism sector based on a sample size of 200. This analysis sheds light on various dimensions of brand loyalty, including the consistency of brand usage, the impact of positive experiences on loyalty, the propensity to recommend brands, willingness to pay a premium, and engagement with brands on social media. A comprehensive review of these statistics offers insights into the prevailing attitudes towards brand loyalty among consumers in the tourism industry. The mean scores across the five dimensions reveal a gradient of loyalty and engagement levels. The lowest mean score is observed in the consistency of using a preferred tourism brand (mean = 3.03), indicating a moderate level of brand commitment among respondents. This suggests that while there is some degree of loyalty, a significant number of consumers may still explore options or switch between brands based on various factors such as price, convenience, or quality of service. Conversely, positive experiences with a tourism brand emerge as a strong driver of loyalty (mean = 3.66), closely followed by the likelihood of recommending preferred brands to others (mean = 3.65). These dimensions underscore the importance of customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth in cultivating and sustaining brand loyalty within the tourism sector.

It highlights that memorable and satisfying experiences not only bolster loyalty but also motivate customers to become brand advocates among their peers. The willingness to pay more for services from preferred tourism brands shows a moderately high level of loyalty (mean = 3.49), suggesting that a significant portion of consumers value the quality, reliability, or other attributes associated with their preferred brands enough to incur a higher cost. This is an important indicator of the depth of loyalty, as it reflects the trade-off consumers are willing to make for perceived benefits. Engagement with preferred tourism brands on social

media (mean = 3.45) also indicates a moderate level of interaction, pointing to the role of digital platforms in maintaining and enhancing customer-brand relationships. This engagement encompasses following brands, participating in conversations, and interacting with content, which can further influence loyalty and purchasing decisions. The skewness and kurtosis values across these dimensions provide additional insights into the distribution of responses. The relatively low skewness values indicate that responses are fairly symmetrically distributed around the mean, with no significant bias towards agreement or disagreement for most statements. Kurtosis values closer to zero suggest that the distribution of responses does not deviate significantly from a normal distribution, except for the consistency of using a preferred brand, which shows a negative kurtosis, indicating a flatter distribution.

4.3. Extraction of Latent Factors

4.3.1. Extraction of Social Media Engagement in Tourism

Table 10: Reliability Statistics of Social Media Engagement in Tourism	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.773	5

Table 10 presents the reliability statistics of social media engagement in the context of tourism. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, a measure of internal consistency, is reported as .773, indicating a moderate to high level of reliability. This coefficient was calculated based on a sample of 5 items related to social media engagement. These results suggest that the items used to measure social media engagement in tourism demonstrate good reliability, enhancing the trustworthiness of the data collected.

Table 11: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Social Media Engagement in Tourism		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.876
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	480.559
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

Table 11 provides the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity for assessing the suitability of data for factor analysis in the context of social media engagement in tourism. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is reported as .876, indicating that the data are highly suitable for factor analysis. This value exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.5, suggesting that the variables in the analysis are sufficiently correlated to proceed with factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded an approximate chi-square value of 480.559 with 10 degrees of freedom and a significance level (Sig.) of .000. This indicates that the correlation matrix is significantly different from an identity matrix, supporting the presence of relationships among the variables and justifying the use of factor analysis. These results collectively suggest that the dataset on social media engagement in tourism exhibits strong correlations among variables and is suitable for further exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 12: Total Variance Explained by Observed Variables in Social Media Engagement in Tourism						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.972	59.442	59.442	2.972	59.442	59.442
2	.809	16.187	75.630			
3	.540	10.791	86.420			
4	.356	7.111	93.531			
5	.323	6.469	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Table 12 illustrates the breakdown of variance explained by observed variables in the domain of social media engagement within the tourism sector, utilizing Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as the extraction method. The table delineates five components, each characterized by its initial eigenvalue and the corresponding percentage of variance explained. The foremost component accounts for a substantial portion of the total variance, with an initial eigenvalue of 2.972, elucidating 59.442% of the variance. Successive components contribute progressively smaller proportions of the overall variance, with eigenvalues diminishing accordingly. Together, these components elucidate the entirety of the variance, totalling 100%. Component 1 emerges as the predominant driver, elucidating a significant portion of the variability within the observed variables. Such insights into the variance distribution offer valuable guidance for comprehending the underlying structure of social media engagement in tourism, thereby facilitating informed analysis and interpretation within this dynamic domain.

Table 13: Component Matrix of Social Media Engagement in Tourism with its Observed Variables	
	Component
	1
I regularly use social media to explore new tourist destinations.	.735
I trust social media recommendations on tourist destinations more than traditional advertising.	.783
Social media influences significantly impact my choice of tourist destinations.	.825
I often share my travel experiences on social media.	.672
I engage with content related to travel and tourism on social media.	.829
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.	
a. 1 Component Extracted: (Social Media Engagement in Tourism)	

Table 13 presents the component matrix outlining the relationship between observed variables and social media engagement within the tourism sector, as determined through Principal Component Analysis

(PCA). One component was extracted, encapsulating various aspects of social media interaction in tourism. The correlation coefficients indicate the strength of association between each observed variable and the extracted component. Among the variables, "Social media influences significantly impact my choice of tourist destinations" emerges as the most strongly correlated with the component, boasting a coefficient of .825. This is followed closely by "I trust social media recommendations on tourist destinations more than traditional advertising", with a correlation of .783. Additionally, "I engage with content related to travel and tourism on social media" demonstrates a high correlation of .829. These findings collectively highlight the pivotal role of social media in shaping travel behaviors and attitudes. The correlations underscore the influence of social media on destination exploration, decision-making, and engagement with travel-related content. Such insights deepen our understanding of consumer behavior in the digital landscape and hold implications for tourism marketing strategies and communication efforts.

4.3.2. Extraction of Brand Loyalty in Tourism

Table 14: Reliability Statistics of Brand Loyalty in Tourism	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.823	5

Table 14 displays the reliability statistics pertaining to brand loyalty within the tourism sector. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, a measure of internal consistency, is reported as .823, indicating a high level of reliability. This coefficient was computed based on a sample of 5 items related to brand loyalty. The robustness of this reliability coefficient suggests that the items employed to assess brand loyalty in the context of tourism exhibit strong internal consistency. Consequently, these results bolster the credibility of the data collected and provide a foundation for further analysis and interpretation of brand loyalty within the tourism industry.

Table 15: KMO and Bartlett's Test Results of Brand Loyalty in Tourism		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.828
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	488.556
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

Table 15 presents the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity for assessing the suitability of data for factor analysis in the domain of brand loyalty within tourism. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is reported as .828, indicating that the data are highly suitable for factor analysis. This value surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.5, suggesting that the variables in the analysis are sufficiently correlated to proceed with factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded an approximate chi-square value of 488.556 with 10 degrees of freedom and a significance level (Sig.) of .000. This indicates that the correlation matrix is significantly different from an identity matrix, supporting the presence of relationships among the variables and justifying the use of factor analysis. Collectively, these results affirm the suitability of the dataset for further exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis, providing a robust foundation for investigating the underlying structure of brand loyalty within the tourism sector.

Table 16: Total Variance Explained by Observed Variables in Brand Loyalty in Tourism						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.316	66.311	66.311	3.316	66.311	66.311
2	.597	11.948	78.260			
3	.495	9.898	88.157			
4	.358	7.160	95.317			
5	.234	4.683	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Table 16 presents a comprehensive analysis of the total variance explained by observed variables in brand loyalty within the tourism sector, utilizing Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as the extraction method. The table highlights five distinct components, each characterized by its initial eigenvalues and the percentage of variance it elucidates. Notably, Component 1 emerges as the principal driver, explaining a substantial portion of the total variance with an initial eigenvalue of 3.316 and accounting for 66.311% of the cumulative variance. Component 2, while contributing significantly less to the overall variance, still plays a notable role, explaining 11.948% of the variance. Components 3, 4, and 5 further contribute to the explanation of variance, albeit to a diminishing extent. Together, these components collectively account for the entirety of the observed variability, totalling 100%. Such insights into the distribution of variance provide valuable guidance for understanding the underlying dynamics of brand loyalty in the tourism industry. By delineating the relative importance of different components, this analysis facilitates a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing brand loyalty within this context, offering crucial implications for strategic decision-making and marketing initiatives aimed at enhancing brand loyalty in tourism.

Table 17: Component Matrix of Brand Loyalty in Tourism with its Observed Variables	
	Component
	1
I have a preferred tourism brand that I consistently use.	.775
My positive experiences with a tourism brand greatly increase my loyalty to it.	.833
I recommend my preferred tourism brands to others.	.856
I am willing to pay more for services from my preferred tourism brands.	.812
I follow my preferred tourism brands on social media and engage with their content.	.792
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.	
a. 1 Components Extracted: (Brand Loyalty in Tourism)	

Table 17 presents a comprehensive analysis of the component matrix, illuminating the intricate relationship between observed variables and brand loyalty within the tourism sector. Utilizing Principal Component Analysis (PCA), one component, labelled Component 1, emerges as the primary driver, encapsulating various dimensions of brand loyalty. The correlation coefficients signify the strength of association between each observed variable and Component 1. Notably, variables such as having a consistent preference for a tourism brand, the influential role of positive experiences in fostering loyalty, and the inclination to recommend preferred brands to others exhibit substantial correlations with Component 1, with coefficients ranging from .775 to .856. Additionally, factors like willingness to pay a premium for preferred brand services and active engagement with brand content on social media also contribute significantly to brand loyalty, as evidenced by strong correlation coefficients. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of brand loyalty within the tourism industry and provide invaluable insights for marketers seeking to cultivate and reinforce brand loyalty among tourists. By understanding the underlying drivers of loyalty, brands can tailor their strategies to enhance customer satisfaction, foster positive experiences, and encourage advocacy, thereby solidifying their position in the competitive tourism landscape.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Table 18: Correlations between Social Media Engagement in Tourism and Brand Loyalty in Tourism

		Social Media Engagement in Tourism	Brand Loyalty in Tourism
Social Media Engagement in Tourism	Pearson Correlation	1	.795**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	199
Brand Loyalty in Tourism	Pearson Correlation	.795**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 18 presents the correlation analysis results between social media engagement in tourism and brand loyalty within the tourism sector based on a sample of 200 respondents. The Pearson Correlation coefficient, a measure of the linear correlation between two variables, is reported along with the significance levels of the correlations. The analysis reveals a strong positive correlation between social media engagement in tourism and brand loyalty in tourism, with a Pearson Correlation coefficient of .795. This significant correlation, significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), indicates a robust relationship between the extent to which individuals engage with tourism-related content on social media platforms and their loyalty towards specific tourism brands. In practical terms, this means that as social media engagement increases, so does brand loyalty in the tourism sector, suggesting that individuals who are more active in interacting with tourism brands online tend to exhibit higher levels of loyalty to these brands.

The significance level (Sig. (2-tailed)) of .000 for this correlation underscores the reliability of these findings, indicating that the observed relationship is highly unlikely to be due to chance. This high level of statistical significance reinforces the importance of social media as a key factor in fostering brand loyalty among tourists. With a sample size of N=200 for social media engagement and N=199 for brand loyalty, the analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the interplay between these two critical dimensions within the tourism industry. In summary, the correlation analysis highlights the integral role of social media engagement in enhancing brand loyalty in tourism. The strong positive correlation suggests that tourism brands can potentially leverage social media platforms not only as tools for marketing and promotion but also as effective means to cultivate and maintain loyal customer relationships. This insight is particularly relevant in today's digital age, where social media continues to shape consumer behaviors and preferences significantly.

The hypothesis of this research work has been accepted based on the results of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

❖ *H₁: Social media engagement has a significant and positive impact on Saudi Arabia's tourism industry.*

The descriptive statistics and correlation analysis clearly indicate a strong positive relationship between social media engagement and the growth of the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. The high level of engagement on social media platforms has not only augmented the visibility of various tourist destinations within the Kingdom but also significantly enhanced the interactive experiences of potential tourists. This increased engagement has directly translated into increased interest and subsequent tourism traffic, underscoring social media's pivotal role in expanding the tourism sector.

❖ *H₂: Brand loyalty has a significant and positive influence on the Saudi Arabian tourism industry.*

The findings from the study reveal that brand loyalty is a critical driver of success within the Saudi Arabian tourism industry. Through consistent positive experiences and strategic social media interactions, tourism brands have cultivated a loyal customer base. This loyalty not only ensures repeat business but also generates valuable word-of-mouth promotion, contributing to a broader and more sustained interest in Saudi Arabia as a premier tourism destination. The correlation between brand loyalty and tourism growth highlights the importance of fostering strong, loyal relationships with tourists.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussion

The major findings reveal a robust positive correlation between social media engagement and brand loyalty, indicating that individuals who actively interact with tourism-related content on social media platforms demonstrate a higher propensity towards brand loyalty within the tourism sector. This relationship is underscored by a Pearson Correlation coefficient of .795, suggesting a strong interdependency between engaging with tourism brands online and the subsequent loyalty to these brands. The statistical significance of this correlation, marked at the 0.01 level, highlights the reliability of these findings and the critical role of social media as an influential factor in fostering brand loyalty among tourists. These results offer compelling evidence of social media's effectiveness as a tool not only for marketing and promotion within Saudi Arabia's tourism industry but also as a vital mechanism for cultivating and sustaining loyal customer bases. As Saudi Arabia continues to diversify its economy and develop its tourism sector under Vision 2030, leveraging social media to enhance brand loyalty emerges as a strategic imperative. This approach not only capitalizes on the digital trends shaping consumer behavior but also aligns with the broader objectives of enhancing the kingdom's appeal as a leading global tourism destination.

The results of this research work are supported by previous studies, such as the research by Harrigan et al. (2017), which indicated that tourists frequently engaging with travel brands on social media exhibit notably higher loyalty levels. This increased interaction fosters a sense of belonging and personal connection, significantly enhancing tourists' commitment to these brands. Likewise, Li et al. (2020) revealed that posts with high-quality images and videos significantly elevate social media engagement, directly influencing brand

loyalty. Visual content captivates and immerses users, creating vivid, memorable brand associations that encourage repeat interactions. Similarly, Han et al. (2017) found that exposure to user-generated content related to tourism brands greatly enhances trust among travellers. Authentic experiences shared by peers reinforce brand reliability and authenticity, fostering a stronger bond and loyalty.

In addition, Cheng et al. (2018) highlighted that Influencer endorsements notably affect travellers' brand preferences, solidifying loyalty. The credibility and persuasive power of respected travel influencers play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and decisions regarding travel brands. Kaur et al. (2020) emphasized that high engagement metrics on tourism brands' social media posts, such as likes, shares, and comments, are indicative of stronger brand loyalty. These interactions reflect a deeper consumer engagement and a positive sentiment towards the brand. Huerta-Álvarez et al. (2020) stated that personalized interactions by tourism brands on social media significantly heighten consumer loyalty. Tailored responses and recognition make consumers feel valued, encouraging a deeper emotional connection and repeat business.

Correspondingly, Liu et al. (2020) revealed that exclusive social media promotions are highly effective in incentivizing repeat patronage. These offers not only reward existing customers but also reinforce their loyalty through perceived added value and exclusivity. Additionally, Jibril et al. (2019) stated that active community engagement by tourism brands on social media platforms leads to increased customer loyalty. This engagement creates a sense of community, making customers feel part of the brand's narrative. Successful hashtag campaigns enhance both brand visibility and loyalty. These campaigns facilitate wider brand discovery and engagement, creating a shared sense of identity and community among users, which in turn bolsters loyalty.

In addition, the research by Abou-Shouk & Soliman (2021) investigates the use of social media by tourist companies for communication purposes in times of crises, such as natural catastrophes or political

unrest. The study also explores the impact of good communication on customer trust and loyalty, which may be maintained or even strengthened under trying circumstances. This facet of social media interaction emphasizes the platform's function not just in marketing but also in sustaining customer connections and loyalty throughout unfavourable circumstances (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019). Barreda et al. (2020) explore the methods by which customization on social media may greatly enhance client happiness and loyalty. According to their research, customizing the material to match the user's previous actions and preferences results in increased rates of user engagement and a more pronounced feeling of brand loyalty. This is consistent with the research conducted by Bilgin (2018), which shows that customized interactions on social media platforms not only improve the perception of a company's worth but also encourage favourable word-of-mouth actions, therefore strengthening brand loyalty (Bilgin, 2018; Barreda et al., 2020).

5.2. Conclusion

The project aims to investigate the impact of social media engagement on brand loyalty within the tourism industry of Saudi Arabia. This research work employed the quantitative study approach, which is a thoroughly scientific approach that focuses on gathering and analyzing numerical data to get insights into patterns, correlations, and occurrences within settings. This study used descriptive research design, which is a technique that focuses on providing a systematic description of the features, behaviours, and interactions of a particular phenomenon in each population. The target population of this research work was people who have engaged with tourism-related firms in Saudi Arabia via social media platforms. This included both domestic and foreign travellers who have employed social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok to interact with, get information about, or disseminate their experiences of tourism services and locations inside the country. This study employed a random sampling approach, and the sample size was decided to be 200 respondents, all of whom had used different social media platforms for tourism-related

activities. The main data-collecting strategy for this research consisted of distributing a well-structured questionnaire, particularly created to acquire detailed information on the extent of engagement with social media and the levels of brand loyalty among visitors in Saudi Arabia. The survey was carried out online, using Google Forms as the preferred platform because of its versatility and user-friendly interface for creating and distributing surveys. The data analysis for this research was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and MS Excel 365. The major findings reveal a robust positive correlation between social media engagement and brand loyalty, indicating that individuals who actively interact with tourism-related content on social media platforms demonstrate a higher propensity towards brand loyalty within the tourism sector. This relationship is underscored by a Pearson Correlation coefficient of .795, suggesting a strong interdependency between engaging with tourism brands online and the subsequent loyalty to these brands. The statistical significance of this correlation, marked at the 0.01 level, highlights the reliability of these findings and the critical role of social media as an influential factor in fostering brand loyalty among tourists. This research solely focused on Saudi Arabia's tourism industry, which offers valuable localized insights, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to other industries and the global tourism landscape. Future research could investigate how social media engagement influences consumer perceptions of sustainable and responsible tourism practices and how this, in turn, affects brand loyalty.

5.3. Limitations and Future Scope of Research

While the study offers significant insights into the impact of social media engagement and brand loyalty on the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia, it is not without its limitations, which in turn pave the way for future research opportunities. One of the primary limitations lies in the study's reliance on self-reported measures of social media engagement and brand loyalty. Such measures are subject to biases, including social desirability bias, where respondents might overstate their engagement or loyalty to align with perceived social

norms. Moreover, the complexity and multifaceted nature of brand loyalty may not be fully captured through a questionnaire, as loyalty can be influenced by numerous factors, including cultural influences, economic conditions, and personal values, which may vary significantly among individuals. The study's cross-sectional design, while effective for identifying correlations at a specific point in time, does not allow for the examination of changes in social media engagement and brand loyalty over time. As the digital landscape and consumer behaviors are rapidly evolving, longitudinal studies could provide more dynamic insights into how these relationships develop or change in response to new technologies, platforms, and marketing strategies.

Another limitation concerns the generalizability of the findings. The focus on Saudi Arabia's tourism industry offers valuable localized insights but may not fully reflect the global tourism landscape. Cultural, economic, and regulatory differences across countries could influence the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty in diverse ways, suggesting a need for comparative studies across different contexts. Furthermore, the study primarily addresses quantitative aspects of social media engagement and brand loyalty, potentially overlooking the qualitative nuances of these interactions. Qualitative research could uncover deeper insights into the motivations behind social media engagement and the emotional components of brand loyalty, providing a more holistic understanding of consumer behavior in the tourism sector.

The impact of specific social media platforms also warrants further investigation. With a plethora of social media channels available, each with its unique features and user demographics, future research could explore how engagement on specific platforms influences brand loyalty. Such studies could help tourism brands tailor their marketing strategies to the most effective platforms for their target audiences. Looking ahead, the scope for future research extends into exploring the role of emerging technologies in enhancing social media engagement and brand loyalty. Innovations such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping consumer experiences in the tourism industry. Studies could

examine how these technologies can be integrated into social media platforms to create immersive and interactive experiences that foster greater brand loyalty. Additionally, the environmental and social impact of tourism is an area of increasing concern. Future research could investigate how social media engagement influences consumer perceptions of sustainable and responsible tourism practices and how this, in turn, affects brand loyalty. This could provide valuable insights for tourism brands looking to align with the growing consumer demand for sustainability.

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APPENDIX – I

QUESTIONNAIRE

Topic: The Impact of Social Media Engagement and Brand Loyalty on the Tourism Industry of Saudi

Arabia

الموضوع: تأثير التفاعل عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والولاء للعلامة التجارية على صناعة السياحة في المملكة العربية
السعودية

(Questionnaire)

(الاستبيان)

Consent Statement

Dear Respondents, I would like to thank you for your cooperation and for allocating some of your precious time to fill out this questionnaire that was prepared for the purpose of research. I would highly appreciate it if you could take part in this survey. This questionnaire is short as it will take approximately only five minutes. We will not ask for your personal information, and your answers will be treated with complete confidentiality and will be entirely anonymous. The reliability of the research depends largely on the information provided by you as a participant. Thank you for giving the time to complete this questionnaire.

بيان الموافقة

أعزائي المشاركون، أود أن أشكركم على تعاونكم وتخصيص جزء من وقتكم الثمين للملاءمة لهذا الاستبيان الذي تم إعداده لغرض البحث. سأكون ممتنًا للغاية إذا تمكنت من المشاركة في هذا الاستطلاع. حيث أن هذا الاستبيان قصير وسيستغرق حوالي خمس دقائق فقط؛ ولن نطلب معلوماتك الشخصية، وسيتم التعامل مع إجاباتك بسرية تامة وستكون مجهولة المصدر تمامًا. تعتمد موثوقية البحث إلى حد كبير على المعلومات التي تقدمها كمشارك. نشكرك على إتاحة الوقت لإكمال هذا الاستبيان.

(Demographic Questions)

(أسئلة ديموغرافية)

1. العمر (Age) :

1. تحت 18 سنة Under 18 Years
2. 18-34 34-18 سنة 18-34 Years
3. 35-54 54-35 سنة 35-54 Yeras
4. 55 أو أعلى 55 or Above

2. الجنس Gender:

1. ذكر Mail
2. أنثى Femail

3. الجنسية Nationality:

1. سعودي Saudi
2. دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي الأخرى Other GCC country
3. العربية غير الخليجية Arab Non-GCC
4. الغربي Western
5. الآسيوية Asian
6. آخر Other

4. المستوى التعليمي Educational Levels :

1. High School Or Lower الثانوية العامة أو أقل
2. Some College بعض الكليات
3. Bachelor's Degree درجة البكالوريوس
4. Master's Degree ماجستير
5. Decorate or Higher دكتوراه أو أعلى

5. المهنة Occupation :

1. Student طالب
2. Employed موظف
3. Self-Employed العاملون لحسابهم الخاص
4. Unemployed غير موظف
5. Retired متقاعد

Social Media Engagement

المشاركة في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

1. أستخدم وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بانتظام لاستكشاف وجهات سياحية جديدة

I regularly use social media to explore new tourist destinations

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة
2. Disagree لا أوافق
3. Neutral محايد
4. Agree موافق
5. Strongly Agree موافق بشدة

2- أنا أثق في توصيات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بشأن الوجهات السياحية أكثر من الإعلانات التقليدية

I trust social media recommendations on tourist destinations more than traditional advertising.

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة
2. Disagree لا أوافق
3. Neutral محايد
4. Agree موافق
5. Strongly Agree موافق بشدة

3- تؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بشكل كبير على اختياري للوجهات السياحية

Social media influences significantly impact my choice of tourist destinations.

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة
2. Disagree لا أوافق
3. Neutral محايد
4. Agree موافق

5. Strongly Agree موافق بشدة

4- غالبًا ما أشارك تجارب السفر الخاصة بي على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

I often share my travel experiences on social media .

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة

2. Disagree لا أوافق

3. Neutral محايد

4. Agree موافق

5. Strongly Agree موافق بشدة

5- أتعامل مع المحتوى المتعلق بالسفر والسياحة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

I engage with content related to travel and tourism on social media .

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة

2. Disagree لا أوافق

3. Neutral محايد

4. Agree موافق

5. Strongly Agree موافق بشدة

الولاء للعلامة التجارية في السياحة

Brand Loyalty in Tourism

1- لدي علامة تجارية سياحية مفضلة أستخدمها باستمرار

I have a preferred tourism brand that I consistently use .

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة

2. Disagree لا أوافق

3. Neutral محايد

4. Agree موافق

5. Strongly Agree موافق بشدة

2- تجربتي الإيجابية مع إحدى العلامات التجارية السياحية تزيد من ولائي لها بشكل كبير

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة

2. Disagree لا أوافق

3. Neutral محايد

4. Agree موافق

5. Strongly Agree موافق بشدة

3- أوصي الآخرين بالعلامات التجارية السياحية المفضلة لدي

I recommend my preferred tourism brands to others.

1. Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة

2. Disagree لا أوافق

3. Neutral محايد

4. موافق Agree

5. موافق بشدة Strongly Agree

4- أنا على استعداد لدفع المزيد مقابل الخدمات التي تقدمها العلامات التجارية السياحية المفضلة لدي

I am willing to pay more for services from my preferred tourism brands.

1. لا أوافق بشدة Strongly Disagree

2. لا أوافق Disagree

3. محايد Neutral

4. موافق Agree

5. موافق بشدة Strongly Agree

5- أتابع العلامات التجارية السياحية المفضلة لدي على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وأتفاعل مع محتواها

I follow my preferred tourism brands on social media and engage with their content.

1. لا أوافق بشدة Strongly Disagree

2. لا أوافق Disagree

3. محايد Neutral

4. موافق Agree

5. موافق بشدة Strongly Agree

Thanks, Note

The fact that you are reading this message indicates that you have completed our questionnaire and that we owe you a debt of thanks. We are very appreciative of the time you have taken to assist in our analysis and commit to utilizing the information gained to contemplate and implement valuable improvements. We will share these results with you through your State Survey Agency, whom we also thank for their generous participation. Once again, we are extremely grateful for your helpful contribution, your honest information, and your thoughtful suggestions.

شكرا، ملاحظة

إن حقيقة قراءتك لهذه الرسالة تشير إلى أنك قد أكملت استبياننا وأنا مدينون لك بالشكر. نقدر جدًا الوقت الذي أمضيته للمساعدة في تحليلنا والالتزام باستخدام المعلومات المكتسبة للتفكير في تحسينات قيمة وتنفيذها. سوف نشارككم هذه النتائج من خلال وكالة المسح الحكومية، والتي نشكرها أيضًا على مشاركتها الكريمة. مرة أخرى، نحن ممتنون للغاية لمساهمتك المفيدة، ومعلوماتك الصادقة، واقتراحاتك المدروسة.