

Investigating Agri-tourism's Niche Benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communications and Brand Equity

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Investigating Agri-tourism's niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated
Marketing Communications and Brand Equity.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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DECLARATION

I Tyler-Paige Langton declare that this dissertation is of my own original work. Any secondary research material that has been used throughout this dissertation is peer reviewed and has either been a print source or from the Internet.

All sources that have been referenced and accessed for this work have been acknowledged and accurately referenced according to the Harvard referencing technique. The date, author and page number have been cited for the in-text references and a thorough reference list of all authors mentioned and cited in the work has been included at the end of the article. This includes all written, verbal, digital, audio, visual, audio-visual and other sources. Images, tables and figures have also been referenced adequately in the text as well as in the reference list.

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Signed: T.P. Langton

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ABSTRACT

This research dissertation is a case study inquiring as to Agri-tourism's niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's (OGGF) Integrated Marketing Communications and Brand Equity. The main theoretical frameworks that underpin this study include Aaker's Model of Brand Equity, the Agro-tourism Business Model described by Vogt (2014), and lastly the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Model as described by Enslin and Klopper (2014).

The problem that this study aims to address, is to determine how well Agri-tourism has been utilised in the IMC Strategy of OGGF and to identify any untapped potential within the business, and where it can be improved, thus aiming to improve its user experience and Brand Equity.

This study utilised a Qualitative approach as the research objectives are anchored upon the consumers perspective on brand equity and integrated marketing communications within the context of OGGF.

Findings revealed that some of the greatest onsite consumer experiences that supported the brand equity relation to agri-tourism, where informal and unofficial services. The most significant finding discovered was the niche challenges that face this unique industry, how agricultural seasonality affects human resource and consequently potentially customer service.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agri-tourism - According to Micheal Clancy (2018), the origins of Agri-Tourism can be seen to have its roots in the Italian word 'Agriturismo'; Agriturismo is a combination of the Italian words for 'agriculture' and 'tourism'.

Brand Equity - A definition of Brand Equity by Aaker (1991) can be identified as a set of brand assets and liabilities that add value to or take value away from brand products or services.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) - Chima (2019) defines Integrated Marketing Communication as combining all the aspects of marketing communication into one unified force by using a thoroughly co-ordinated selection of different promotional tactics.

OGGF - An abbreviation for Oribi Gorge Guest Farm, the brand that this dissertation has utilised for its primary research and served as a case study for the research.

Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM) - Word of mouth marketing can be described as written or oral recommendations made by pleased customers to other potential customers about a brand or product/ service (Whitler, 2014); Word of mouth marketing can be seen as a valuable form of earned (not paid for) advertising for a brand.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 TITLE

Investigating Agri-tourism's niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communications and Brand Equity.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Although there is ample literature that explores the various measurements of Brand Equity in a variety of industries, research on how this model applies to the Agri-Tourism industry is lacking considerably. This study aims to contribute to the literature examining the applicability of consumer-based brand equity within the Agri-Tourism sector. This study will examine the Agri-Tourism business of Oribi Gorge Guest Farm as a case study to better understand how Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and Brand Equity, relate to this type of brand.

1.3 CONTEXTUALISATION

The niche Agri-Tourism Market in South Africa can be seen as an opportunity for a multi-sector partnership with the potential to create meaningful and innovative economic growth. If South Africa's Tourism and Hospitality sector is examined, the Hospitality Outlook 2017-2021, conducted by PWC South Africa (2018) suggests that the tourism industry is the fastest growing and most vibrant sector in the South African economy. This study endeavours to explore how effective brand and marketing communication within this niche sector can increase agri-tourism businesses' overall success and reach their full potential through effective IMC management and creating strong brand equity.

1.4 FIELD OF STUDY

The chosen field of study that this research will examine is the fields of Branding and Marketing. An interpretivist paradigm will be used to analyse the collected qualitative data in order to understand past users' experiences' (Maree, 2016) and gain consumers perspective on the branding and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) of Oribi Gorge Guest Farm (OGGF).

1.5 PROPOSED JOURNAL

This study could be added to the Farmers Weekly, a weekly periodical magazine published in South Africa that has great market penetration within the agricultural sector as the oldest agricultural magazine in the country (Farmers Weekly, 2019). The findings of the study could be adapted in order to suit the weekly magazine format. This study could also be placed within the research and publications of the National Agricultural Marketing Council, this study could be included in the annual Agribusiness Development Report (National Agricultural Marketing Council, 2019).

1.6 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study has significant potential to provide beneficial strategic business insights to the OGGF business in order to improve Brand equity and Consumer Satisfaction. Improving Brand equity and Customer Satisfaction will have a positive effect on the businesses profitability (Aaker 1991, Aaker 1996). This study has further potential to provide insights into how successful brand architecture and brand equity play a vital role in the success of the Agro-tourism business model; this consequently could bring significant strategy and understanding to this fledgeling industry.

When the context is examined, the South African agricultural sector can be seen to have significant potential for job creation due to the key focus of the New Growth Path, (Brand South Africa, 2018). Furthermore, when South Africa's Tourism and Hospitality sector is

examined, PWC suggests that the tourism industry is the fastest growing and most vibrant sector in the South African economy (PWC South Africa, 2018). The South African Sectors of Agriculture and Hospitality both have a unique opportunity for expansion and job creation, that could lead to meaningful change and upliftment on a national scale.

1.7 RESEARCH PROBLEM

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Oribi Gorge Guest Farm (OGGF) was initially only an agricultural business, it then diversified its business strategy to include an additional income stream with the use of the Agri-tourism business model.

The problem that this study aims to address, is to determine how well Agri-tourism has been utilised in the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Strategy of OGGF and to identify any untapped potential within the business. This study endeavours to investigate whether the current strategy is fully harnessing its potential, and where it can be improved, thus aiming to improve its user experience and Brand Equity.

1.8 RESEARCH PURPOSE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to explore the efficiency of the Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's IMC strategy and its consequent effect on service delivery and customer experience; this is in order to gain insights into possible improvements that have potential to enhance Brand Equity. This study will investigate how brands can successfully diversify from the Business to Business (B2B) sector in agriculture, where the key focus is relationship management, to the Business to Consumer (B2C) sphere, where the effective brand communication and customer experience is key to success.

1.9 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In order to understand how Agri-tourism can be a niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's IMC and Brand Equity, the following objectives are explored in this study:

1.9.1 The first objective of this research is to investigate how effective the current Integrated Marketing Communication strategy is at Oribi Gorge Guest Farm in communicating Agri-tourism.

1.9.2 The second objective of this research is to explore how effectively OGGF is harnessing Agri-tourism's potential benefit to Brand Equity through online and onsite experiences

1.9.3 The last objective of this research is to investigate what insights can be elicited from respondents in order to improve the quality of the consumer experience and aid in creating positive Brand Equity and to identify any untapped potential within the business.

1.10 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research intends to address the following research questions:

1.10.1 How effective is Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communication strategy in communicating the Agri-tourism benefits to the consumer experience?

1.10.2 How effectively OGGF is harnessing Agri-tourism's potential benefit to Brand Equity through online and onsite experiences?

1.10.3 What insights can be elicited from respondents in order to improve the quality of the consumer experience and aid in creating positive Brand Equity and to identify any untapped potential within the business?

1.11 KEY THEORIES

1.11.1 Aaker's Model of Brand Equity was examined as a key source of literature for a better understanding of brand image, while this theory may be perceived as outdated, Aaker is still considered a leader within today's Marketing landscape. (Aaker 1991; Aaker 1996) This study will utilise Aaker's (1991; 1996) the widely known framework for brand equity, in order to investigate the service delivery and customer experience at OGGF.

1.11.2 The Agro-tourism Business Model by Luisa Vogt is an insightful study into the economic performance factors of agri-tourism as well as the competitive advantages of this model. This study provides an understanding of this multi-sector business model approach (Agritourism South Africa, 2019; Taylor, 2017; Vogt, 2014).

1.11.3 The Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Model as described by Enslin and Klopper (2014) was used to understand the effective use of consumer touch-points and media planning.

1.12 KEY CONCEPTS

1.12.1 The first key concept to be examined is the latest hospitality trends: the trends identified for this study were the consumers desire for 'authentic' experiences (Slee, 2016) and consumer personalisation (Gelfeld, 2019). Identifying trends is important as it enables

brands to understand the market dynamics that they operate in. Additionally, understanding the market, trends assist brands in understanding how consumers' desires and motivators are changing (Michael, 2018). If these trends and core motivators can be leveraged to align with the existing business' brand, insights to marketing strategies can be found. (Michael, 2018; PWC South Africa, 2018).

1.12.2 Agro-tourism, is a dynamic example of a multi-sectors approach to market innovation. This study will explore how the interaction of these two seemingly contrasting sectors can create an environment for marketable innovation (Future, 2018; Brackley, Guenther & Malmqvist, 2018).

1.12.3 The last concept that this study will examine is the influence organisational structures have on the success of the implementation. Understanding how buy-in from top-level management as well as seemingly less 'influential' members of the value chain in both sectors of this brand can underpin the success of any new strategy (Milin, Morača, Simeunović & Mitrović, 2013).

1.13 LIMITATIONS

The Limitations of this research include predominately time and budget. As a student, only a limited time is allocated for each stage of the research process, and in addition to this, the study is self-funded, therefore restricting the scale of the proposed research as well as the research tactics used. Although the field of research that is being explored has expansive literature available (Branding and Integrated Marketing Communication), the niche of Agri-tourism within the South African context has considerably less published works to draw from.

1.14 DELIMITATIONS

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), Delimitations can be seen as “self-imposed boundaries” set by the researcher in order to manage the scope of the study, Maree (2016) further refines this definition by describing delimitations as a ‘constant reminder’ of the studies potential weaknesses. Delimitations of this study include only examining a few key elements of the OGGF’s business’ hospitality metrics and KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators) such as Occupancy rates and Turnover, this study does not have the resources or time allowance for a complete statistical inquiry in to the business’s performance in order to gain a perspective on the success of businesses current IMC strategies. Another key delimitation of this study is access to past international guests at OGGF, in order to gain their perspective on the brand and their customer experience.

1.15 CHAPTER OUTLINE

CHAPTER ONE - Introduction and Overview of Research

The first chapter functions as an introduction to the field of study, highlighting the context and background; in addition to bringing clarity to the questions and objectives being addressed.

CHAPTER TWO - Literature Review

Chapter Two examines the secondary data and literature that relates to the study, it provides a theoretical framework for the consequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE - Research Design

This chapter outlines the research methodology and design used to conduct the study. It covers topics such as the research approach, population, sampling and collection methods, the limitations and ethical considerations are also considered in this chapter

CHAPTER FOUR - Results and Findings

Chapter four details the results from the research that was conducted, it presents the findings and provides a discussion of significant discoveries.

CHAPTER FIVE - Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter discusses the conclusions and recommendations that pertain to the objectives established in this study. Suggestions are then made for further studies.

1.16 SUMMARY

This chapter presents the significance and justification for the research problem, that scrutinises the role that Integrated Marketing Communications and Brand Equity play in effectively communicating the niche benefits of Agri-Tourism. The research context and it's potential to contribute to the literature on Agri-Tourism is addressed, in addition to the objective the research aims to achieve. Chapter two introduces the literature review that examines the appropriate theoretical models that relate to this research.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two examines the secondary data and literature that relates to the study, this provides a suitable platform to explore what further research can be addressed (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This chapter will establish a theoretical framework for the consequent chapters.

2.1.1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Two models have been presented about brand equity. after-which justification of the chosen model is provided.

2.2 AAKER'S MODEL OF BRAND EQUITY

Aaker's Model of Brand Equity will be examined as a key source of literature for a better understanding of brand image, while this theory may be perceived as outdated, Aaker is still considered a leader within today's Marketing landscape. (Aaker 1991; Aaker 1996) This study will utilise Aaker's (1991; 1996) the widely known framework for brand equity, in order to investigate the service delivery and customer experience at OGGE. This is in order to gain insights into possible improvements that have potential to enhance Brand Equity to identify any untapped the potential within the business.

2.2.1 AAKER'S DEFINITION OF BRAND EQUITY

A definition of Brand Equity by Aaker (1991) can be identified as a set of brand assets and liabilities that add value to or take value away from brand products or services. Aaker's model for Brand Equity looks at five key components support Brand Identity namely: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets (Klopper, North, Ntsubane, Niemann-Struweg, Mulder, Koekemoer,

Enslin, Ehlers, Bick, and Abratt, 2011). Aaker's model can be seen to emphasise 'brand-added value' however, this model does not make a stringent distinction between added value for the consumer and added value for the brand (Klopper et al., 2011).

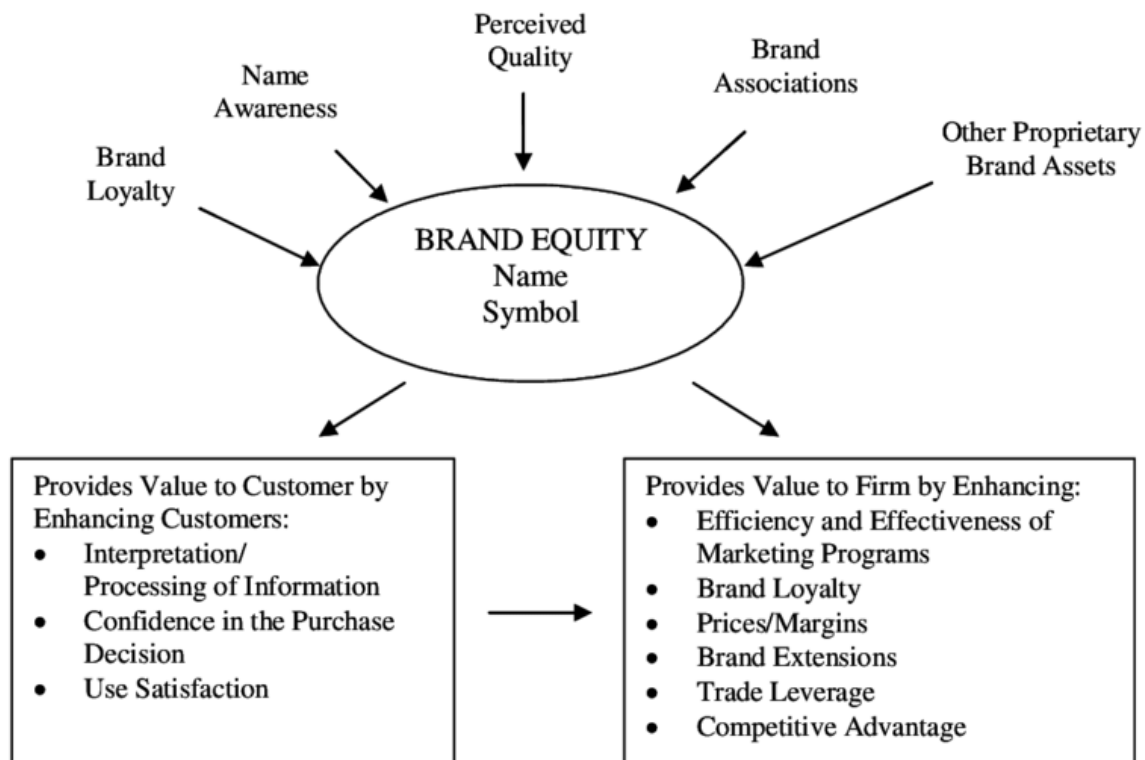


Figure 2.1: Aaker's Brand Equity Model - Source: Aaker, D.A. 1991. Managing Brand Equity, Free Press, New York, NY.

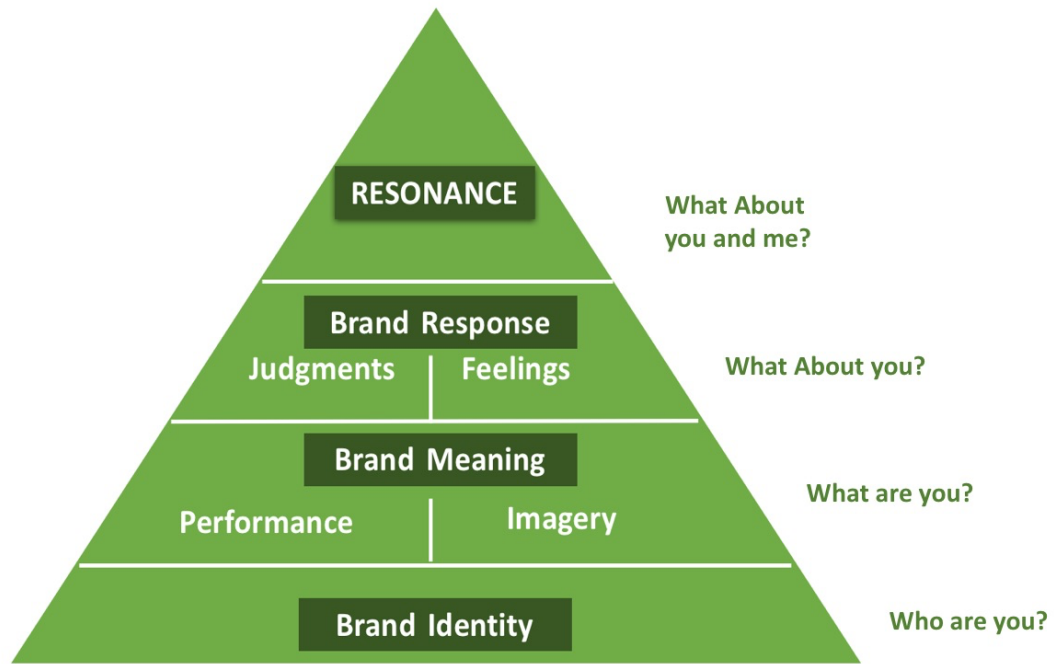
2.2.2 AAKER'S 5 COMPONENTS OF BRAND EQUITY

The first component of brand equity can be identified as *Brand loyalty*, Aaker (1996:9) suggest that brand loyalty can reduce marketing costs, as existing customers are cheaper than acquiring new customers. The second component is *brand awareness*, brand awareness is the extents to which the public is aware of the brand; this can be measured with a few metrics such as familiarity and liking (Aaker, 1996:9). *Perceived quality* can be identified as the extent to which the brand is considered to provide a quality product, this

can be measured with five key criteria namely: quality, Level of differentiation, price, availability and the number of brand extensions (Aaker, 1996:9). Brand associations can be identified as any deep-seated association that customers have in mind when considering the brand, for example, these can be feelings and reasons to buy (Aaker, 1996:9). The last brand equity component according to Aaker (1996) is '*other proprietary assets*', these are the competitive advantages of the brand such as patents and intellectual property rights. According to Aaker's (1996) model for brand equity, the above-mentioned components all contribute to building and measuring brand equity, in the ambitions of creating brands with high brand awareness, positive brand image, a high perception of quality and loyal customers.

2.2.3 AAKER'S MODEL FOR BRAND EQUITY CONTRASTED WITH KELLER'S:

In contrast to Aaker's model for brand equity with five key components, Keller's model for brand equity (2002) distinguishes brand equity into two components: awareness and association. Keller looks at brand equity from the perspective of a hierarchy or pyramid; with *brand identity* at the base, followed by subdividing *brand meaning* into performance and imagery, then subdividing *brand response* into judgments and feelings and lastly *brand resonance* being at the top of the hierarchy (Keller, 2002) . Keller's (2002) model for brand equity is also known as the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model, due to the fact that this process focusses on the consumers perspective and needs utilising a zero-based planning paradigm or outside-in thinking (Klopper et al.,2011:196).



Keller's Brand Equity Model – CBBE Model

Figure 2.2: Keller's Brand Equity Model - Source: Keller, K.L. (2002), Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Management Brand Equity (Second Edition), Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

2.2.4 CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY (CBBE) AND THE INTERPRETIVIST PARADIGM

According to Barwise (1993) and Yoo and Donthu (2001) the first four components of Aaker's model relate to the customers perspective, they suggest that these elements have been adopted to measure customer-based brand equity. By using consumer-based metric and an outside-in thinking perspective this model supports the paradigm of the research being interpretivist (Maree, 2016). It is for this reason in conjuncture with the fact that Aaker's model for brand equity is the most widely used model, that this study will utilise Aaker's model for analysing the brand equity of OGGF.

2.3 THE AGRI-TOURISM BUSINESS MODEL

2.3.1 HISTORY OF THE AGRI-TOURISM MODEL

According to Clancy (2018), the origins of Agri-Tourism can be seen to have its roots in the Tuscan countryside of Italy. In the aftermath of World War 2, many in Tuscany abandoned their farmsteads to seek work in cities, a 1971 census highlighted the intense depopulation of Tuscan countryside (Clancy, 2018). By 1985 Italian lawmakers had created a legal definition for 'Agriturismo', which provided funds for, the restoration of many abandoned rural buildings and estates; this resulted in government passing the "Actions to Farm" law in 1973. This law allowed small-scale farmers to survive and supplement their income by the diversification strategy of agri-tourism, in addition, the legislation provided farmers' access to government funding set aside for tourism (Clancy, 2018).

This was the birth of a new multi-sector partnership, 'Agriturismo' is a combination of the Italian words for 'agriculture' and 'tourism'. Agri-tourism has resulted in a new vibrant form of economy featuring over 4000 registered Farm accommodation sites (BAKERJIAN, 2018). This has lead to the creation of new authentic travel experience of the Tuscan country-side.

2.3.2 THE AGRI-TOURISM BUSINESS MODEL BY LUISA VOGT

The Agri-tourism Business Model by Luisa Vogt is an insightful study into the economic performance factors of agri-tourism as well as the competitive advantages of this model. This study will provide an understanding of this multi-sector business model approach (Agritourism South Africa, 2019; Taylor, 2017; Vogt, 2014). Vogt (2014:26) suggests that agri- tourism can be seen as one of the most "promising diversification strategies in agriculture".

One of the most prominent motivators for adopting this strategy is the opportunity for creating increased revenue however, one of the most important justifications for following

through with the consideration is the fact that participants already had buildings to spare (Vogt, 2014).

The metrics used within this Vogt's (2014) study include Occupancy Rates in addition to the owner's satisfaction with turnover; these metrics are useful within the hospitality industry to measure the growth of the business over time in addition to Market Share.

Vogt (2014: 130) examined the different types of agri-tourism experiences and amenities on offer by the sample of 48 agri-tourism operations, these included: Accommodation, restaurants and coffee shops, tractor rides, guided tours, horse riding and assisting with farmyard activities. These aggregated experiences can be seen to provide a wealth of qualitative data to interpret the market competition in addition to customers' expectation of authentic 'farm' experiences. The sample revealed that close to 90% of agri-tourism accommodations locations provided meals.

Lastly Vogt's (2014) evidences suggests that Agri-tourism is a competitive market segment, having said this the most significant drivers of performance in this market can be seen as the strategic management and implementation of a marketing budget targeted at specific target groups, this can be seen to produce the best return on investment with this market (Vogt, 2014).

2.3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY HAVE ON THIS BUSINESS MODEL

According to Tong and Hawley (2009), branding can be seen to persist as industries most substantial source of competitive advantage, and in addition to this, when measured correctly it can be utilised as an appropriate metric for assessing the long-term impact marketing decisions (Simon and Sullivan, 1993). This data is extremely beneficial to 'Business to Consumer' (B2C) business models (Jablonski, 2017; Vogt, 2014), as it allows businesses to strategically adapt to markets and consumer perceptions in order to thrive

as well as evaluate the success implemented of marketing strategies. In contrast with this, the Business to Business (B2B) model that is often used in agriculture, can be seen to place less emphasis on developing a strong brand, as sales are less related to consumer perception and loyalty (Jablonski, 2017; Vogt, 2014). Having considered this, it can be seen that developing a coherent Integrated Marketing Communications strategy that encourages brand equity and can be measured, has vital significance to the success of the business model diversification that occurs in Agri-tourism.

2.3.4 THE INFLUENCE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES HAVE ON THE SUCCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The next concept to be examined is the influence organisational structures have on the success of the implementation. Understanding how buy-in from top-level management as well as seemingly less 'influential' members of the value chain in both sectors of this brand can underpin the success of any new strategy (Milin, Morača, Simeunović & Mitrović, 2013; Vogt, 2014). In diversified business models where there is an overlap in Human resources, the brand architecture of the business becomes an element of increasing importance (Jablonski, 2017). There's a significant need for an effective Brand Contact Council, where the brand is effectively communicated internally in order to support the effective translation 'outwardly' to customers, in addition to managing motivation and priority amongst an intricate Brand Architecture of overlapping human resources (Enslin, 2019; Joachimsthaler & Aaker, 2000).

2.3.5 AGRO-TOURISM A MULTI-SECTORS APPROACH TO MARKET INNOVATION

Agri-tourism, is a dynamic example of a multi-sector approach to market innovation. The interaction of these two seemingly contrasting sectors can create an environment for marketable innovation (The Inter-Sector Project, 2018; Brackley, Guenther, & Malmqvist 2018). Ambile and Khaire (2008) further reenforced this idea with their Harvard Business

Review Article "Creativity and the role of a Leader" with their model for scaling creativity and innovation within a corporate business context, it is suggested that creativity and innovation can be seen as an impactful brand protecting strategy for adaptability and value creation (Klopper et al., 2011). Ambile and Khaire suggest that the 'lone inventor' myth must be dispelled, they argue that ideas come from all ranks and disciplines, moreover that facilitating collaboration is the key to creative innovation.

2.4 THE INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

2.4.1 INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

This communication model reinforces Aaker's brand equity model and is relevant to the brand equity communication strategies.

The Integrated Marketing Communications Model as described by Enslin and Klopper was used to understand the effective use of consumer touch-points and media planning (Enslin & Klopper, 2014) .

A marketing strategy in its most simplistic form merges the 7 components of the Marketing Mix, namely: Product, Price, Place and Promotion, Process, People and Physical Evidence (Enslin & Klopper, 2014). The fundamental objective of marketing can then be regarded as the support and building of brands consequently, this requires the identification and reach of specific target audiences (Klopper et al., 2011:185). Integrated Marketing communication can then be seen as the process of managing the integration of these processes and messages (Chima, 2019).

Chima (2019) defines Integrated Marketing Communication as combining all the aspects of marketing communication into one unified force by using a thoroughly co-ordinated selection of different promotional tactics. Chima (2019), argues that IMC is a less 'cluttered' method of advertising in the current marketing and advertising landscape. This is of vital importance in an era where there is an unprecedented level of advertising exposure to consumers, strategic clarity is not only indispensable to create effective and

coherent messaging but to ensure the most strategic use of marketing budgets. Furthermore clear and coherent IMC plans assists in creating a seamless purchasing process, this expediency has the potential to create a competitive advantage for brands (Enslin & Kloppe, 2014).

Integrated Marketing Communication can be categorised into four main categories namely: External, Internal, Horizontal and Vertical (Chima, 2019).

As explained by Chima (2019), External IMC is outsourced from Agencies and PR firms, while in contrast, Internal IMC is sourced and created internally (Chima, 2019). Horizontal IMC can be identified as when communication is conducted across various departments. In contrast to this, Vertical IMC can be seen as a strategy that focuses on using existing communication channels that are specific to the product or service in question. Vertical Integrated Marketing Communication benefits businesses with intricate brand architecture due to the fact it brings synergy with corporate policy and values (Chima, 2019) .

2.4.2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRAND COMMUNICATION AND INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Brand Communication as described by Chima (2019), is communicating the brand image to consumers, it can be perceived as the art of bridging the gap of target market perceptions about the brand in order to gain brand loyalty. From this definition, it is important to note the contrast in scope when compared with the function of Integrated Marketing Communication. IMC utilises different media channels to create an integrated blend, an appropriate to the industry; IMC has moved from away from strictly traditional advertising to an integrated blend of digital and tradition appropriate to the industry.

2.5 KEY CONCEPT

2.5.1 HOSPITALITY TRENDS

A key concept to be examined is the latest hospitality trends: this will be important for the brand to understand the market, in addition to how consumers' desires and motivators are changing. If these trends and core motivators can be leveraged to align with the existing business's brand, insights to marketing strategies can be found (Michael, 2018; PWC South Africa, 2018).

Harvard Business Review published a case study on the success of the Airbnb advertising campaign: "Don't go to Paris... Live there, even if its just for a night", this saw inner-city rentals increasing from 20 000 to 40 000 in a single year (Slee, 2016). The success of this advertising campaign can be seen to harness the power of consumers wanting local authentic travel experiences, the idea that consumers are connecting with brands through experiences and emotional connection rather than only functional benefit was first popularised by authors Pine and Gilmore in their seminal article 'Experience Economy' (1998). According to the Havas Review in 2017, meaningful brands outperformed the market by 206%. It can be seen that consumers expect and respond to, meaningful brands and authentic experiences (Havas, 2017).

Personalisation can be regarded as a key booking trend according to Kutschera (2019) and Skift (2019). According to Think Google, 36% of U.S. traveller's would pay more for more tailored information and experiences and 57% of U.S. travellers feel that brands should tailor their information based on personal preferences or past behaviours. Consumers want personalised integrated mobile processes (Gelfeld, 2019; Graft, 2019; Kutschera, 2019)

2.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES LINK TO LITERATURE

In order to understand how Agri-tourism can be a niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's IMC and Brand Equity, the following objectives are explored in this study:

2.6.1 The first objective of this research is to investigate how effective the current Integrated Marketing Communication strategy is at Oribi Gorge Guest Farm in communicating Agri-tourism.

The research question that relates to this is: How effective is Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communication strategy in communicating the Agri-tourism benefits to the consumer experience?

Research Objectives Link To The Literature

This research objective can be seen to relate to Key Literature theories (2.2 and 2.3), the Agri-Tourism Business Model and the Integrated Marketing Communications Model as the objective will apply the two literature theories to the OGGF brand in order to establish how successfully they have integrated their communication that relates to agri-tourism.

Research Objective's Significance

This research objective has vital significance due to the fact that in order to investigate untapped potential within the business and uncover strategic insights, first the current circumstances must be established. This objective evaluates the current IMC strategy, if there is one at all, in order to establish how well the brand is harnessing the potential of agri-tourism.

2.6.2 The second objective of this research was to explore how effectively OGGF is harnessing Agri-tourism's potential benefit to Brand Equity through online and onsite experiences

The research question that relates to this is: How effectively OGGF is harnessing Agri-tourism's potential benefit to Brand Equity through online and onsite experiences?

Research Objectives Link To The Literature

This research objective can be seen to relate to Key Literature theories (2.1 & 2.2), Aaker's Model of Brand Equity and the Agri-Tourism Business Model as it explored the consistency of Agri-tourism in the brand communication and its brand promise. This objective required an understanding of these two theories in order to assert the effectivity of the online and onsite experiences

Research Objective's Significance

The significance of this research objective and its link to the key literature was the critical analysis of the OGGF brand touch-points that support positive brand equity. Building strong brand equity is a substantial asset as it is a competitive advantage to the business, it can be seen to increase profit margins in addition to encouraging customer loyalty (Klopper et al., 2011:185).

2.6.3 The last objective of this research was to investigate what insights could be elicited from respondents in order to improve the quality of the consumer experience and aid in creating positive Brand Equity and to identify any untapped potential within the business.

The research question that relates to this is: What insights can be elicited from respondents in order to improve the quality of the consumer experience and aid in creating positive Brand Equity and to identify any untapped potential within the business?

Research Objectives Link To The Literature

This research objective can be seen to relate to Aaker's Model of Brand Equity (2.1): this is due to the fact that a fundamental element of brand equity is understanding the customers perspective from a interpretivist paradigm in order to elicit consumer insights (Maree, 2016).

Research Objective's Significance

This research objective and its relevance Aaker's model for brand equity has the capability to uncover valuable consumer perceptions in order to create positive brand equity, this can be regarded as a brand protection strategy (Enslin & Klopper, 2014). Identifying untapped potential within the business has a significant opportunity to increase revenue and gain competitive advantages within this competitive market (Vogt, 2014).

2.7 SHORTCOMINGS IN THE LITERATURE

One of the most significant shortcomings of the literature is the absence of an agri-tourism study within the context of South Africa. The study completed by Vogt (2014), although conducted with great depth and insight, was completed in North Rhine-Westphali, Germany.

The purpose of Vogt's study "The economic side of agrotourism", examined the competitive situation and performance drivers of agri-tourism businesses, while this is insightful for understanding the market environment and consumers expectations within this market, it does not, however, examine the role of brand and integrated communication within this business model.

2.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE LITERATURE

This research study will contribute to the field of brand and integrated marketing communication by exploring the niche of agri-tourism. There is a gap in research that applies the literature dense fields of brand and IMC, to the niche market of Agri-Tourism. This research has significant potential to provide beneficial strategic business insights not only the OGGF business, but potentially the entire Agri-tourism industry with regards to brand equity and consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, the locational context of the study, namely South Africa, will contribute to the scant literature that addresses the agri-tourism brands.

2.9 SUMMARY

In summary, it can be seen that this research has significant potential to benefit the OGGF business both in identifying strategies that can increase profitability but also aid in building a strong brand that can be considered as a protection strategy for the business (Klopper et al., 2011). The use of the interpretivist paradigm to analyse the valuable perspective of users can be regarded as an ideal framework to mine qualitative data for consumer insights that have potential to build better user experiences and stronger brand equity (Maree, 2016).

Two core models of brand equity have been discussed, relevant to the topic and literature pertinent to each of the objectives has been provided. The 5 components of brand equity in Aaker's definition of brand equity have been discussed and then contrasted with Keller's model for brand equity; lastly, the relationship between customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and the interpretivist paradigm was explored.

After a brief history of the origins of Agri-tourism, Lisa Vogt's model for Agri-tourism was investigated. The importance of integrated marketing communication strategies impact on this business model was identified; in conjuncture with the influence organisational

structures have on the success of implementation and brand architecture. Lastly, agro-tourism's multi-sector approach to market innovation was considered.

The integrated marketing communications model was explored and identified as the process of managing the integration of these processes and messages. The difference between brand communication and integrated marketing communication was also identified.

By applying Aaker's model for brand equity and Integrated Marketing Communications theory to the Agri-tourism model, there is further potential to elicit insights not only for OGGF but this niche market sector.

The next chapter outlines the research methodology and design used to conduct the study. It covers topics such as the research approach, population, sampling and collection methods, the limitations and ethical considerations are also considered in this chapter

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Bryman & Bell (2015) suggest research design gives researchers' a guide and format that helps facilitate a particular research method. This chapter will layout the selected research methodology and research paradigm, it will map out and rationalise the chosen research approach. Ethical considerations and limitations will be discussed, in addition to data collection methods and tactics.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study anchored upon the consumers perspective on brand equity and integrated marketing communications within the context of Agri-Tourism in South Africa, specifically the OGGF business.

3.2.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A Qualitative approach to research design was identified as the most appropriate for this research as it facilitates the mining of pertinent information that does not necessarily require a statistical inquiry, this is since the research is ethnographic and therefore focuses on cultural and behavioural findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2017; Visocky O'Grady & Visocky O'Grady, 2017). However, an element of statistical secondary data mining research was utilised to understand various Key Performance Indicators such as Occupancy Rates as the business in question, (OGGF) operates within the tourism industry and can often be seen to use this key metric to inform marketing strategies (Vogt, 2014). Nevertheless, primary and secondary qualitative research was conducted in order to better understand user experience (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

3.3 PARADIGM

This study utilises an ontological approach, this is where reality is created by individuals (Maree, 2016). In order to understand and improve consumers experiences, qualitative research mining for meaning and consumer emotions was used to navigate research methodologies, such as interviews and contextual inquiry's, this also refers the epistemological approach to the study (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). This approach emphasises the experience of the users at (OGGF) in order to optimise it.

An interpretivist paradigm was used to analyse the qualitative data and understand past users' experiences' (Maree, 2016). This paradigm is interested in understanding situations from the subjective experiences of individual consumers and consumer groups (Maree, 2016). Inductive content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data through the used of coding and Thematic models (Sapsford & Jupp, 1996). To make sense of the potential wide variety of experiences that take place at (OGGF), a thematic approach was used in a scientific manner in order to minimise researcher bias.

According to Thanh and Thanh (2015), the interpretive paradigm may be viewed as a research approach that enables researchers to view the world from the perspective of the respondents. In essence, researchers explore their own experience of the world by making sense of the perception of other individuals (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

According to Willis (2007), the interpretive paradigm can be seen to seek out an understanding of the particular context in question, this is because an epistemological foundation of this world view, is that reality is socially constructed. It is for this reason that Interpretive research is viewed as more subjective than objective. Furthermore, Willis (2007:110) debates the objective of this paradigm is to value subjectivity and "interpretivist eschew the idea that objective research on human behaviour is possible". In contrast, a Post-positivism paradigm can be seen to operate in complete opposition to this, as it aims to determine universal rules, where Interpretivism is accepting of multiple

perspectives and seeks to engage with multiple perspectives in order to promote holistic qualitative data findings (Willis, 2007). For the sake of this research, it is of vital importance to understand and value the customer's experience at OGGF, in order to establish whether the brand's Brand Equity is positive and where it can be improved upon; furthermore how their IMC strategy is supporting this.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD(S)

An interpretivist paradigm was used to analyse the qualitative data in order to understand past users experiences (Maree, 2016). Inductive content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data through the used of coding and Thematic models (Sapsford & Jupp, 1996).

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS / DATA COLLECTION METHODS

For the purpose of this study, the research methods included the collection of both primary and secondary data. The data collection methodologies utilised data mining and qualitative research (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Sapsford & Jupp, 1996)

3.5.1 COLLECTION OF SECONDARY DATA

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), secondary data is evidence and information that has already been gathered for specific purposes, this study utilised various mediums of secondary data for the theoretical foundation, particularly within the literature review. Credible sources from academic books, the internet and journal articles that focused on the fields of Brand Equity and IMC in addition to the topic of Agri-Tourism.

In addition to the standard secondary data collection, this study utilised secondary research Data Mining. Data Mining was conducted on the statistical records from the

(OGGF) business with regards to occupancy rates and turnover; this is in line with the study by Vogt (2014) examining the economic success of agri-tourism businesses. The data mining provided a baseline point of comparison for discerning the success of the business and consequently the brand equity in conjuncture with the effectivity of the Integrated Marketing Communication strategy.

3.5.2 COLLECTION OF PRIMARY DATA

Maree (2016) suggests that there are two primary approaches for researchers' to utilise when collecting primary data of a qualitative nature: namely observation and interviews. Observation can be used as an effective tool for ethnological approach, where an interpretivist paradigm is used, observation can be used to examine the behaviour of user or consumers. Interviews can be used as a valuable tool for understanding consumers perspective and motivations related to products, services and events. The primary data collection included: Questionnaires, Semi-structured interviews, social listening and lastly a contextual inquiry.

Primary Qualitative Research

- Data Mining was conducted on the statistical records from the (OGGF) business with regards to occupancy rates and turnover; this inline with the study by Vogt (2014).
- Questionnaires were sent to past guests. This research tactic is a great source of baseline demographic data in addition to qualitative experiential questions that can be easily compiled and collected efficiently.
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with various members of the value chain, specifically the owners of the brand and past guests of the establishment. This allowed for an in-depth inquiry into brand experiences and untapped potential.
- Social Listening was conducted in order to examine consumers perceptions and experiences at OGGF.

- A contextual inquiry took place with various levels of management and staff to establish how the business operates internally. Secondly, potential consumers that have not been to OGGF were also interviewed on the brands online touch-points to establish how effective the online IMC is.

3.6 POPULATION

A research population as stated by Maree (2016), can be seen as the broader group of individuals that a study will apply to; as this study explores the brand perception and IMC strategies of a South African hospitality brand with both local and international guests, resulting in a population that was somewhat broad. However, it was broken down as follows: individuals' that have interacted with the brand by staying on-site as a guest, potential customers that have not yet stayed at OGGF and those individuals that play a part in creating the experience guests' of the brand encounter.

3.7 SAMPLING

This research made use of purposive sampling as it provides a greater opportunity to focus on specific characteristics of the sample (Maree, 2016). The sample included three main categories: Guests [both local and International], OGGF personnel and potential OGGF consumers. The Guest category was split into further sub-categories namely: family groups, couples and groups of friends. In addition to investigating the experiences of the onsite consumers of the brand, this study reviewed the individuals responsible for creating and managing these brand experiences, namely the brand owners and personnel. Lastly, potential OGGF consumers that have not yet experienced the brand on-site were interviewed specifically to examine OGGF's online consumer touch-points.

The Sample that was considered for this study includes various members of the value chain such as:

- Past guests of the Guest Farm, both local and International: By examining not only local (South African) guests but the brand's international guests, the study was able to explore how this brand performs on a global platform.
- Various levels of management and staff: This was essential in order to understand the process in which the brand expertise is crafted and inventory all the potential brand contact points.
- Owners and founders of the establishment: By interviewing the owners of the business, the study was able to establish the essential motivators for the brand's existence and investigate the level of buy-in from top-level management in order to explore the key concept of how organisational structures influence the success of the implementation of strategies.
- Potential consumers that had not been onto the OGGF premises: these individuals were used to examine the consumers perspective on the online consumer touch-points and how effectively they communicate the Agri-tourism's benefit of the OGGF brand.

3.8 QUESTIONNAIRES

Visocky and Visocky (2017) suggest that the main distinction between a survey and a questionnaire is the process in which the data is collected, in essence, the question that respondents are being asked is essentially the same. The distinction comes with the manner in which the designed set of questions is administered, if the research questions are administered to the respondent, the collection method is a survey (or potentially a structured interview), when questions are administered in person by a researcher, they must be delivered in a respectful and scientific manner in order limit researcher bias. Questionnaires' can, therefore, be identified as a designed set of questions that respondents answer for themselves either online or filled out on paper. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) can be seen to refine these definitions by advocating that questions

and surveys are designed to explore the current opinions, beliefs, attitudes and demographics of a selected population.

For the purpose of this study, the online research tool of SurveyMonkey was utilised. SurveyMonkey is a platform where questions can be designed and flighted via email or social media with the use of a URL link, this data is then collected and processed automatically by the site into the researcher's choice of graphs and charts (SurveyMonkey, 2019). By choosing a data collection method that removed the researcher in person, there has been a reduction of researcher bias nevertheless, the questions must still be designed scientifically, so as not to lead the respondent's answers or affect the quality of the data (Maree, 2016).

This online tool gave this study access to a larger sample of the research's population moreover, this process works in the benefit of combating my previously mentioned limitations of time and budget as it is a free online research tool within a certain sample size.

A pilot study was conducted with the Survey Monkey Questionnaire, whereby the original question list containing 15 questions was discussed with an academic and the supervisor in addition to another two Vega Honours Students. The list of questions was reduced to 10 questions and adapted to include more multiple-choice options in order to make the online process more user-friendly and expedient for respondents. The online questionnaire can be viewed in Annexure A.

3.9 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviews are described by Maree (2016) as a two-way conversation between researcher and respondent, there are three main types of this data collection method: Structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The main distinction between structured and semi-structured interviews is the fact that structured interviews do not veer off of the pre-

determined set of questions. While this tool is useful for more formal settings and time-sensitive occasions, this approach can limit qualitative responses that are often brought out in more informal settings. Semi-structured interviews, while still thoroughly pre-prepared for allow the respond to guide some of the direction of the interview, this facilitates the opportunity for deep qualitative responses that the researcher might not have accounted for (Visocky & Visocky, 2017). However, the researcher must be aware of the risk of the participant drifting too far off-topic where the data collected becomes less useful to the study at a dear cost in time. Semi-structured interviews are an ideal research tool for deep qualitative research that investigates an ontological approach of consumer journey and perspective (Maree, 2016). Semi interviews were conducted with past guests and staff members. The Interview Guide for the owners and personnel of OGGF can be viewed in Annexure B.

3.10 CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

A contextual inquiry is a valuable research tool where the interview between researcher and respondent takes place at the location of the process of the task (Visocky & Visocky, 2017). Contextual inquiries took place with various levels of management and staff in order to better understand the brand's points of contact and the processes that affect a positive brand experience. Time was spent in the various departments of the OGGF business in order to get an in-depth perspective on the consumer experience and the processes that create said experiences.

Additionally, potential consumers that have not been on to the OGGF premises were used to examine the consumers perspective on the online consumer touch-points and consumer journey without being influenced by the onsite experience. By conducting interviews with the respondents while they view the various online touch-points, the research aimed to establish how effectively the OGGF brand communicates the Agri-tourism benefit of the OGGF brand. The Interview Guide for the potential consumers participating in the contextual inquiry can be viewed in Annexure C.

3.11 SOCIAL LISTENING

Social listening is a valuable tool used to gain consumers perspectives about brands in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner (Visocky O'Grady & Visocky O'Grady, 2017). This tool was used to address the research objective One that examines the effectivity OGGF's IMC, in addition to research objective three that sought to uncover untapped potential with the business. Consumer-driven content and rating sites such as TripAdvisor and testimonials/ratings on hospitality booking sites such as [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) provide a potential wealth of qualitative insights from consumer experiences.

3.12 ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTION

This study aims to contribute not only to the scant literature on Brand and Integrated Marketing communications within the niche of Agri-Tourism, but provides the opportunity for valuable insights and strategies for the OGGF. This study has potential to provide valuable insight on the motivators and desires of consumers' within this hospitality niche and create a framework for how organisations with diverse business architecture (particularly with a tourism/ hospitality diversification) can leverage human resources effectively to create a meaningful consumer experience.

3.13 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

Guba (1981, cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016) suggests that in qualitative research reliability and validity form the cornerstone of trustworthiness, a vital ingredient in qualitative research. According to Guba there are four main criteria for establishing a trustworthy study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This research study was conducted with ethical clearance from the IIE and Vega School of business and design, in line with the standards of IIE research ethics and practises. Data analysis was conducted in a scientific manner in order to minimise researcher bias in accordance with ethical research practices.

Louw (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014) describe ethics as an individual's 'moral or professional code of conduct'; this is of exceeding importance within the process of data collection and research to promote ethical standards that produce validity and the avoidance of error. The ethical considerations of research are at the centre of its success, with high regard for confidentiality, answerability and mutual trust.

In accordance with ethical research practices and the standards of the IIE, this research study was conducted with the knowledge and written consent of the Oribi Gorge Guest Farm business, a signed gatekeepers letter is included as Appendix D: OGGF Gatekeepers Letter.

In the interest of ethical compliance, no persons under the age of eighteen were interviewed. To secure informed consent a signed letter of consent was completed by each participant when interviews and contextual inquiries were held, all participants were informed of the right to anonymity. Participants were informed as to the nature of the research and the security of all obtained data (Maree, 2016).

3.15 CONCLUSION

Chapter three laid out the research methodology, where a qualitative approach was selected with an interpretivist paradigm. This chapter explored the scale of the study by defining the research population and sample in addition to selecting the most appropriate data collection tools such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and lastly a contextual inquiry. Finally the ethical values and consideration of this study were laid out in order for research validity and credibility. Chapter Four presents the results and findings of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the results from the research that was conducted, it presents the findings and provides a discussion of significant discoveries. Data collected from the questionnaires, the semi-structured interviews, social listening and contextual inquiry will then be contextualised and related back to the research's three key objectives.

The essence of the objectives are as follows: How effective is OGGF's IMC strategy in communicating the Agri-tourism? How effectively is OGGF harnessing Agri-tourism's benefits thorough online and onsite experiences? And lastly, What insights can be gained in order to improve the quality of the consumer experience identify any untapped potential within the business?

The approach to the analysis of the findings was conducted as per the methodology in chapter three. It is significant to note at this point that due to the fact that this is a small-scale qualitative study, the data is not statistically sound and therefore the results cannot be generalised (Maree, 2016).

4.2 DATA MINING

Given the theoretical foundation laid by Vogt's (2014), secondary data mining was utilised in order to create a baseline point of comparison for discerning the key performance indicators (KPI's) that Vogt identified for this industry. The statistical records from OGGF with regards to occupancy rates and turnover were tabulated for ease of interpretation. Interviews with the Owners of OGGF uncovered that the business has only been operating on [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) since 2015. Before 2015 OGGF had not kept or calculated records for occupancy rates, overall satisfaction had been measured with turnover, much like Vogt's (2014) study suggests.

Oribi Gorge Guest Farm Turnover		
Financial Year	Turnover	% increase/decrease from previous year's turnover
2014	R 157 779.00	- 33,45%
2015	R 178 531.00	+ 13,15 %
2016	R 260 645.00	+ 45,99 %
2017	R243 129.00	-6,72%
2018	R 311 523.00	+ 28.13%

Table 4.1 : Oribi Gorge Guest Farms Turnover from 2014-2018

Data from OGGF suggests that turnover has almost doubled in four years, the largest increase in turnover during the period from 2014 to 2018 occurred in 2016. This is after OGGF had joined [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) in 2015.

Oribi Gorge Guest Farm Occupancy Rate according to bookings.com referrals					
	Number of Houses	Nights	Sold	Occupancy Rate %	% increase or decrease
2015	3	1081	385	35,6	
2016	3	1077	379	35,2	-0.4 %
2017	3	1005	465	46.3	+ 11,1 %
2018	3	1000	607	60.7	+ 14,4 %
2019	3	503*	301*	59.8*	- 0,9 %

* all statistics for 2019 are still subject to change and only take into account data from the first two quarters of the year (2019/01/01 to 2019/06/30).

Table 4.2 : Oribi Gorge Guest Farms Occupancy Rates according to [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) 2015-2019

From

2018-07-01

To

2019-07-28

Apply

as of July 29, 2019 for room reservations that have stayed (net reservations) at your property since July 1, 2018.

Compare with: Last year



Figure 4.1 : Net Reservations statistics according to bookings.com from July 2018 to June 2019

Table 4.2 demonstrates the occupancy rate for OGGF in the years from 2015 to halfway through 2019. Steady growth can be seen in the occupancy rates in this 5-year window. Figure 4.1 shows the Net Reservations statistics according to bookings.com from July 2018 to June 2019. Dark blue bar represents the occupancy of the current year, with the grey representing the previous years' data, the orange line demonstrates the average rate in South Africa. This data suggests that the OGGF business is performing relatively well given its context.

4.3 QUESTIONNAIRES

An online qualitative questionnaire was conducted on Survey Monkey. There were 15 respondents of which 12 were from South Africa and three were international guests (Zimbabwe / United States / Czech Republic). Twelve of the fifteen respondents had stayed at OGGF in the last 24 months, with the rest in the last 10 years.

When examining the Integrated Marketing Communications of OGGF, an astonishing Twelve of the fifteen respondents heard of OGGF through word of mouth with the remainder though [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com). This was then re-enforced by five of fifteen respondents being primarily motivated to stay by recommendations, with a further six respondents being primarily motivated by the onsite farm experience. The questionnaire revealed that Facebook was the more popular social media platform, with the remainder preferring Instagram and TripAdvisor. The IMC strategy can be seen to be encouraging Word of Mouth Marketing and earned media; furthermore, the questionnaire has indicated that there is an element of received communication of the Agri-tourism niche benefit (Eustis, 2013; Whitler, 2014).

The questionnaire results reveal a diverse combination of motivators for coming to the Oribi Gorge area however, it is interesting to note that five of fifteen respondents were in the area for weddings. Thematically, words that were frequently used to describe the experience included 'tranquillity', 'farm atmosphere' and lastly the 'beauty' of the space, further supporting an IMC strategy with messaging related to the benefits of agri-tourism.

The questions that address research objective three, seeking to uncover untapped potential and explore the user experience, asked if the respondents would stay at OGGF again. All respondent respond positively when asked what could be improved upon for their next stay ten of the fifteen respondents did not request any changes or improvements. Suggestions that where made included two requests for additional heaters and one requested for wifi.

The findings from the questionnaire suggest that the consumers' experience is considered largely positive, data exploring the OGGF communication efficiency revealed that word of mouth marketing (WOMM) is a large focus in the communication strategy (Eustis, 2013; Whitler, 2014).

4.4 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-Structured interviews were conducted with the owners of the brand. Much like the study by Vogt, the business started as a diversification strategy over 15 years ago, due to unoccupied buildings. The brand had a soft launch with branding and brand touch-points only coming much later. The agricultural side of the brand architecture is the main focus for the owners, requiring the lions share of their time and resources, the accommodation is required to 'tick-over' as they put it. According to the owners, Oribi Gorge Guest Farm was one of the first tourism locations in the area, and consequently initially provided most of its entertainment onsite with Farm experiences, this changed as the area developed and OGGF increasingly relied on outsourcing activities. The owners noticed a considerable increase in turnover when joining [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) and used a pricing strategy on the site to gain best value for money to increase visibility on the site. Price point and value for money is in their opinion one of the brand's greatest selling points, and consequently, much of their messaging is discounts on social media platforms.

Semi-Structured interviews with international guests revealed that [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) site was the major contributing factor in staying at OGGF, due to the high ranking on value and multiple positive reviews on trusted accommodations sites (TripAdvisor & [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com)). The guests' were very satisfied with the experience, enjoying expansive farm gardens and friendly service, gaining more than they had realised they would.

4.5 SOCIAL LISTENING

Social listening was conducted on various of the OGGF online touch-points such as Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor and [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com); a brief summary of the findings can be seen in Figure 4.2. OGGF can be seen to have a high rating from consumers on TripAdvisor and [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com), this is a valuable form of earned media and word of mouth marketing. As seen in the Questionnaire results, OGGF's Facebook page has more engagement than their Instagram page.

Reviewing multiple testimonials and comments across these platforms, revealed further re-enforcement of the thematically coded words used to describe the brand and consumer experiences, in addition to comments on the cleanliness of the Units. Many accounts of customers finding there stay tranquil, while particularly enjoying the farm atmosphere and beautiful setting. Social Listening also brought to light the friendly customers service with multiple special mentions of 'Lindiwe' the Head Hospitality Maid. Guests frequently mentioned the farm's unofficial tour guide, 'Grandpa'. Interviews revealed was the owner's retired father, that gave personalised recommendations and often took guests on complimentary tours of the farm.

Whitler (2014), indicates that according to Nielsen data: "92% of consumers believe recommendations from friends and family over all forms of advertising", OGGF can be seen to be harnessing this communication strategy in their IMC by highlighting their TripAdvisor and [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) rating as well as posting and highlighting positive reviews on their owned media touch-points.

Social Listening also revealed consumer insights as to areas that the OGGF brand can improve upon. The breakage deposit refund system gain multiple comments on the approach to delayed refunds as per the OGGF policy, while there were personalised responses to the inquiries there is an opportunity for improvement in this consumer part of the consumers' experience. In addition to the breakage deposit system, various

comments made mention of the distance the establishment is from shopping services and supplies, resulting in unforeseen distances required for supplies. This represents an opportunity for better a consumer experience.

In addition to the breakage deposit system, there were multiple comments of guest unsatisfied that although there were pictures of horses on the brand's website, the service was not offered onsite. This demonstrates that the agri-tourism benefits are being communicated to consumers, even if clearly resulting miscommunication and unmet expectations. While the website contains many farm picture and there is a story of the history of the farm on the website, the onsite activities listed there are generic resort actives that do not necessarily engage actively with the agriculture instead, rely on guests being happy with just being in an agricultural setting.

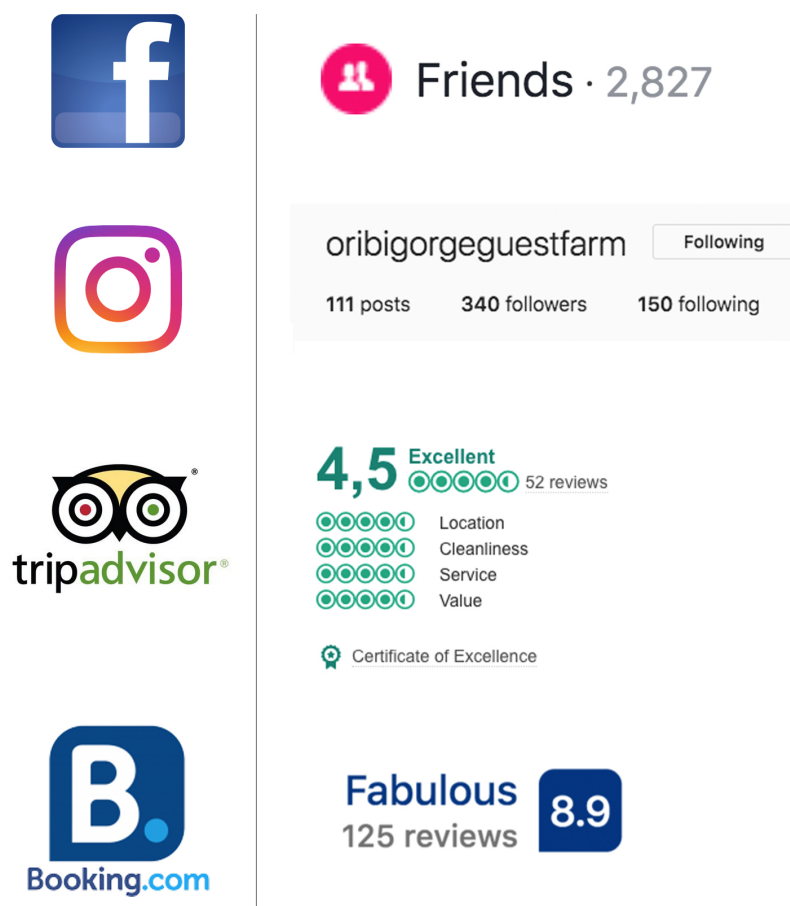


Figure 4.2 : Social Listening representation of Oribi Gorge Guest Farm

4.6 CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

4.6.1 CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY OGGF PERSONNEL

A contextual inquiry was conducted with the various members of staff, in addition to the 'grandpa' mentioned during the social listening phase. I was discovered according to both perception and records that the busiest unit by a significant difference, was the smallest unit and correspondingly the most frequent customer demographic were couples. In-depth questioning uncovered that this demographic has been seen as the most common demographic to ask for concierges services such as organising bottles of champagne and booking activities. The management at preset does not offer this service due to the diverse brand architecture (diverse agricultural business and tourism), requiring much time and not leaving much capacity for time-consuming customer experience policies. This demographic can be seen as an opportunity to focus on the brand's target market and consequent IMC strategy.

In support of the social listening findings and questionnaire, various levels of staff suggest that the most frequent positive comments from guests include tranquillity, the cleanliness of the units and staff friendliness. These reoccurring customer perceptions can be seen as indicators of the brand image perceived by consumers, relating to research objective 1 understand the effectiveness of OGGF's IMC strategy and research objective 2 questions the brand equity supported by the onsite and online experience.

4.6.2 CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY POTENTIAL OGGF CUSTOMERS

Two respondents that had not heard of the Oribi Gorge Guest Farm or been there were interviewed regarding the brand's touch-points (Website, Instagram, [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com), TripAdvisor and Facebook), this explored research objective 1. When asked about their perception of the brand, comments such as 'elegant' and 'fancy' occurred with the website where the respondent assumed the cost would be premium, however there was confusion with the Instagram page as it consisted mostly of adverts that frustrated the

users and reduce the perception of quality in their perspective. Respondents spent more time engaging with the hospitality sites rather than the owned media platforms, paying more attention to the ratings and comments than the OGGF website content.

4.7 RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR OBJECTIVE ONE

The OGGF brand has harnessed WOMM through online hospitality sites to generate earned media and awareness (Eustis, 2013; Whitler, 2014). The questionnaires revealed effective communication of agri-tourism in the majority of the respondents being motivated to stay due to the onsite farm benefit and positive word of mouth. 'Tranquility' and 'farm atmosphere' appearing in both the external messaging and positive comments from customers, suggests there is a certain level of success in the IMC strategy.

The contextual inquiry however, revealed inconsistency with the online touch-points with the website and Instagram page having different focusses, one with premium accommodation and elegance and the other using push advertising methods to drive promotion driven sales (Chima, 2019). Furthermore, a few cases were discovered of guest dissatisfaction that although there were pictures of horses on the brand's website, the service was not offered onsite.

4.8 RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR OBJECTIVE TWO

Online Experiences

Much of the visual imagery and messaging focused on the farm-yard and spaces, which re-enforces agri-tourism in the IMC; however, no directly agri-tourism related activities listed on the website available onsite (Enslin & Klopper, 2014). As previously established in research objective 1, there is seen to be inconsistency in the brand's online experience.

Onsite Experiences

Unofficial tours conducted by the owner's father created a highly valuable consumer experience that harnessed the brand's agri-tourism benefit. The brand's agricultural context and location itself contributes to the consumer experience however, more can be done to further encourage engagement with this niche benefit.

4.9 RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR OBJECTIVE THREE

While the questionnaires received an overwhelmingly positive response when asked what OGGF could improve upon, some areas of improvement were identified. There is potential room for improvement in the customer experiences with the breakage-deposit refund system in conjuncture with improving the wifi accessibility and heating options in the units. It was also discovered that there is customer desire particularly in the couples demographic to include an element of formalised concierge services. Lastly, the distance of the establishment from shopping supplies has the potential to create a frustrating experience for unprepared guests, this represents an opportunity for a better consumer experience.

4.10 SUMMARY

In summary, the OGGF brand can be seen to be operating with a measure of health, with many examples of valuable WOMM and owners being satisfied with the growth in turnover in the last 5 years (Vogt, 2014). There is room to improve on elements of the consumer experience at OGGF and further support official and unofficial guest activities that are supporting agri-tourism's niche benefit to OGGF plus generating positive consumer experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the conclusions and recommendations that pertain to the objectives established in this study. This will be achieved by briefly examining the findings from the literature, followed by the findings from the research after which the conclusions and suggestions for further studies will be made.

5.2 OBJECTIVE ONE

To investigate how effective the current Integrated Marketing Communication strategy is at Oribi Gorge Guest Farm in communicating Agri-tourism.

5.2.1 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

Integrated Marketing Communications is used to understand the effective use of consumer touch-points and media planning (Enslin & Klopper, 2014) additionally, it reinforces Aaker's (1991; 1996) brand equity model. Consequently, effective IMC requires the identification and reach of specific target audiences (Klopper et al., 2011:185). Chima (2019), argues that IMC is a less 'cluttered' method of advertising in the current marketing and advertising landscape. IMC plans assists in creating a seamless purchasing process, this expediency has the potential to create a competitive advantage for brands (Enslin & Klopper, 2014).

5.2.2 FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

The OGGF brand has harnessed WOMM through online hospitality sites to generate earned media and awareness. The questionnaires revealed effective communication of

agri-tourism in the majority of the respondents being motivated to stay due to the onsite farm benefit and positive word of mouth. 'Tranquility' and 'farm atmosphere' appearing in both the external messaging and positive comments from customers, suggests there is a certain level of success in the IMC strategy.

The contextual inquiry however, revealed inconsistency with the online touch-points, furthermore, a few cases were discovered of guest unsatisfied that although there were pictures of horses on the brand's website, the service was not offered onsite.

5.2.3 CONCLUSION

It is clear that OGGF's IMC is not as consistent as authors (Chima, 2019; Enslin & Kloppe, 2014) suggest it should be; given this, the following recommendations have been made.

5.2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation is to improve the consistency of the social media touch-points, in addition to making a clearer and more distinguishable connection between the 'tranquillity' that is enjoyed by guests and its connection to the agri-tourism niche. Lastly, the highlighted issue regarding horse riding not being offered can be resolved with an additional link to booking horse riding in the area beneath the messaging highlighting it not being offered on-site.

5.3 OBJECTIVE TWO

To explore how effectively OGGF is harnessing Agri-tourism's potential benefit to Brand Equity through online and onsite experiences

5.3.1 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

Vogt's study (2014:130) examined the different types of agri-tourism experiences and amenities on offer by a sample of agri-tourism hospitality brands, these included: tractor rides, guided tours, horse riding and assisting with farm-yard activities. The sample revealed that close to 90% of agri-tourism accommodations locations provided meals. Lastly, Vogt's (2014) evidence suggests that Agri-tourism is a competitive market segment, having said this the most significant drivers of performance can be seen as the strategic management and implementation of a marketing budget targeted at specific target groups (Vogt, 2014).

Aaker's model for Brand Equity looks at five key components support Brand Identity namely: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets (Enslin & Klopper, 2014).

5.3.2 FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Much of the visual imagery and messaging focused on the farm-yard and spaces, which re-enforces agri-tourism in the IMC, however, no directly agri-tourism related activities listed on the website available onsite. Unofficial tours conducted by the owner's father created a highly valuable consumer experience that harnessed the brand's agri-tourism benefit. The brand's agricultural context and location itself contributes to the consumer experience however, more can be done to further encourage engagement with this niche benefit.

5.3.3 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the above that whilst OGGF provides some of the activities discussed by the author (Vogt, 2014), there is a danger that clients might see the brand as overselling and under-delivering .

5.3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation is to provide support and resources for the unofficial farm tours that are being offered, as they provide highly valuable customer experiences that support the brand's niche and competitive advantage. Secondly, creating self-service farm experiences for the guests', will enable OGGF to better harness agri-tourism's niche benefit to the brand. For example, self-service egg collection, complimentary vegetable garden and audio farm tour/scavenger hunts, would enable guests to experience the benefits of agri-tourism without putting additional pressure on the human resources. Lastly, these improvements should be integrated into the website and into the overarching communication strategy.

5.4 OBJECTIVE THREE

To investigate what insights can be elicited from respondents to improve the quality of the consumer experience and aid in creating positive Brand Equity and to identify any untapped potential within the business.

5.4.1 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

Aaker's (1991; 1996) study was utilised for its brand equity framework, in order to investigate the service delivery and customer experience at OGGF. A definition of Brand Equity by Aaker (1991) was identified as a set of brand assets and liabilities that add value to or take value away from brand products or services; key features being: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets.

5.4.2 FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

There is potential room for improvement in the customer experiences with the breakage-deposit refund system in conjuncture with improving the wifi accessibly and heating options in the units. It was also discovered that there is customer desire particularly in the couples demographic to include and elements of formalised concierge services. Lastly, the distance the establishment is from shopping services and supplies has the potential to create a frustrating experience for unwrapped guests, this represents an opportunity for better a consumer experience.

5.4.3 CONCLUSION

Aaker (1991) suggests that a key element of brand equity is perceived quality. Research suggests some basic elements of the OGGF customer experience are not being satisfied, such as suitable heating. Furthermore, there is additional potential to provide more than the unofficial farm tours, but also include activities such as tractor rides to provide a more authentic and personalised (Kutschera, 2019) agri-tourism experience.

5.4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for this objective include investigating solutions for the heating in the units, the consistency of the wifi and the possibility of including elements of concierges services such as stocking champagne and offering to book local activities/ reservations in advance to the stay.

Another recommendation that could reduce customers potential pain point and further possible complaints is an email reminder policy send before the stay covering topics such as the locations and distances of local shops en-route and reminders of the breakage deposit policy with an explanation as to why it operates as such. The email could also

suggest a list of activities in the area and ask if reservations at a local restaurant can be made for the first night of their stay.

Lastly, support and resources should be established for the unofficial farm tours that are being offered, as they provide highly valuable customer experiences that support the brand's niche and competitive advantage.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Suggestions for further research on this topic could include, seeking to establish the most desired agri-tourism experiences by consumers, in order to determine which customer experiences would develop loyal customers and result in repeat business. Furthermore, additional research that would benefit this industry would be to establish what demographic is best suited as a target market for this hospitality experience niche. Lastly, as a key finding regarding the industry niche of agri-tourism was the challenges that face this diversification strategy. Further research on how the Brand Equity model can be adapted to an industry where seasonality has a considerable effect on human resources resulting in possibly inconsistent customer service due the seasonal demand on human resources. A larger-scale study could be conducted throughout the country with the support of Tourism South Africa.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research set out to investigate agri-tourism's niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communications and Brand Equity. As result of a sound literature review and appropriate research instrument, valuable data was elicited from respondents which ensured that appropriate recommendations could be made that are of value to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm.

In conclusion, it can be seen that Oribi Gorge Guest Farm has utilised Word of Mouth as a key strategy in their Integrated Marketing Communications however, it was identified that there is room for improvement with regards to increasing the consistency of the IMC across their online and physical contact points. When examining how Oribi Gorge Guest Farm was able to make use of the agri-tourism niche benefit in order to support Brand Equity, it was found that there is considerable potential to expand the number of onsite agri-tourism experiences in order to better benefit from this hospitality niche and further support their Brand Equity. Significant findings relating to the specific challenges that face this agri-tourism diversification strategy reveal that the seasonal nature of the niche that has been seen to have a considerable effect on human resources resulting in possibly inconsistent customer service. Given the context, findings suggest that an adaption of the Brand Equity model that undersells and over-delivers due to constraints often associated with this type of brand architecture, could result in better managing the seasonal stresses on human resources and reduce the opportunities for unmet consumer expectations. As this was a small-scale qualitative study, there is not statistical certainty that the findings will address all the identified problems and they can not be generalised to other agri-tourism entities. In spite of this, if the recommendations are carefully implemented and monitored they have the potential to improve the brand equity of Oribi Gorge Guest Farm

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ANNEXURE A - Sample of Online Questionnaire

* This is a sample of the questions flighted on the Survey Monkey questionnaire

Oribi Gorge Guest Farm Customer Experience Survey

By completing this online survey, you are giving your consent to the collection of the data. Your responses are completely anonymous. Thank you so much for your time and engagement!

OK

1. When did you stay with us at Oribi Gorge Guest Farm?

- ☐ 2019
- ☐ 2018
- ☐ In the last 5 years
- ☐ In the last 10 years
- ☐ In the last 10+ years

2. Where are you from?

Country	
Province	
City	

3. What type of holiday was your stay with us?

- ☐ Family Holiday
- ☐ Couples Getaway
- ☐ Group of Friends
- ☐ Work

Other (please specify)

4. Where did you find out about Oribi Gorge Guest Farm?

- ☐ Word of Mouth
- ☐ bookings.com
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ TripAdvisor
- ☐ Southern Explorer

Other (please specify)

5. What is the reason for your stay in the Oribi Gorge area?

- ☐ Experience Oribi Gorge sites and activities
- ☐ Wedding/Function
- ☐ Sports Event
- ☐ Visiting Friends/Family

Other (please specify)

6. What motivated you to book at Oribi Gorge Guest Farm for stay?

- ☐ Price Point
- ☐ Recommendations
- ☐ The character of the Units
- ☐ Discount Deal
- ☐ Onsite Farm Experience

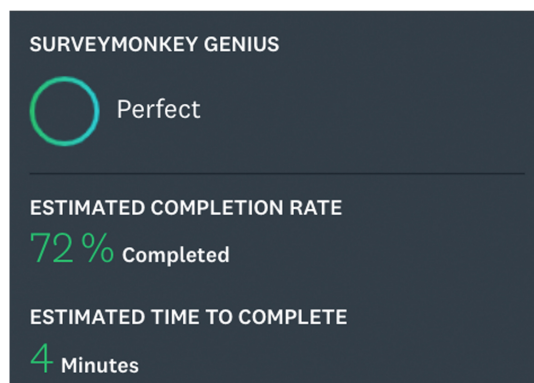
Other (please specify)

7. What was the best part of your stay with us?

9. Are you following the Guest House on social Media?

- ☐ Insta
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ TripAdvisor

10. Would you come to the Guest House Again? And elaborate on your response?



ANNEXURE B - Interview Guide for the owners and personnel of OGGF

* Questions 1- 5 were only asked to the owners of OGGF, the rest of the interview guide was used as a guide for the interviews that were conducted with various levels of personnel.

1. What year was the guest house started?
2. What motivated the start of the business?
3. What was the local competition like at the time?
4. How has this changed?
5. What was your advertising strategy at the beginning of the business?
6. Has this changed ?
7. What was the business's Unique selling proposition (USP) at the conception of the brand?
8. What are the onsite amenities advertised for the brand?
9. What were the off site amenities advertised for the brand?
10. Does the Guest House have a Facebook Page
11. If so, When was it launched?
12. Who Manages the page?
13. Does the Guest House have an Instagram Page
14. If so, When was it launched?
15. Who Manages the page?
16. Does the Guest House have a Twitter Page
17. If so, When was it launched?
18. Who Manages the page?
19. Is the Guest House registered on other online accommodation websites?
20. If so, When was it launched?
21. Have you seen a change in the performance of the business?
22. What measures do you have to indicate the performance of the business?
23. Have these changed over the course of the business?
24. Is there a co-ordinated marketing strategy across all your online platforms and communication ?
25. Who is responsible for your marketing communication strategy?
26. Who designed the old logo and website ?
27. When was it launched ?
28. Where there metrics and KPI's designed to measure the effectiveness of the website?

29. What is the website's Bounce rate?
30. What is the percentage of local versus international guests?
31. Do you have loyal repeat customers?
32. How do you track this?
33. What portion are local vs international ?
34. Do you have a customer experience protocol or systems of enquiring of UX?
35. What was the occupancy rate the year of the website launch ?
36. Who designed the new logo and website ?
37. When was it launched ?

ANNEXURE C - Interview Guide for the contextual inquiry conducted with potential consumers of the OGGF brand.

1. Can you open Oribi Gorge Guest Farms Website, Instagram page, [bookings.com](https://www.bookings.com) page, TripAdvisor page and Facebook page?
2. What are your initial impressions of the brand?
3. What would you say is the brands best feature?
4. Would you consider staying at this establishment ?
5. Does this look like the same brands on each of these platforms?
6. What are key motivators choosing a place to stay?
7. What would be the biggest element on these touch points dissuade you from staying at Oribi Gorge Guest Farm?

ANNEXURE D - GateKeepers Letter

Est 1912
SIYANDA FARMS
-We are growing

PO BOX 1360
Port Shepstone
4240

081 306 0379- ADMIN OFFICE
siyanda@oribigorgeguestfarm.co.za
Siyanda Farms, Oribi Flats, Lot 9B, KZN

To whom it may concern,

I Paul Langton, the proprietor of Oribi Gorge Guest Farm hereby grant consent to Tyler-Paige Langton, to undertake research entitled " An Investigation of Agri-tourism's niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communications and Brand Equity"on our property. To this end she may interview staff and guest in addition to emailing guest of the establishment.

Yours Faithfully



Paul E. Langton
Director of SilverCreek Farm Trust

ANNEXURE E - Ethical Clearance



1 June 2019

Dear Tyler-Paige Langton
Student Number: 19333864

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and ethical considerations were reviewed by your supervisor and moderated by the campus research panel.

- ☒ Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns. We hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your research methodology.
- OR
- ☐ Your research proposal posed the following minor concern:
Please mention how your research design will address this issue:

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Supervisor Name: Gareth Gray

Supervisor Signature:

Campus Anchor Name:

Alec Bozas

Campus Anchor Signature:

www.vegaschool.com

Directors: LW Maasdorp, JDR Oesch
Company Secretary: S Saunders

Johannesburg: 011 521 4600 | Durban: 031 569 1415 | Cape Town: 021 461 8089 | Pretoria: 012 343 3669

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ANNEXURE F - Informed Consent Forms

Letter of Consent

VEGA
Honours in Strategic Brand Communication
Research methodology
RESM 8419
Students
Tyler-Paige Langton

Dear Participant,

I am an Honours students at Vega School of Brand Leadership and in order to complete my research proposal - Primary, as well as Secondary Research is required. This assignment will include an investigation of Agri-tourism's niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communications and Brand Equity.

This assignment requires data to be collected through participant interaction - Hence, the reasoning for the connection and communication with one another.

Through your participation I hope to understand more on this topic.

Please note, that your participation throughout is voluntary and you have the right to anonymity.

I appreciate the time you have taken to communicate and share your insights and information

Thank you for your participation!

Kind Regards,

Lecturers Signature :  Date: 13-8-2019.

Letter of consent

VEGA

Honours in Strategic Brand Communication

Research methodology

RESM 8419

Student

Tyler-Paige Langton

WRITTEN CONSENT

I.....(Full names of participant) understand what is expected of myself throughout this interaction and I agree to contribute my insights and information into this project which may relate to findings. I understand that I have the right to choose between anonymity or not and that my involvement in this study is voluntary.

Would you like to be kept anonymous? Yes ____ No ____

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

This page will be kept by the students for record of interaction

ANNEXURE G - Concept Table

<u>Research Purpose/Objective</u>	<u>Primary Research Question</u>	<u>Research Rationale</u>	<u>Seminal Authors/ Sources</u>	<u>Paradigm</u>	<u>Approach</u>	<u>Data Collection Methods(s)</u>	<u>Ethics</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
This research will explore the business's Brand Equity & the efficiency of the IMC strategy, in order to gain insights into possible improvements and assess the businesses integration and benefit of the Agri-tourism concept.	An investigation of Agri-tourism's niche benefit to Oribi Gorge Guest Farm's Integrated Marketing Communication s and Brand Equity. i) Investigate how effective the current IMC strategy is.	This study has potential to provide beneficial insights to the OGGF business to improve Brand equity and Consumer satisfaction; additionally this study could potentially provide insights to the Agro-tourism industry.	-Aaker, D.A., 1991. Managing Brand Equity. -Enslin, C. & Klopfer, H.B. 2014. A Balanced Perspective on Brands. -Luisa Vogt (2014) The economic side of agrotourism: Business performance and competitive factor	Interpretivist The interpretivist paradigm is interested in understanding situations from the subjective experiences of individual consumers and consumer groups in order to understand and improve these consumers experiences. In this way, qualitative research mining for meaning and consumer emotions are used to navigate research methodologies, such as interviews and focus groups.	Mixed Methodologies: Quantitative secondary research to understand various KPI's such as Occupancy rates. Qualitative primary research to understand consumer experience.	Questionnaire (past guests) Semi-Structured Interviews (owners and international guests) Social Listening (FB, Insta, TripAdvisor & bookings.com) Contextual Inquiry (Personnel and potential guests)	This study will not be interviewing children under the age of 18 years old. Consumers will be informed as to the nature of the study and the security of all obtained data.	- Research can be adapted for Agricultural or Tourism Journals as well as Trade Magazines. - Further research can be conducted to enquire for possible innovative benefits for the Agricultural and Hospitality departments - Further research could be conducted to investigate the correlation between sector diversification and the opportunity for innovation.
<u>Research Problem</u>	<u>Secondary Questions/ Hypothesis/ Objectives</u>	<u>Key Concepts</u>	<u>Key Theories</u>					
This research aims to understand how Agri-tourism can be utilised in an IMC strategy and if the current strategy is fully harnessing its full potential.	ii) How effectively do the provided onsite experiences support brand equity. iii) How well do off site support amenities support Brand Equity. iv) What insights can be discovered to improved Brand Equity & UX.	i) Lasted hospitality trends. ii) Multi-sectors approach to market innovation. iii) The influence organisational structures have on the success of implementation.	- Aaker's model of brand architecture. - Agro-tourism model - IMC Model by [Odinma Chima]					
				Population				
				The population that will be considered are past guests.				
				Sampling The sample will include three main categories [families, couples & friend groups as well as local/ international]				
				An interpretivist paradigm will be used to analyse the qualitative data in order to understand past users experiences. Coding and Thematic models will also be utilised to understand the data.				
				i) Geographical-guest that do not live locally, attending focus groups. ii) Survey Feedback- low response rate. ii) Business data not accessible because of ineffective data storage system.				

ANNEXURE H - Originality Report