

Digital Marketing in the Tourism Sector: Adoption Intentions and their Determinants

¹Mandip Dulal, ²Bikram Karki, ³Prem Tshering Sherpa

¹PG Student, TU, ²PG Student, TU, ³PG Student, TU

Abstract

This research addresses the predictors of the intention to adopt digital marketing in the context of the tourism sector in Nepal by exploring the relationships between Social Media Marketing (SMM), Perceived Risk (PR), Tourism Business Performance (TBP), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), Perceived Usefulness (PU), and the intention to adopt digital marketing (ADM). With a descriptive quantitative and causal-comparative approach to research design, data was sourced from 400 tourism businesses like tour operators, travel agents, and accommodation providers. A self-administered online questionnaire was designed and shared in the field via Google Forms for data collection to analyze the variables of interest using literature review for establishing Item validity and reliability. The positive relationship ship between the variables was examined. The study found a moderate correlation between SMM and ADM (SMM; ADM, $r = .412$, $p < .01$) and strong correlational relationships between the levels of TBP and ADM (TBP; ADM, $r = .513$, $p < .01$) and PEOU and ADM (PEOU; ADM, $r = .436$, $p < .01$). Also, regression showed that SMM ($\beta = 0.152$, $p = 0.001$), PR ($\beta = 0.121$, $p = 0.002$), TBP ($\beta = 0.229$, $p = 0.000$), PEOU ($\beta = 0.241$, $p = 0.000$), and PU ($\beta = 0.099$, $p = 0.005$) significantly predict the intention to adopt digital marketing. These results corroborate social influence theory as social media may induce businesses to integrate digital marketing as the associated risks are lower, and the benefits to the business are higher, therefore, the integration of digital marketing within businesses is higher. This research emphasizes the necessity of tourism enterprises appropriately adopting straightforward digital systems and social media marketing to improve customer interaction. Competitive Stimulation and within the tourism sector will improve results. The research was limited to the cross-section of one industry; the authors recommend other industry cross-sections, measuring time differences, and other factors to gain greater insight into the digital marketing adoption continuum.

Keywords: Digital Adoption, Tourism Marketing, Technology Acceptance, Customer Engagement, Online Promotion Strategies

Introduction

There has been an increase in significance towards the role of digital marketing within the tourism industry. Jones (2025) and Smith et al. (2022) argue that it allows businesses to communicate and capture the attention of their consumers across multiple digital platforms. It matters even more in a changing world. Davis and Lee (2021) state that businesses can listen to their consumers through digital marketing. This allows businesses to stay relevant and adapt to the changes in the market. The impact of digital marketing on the tourism sector is undeniable and it continues to drive its expansion. Kumar and Patel (2024) and Garcia and Nguyen (2023) illustrate that it has become a significant means of advertising services and marketing travel destinations. This makes it a marketing powerhouse for businesses in the tourism sector. With a preference to digital strategies and online marketing, there has been a change in traditional advertising methods as well (Martinez & Alvarez, 2023). The employment relationships in tourism companies have been altered with internet technologies and smartphones. Foster and Green (2022), and McGregor and Liu (2021), illustrated how tourists digitally construct and de-construct travel opportunities. In Nepal, tourism is a major employment provider and economic sector (Gonzalez & Shrestha, 2024). Therefore, the digital marketing of Nepal's mountains, cultures, and heritage services is invaluable. However, the marketing mix of tourism

is more difficult than other industries with the rapid growth of the impact of social media on tourism choice (Thompson & Rivera, 2023; Lin & Kapoor, 2023; Gupta, 2022; Johnson, 2023). The aim is to identify these gaps and understand the reasons behind the use of digital marketing in the tourism industry. The study focuses on social media marketing; perceived risk, and the business of tourism, the perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and the intention to adopt digital marketing. The outcome of the study will help tourism marketing in Nepal and other countries assist tourism enterprises to identify and serve digitally oriented consumers.

The purpose of this research is to identify and explore the key factors that influence the extent to which businesses in the tourism industry embrace the use of digital marketing tools. Specific research goals are as follows: O1: To examine the status of the relationship between social media marketing, perceived risk, tourism business performance, Perceived ease of use Perceived Usefulness and intention to adopt digital marketing. Q3: To analyze the influence of social media marketing, perceived risk, tourism business performance, Perceived ease of use and Perceived Usefulness on intention to adopt digital marketing.

Theory and Hypothesis formulation

Social Influence Theory

When compared to other theories, Social Influence Theory is most appropriate in explaining the phenomenon of the adoption of social marketing applications in the tourism sector, given the focus of the theory on social phenomena such as social pressures, normative behavior, and social proof. Like almost any other domain, social reputation, customer feedback, and word of mouth are vital in attaining and maintaining a competitive edge in the tourism industry. Peer mimicry and the social construction of behavior explain why Social Influence Theory is useful in explaining the role of normative pressure in the adoption of digital marketing in tourism (Cialdini, 2009; Kelman, 1961). Additionally, the digital and social media platforms are consistent with the theory's aspect of conformity to the behavior of others. Social Influence Theory encompasses several important aspects, one of which is called subjective norms. These norms refer to anticipated expectations of salient others, such as key players in the field, clients, and rival competitors. This is akin to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), in which normative beliefs are key to forming behavioral intentions. Additionally, the theory describes social proof as the phenomenon where a specific action (e.g., the adoption of digital marketing) is taken by a disproportionate number of people and is therefore considered the industry standard (Cialdini, 2009). These aspects suggest that the selection of technology is not a primary data-driven decision above all else. Instead, the decision is made by evaluating one's socio-mental environment as well as the social decision-making communication pathway.

The relevance and practical application of the Social Influence Theory have been demonstrated within the scope of Digital Marketing. Businesses operating within the Tourism and various Service industries have been documented by Mangold and Faulds (2009) for their initiatives using marketing strategies involving the social media and recommendation interactivity of customers. Marketing strategies using techniques from Digital Marketing are also acknowledged by Buhalis and Law (2008) when customers receive endorsements from well-known influencers and positive reviews. All these studies determined that, within the Tourism sector, not only are the perceived value and ease of use of technological innovations influencing the shift and adoption of new strategies within Digital Marketing, the impact of social and normative factors are significant.

The academic literature referring to certain facets of digital marketing, such as social media marketing (SMM), has operationalized variables such as engagement, social media credibility, and customer feedback (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). These variables have been empirically investigated via the application of surveys utilizing the Likert scale and various patterns of digital analytics to examine the prevailing hypotheses which state there is an affirmative relationship (i.e. correlation) between the high degrees of engagement in SMM and the likelihood to adopt a strategy of digital marketing. Such relationships, in conjunction with social mechanisms, have been investigated through the use of regression and structural equation modeling (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Conformity and group behavior were historically the initial focus of Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1961). With the advent of the digital revolution, this theory went through massive transformations. Initially, research focused on social interactions in person; however, with the advent of social media, the focus of the theory shifted to networked digital interactions and social media influencers. This modified theory was synthesized with other theoretical frameworks, including the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). In this instance, social influence is a moderator and is used to posit the theory is consistent with technology adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The theory has also provoked discussions around its social components relative to individual cognition, which is a primary concern of researchers examining social interactions in the digital sphere.

Technological Acceptance Model

Digital technology integration presents unique challenges for businesses, especially those in the technology usage in marketing in tourism. The TAM model assists in understanding the complexities associated. The core tenet of TAM is that an individual's acceptance of technology is dependent on the perceived usefulness of the technology and the ease of using the technology (Davis, 1989). This is especially the case in the contemporary tourism industry in where digitally marketing tools like social media and online website engagement presents and marketing and customer service strategies. Perception and understanding of the usefulness of digitally marketing within the tourism industry is crucial. TAM assists in understanding the connection between digital marketing and the intention to incorporate marketing within the tourism industry. TAM considers perceived usefulness, PU, and perceived ease of use, PEOU, as the basis of its framework. PU is characterized as the user's belief that utilizing the system or relevant technology will result in an enhancement of job performance. With that in mind, PEOU suggests that the user will determine that the technology in question will require little effort to use, (Davis, 1989). In digital marketing, these constructs are relevant. In tourism sector, businesses will be more inclined to use digital marketing if they are convinced that the approach will positively enhance customer interaction and improve overall performance of the business while incurring low effort and cost. Moreover, in numerous studies, TAM has been supplemented to include more variables, like perceived risk, that increases its relevance to more advanced technologies and new settings. This Supplement is important in tourism, as unadopted technologies due to perceived costs and security, reputation, and implementation related risks can be significant. TAM enjoys overwhelming support from current research publications. Over the span of years, the model has been confirmed in various realms such as information technology, e-commerce, and more recently, digital marketing and tourism (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2003). In practical contexts, TAM has been applied to describe the acceptance of online booking systems, tourism mobile apps, and social media marketing tools. In tourism, researchers have shown that if decision-makers view digital marketing tools as valuable and effortless, they are more willing to adopt them in their marketing activities. This strength of evidence has positioned TAM as a primary theoretical framework in numerous research that investigate technology adoption in diverse and customer centric ecosystems.

The two main ideas within TAM, 'perceived usefulness' and 'perceived ease of use' have measurable working definitions. Because of this, they can be measured quite clearly. In previous works, this measurement has been done through the use of surveys that utilize Likert scale items. An example of this could be measuring perceived usefulness by measuring how much participants believe that digital marketing helps in reaching customers or improving the service quality. For perceived ease of use, measuring how simple understanding and using the technology is would be sufficient. With studies focusing on digital marketing in the tourism industry, these are often associated with the behavioral intention of adopting digital marketing and this is often measured by using reliable scales. This can make the construction of hypothesis and the testing quite easier using various technological approaches, for example, regression or structural equation modeling. In comparison to other models, such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and the Diffusion of Innovations, Rogers (2003), explains that Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) pays greater attention to the cognitive

aspects driving the adoption of new technologies. UTAUT, for instance, analyzes social influence and other facilitating conditions. However, because of UTAUT's complexity, the effect of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use may get lost. As a result of TAM's simplicity and ease of use, much attention has been received in the academic world and in practical settings. However, there are critics of TAM, and these critics embrace the idea of simplicity being the model's significant barrier, as the model has been criticized for overlooking several other contextual factors. Some of these factors include social factors, cultural factors, and are particularly important in the global tourism industry. The most recent research suggests that the Technology Adoption Model, an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action, (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and introduced by Davis, has been refined (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000) to explain the ongoing and growing phenomenon of rapid technological change. TAM has extended to include perceived risk, enjoyment, and trust to address the gaps in the original model. In of the Digital Marketing Adoption in Tourism research, TAM has adapted to create a more comprehensive model that incorporates the motivational and inhibiting factors of digital strategy choices. Based on the arguments presented, TAM could be further enhanced by incorporating contextual factors from the tourism sector, including destination image, customer experience, and the changing digital communication landscape. Coupled with the growth of analytics and machine learning, TAM can be tested and refined on a continuum across a variety of different markets, ultimately yielding a more sophisticated toolkit to examine the phenomenon of digital adoption. In addition, incorporating TAM with theories that address the social and cultural dimensions will fill existing gaps and further enrich the model by exploring the relationship between the technological factors driving digital marketing and social factors.

Resource Based View

Due to its focus on a firm's internal resources and capabilities as the main sources of competitive advantage, the Resource-Based View (RBV) is a dominant perspective in strategic management research. In terms of the adoption of digital marketing in the tourism business, RBV is applicable as it shifts the emphasis from external market trends to the internal strengths of a tourism company such as competencies in digital marketing, techniques in advanced data analytics, and skills in creative content production that can lead to enhanced performance (Barney, 1991). Considering that tourism businesses are extremely competitive and customer-oriented, understanding the internal resources that are decisive in attaining successful digital marketing is instrumental in revealing the reasons these businesses can outperform and outperform competitors. A primary reason for choosing an RBV framework is its consideration of resource heterogeneity along with the definitions of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resource criteria. These concepts form the basis of understanding the differences in performance among firms. In the context of tourism, for example, a hotel with a digital team that excels in innovative online customer engagement will be able to leverage those internal resources to attract greater customer volume and enhance revenue (Wernerfelt, 1984). This internal resource examination is why RBV allows researchers and practitioners to more precisely single out those digital resources fundamental to achieving an organization's competitive advantage and thus speaks directly to the research question of identifying the factors that influence the intention to adopt digital marketing strategies. Resources-Based View (RBV) focuses on analyzing performance and digital marketing competencies, technological resources, and organizational acuity (internal resources) within a business. Academic studies concentrate on the performance of a business within the domain of tourism through quantitative factors such as the volume of the business, sales performance, growth of revenue, active participation of customers (engagement), and accommodation ratios of the business (which all show strong positive results of substantial resources). RBV aids in constructing theories as to how internal resources translate to results, such as the positive effects of digital resources on business results. In tourism marketing and digital marketing, RBV aids in developing the definitions of concepts, and research methodology (Michael, 1993).

There is sufficient evidence supporting this theory of knowledge within the tourism industry. Various studies show a positive relationship between digital marketing and customer

satisfaction and organizational financial performance, confirming the existence of digital marketing in organizations, as it is a resource of knowledge and also a marketing strategy (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997). This explains the substantial importance of internal organizational resources in the digital marketing strategy, thus confirming that it is a digital technological decision to achieve organizational growth through the external resources of the business. Unlike models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) or Diffusion of Innovations, the RBV takes a more unique approach by considering internal factors as opposed to external or individual views about technology. Even though the RBV incorporates valuable insights about technology supported by users, models such as TAM and Diffusion of Innovations, the RBV further extends these frameworks by considering internal strategic resources as well. In light of this comparison, we can identify a gap in the literature whereby studies on the adoption of digital marketing in tourism could instead benefit from a dual internal and external approach in exploring the numerous determinants of adoption. The origins of Resource Based View theory began in the 1980s - 1990s (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991) and have progressed from the theory of firm's resources being static, to more of a focus on resource renewal having to be a dynamic process (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). Because of this, RBV has stayed pertinent due to the increase in the pace of digital technology. The most recent work on the theory has incorporated, and further developed, dynamic capabilities which recognize that a firm's resources are of little importance if the firm does not have the ability to effectively reconfigure its resources in its possession to fit the ever-changing landscape of the market. In the most near-term future, the theory is likely to be further developed with the use of digital analytics in real time and the incorporation of a cross-cultural approach so that the focus will be on what internal capabilities can be tailored to fit the rapidly growing international digital tourism market.

Hypothesis

Social Media Marketing and the Intent to Adopt Digital Marketing

Marketing through social media is explained by Tuten and Solomon (2017) as the ability to use social media to capture the attention of the target audience to develop brand trust and create a line of communication between the brand and the consumer. In the tourism sector, this entails the creation of interactive, attractive content to increase the image and trust of the destination as well as the use of social media like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. While older studies focused primarily on content creation and promotion (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), more recent studies focus on the use of social media as a promotional tool and the relationship development between the brand and the consumer. For the purpose of this study the authors will consider social media marketing as the engagement-promoting strategy employed by businesses to affect tourism consumer behavior. This is the definition that represents the practice in the digital age. The intention to adopt digital marketing stems from the organizational and commitment decision-making criteria to mesh digital marketing strategies with business practices. For some time, this construct has been conceptualized using the Technology Acceptance Model and its extensions which link one's intent to adopt technology to its perceived value and simplicity of use. More recently, particularly in the tourism industry, this intention reflects a primary strategic decision at the firm level as a function of the firm's internal ability and the competitive environment (Dwivedi et al., 2019). While many of the studies offer slightly different definitions which range from individual behavioral intentions to a collective organizational commitment, the current study takes the organizational focus because the digital marketing strategies in tourism are a function of executive decisions and strategic resource allocation. These two factors are interconnected in many significant ways. Increased engagement and improved brand awareness are two anticipated outcomes of effective social media marketing that also overcome the perceived risks and strengthen the intent to utilize fully integrated digital marketing strategies by increasing the perceived ease and usefulness of digital marketing tools. This relationship can be explained by Social Influence Theory which suggests that the lack of uncertainty and the rapid adoption of innovative technologies are driven by visible social cues, particularly the successful implementation of digital marketing strategies by competitors

(Cialdini, 2009; Ajzen, 1991). This relationship is further supported by empirical research such as in the field of tourism, where the visibility and positive social proof from digital marketing remained a strong predictor of strategic investment and innovation adoption in its digital marketing practices (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Although there is a general agreement in the literature regarding the positive roles of marketing through social media and the adoption of digital marketing, some contradictions do exist, especially in relation to the role of contextual issues such as organizational culture and market dynamics. These gaps indicate the need for research that examines the additional variables to be moderated. There is also a need for further research that attempts to address the methodological issues in sample heterogeneity and in the use of more powerful, albeit, longitudinal approaches that can capture the processes involved in the adoption of digital marketing over time. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Social media marketing significantly affects the intention to adopt digital marketing.

Perceived Risk and Intention to adopt digital Marketing

Perceived risk refers to the potential downside or uncertainty organizations feel regarding the adoption of new technologies. In terms of digital marketing in the tourism business, perceived risk involves concerns such as data loss, financial loss, negative feedback from customers, and loss of reputation. In past studies, perceived risk has been treated as a multi-faceted concept that includes performance risk, privacy risk, and economic risk (Featherman and Pavlou, 2003; Bélanger and Crossler, 2011). While some definitions are more narrowly concerned with risks around technology, this study will embrace a definition that encompasses both the technology and strategic risks regarding the adoption of digital marketing. Such an approach is of particular importance to businesses in the tourism industry, as they are more susceptible to such risks because they operate in highly competitive, fast-evolving industries, and even a small error in the part of the business can drastically affect overall productivity. The intent to adopt digital marketing refers to an entire organization's willingness to engage with digital marketing as a business process. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM (Davis, 1989) and extensions of it (Venkatesh et al., 2003)), this willingness has to do with whether the business decision makers of an organization see value and the digital marketing attributes/possibilities as practicable. In the tourism sector, the intent to adopt digital marketing is measured at the organization level and not at the individual level, because large strategic decisions consume a good deal of resources and have far-reaching consequences on the organization's competitiveness. There have been some researchers looking into the adoption intention at the consumer level, but this particular study is focused on the organizational intent, primarily because within the tourism sector, digital marketing is a result of managerial decisions and the frameworks are predominantly strategic and long-term.

The interplay of perceived risk and the intention to adopt digital marketing is crucial for understanding the adoption of technology. Studies show that high perceived risk reduces the intention to adopt technology, as it focus more on the risk and less on the advantages and outcomes of the proposed digital strategy (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003). Cyber security, implementation costs, and reputational risk (if perceived risks are low or well controlled) are perceived as a risk to tourism businesses, and thus give more to digital marketing activities. Several scholars report a negative relationship between the perceived risk and intention to adopt in different contexts (e.g. e-commerce, digital innovation in service sectors) (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Dwivedi et al., 2019). This indicates that the perceived risk is a barrier for engaging in digital marketing practices in tourism. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) assists in discussing these concepts by explaining how external elements like perceived risk affect how an organization views a technology's value and overall simplicity, which then impacts the likelihood of adoption (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2002). In this instance, the inclusion of perceived risk within the parameters of TAM gives a better understanding of the relationship of potential loss and anticipated gain. This is particularly the case in tourism as the adoption of newly developed marketing technologies is complimented by the need to address the risks presented by fast-changing markets and consumer behavior. There is strong support for these

relationships; however, there are certain aspects of the relationship between perceived risk and adoption intention that are controversial and differ among the literature. The literature examines these controversies through the contexts of different industries, culture, and perception of measurement scale. The literature calls for further research to be conducted with the consideration of the additional moderating variables among firm size, digital readiness, or culture. The research should also include broad sampling, and adaptive methodological approaches, e.g., longitudinal studies, to be able to capture the dynamic nature of digital tourism adoption. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2. The perceived risk has a significant impact on intention to adopt digital marketing.

The performance of the tourism business and the intention to adopt digital marketing

Tourism business performance denotes the outcomes which are achieved and measured through the effectiveness and competitiveness of the firm among the tourism business market. This study conceptualizes it as a multi-dimensional construct comprising several financial measures, revenue, growth, and profitability; operational measures, occupancy rate, market share; and customer measures, satisfaction, and loyalty. The business tourism performance has been defined in a number of ways in the previous studies. While Buhalis (2003) focuses on performance metrics in the context of the customer service operational efficiency module, Sigala (2018) examines metrics and operational results from a broader perspective, as they relate to the brand and market positioning. Despite the differences in definitions, the present study takes a holistic approach that includes other performance measures, including financial and operational, and marketing performance. This approach is justified because the outcomes of digital marketing in tourism are multivariate and require the selection of a variety of performance measures to meet the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. According to RBV, a firm's sustained competitive advantage is emanated from the effective utilization of internal resources, particularly the idiosyncratic digital resources (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). When an organization decides to adopt digital marketing, it shows strategic commitment and readiness to incorporate digital marketing activities into the organization's daily activities. This intention stems from traditional technology acceptance research, where the intention to adopt technology is associated with the perceived usefulness of the technology and the ease of using it (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). In the field of tourism, this intent is measured at the organizational level through the analysis of manager commitment, the availability of resources toward digital spending, and the integration of digital initiatives into the broad business frameworks. Although some studies have analyzed the intention to adopt from an individual perspective (user behavior focus), this research is concerned with the firm-level decision-making process. This is the correct approach because strategic digital marketing in tourism involves complex resource allocation and elaborate planning frameworks.

The interaction of these variables is very important since the desire to adopt digital and focus on customer engagement, operational efficiency, and market opportunities, is expected to improve the performance of tourist businesses. There is evidence to support this relationship. Businesses in the tourism sector that practice digital marketing are likely to outperform their competitors in the acquisition of customers and in profitability (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2019). In this case, the RBV goes on to argue that a firm is more likely to acquire and implement digital marketing efforts if they have (VRIN) digital capabilities and are also more likely to have a higher level of digital marketing implementations. (Barney, 1991; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). However, the literature is contradictory concerning these constructs and their interaction. There is a growing consensus that the adoption of digital marketing is beneficial to business performance, but this impact is not straightforward. external variables\ factors, such as level of market competition, technological infrastructure, and cultural differences, can change the strength or direction of this relationship to be negative. These differences may be the gaps that the literature is asking to be filled in terms of what other variables are in the context and the need for more comprehensive and perhaps longitudinal studies.

The Social Influence Theory also provides some normative pressure arguments from inquiry peers and clientele that may increase the propensity for adopting the practice of digital marketing. Mainly, it seeks to reinforce the behavioral studies in this context confirming the RBV theory that company's own capabilities, when constrained by negative external social factors and positive external social factors, leads to higher levels of strategic commitment in relation to digital marketing (Cialdini, 2009). In other terms, it means observing marketing practices in the industry may compel some tourism businesses to engage in marketing practices that will result in greater performance. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

H3: There is a significant impact of tourism business performance and intention to adopt digital marketing.

Perceived Ease of Use and Intention to Adopt Digital Marketing

Davis (1989) defined the perceived ease of use (PEOU) construct as the extent to which an individual is of the opinion that the technological application would not require effort. Drawing from PEOU, in the case of the tourism business, digital marketing refers to the extent to which tourism managers and staff perceive the digital marketing methodologies to be uncomplicated, straightforward, and user-friendly. Ease of use greatly diminishes the overall mental and procedural challenges that come when trying to utilize new tech systems. Other researchers have operated with a TAM-based definition and come to the conclusion that organizations are more inclined to adopt new digital marketing technologies the system's usage and learning requirements are very minimal (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Some researchers have, however, observed system usability separately from its ease, but regardless of the different approaches, this research employs the original definition of TAM focusing on perception, for its greater empirical backing and overall usefulness in elucidating on the behavioral patterns revolving around the usage of new tech.

Intention to adopt digital marketing refers to the organizational effort to follow through with the implementation of digital marketing strategies. Within the framework of TAM, intention refers to the willingness of an organization to use digital marketing tools, which stems from perceptions of ease of use and usefulness. In the context of the tourism industry, this intention is demonstrated through the management of the business and the decisions made to incorporate digital marketing, from social media customer engagement to online booking tools that streamline business operations. Some studies have framed adoption intention from a consumer perspective; however, this research takes an organizational perspective, especially considering that decision making within tourism companies is predominantly at the top of the organizational hierarchy where higher management is responsible for strategic resource planning and long-range planning (Venkatesh et al, 2003). The relationship among these constructs is further documented in the TAM framework. TAM states higher the perceived ease of use, not only does the behavioral intention to use the technology increase, but also indirectly influences the adoption intention through perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989). In the tourism industry, when marketing tool is perceived to be easy to use, it is perceived to be more useful, thereby increasing the overall intent to adopt digital marketing. Ease of use as a determinant of adoption intentions has been documented in the literature. Across various industries and tourism, it is a common finding that tools requiring less effort, result in higher acceptance (Venkatesh et al., 2003). A degree of conflict exists in academia even with the broad backing of (use and ease in consumer application technology). Users may have several motivations toward the technology and in such scenarios, ease of use may become inconsequential. TAM may be the bedrock and fundamental basis of theory; however, several streams of theory propose other external variables such as organizational preparedness, market competitiveness, and the digital market complexities that may be moderating variables, ease of use and your consumer motivation theory. This emphasis gap and these variables, indicates that extra frameworks and theories with observed contextual and moderating variables integration, require solid empirical construction. TAM substantiates the concepts discussed in this study. In defining the roles of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, TAM also provides contextualization's to integrate the concepts, in this case, the intent to adopt digital marketing in the tourism sector.

In this case, the tourism sector businesses, if perceived digital marketing tools as easy to use and beneficial, would ease the adoption of the tools and grow the digital marketing competitive agility and customer responsive engagement. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H4: There is a significant impact of Perceived ease of use on intention to adopt digital marketing.

Perceived Usefulness

Most technology adoption research centers on perceived usefulness which is defined as the expectation in performing a specific task that one's performance will be improved, and the technology value will be additive to the outcome (Davis, 1989). In relation to digital marketing in tourism, perceived usefulness is the expectation of the tourism businesses to achieve improved performance through customer retention and customer engagement from the utilization of different digital marketing tools like social media, online advertising, and data analytics. The marketing outcomes to be improved from the marketing in tourism will result in improved performance of the businesses. Perceived usefulness has been the cognitive belief that a technology will enhance the performance of tasks.

Take (Davis, 1989) as an illustration, who first conceived of this construct in the scope of individual-level job performance. Later works, such as Venkatesh et al. (2003), incorporated analyses of how technology improves the organization's strategic and operational performance and expanded the construct to the organizational level. While other definitions exist such as in (Davis, 1989) work where the studies focus on relative advantages or cost-benefit analysis, in this case the version of the definition closely aligned with TAM is preferred due to the abundance of empirical studies in support of this proposed relationship and the straightforward nature of the definition in linking perceived benefits to the intentions to adopt.

An organization's readiness and dedication to integrating digital marketing techniques into its marketing strategy is referred to as the intention to adopt digital marketing. In our context, this concerns the strategic intent of tourism businesses to leverage and implement digital marketing practices and channels to gain a competitive edge. The concept originates from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and from the perception of usefulness as a construct, the intention to adopt is measured through the willingness of managers to invest and use digital marketing. There is no shortage of studies, which include Venkatesh et al. (2003), which show the strong correlation of perceived usefulness to the intention to adopt. Even though literature discusses the intention to adopt from the individual perspective, in this context, where digital marketing is concerned, the decision streamlines around the organization. Hence, the organization-wide definition is more relevant. Within TAM, the extent to which one's perception affects the intention to accept the use of digital marketing is well documented. TAM suggests that if managers in the tourism business perceive digital marketing to be an asset to their performance, they will be more inclined to accept its use. Several quantitative studies have established that perceived usefulness is the most important predictor of willingness to accept the use of technology (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). In tourism, if managers perceive that they can use digital marketing to better engage their customers, increase their profits, or improve the reputation of their brand, their willingness to use digital marketing will increase. This is especially so since digital marketing activities are widely perceived to be important in meeting the needs of customers in an intensely competitive industry like tourism. While empirical evidence supports this association, there are still some unexplained issues and inconsistencies. Research suggests that perceived usefulness is a strong predictor of adoption intention, moderation of which is influenced by organizational culture, risk perceptions, and availability of resources (Dwivedi et al., 2019). These moderators imply that the association must not be uniformly strong in all scenarios and that there are likely other factors that interact with perceived usefulness to determine adoption intention. In any case, TAM strongly argues that perceived usefulness is, indeed, a major predictor of technology adoption. This is especially true in the case of tourism digital marketing where the competitiveness of the sector can make

a difference in the adoption of technologies that are perceived to improve performance. Hence, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H5: There is a significant impact of perceived usefulness on the intention to adopt digital marketing.

Research Methodology

A quantitative descriptive and causal comparative research design was utilized in the study. The study was applied to the population of business in tourism in Nepal focusing on the business of tourism services like tour operators, travel agencies and hospitality services. The sample include a total of 400 respondents and we selected the operators of the companies to obtain information on the uses and adoption of digital marketing, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social media marketing, perceived risk, tourism business performance, and if the business adapted to digital marketing. A survey instrument was designed and from there we decided to use Google Form to distribute and collect data. To increase the reliability and validity of the study, the questionnaire items was adopted to the previous studies. Items on perceived usefulness were adapted to the technology adoption studies in tourism (Hernandez et al., 2021) perceived ease of use items were taken from TAM based (Davis, 1989); social media marketing items tourism marketing (Buhalis & Law, 2008); perceived risk items were adopted from technology adoption (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003); and items on tourism business performance were from digital marketing performance (Chaffey, 2015).

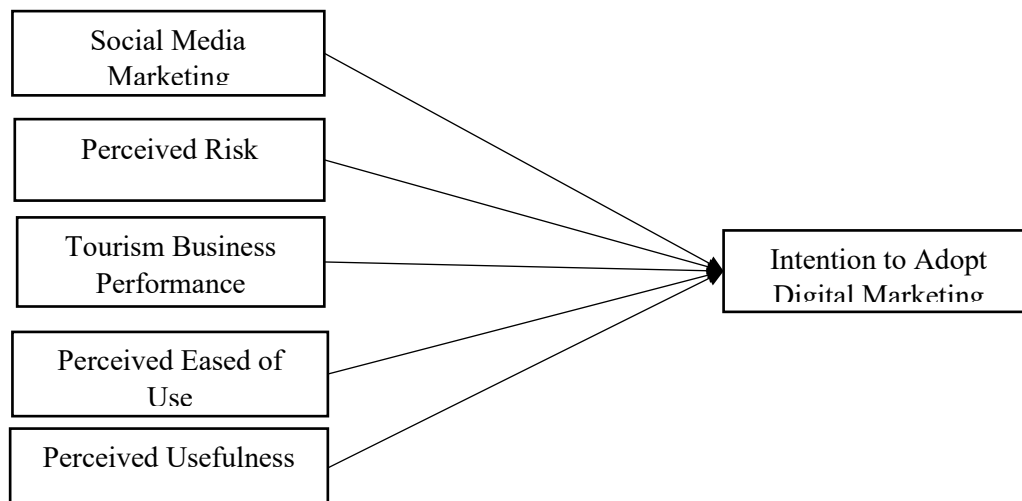


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Table 1: Respondents Demographics

Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	304	76
	Female	96	24
	Total	400	100
Age	Below 20	76	19
	20–40	224	56
	40–60	84	21
	Above 60	16	4
	Total	400	100
Education Qualifications	High School	4	1
	10+2	116	29

Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
	Bachelor	224	56
	Masters	48	12
	Above Masters	8	2
	Total	400	100

This section contains information regarding the respondents' demographic information as to their gender, age, and education. Considering the respondents by gender, 76% were male, while 24% were female, which suggests the sample is male dominated, perhaps reflective of the gender distribution generally noted in the tourism industry. With respect to the age of the respondents, most of the respondents, 56% were in the age range of 20-40, which suggests that the tourism industry is mainly represented by people in the earlier to middle career stages. A lower percentage of the sample, 21% were in the age range of 40-60 and just 4% were over the age of 60, which indicates that the sector is primarily run by younger and middle-aged people. About educational attainment, 56% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, 29% were 10+2 pass, and 12% were master's degree holders. A lower percentage, 2% went beyond a master's and only 1% were high school graduates. This figure indicates that the respondents were educated to a high degree, with a larger percentage of the respondents holding a bachelor's degree. The combined characteristics show that the workforce in the tourism industry is male, young and educated to a high level, which educated to a high level, and is male oriented as per the education statue and predominance of young people and the workforce being educated. The workforce is heavily educated and young.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix between independent and dependent variables

Constructs	SMM	PR	TBP	PEOU	PU	ADM
SMM	1					
PR	0.242**	1				
TBP	0.398**	0.335**	1			
PEOU	0.421**	0.498**	0.264**	1		
PU	0.389**	0.387**	0.375**	0.231**	1	
ADM	0.412**	0.377**	0.513**	0.436**	0.308**	1

The analysis of correlation and interdependence pertaining to the variables of interest, namely Social Media Marketing, Perceived Risk, Tourism Business Performance, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, and Adoption of Digital Marketing, as reflected in Table 2, indicates the following important associations: There is moderate positive correlation between SMM and ADM, being $r = .412$, $p < .01$, which indicates that the more social media marketing is done, the more likely there is to be inclination towards the use of digital marketing in tourism enterprises. PR demonstrates weak positive correlation with ADM, being $r = .377$, $p < .01$, wherein the perceived risk is not substantive, but perhaps the higher perceived risk might be an influence to the more cautious adopting of the digital marketing tools. TBP is positively correlated with ADM with $r = .513$, $p < .01$, which would mean that there is a positively strong relationship between the higher performing of tourism enterprises to the increased use of digital marketing. PEOU demonstrates correlation with ADM, $r = .436$, $p < .01$ which shows the more that the digital marketing tools are perceived to be easier to use, the more that tourism enterprises would likely adopt use of the tools. PU indicates low to average to relationship to other aspects that increase ADM due to end positive influence, though relative to other factors such as improve performance and behavioral acceptance might be considered low.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.612	0.165		9.770	0.000

SMM	0.128	0.034	0.152	3.760	0.001
PR	0.095	0.026	0.121	3.615	0.002
TBP	0.178	0.035	0.229	5.087	0.000
PEOU	0.163	0.037	0.241	4.405	0.000
PU	0.074	0.024	0.099	3.083	0.005

Source: SPSS 20

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is significantly positively correlated with the adoption of digital marketing ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 3.760$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). Thus, SMM does influence the intention to adopt digital marketing, and is thus, a supported hypothesis. The influence of Perceived Risk (PR) is positively significant on adoption ($\beta = 0.121$, $t = 3.615$, $p = 0.002 < 0.05$). This is to say PR does influence the adoption of digital marketing and the prediction is validated. The impact of Tourism Business Performance (TBP) on adoption is very high ($\beta = 0.229$, $t = 5.087$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) which implies the better the business performance, the more the adoption of digital marketing, as such the hypothesis is validated. The influence of Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) on the adoption of digital marketing is very high too ($\beta = 0.241$, $t = 4.405$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) which indicates the significant role is played to influence such adoption, thus validating the hypothesis. The influence of Perceived Usefulness (PU) is positively correlated to adoption ($\beta = 0.099$, $t = 3.083$, $p = 0.005 < 0.05$). This validates the hypothesis that PU does indeed influence the adoption of digital marketing positively.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research illustrates social media's and its marketing's importance in incorporating various marketing techniques. In this scenario, we are focusing our research on tourism. The results demonstrate on social platforms that marketing digitally and adopting marketing techniques influences the social marketing intent. Therefore, this reinforces the research done by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) acknowledging social media as a trust and credibility barrier, opening the door to the digital world. The phenomena social proof is also eventually supported by social influence theory (Kelman, 1958; Cialdini, 2009), which simply states that peers or influencers on social platforms can break down the walls of businesses in adopting marketing digitally. The research showed that exposure to marketing digitally must persuasively demonstrates a social platform an overwhelming amount of the research concludes overwhelmingly that social media persuades businesses to adopt digital marketing techniques.

Besides social media, the study underlines the impact perception of risk has on making adoption decisions. According to the extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006), stronger intentions to adopt digital marketing tools are explained by lower perceived risks. When firms perceive little to no risks, such as financial, security, or operational, they are likely to adopt new technologies. This is especially true in the tourism industry, as the digital marketing tools are likely to be perceived as more novel or uncharted. The study also noted that the speediest adopters of digital tools were the higher performers, especially within the tourism industry. Companies that were more successful perceived digital marketing technologies as more valuable within the marketplace and to their businesses. This also aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Adama et al., 2024) which suggests the more a firm possesses valuable internal resources, the more they are enabled to direct their focus toward the acquisition of more sophisticated technologies that are likely to strengthen their competitive edge in the marketplace. Moreover, this study illustrates how accessible the marketing tools are. Tools that have a lower price point are set at that point because of their ease of use, and mastery. The result solidifies an integral principle of the TAM (Davis 1989), which argues that the easier the technology is to use, the more it will be adopted. Some discrepancies were observed, where a minority of respondents reported some difficulties with tools that are generally regarded as easy to use, signifying that these people are more likely to have a digital literacy or tech experience that is below average, which could affect their level of adoption. This theory has outlined the impact that this phenomenon can have both on the theory and practice. In a theoretical context, it emphasizes the value of the social influence

theory in digital marketing, and the RBV theory in focusing on the resources and capabilities within a firm in efficiently transforming the digital resources. On the practical side of it, the tourism firms have to merge social media marketing to facilitate digital assimilation. Trust marketing must be persuasive in a digitally and visually interactive way and must address the digitally disadvantage to facilitate and promote digital adoption. Besides, on the operational and financial side, there are successful tourism enterprises. They have to improve their operational capability and digital marketing assets for their competitive advantage.

To summarize, social media marketing, perceived risk, ease of use, and outcomes of the business affect the adoption of digital marketing technologies the most. For effective digital business transformation, businesses must cultivate a digital tool ecosystem viewed as safe, simple, and instrumental. All these, especially via social media and risk reduction, will enable businesses to sustain high customer engagement and performance and retain competitiveness in the digitally evolving market. The tourism industry will benefit the most. Further research on the impacts of social media on the digitally adoption phenomenon will provide insights on the digital adoption enablers across varying tourism market scenarios and business environments.

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