African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure 2025 Vol. 14 No. 2 pp. 301-308
ISSN: 2223-814X

Tourism Marketers' Perceptions on Digital Marketing Adoption: Extending the Technology Acceptance Model

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Abstract

This study aims to explore tourism marketers' perceptions regarding the adoption of digital marketing platforms and extends the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by integrating constructs pertinent to the tourism sector in emerging economies. Adopting a qualitative approach, data were collected from semi-structured interviews with tourism marketers possessing varied levels of digital experience, organisational support, and access to resources. The findings, derived from thematic analysis, underscore the significance of perceived usefulness and social influence in the adoption of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Facebook. Furthermore, trust in technology and organisational digital readiness emerged as influential factors. This study proposes an extended TAM framework, termed the Digital Tourism Acceptance Model (DigiTAM), which incorporates perceived trustworthiness, visual social influence, and digital readiness. The study contributes to the literature by offering an empirically grounded extension of TAM contextualised for developing countries and provides actionable insights for tourism policymakers to enhance digital transformation in destination marketing.

Keywords Digital marketing adoption, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), tourism digital transformation, tourism marketing

How to cite this article: Chamboko-Mpotaringa, M. (2025). Tourism Marketers' Perceptions on Digital Marketing Adoption: Extending the Technology Acceptance Model. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 14(2):301-308. DOI: https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.610

Introduction

The tourism industry serves as a significant economic force for many developing countries (Alcalá-Ordóñez & Segarra, 2023) and continues to experience substantial digital transformation, reshaping how tourists and marketers engage during various stages of consumers' travel decision-making (Veseli et al., 2025). In recent years, COVID-19 imposed stringent restrictions on numerous businesses (Bama & Nyikana, 2021), accelerating digital adoption and usage, which has resulted in tourism destinations and businesses prioritising their online presence (Chamboko-Mpotaringa, 2024a). Digital marketing, encompassing the utilisation of diverse platforms and strategies such as social media, websites, mobile applications, search engine optimisation (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), and content marketing, has become an integral tool for tourism marketers (Raji et al., 2024; Seyitoğlu & Costa, 2022). Digital marketing facilitates the reach and engagement of a broader customer base and enhances information sharing. Moreover, its real-time, two-way interaction renders it an indispensable tool for maximising economic gains and attracting tourists (Barman & Mahanta, 2025). For emerging economies, digital marketing platforms present significant potential to enhance destination competitiveness, increase visibility, promote sustainable economic growth, and influence consumer behaviour (Chiwaridzo & Masengu, 2024; León-Gómez et al., 2023; Sharma & Sharma, 2023). However, their effectiveness is contingent upon the availability of digital platforms, infrastructure readiness, effective utilisation, digital trust, and the willingness of tourism marketers to adopt these technologies (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023a; Lama et al., 2020; Splendiani et al., 2023). Tourism marketers in emerging economies operate within complex environments characterised by both technological opportunities and structural constraints. For instance, while social media is widely acknowledged for its cost-effectiveness and capacity to generate interest and engagement (Ezeh et al., 2025), barriers such as trust issues with online payments, limited digital literacy, and organisational readiness hinder optimal technology adoption. The literature (Barman & Mahanta, 2025; Maduku, 2021; Raji et al., 2024) indicates various contextual barriers. Maduku (2021) and Barman & Mahanta (2025), focusing on South Africa and India respectively, concur that while small and medium enterprises (SMEs) adopt digital marketing due to the cost-effective solutions it offers, many SMEs have been slow to embrace digital marketing because of technological complexity, compatibility issues, lack of knowledge, and security concerns. Similarly, Murniati et al. (2023) highlight that rural tourism destinations often encounter challenges related to infrastructural limitations and a deficiency in digital skills. Conversely, focusing on larger firms in the USA and Africa, Raji et al. (2024) found that larger tourism enterprises are better positioned to implement sophisticated digital marketing strategies. Despite previous literature contextualising its research within various geographical settings and sizes of tourism firms (Barman & Mahanta, 2025; Maduku, 2021; Murniati et al., 2023; Raji et al., 2024), these studies have insufficiently addressed the role of trust and the impact of visual social factors in the adoption of digital marketing. Trust in digital technologies is crucial, particularly in contexts where certain consumers remain skeptical of online payments and automated responses (Buvár & Gáti, 2023). The visual appeal of destinations, as presented through digital platforms and visual media, significantly influences user perceptions and consumption of these destinations (Wengel et al., 2022). This influence imposes increased pressure on marketers to determine which visuals to utilise. Moreover, given the rapid evolution of digital technologies, there is a pressing need for ongoing research into the digital readiness of tourism firms to guarantee technological preparedness. This research

aims to fill the gap in the literature by investigating tourism marketers' perceptions regarding the adoption of digital marketing platforms and introducing an extended Technology Acceptance Model, termed the Digital Tourism Acceptance Model (DigiTAM), which is pertinent to the tourism sector in emerging economies where tourism marketers encounter unique contextual challenges. DigiTAM incorporates three additional constructs: trustworthiness, visual social influence, and digital readiness. While situating the discussion within the South African context, the study offers a conceptual framework with empirically supported constructs that can be applied to other emerging tourism markets.

Literature review

Theoretical underpinning

Established theoretical frameworks, such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989), have been employed to investigate technology adoption across various contexts, including education (Al-Adwan et al., 2023), employee well-being (Shamsi et al., 2021), and tourism (Buvár & Gáti, 2023; Mathew & Soliman, 2021). TAM posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are two primary factors influencing an individual's attitude towards the utilisation of a particular technology, which subsequently affects their behavioural intention and actual usage (Davis, 1989). The relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness has also been highlighted in previous studies within the tourism sector (Teng et al., 2024). Attitude can serve as a predictor of user behaviour. According to Ajzen and Driver (1991), attitude towards behaviour reflects the extent to which users evaluate the behaviour in question favourably or unfavourably. This study acknowledges that while TAM provides a robust framework for understanding technology adoption across diverse sectors, it possesses limitations, particularly in its omission of external factors. This is especially pertinent in dynamic, context-specific domains such as tourism, where user behaviours evolve in tandem with technological advancements. Consequently, there is an increasing necessity to extend TAM to incorporate constructs that capture industry-specific dynamics and contemporary digital realities.

Trustworthiness, social visual influence and institutional digital readiness in digital marketing platforms adoption

The tourism sector has undergone a significant transformation with the adoption of digital marketing platforms, disrupting traditional marketing methodologies (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2021) and reshaping the ways in which marketers engage with tourists (Bilgihan & Ricci, 2023; Prathapan et al., 2019). The rapid infiltration of technology into various business dimensions, including marketing, is an inevitable phenomenon (Mgoduka et al., 2024). However, the adoption of digital marketing platforms by marketers within the tourism sector of emerging economies represents a dynamic phenomenon influenced by the interplay of multiple factors, including trustworthiness, social visualisation, and institutional digital readiness (Eze, 2024; Khasawneh et al., 2023; Saini et al., 2024). Trustworthiness is a multidimensional concept encompassing ability, perceived competence, and integrity (Svare et al., 2020), which is essential for fostering long-term customer loyalty and satisfaction (Tam et al., 2024). The presence of trustworthiness enhances the effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives by promoting positive consumer attitudes and behaviours (Mollik et al., 2024). Initiatives aimed at building trust are crucial for overcoming scepticism towards digital platforms in developing economies such as South Africa and Nigeria (Eze, 2024). Marketers and tourists are more inclined to engage with platforms that exhibit reliability and competence, significantly influencing marketers' decisions to adopt digital platforms. Social visuals, including videos and photographs shared by family, friends, and influencers, significantly impact tourists' perceptions of destinations. Understanding the influence of social visual elements is vital for tourism marketers, as it affects tourist decision-making processes and the design of marketing campaigns. Social media platforms have emerged as potent tools for promoting tourism products through user-generated content, with influencers playing a pivotal role in shaping destination preferences (Deng et al., 2022; Rehman et al., 2023). Factors such as the need for social proof, fear of missing out (FOMO), and identity construction significantly influence tourists' attitudes toward and behavioural engagement with social media, rendering these platforms powerful instruments for tourism marketing (Chen & Lin, 2019; Saini et al., 2024). Trustworthiness and social visual influence are intricately connected, as visual content on social media platforms can either enhance or undermine trust in digital marketing initiatives. For instance, high-quality visual content produced by marketers on digital platforms can cultivate trust, whereas low-quality content may diminish it (Hossain et al., 2024). The ability of tourism organisations to adopt and effectively utilise digital technologies in emerging economies is frequently constrained by resource limitations and infrastructural challenges (Sharma & Sharma, 2023). Previous research has confirmed that emerging economies often encounter significant difficulties in competing within a rapidly evolving digital landscape (Mgoduka et al., 2024) due to a lack of access to funding, digital expertise, and infrastructural barriers (Chamboko-Mpotaringa, 2024b; Pikkemaat et al., 2018; Styvén & Wallström, 2019). Tourism organisations that are digitally prepared are better positioned to adopt digital marketing platforms, thereby responding more effectively to the evolving needs of tourists, enhancing tourist engagement, and improving overall performance (Khasawneh et al., 2023). Consequently, institutional digital readiness exerts an influence on marketers' behavioural intentions to adopt digital platforms for tourism marketing. This relationship is consistent with previous studies that emphasise the impact of internal capacity and support systems on technology adoption (Dahmani & Ben Youssef, 2023; Triandini et al., 2024).

Methods

The study was conducted in the Free State province of South Africa. This province was selected due to its diverse yet rich tourist routes, uneven tourist arrivals across its municipalities, and increasing digital adoption. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with tourism marketers possessing varied levels of digital experience, organisational

support, and access to resources. Qualitative research was chosen as it enables the researcher to engage closely with the subjects under investigation (Mik-Meyer, 2020), thereby facilitating a deeper exploration of the marketers' perspectives on digital marketing adoption. Guided by a semi-structured interview framework, the study ensured comprehensive coverage of all relevant themes. Non-probability purposive sampling techniques were employed to select the research participants, who were required to have a connection to marketing. The interviews were conducted in person or virtually to accommodate participants' preferences and to mitigate the limitations of travel costs for the researcher, whilst allowing for the observation of interviewees' body language to assess their understanding of the questions. The average duration of the interviews was thirty-five minutes, deemed appropriate for an in-depth exploration of the topic while maintaining participant engagement. After conducting thirteen interviews, the researcher determined that saturation had been reached, which is consistent with the findings of Guest et al. (2006), who suggest that saturation is typically achieved within the first twelve interviews in qualitative research. The digital recordings were transcribed verbatim shortly after the interviews, while the content remained fresh in the researcher's mind. The interview data were thematically analysed manually, following the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Clarke & Braun (2017), which includes familiarisation, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report production. Manual data analysis is advocated for small qualitative datasets, as it affords the researcher a level of control that is absent in software analysis, enabling a deeper exploration of the data and the capture of nuanced insights (Reed et al., 2025). Interviewees were assigned codes for their direct quotes. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification of patterns (themes) within the data and categorised them according to the constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and other emergent themes.

Results and discussion

Profile of the research participants

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the research participants, indicating that the majority of respondents were female (53.8%). Additionally, a significant proportion of participants (53.8%) fell within the 31-40 age category and were employed by local and provincial governments (61.5%). A notable number of respondents held senior and managerial positions (53.8%) and reported varying levels of experience with digital platforms, with 46.2% indicating high levels of experience and 38.4% reporting moderate levels.

Table 1: Profile of the research participants

Identifier	Gender	Age (range in years)	Stakeholder	Marketing position	Digital experience
RP01	Female	31-40	Provincial government	officer	Moderate
RP02	Male	31-40	Private	manager	High
RP03	Female	41-50	Provincial government	officer	Basic
RP04	Female	31-40	Provincial government	manager	Moderate
RP05	Female	31-40	Private	manager	Moderate
RP06	Male	51-60	Local government	Senior officer	Moderate
RP07	Male	41-50	Provincial government	manager	High
RP08	Male	51-60	Local government	manager	Basic
RP09	Female	31-40	Provincial government	officer	High
RP010	Male	41-50	Private	manager	High
RP011	Female	31-40	Local government	officer	High
RP012	Male	51-60	Private	officer	High
RP013	Female	31-40	Private	officer	Moderate

Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis identified eight key themes, offering insights into tourism marketers' perceptions regarding the adoption of digital marketing platforms within the tourism sector.

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Perceived usefulness (PEOU)	Enhances destination visibility
	Facilitates customer engagement and communication
	Increases sales and bookings
	Cost effective
Perceived ease of use (PU)	Simplicity and familiarity of social media platforms
	User-friendly integration across platforms
Attitude (ATT)	Optimistic about digital transformation
	Cautiousness due to a lack of digital skills and capacity
Perceived trustworthiness (PT)	Preference for human interaction
	Credibility through reviews
	Trust in the security and payment of digital platform systems
Social visual influence (SVI)	Visual triggers
	Authentic user-generated content
Institutional digital readiness (IDR)	Lack of dedicated digital marketing personnel
	Inadequate training and digital skills
	Financial constraints
Behavioural intention to use (BI)	Plans to expand the use of digital marketing platforms
	Anticipation of use
Actual use	Active use of digital marketing platforms
	Regular posting
	Data analytics

Perceived usefulness

Marketers perceive digital marketing platforms as valuable tools, and various perceptions underscore their utility in enhancing awareness of tourism routes, destinations, and local attractions, facilitating real-time communication with tourists, and enabling prompt responses to inquiries. Notable comments reflecting this perspective include: "People share on Facebook so that we can reach a wider market. I think that's the benefit of social media" (RP01, female marketing officer, moderate digital experience). "It makes it easier to inform people of our brand and establishment…we use WhatsApp for our business. It's faster for us to respond" (RP02, male marketing manager, high digital experience), "I would package my route on the Shot Left, showcasing and demonstrating the type of destination I have here" (RP03, female marketing officer, basic digital experience). Regarding the impact on sales, bookings, and cost-effectiveness, the following observations were recorded: "We have seen some benefits; our sales have been increasing steadily" (RP05, female marketing manager, moderate digital experience). Participants' comments emphasise the potential of digital platforms to address the limitations of traditional marketing, such as printing costs and geographical boundaries. These statements highlight the utility of digital marketing platforms in tourism (Ababneh, 2022; Sigala et al., 2023).

Perceived ease of use

Marketers perceive digital marketing platforms as user-friendly due to their familiarity, intuitive interfaces, widespread adoption, and seamless integration across different platforms. Two marketers articulated their perspectives: "Facebook is easy to use… our social media accounts are linked to our website. People can easily manoeuvre between them" (RP02, male marketing manager, high digital experience). "We have a Facebook page where one can invite friends to like other stakeholders' pages to see what events are happening in Free State" (RP06, male, senior marketing officer, moderate digital experience). These perspectives indicate that marketers connect various digital tools, facilitating their responsibilities and enhancing the tourist experience, as suggested by Tiso & Melani (2023).

Attitude

Mixed sentiments were observed regarding marketers' attitudes towards digital marketing platforms. While some marketers expressed commitment, others remained cautious due to their limited knowledge. These sentiments can be gleaned from the following comments: "We are not giving up on Facebook" (RP04, female, marketing manager, moderate digital experience). "Even though it's hard, we still post. It's better than going silent" (RP05, female, marketing manager, moderate digital experience). "I'm from the other millennium… I prefer hard copies" (RP03, female, marketing officer, basic digital experience). The findings indicate that tourism marketers maintain a positive outlook on adopting digital marketing platforms, providing insights into their intentions to continue utilising these platforms. This perspective is supported by Nguyen & Bui (2022), who assert that positive attitudes influence behaviours.

Trustworthiness

The study revealed that some marketers and customers continue to prefer direct human contact due to distrust in fully digital systems, particularly concerning bookings, confirmations, and payments. "People still want to pick up a phone and speak to someone… we don't do payments online because there are still people who feel it's not safe" (RP03, female, marketing officer, basic digital experience). "Tourists will still call and confirm with us even after seeing the information online" (RP01, female marketing officer, moderate digital experience), "We don't do payments online because there are still people who feel it's not safe.", "They (clients) still inquire: Can I instead pay cash upon my arrival?" (RP04, female, marketing manager, moderate digital experience). Conversely, other marketers contend that trust in digital platforms is enhanced when tourists leave positive reviews, post images, or endorse experiences, thereby generating electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). This underscores the notion that peer validation is crucial in establishing trust. "If an individual shares a video of your establishment, it is perceived as more credible than a government advertisement" (RP06, male, senior marketing officer, moderate digital experience). Trust serves as a critical enabler in the adoption of technology, but it can also present obstacles. The findings align with Buvár & Gáti (2023), who assert that trust affects users' confidence in the reliability, security, and credibility of online transactions.

Social visual influence

Marketers recognise the increasing significance of social media platforms' reels on Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram in capturing attention and inspiring travel. "Video content represents the future" (RP06, male, senior marketing officer, moderate digital experience). "We needed to move away from flyers and concentrate on visuals—individuals scroll more than they read" (RP04, female marketing manager, moderate digital experience). Other marketers argue that photos and videos shared by tourists or locals exert greater influence than professionally produced content, as they are perceived to be more authentic. These perspectives were articulated when the marketers noted that: "It's the copycat effect—someone posts a picnic, and suddenly everyone desires to visit the location" (RP01, female marketing officer, moderate digital experience). "A 15-second video can convey more than a pamphlet. We consistently encourage tourists to post and tag us… it serves as free marketing and is very genuine" (RP05, female, marketing manager, moderate digital experience). "If an individual shares a video of your establishment, it is perceived as more credible than a government advertisement" (RP06, male, senior marketing officer, moderate digital experience). Travel decisions are no longer exclusively directed by organisations (Fodranová et al., 2022). The aforementioned responses from the marketers illustrate the growing importance of visual storytelling and the

influence of content shared by family, friends, and influencers on digital platforms in shaping travel decision-making. Other scholars have echoed these sentiments (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2021; Lam et al., 2020).

Institutional digital readiness

Many marketers have reported contextual challenges regarding the adoption of digital marketing, including a lack of dedicated personnel responsible for digital content creation, campaign management, and platform engagement, as well as inadequate training and digital skills, alongside financial constraints. The following responses provide insight into institutional digital readiness: "We do not have a full-time person for social media. We engage with it when we have time" (RP05, female, marketing manager, moderated digital experience), "It is primarily trial and error. There is no structured support" (RP06, male, senior marketing officer, moderate digital experience), "Sometimes we have to double up our roles; one day I am doing administration, and the next day I am posting on Facebook… No, we do not have a budget for social media advertising. We rely on organic content" (RP04, female marketing manager, moderate digital experience). The responses from the marketers reflect the structural and resource constraints prevalent in emerging economies, which significantly influence the adoption of digital marketing platforms in the tourism sector. Despite increased internet usage, developing countries such as South Africa continue to face challenges related to the digital divide (Jaxa et al., 2025; Mgoduka et al., 2024).

Behavioural intention to use and actual use

Tourism marketers indicated that they are currently utilising digital platforms in their marketing efforts, as evidenced by the following responses: "We post every time we have an event or promotion" (RP02, male marketing manager, high digital experience), "We use WhatsApp for quick updates or to answer questions" (RP04, female marketing manager, moderate digital experience), "We create content in advance and schedule our posts… We also use our website to monitor hits and determine which promotion is more popular" (RP05, female, marketing manager, moderated digital experience), "On Facebook, we examine how many shares or comments we receive" (RP06, male, senior marketing officer, moderate digital experience). Other marketers articulated their future plans and enthusiasm regarding upcoming tools: "We are working on reviving our Facebook page" (RP05, female, marketing manager, moderated digital experience), "We want to expand our presence on TikTok, similar to what is being done in Mpumalanga. We have observed its effectiveness" (RP06, male, senior marketing officer, moderate digital experience), "Yes, we are looking forward to having this application. It will facilitate processes for everyone" (RP01, female marketing officer, moderate digital experience). These findings indicate that tourism marketers employ various digital platforms in their marketing strategies, engage in regular posting to ensure continuous customer interaction, and utilise data analytics to monitor interactions and website traffic. Marketers also gain insights into campaign reach and formulate plans for future implementation. The study's findings affirm that the use of technology in business is no longer an option but a necessity (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2023b; Madila et al., 2022).

Digital tourism acceptance model (DigiTAM)

The findings of the current study facilitated the development of a customised and comprehensive extension of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), termed the DigiTAM, specifically designed for the adoption of digital marketing platforms in tourism within emerging economies. DigiTAM expands upon the original TAM by incorporating three new constructs that emerged from qualitative interviews with tourism marketers, as supported by the identified themes. Figure 1 presents the DigiTAM, illustrating the relationships among the constructs and providing a contextualised framework for understanding the adoption of digital marketing in the tourism sector within emerging markets.

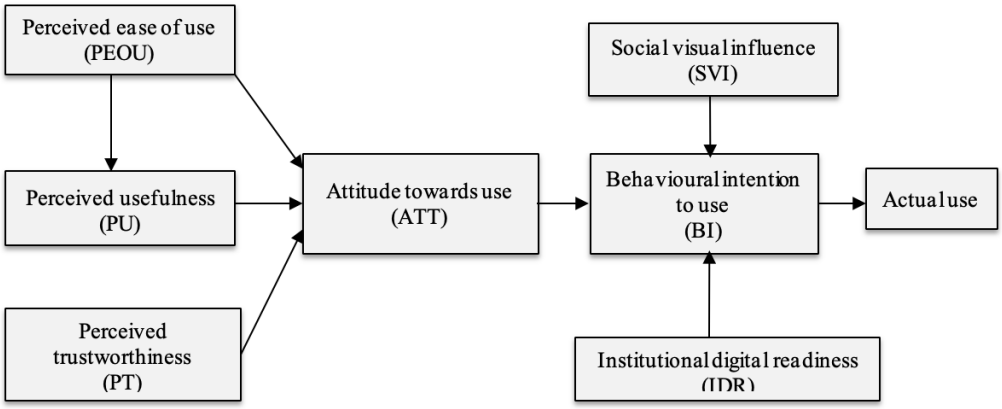

Figure 1: Digital tourism acceptance model (DigiTAM) (an extended TAM)

PEOU → PU

Perceived ease of use influences marketers' perceptions of the usefulness of digital marketing platforms in tourism marketing. If marketers find digital platforms easy to use, they are more likely to perceive them as beneficial for their digital marketing efforts. This is attributed to their ability to navigate and engage with customers effortlessly, promote destinations, and interact

with tourists. A higher level of ease of use leads to positive perceptions of usefulness, as marketers can effectively reach a broader audience.

PEOU → ATT
Perceived ease of use influences marketers' attitudes towards the adoption of digital marketing platforms in tourism marketing. When marketers find these platforms user-friendly, they are more inclined to develop a favourable attitude towards their adoption in tourism marketing. Ease of use mitigates frustration and reduces cognitive effort, thereby enhancing user confidence and willingness to utilise the technology. Consequently, a positive perception of ease of use may foster a constructive attitude towards the adoption of digital marketing platforms.

PU → ATT
Perceived usefulness influences marketers' attitudes towards the adoption of digital marketing platforms in tourism marketing. When marketers perceive digital marketing platforms as useful and conducive to achieving meaningful outcomes, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards their adoption. A positive perception of usefulness may result in a favourable attitude towards the adoption of digital marketing platforms in the tourism sector.

PT → ATT
Perceived trustworthiness affects marketers' attitudes towards the adoption of digital marketing platforms in tourism. If marketers and their customers believe that digital platforms can be relied upon to facilitate safe, secure, and transparent interactions, there is a higher likelihood of developing a positive attitude towards their adoption. Tourism marketers are more inclined to embrace digital platforms when they observe clear evidence that these tools assist them in attaining their marketing objectives.

SVI → BI
The study revealed that tourism marketers recognise the impact of visual content, such as short videos and images shared by tourists, influencers, and competitors, which motivates them to adopt and expand similar digital marketing strategies. The more marketers perceive visual media as effective in attracting tourists, the stronger their intention to engage in visually based digital marketing; thus, positive social visual influence leads to positive behavioural intention.

IDR → BI
Institutional digital readiness impacts behavioural intention. Tourism marketers are more likely to intend to adopt and utilise digital marketing platforms effectively if their organisations are institutionally prepared for such adoption. Conversely, a lack of institutional digital readiness, characterised by inadequate infrastructure, limited budgets, and insufficiently skilled human resources, serves as a barrier to the intention to use, irrespective of whether tourism marketers perceive value or maintain a positive attitude towards digital marketing tools.

ATT → BI → Actual use
Tourism marketers' positive attitudes towards digital marketing platforms result in a stronger intention to utilise them in the future, which subsequently leads to the actual use of these platforms for marketing in tourism. This sequential relationship illustrates that positive attitudes, characterised by confidence, commitment, and enthusiasm for digital platforms, may lead to plans for expanding digital adoption, followed by the actual usage of digital marketing platforms to create and publish content, respond to customer inquiries, and monitor performance.

Conclusions, implications and future research directions
This study aimed to investigate tourism marketers' perceptions regarding the adoption of digital marketing platforms. It proposed an extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by integrating constructs pertinent to the tourism sector in emerging economies. Drawing on qualitative insights from tourism marketers, the study reflects the contextual realities of adopting digital platforms for tourism marketing in emerging economies through the identification of eight key themes. Five of these themes correspond with the original TAM constructs (Perceived Ease of Use [PEOU], Perceived Usefulness [PU], Attitude [ATT], Behavioural Intention [BI], and actual use), while three additional factors were identified: perceived trustworthiness, social visual influence, and institutional digital readiness. The findings revealed that while the traditional TAM constructs remain relevant, they do not fully encapsulate the complexities associated with the adoption of digital marketing platforms within the tourism sector of emerging economies. The emergence of trust in digital platforms, peer influence through visual content, and organisational resource limitations are critical factors shaping marketers' adoption behaviours regarding digital marketing platforms, which informed the development of the Digital Tourism Acceptance Model (DigiTAM). The study contributes to theoretical discourse by contextualising the TAM within the tourism sector to reflect the socio-digital nuances encountered by tourism marketers in emerging economies. The relationships deduced from the study findings (PEOU → PU, PEOU → ATT, PU → ATT, ATT → BI → Actual use) align with the original TAM model (Davis, 1989), underscoring the significance of navigation, integration, and content creation in fostering positive attitudes, particularly in emerging economies that often face constraints related to time, personnel, and technical resources in the adoption of digital marketing platforms, behavioural intention, and actual system usage. Furthermore, the study proposes the Digital Tourism Acceptance Model

(DigiTAM), which extends the TAM by introducing three context-specific constructs (perceived trustworthiness, social visual influence, and institutional digital readiness) that influence technology adoption in emerging economies, revealing that these factors significantly impact the adoption of digital marketing platforms. Given that the tourism industry is information-dependent, trust emerges as a key determinant of attitude, while visual content plays a crucial role in decision-making, and institutional digital readiness facilitates the translation of behavioural intention into actionable outcomes. Practically, the study offers actionable insights for destination marketing organisations, tourism entrepreneurs, and policymakers seeking to enhance the digital capabilities of the tourism sector in emerging economies. For digital marketing platforms to gain greater traction in developing economies, they must be user-friendly, require minimal training, and facilitate integration between digital tools, such as linking WhatsApp, Facebook, and websites to enhance their utility. The integration of digital marketing platforms enables seamless navigation and improves user experience. Tourism organisations could designate staff dedicated to digital platforms within tourism departments to continuously update online information and address customer queries, thereby ensuring real-time feedback. Governments can support technology adopters by providing training assistance, establishing technology hubs, facilitating access to infrastructure funding, and fostering public-private networks. The study is not without limitations, as its findings are based on qualitative insights. Nonetheless, this research establishes an important foundation for understanding how to bridge the digital gap in tourism marketing through theory-informed, context-sensitive strategies. Future studies could quantitatively test the DigiTAM model, apply it in other countries, or investigate its applicability and relevance from a tourist perspective.

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