

UNLOCKING THE DIGITAL GATEWAY: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IMPACT IN TRANSFORMING TOURISM MARKETING

Mihaela-Carmen MUNTEAN^a, Alexandru CAPATINA^{b}, Adrian MICU^c, Angela Eliza MICU^d,
Iulian Adrian SORCARU^e, Oana Daniela LUPOAE^f*

^{a, b, c, e, f} Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania

^d Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in crafting digital marketing strategies within the tourism sector. By analyzing the impact of various AI-driven technological innovations, evolving platforms, and changing consumer behaviors, the research aims to uncover the key factors influencing the adoption and effectiveness of AI in marketing practices, in the case of companies from tourism sector. Using data collected from marketing professionals within the tourism industry, the study evaluates the relationships between AI implementation and digital marketing outcomes, highlighting the most significant predictors of AI-driven success. The findings reveal that trends in digital consumption and changes in consumer behavior are among the strongest influences on AI-influenced marketing strategies, while the evolution of technology platforms exhibits a more complex impact. The study concludes that AI offers companies in the tourism industry the opportunity to continuously adapt and evolve their Digital Marketing strategies in response to technological advancements and consumer expectations.

KEYWORDS: *Artificial Intelligence, Consumer Behavior, Digital Marketing, Technological Innovation, Tourism Industry.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have revolutionized multiple industries, while digital marketing have been one of the most profoundly impacted. Companies across sectors, particularly in the tourism industry, adopted AI to enhance customer engagement, optimize marketing strategies, and increase operational efficiency. AI technologies, such as machine learning algorithms, predictive analytics, and personalized content delivery, are game changers. In tourism sector, where customer preferences shift rapidly and competition is strong, AI offers powerful tools to develop agile, data-driven digital marketing strategies.

Despite its growing importance, research on the specific impact of AI on digital marketing strategies in the tourism sector haven't been explored at its maximum potential. While studies on AI in digital marketing are on a growing trend, the application of AI-driven strategies in the unique context of the tourism industry, characterized by personalized experiences, and service-oriented nature, has not been fully explored. This research gap highlights the need for an in-depth analysis of factors that drive successful AI adoption in tourism sector.

* Corresponding author. E-mail address: alexandru.capatana@ugal.ro

This study seeks to address this gap by answering the following key research questions: How does AI impact the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in the tourism industry?

What are the most significant drivers of AI adoption in tourism marketing?

How do evolving consumer behaviors and technological innovations influence AI-driven digital marketing strategies?

The objectives of this research are twofold. First, to assess the impact of AI on digital marketing strategies within tourism companies, and second, to identify the factors that drive this impact, including technological innovations, changes in consumer behavior, and the degree of AI implementation. The study aims to explore insights into the direction in which AI-driven digital marketing strategies are evolving in this peculiar sector.

This research makes several contributions. It offers an in-depth analysis of AI's role in transforming digital marketing strategies within the tourism industry. Furthermore, the study provides a comprehensive model that identifies key predictors of AI success in digital marketing, offering practical implications for marketers aiming to optimize their strategies through AI.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The first section reviews the relevant literature on AI, digital marketing, and the tourism sector, identifying key trends and theoretical frameworks. Next, the research methodology is presented, outlining the use of structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the data. The results section presents the findings of the study, including key drivers of AI adoption and their impact on marketing strategies. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Technological innovation has long been recognized as a strategic driver of transformation in various industries, including tourism. In recent years, the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has challenged organizations to embrace a new era of innovation, significantly rethinking digital marketing practices. Technological innovations, particularly those associated with AI, enable companies from all sectors to optimize their marketing strategies, automate processes, and offer highly personalized customer experiences. The tourism industry, where customer satisfaction and personalized services are on the core, is strongly impacted by such innovations.

Technological innovations embedded in AI systems provide a wide range of tools and systems that enhance marketing efficiency. Machine learning algorithms, for instance, allow companies from tourism to analyze vast amounts of consumer data and predict customer behaviors with higher accuracy. Moreover, AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants provide instant, personalized customer service for hospitality industry, improving user experience and engagement (Solakis et al., 2024).

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (1995) provides a framework for understanding how technological innovations are shared within organizations. The application of AI in marketing follows this model, as companies gradually incorporate AI-driven tools to remain competitive and relevant. As tourism companies increasingly adopt AI technologies, they are able to create more responsive, data-driven digital marketing strategies that better meet the changing demands of their customers (Rosário & Dias, 2023).

Additionally, the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory (Barney et al., 2001) highlights the role of technological innovations as a strategic resource that provides competitive advantage. AI tools empower a company to be different from its competitors, especially in a highly competitive market like tourism. By integrating AI into their digital marketing strategies, tourism companies are able to streamline digital marketing campaigns and improve customer targeting.

Research by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) highlights that companies implementing AI-based innovations in marketing achieve better customer engagement and campaign performance. Moreover,

Gentsch (2019) argues that AI-driven technologies enable more precise customer segmentation and targeted advertising, which are essential components of digital marketing.

As these innovations continue to evolve, their influence on AI-driven marketing is expected to grow, making them a significant factor in the success of digital marketing efforts, especially in the tourism industry. This leads to the first hypothesis: Technological innovations have a significant impact on AI-influenced Digital Marketing.

Evolving technology platforms equip companies with AI to thrive in digital marketing. The ability to process large amounts of data, perform real-time analytics, and automate marketing processes depends heavily on the capabilities of these platforms. For example, cloud-based platforms facilitate the scalability of AI-driven tools by offering the computing power necessary to analyze massive datasets. The AI scalability empowers companies, especially in dynamic industries like tourism, to deliver personalized and timely marketing messages to a global audience. Similarly, social media platforms continuously evolve to incorporate AI-powered algorithms that enhance user experience through personalized content recommendations and targeted advertising, which are integral to effective digital marketing strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019).

Empirical research further supports the hypothesis that evolving technology platforms have a significant impact on AI-influenced digital marketing. A study by Balducci and Marinova (2018) highlights how advanced digital platforms enable AI-powered marketing tools to analyze customer data in real-time, thereby facilitating more precise and effective marketing campaigns. Similarly, Kietzmann and Pitt (2020) consider that evolving platforms with integrated AI capabilities allow marketers to automate tasks such as content creation, customer segmentation, and ad placement, resulting in greater marketing efficiency and customer engagement. It is relevant in the tourism industry, where real-time responsiveness and personalized services are significant for capturing consumer interest and loyalty.

Aman et al. (2024) indicate that advancements in cloud computing and artificial intelligence will introduce new applications in tourism, driving modernization alongside existing digital marketing tools.

The integration of AI tools into evolving technology platforms also aligns with the concept of platform ecosystems, as proposed by Cusumano et al. (2019). Platform ecosystems enable a network effect, where the growing number of users and partners on a platform increases the value and capabilities of the platform itself. As more companies involved in tourism adopt AI-powered tools within these ecosystems, the platforms evolve over time, offering even more sophisticated AI functionalities for digital marketing. This self-reinforcing cycle allows tourism companies to continuously adapt and improve their AI-influenced marketing efforts as the underlying platforms evolve, further enhancing marketing outcomes. The second hypothesis emerges: Evolving technology platforms significantly influence AI-influenced Digital Marketing.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory further explains the gradual adoption of AI tools, emphasizing how tourism companies implement AI to stay competitive and offer data-driven, agile marketing strategies. Companies from this sector increasingly implement AI tools, and the link between AI adoption and the effectiveness of digital marketing becomes stronger. This relationship is key for companies aiming to create more responsive marketing campaigns. Chen et al. (2023) prove that the level of AI adoption positively influences marketing outcomes by enhancing customer segmentation, predictive analysis, and targeted communication. Therefore, we hypothesize that: the level of AI implementation in companies from the tourism sector is positively associated with AI-influenced Digital Marketing.

Armutcu et al. (2023) presents a model showing that tourists' perceptions of online destination content significantly influence their behavioral intentions, with satisfaction acting as a mediator, and highlights that user-friendly and high-quality information provides destinations with a competitive edge, emphasizing the importance of satisfaction and digital marketing in shaping visit intentions.

The transition toward more personalized and immersive customer experiences in the tourism sector has reinforced AI adoption in digital marketing. Today's consumers demand tailored recommendations, real-time interaction, and seamless digital experiences. AI is a key enabler for these demands by enhancing personalization efforts. For example, recommendation engines powered by AI analyze consumer preferences and behavior to suggest tailored travel packages, accommodations, and experiences. AI technologies, particularly in predictive analytics, allow tourism companies to analyze digital consumption patterns and develop strategies that resonate with tech-savvy consumers. A study by Himeur et al. (2023) highlights the value of real-time data analytics enabled by AI on delivering insights into consumer preferences, leading to more accurate and effective marketing campaigns.

Thus, the following hypothesis arises: The changes in Consumer Behavior impact AI-influenced Digital Marketing.

AI technologies enable companies to automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks, allowing marketers to focus on more strategic activities. For example, AI-powered tools such as chatbots streamline customer interactions and ad placement, ensuring that digital marketing campaigns are executed at scale. AI-driven tools significantly enhance campaign management by automating content personalization, optimizing ad targeting, and providing real-time insights into campaign performance. AI tools not only reduce the effort required to manage digital marketing activities but enable hyper-personalization of marketing efforts, leading to better customer engagement and higher conversion rates (Jain et al., 2021). The findings from a study coordinated by Deb et al. (2024) indicate that perceived usefulness, ease of use, social media marketing, and tourism business performance are key factors in adopting digital marketing in the tourism sector.

Therefore, we hypothesize that: The necessity to streamline digital marketing activities is positively correlated with AI-influenced Digital Marketing.

The rise of digital consumer trends has profoundly impacted how companies approach marketing, especially in industries like tourism, where consumer preferences and behaviors are rapidly evolving. Digital consumer trends, such as the increasing reliance on online platforms for decision-making, personalized experiences, and social media engagement, have restructured how businesses interact with their target audience. The trends are connected to AI-influenced Digital Marketing, as companies leverage AI to meet the demands of a tech-savvy, digitally-driven customer base.

AI algorithms are widely used to process data from these platforms, offering insights into consumer preferences and enabling marketers to deliver highly targeted ads, personalized content, and optimized purchasing experiences. The ability of AI to analyze consumer-generated data from social media and e-commerce platforms equip businesses to respond to trends in real-time, driving higher conversion rates and improving customer satisfaction. Consumers increasingly rely on digital channels for their travel planning and decision-making, and the need to adapt marketing strategies using AI becomes higher, reinforcing the positive relationship between digital consumer trends and AI-influenced digital marketing (Pagani & Wind, 2024). A study conducted by explores the upcoming digital transformation in travel, driven by AI, blockchain, IoT, and cloud computing, and emphasizes a human-centered approach for tourism operators.

These theoretical insights lead to the sixth hypothesis: Digital consumer trend is positively related to AI-influenced Digital Marketing.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method selected to analyze the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on digital marketing strategies is structural equation modeling, specifically using the partial least squares method (PLS-SEM). This approach was chosen because specific indicators have been identified for each variable previously mentioned as a predictor of AI's impact. The aim of the study is to evaluate how AI

influences the digital marketing strategies of companies in the tourism industry and to determine the direction in which these strategies are evolving. The objectives of the research include analyzing the impact of AI on the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies and identifying the direction of their development in the context of the evolution of Artificial Intelligence.

The structural model is represented in Figure 1, highlighting the relationships between variables through six hypotheses.

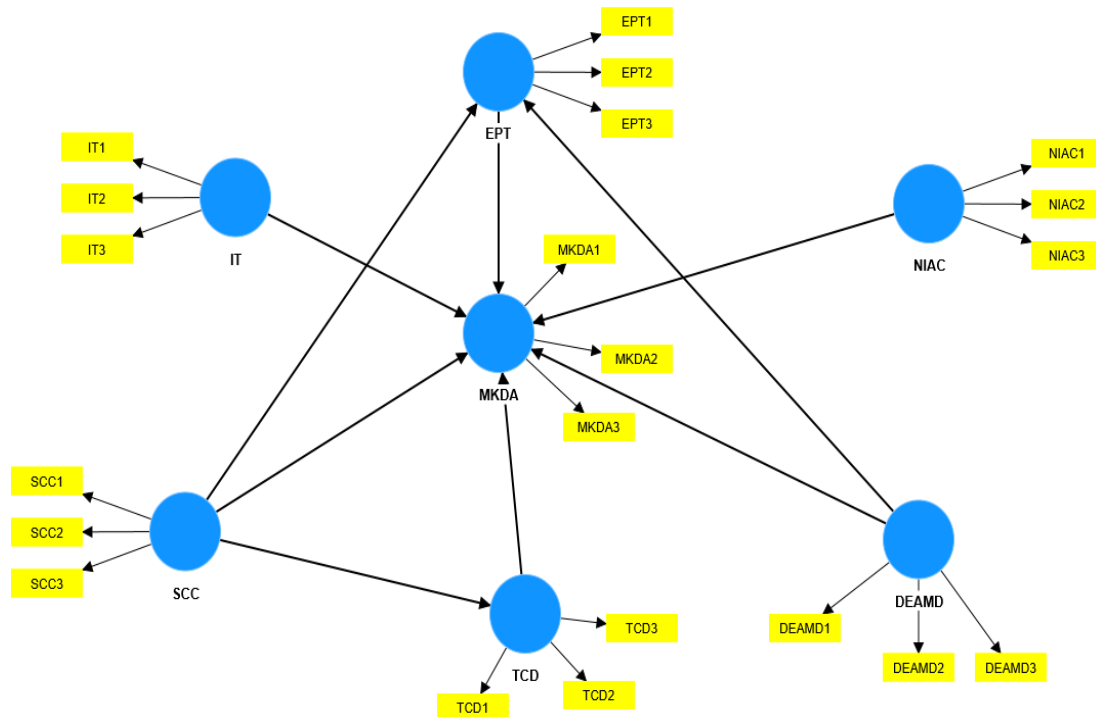


Figure 1. The conceptual model of structural equation modeling research
 Source: Smart PLS 4 software

- Hypothesis 1: Technological innovations (IT) have a significant impact on AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).
- Hypothesis 2: Evolving technology platforms (EPT) significantly influence AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).
- Hypothesis 3: The Level of AI Implementation in companies from tourism sector (NIAC) is positively associated with AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).
- Hypothesis 4: The changes in Consumer Behavior (SCC) impact AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).
- Hypothesis 5: The necessity to streamline digital marketing activities (DEAMD) is positively correlated with AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).
- Hypothesis 6: Digital consumer trend (TCD) is positively related to AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).

The questionnaire used in this research was posted online, while the invitations to complete it were sent to marketers from tourism companies during November - December 2023. A number of 105 responses were collected and validated from Marketing departments of companies involved in tourism sector.

4. FINDINGS

Figure 2 outlines the links between the latent variables of the research model, represented by arrows pointing from the exogenous latent variables, which function as predictors, to the dependent latent variable. The model includes formative variables such as Technological Innovations (IT), Evolution of Technology Platforms (EPT), and Level of AI Implementation in Companies (NIAC), where arrows indicate the direction from the indicators to the latent variables. Also present are reflective variables such as Changes in Consumer Behavior (SCC), Digital Consumption Tendency (TCD), and Desire to Improve Digital Marketing Activities (DEAMD), where arrows demonstrate the influence of latent variables on their indicators.

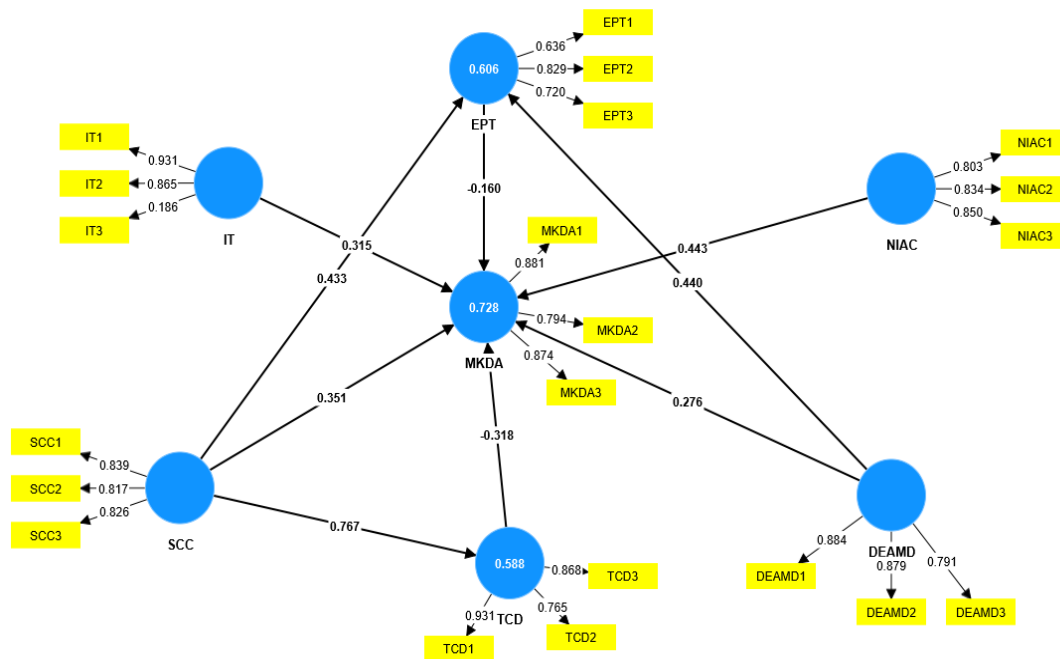


Figure 2. Determination of effect coefficients

Source: Smart PLS 4 software processing

According to the structural model, TCD exerts the strongest influence on AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA) with an effect coefficient of 0.558, while EPT appears to have a negative effect (-0.160). This suggests that while digital consumption trends largely drive digital marketing strategies, evolving technology platforms may have a different impact or require a specific context to manifest positively.

The analysis also indicates that NIAC and DEAMD contribute to MKDA with effect coefficients of 0.440 and 0.276, respectively. While NIAC has a solid contribution, DEAMD shows a moderate influence on MKDA.

The relationship between IT and MKDA is positive with an effect coefficient of 0.433, suggesting that technological innovations are important factors in influencing digital marketing through AI. At the same time, SCC shows a strong influence on TCD with an effect coefficient of 0.767, indicating that changes in consumer behavior are significant predictors of digital consumption trend.

Regarding the explanatory power of the model, IT, EPT, and NIAC explain 72.8% of the variance of the MKDA variable ($R^2 = 0.728$), which denotes a considerable predictive power of these variables on digital marketing influenced by AI.

The relationship coefficients are calculated by SmartPLS 4 software and are illustrated in Figure 2. We observe that the strongest positive relationship is between Consumer Behavior Changes (SCS)

and Digital Consumption Trend (TCD), with a correlation coefficient of 0.767. On the other hand, the weakest and actually negative relationship is between Evolution of Technology Platforms (EPT) and AI-Influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA), with a correlation coefficient of -0.160. These results highlight the importance of consumer behavior in the adoption of digital trends and suggest a possible reassessment of the impact of the evolution of technological platforms on digital marketing strategies of companies from tourism sector, in the context of Artificial Intelligence.

Table 1. Assessment of internal consistency and convergent validity in the case of the reflective measurement model

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
DEAMD	0.811	0.822	0.888	0.726
EPT	0.600	0.658	0.774	0.537
IT	0.522	0.810	0.744	0.550
MKDA	0.808	0.813	0.887	0.724
NIAC	0.774	0.780	0.868	0.688
SCC	0.770	0.772	0.867	0.685
TCD	0.820	0.854	0.892	0.735

Source: Smart PLS 4 software processing

Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency or reliability of a variable, indicating how correlated the items are within a reflective variable. A minimum accepted threshold for this indicator is 0.7. In Table 1, Cronbach's Alpha for the reflective variables Desire for the Efficiency of Digital Marketing Activities (DEAMD) and Digital Consumption Tendency (TCD) exceeds the threshold of 0.7, with values of 0.811 and 0.820, respectively, indicating high reliability. However, Evolution of Technology Platforms (EPT) and Technology Innovations (IT) are below this threshold with 0.600 and 0.522, which may suggest lower internal consistency for these variables.

Composite Reliability (CR) exceeds the minimum recommended threshold for all reflective variables presented in the table, with IT and MKDA having the highest scores of 0.810 and 0.813, respectively.

Convergent validity is evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which should be at least 0.5. This threshold indicates that the majority of a construct's variance is explained by its items, as opposed to variance resulting from measurement error. According to the table, DEAMD, MKDA, NIAC, SCC and TCD have AVEs exceeding the threshold of 0.5, with MKDA recording the highest value of 0.724, which confirms the convergent validity of these variables. On the other hand, EPT and IT show AVEs below the optimal threshold, with 0.537 and 0.550, respectively, signaling a possible problem in terms of variance capture by the items of these variables.

Using the bootstrapping procedure in PLS-SEM, multiple subsamples are created by random sampling with replacement from the original data set. Each subsample is used to recalculate the structural model, thereby allowing a distribution of parameter estimates to be obtained. The process is repeated until a large number of random data samples, about 5,000, have been created, so we can obtain an accurate estimate of the standard errors and T-test values for each estimate.

Five from the six hypotheses are validated, given that the p-values for each relationship tested in the structural model do not exceed the maximum significance level allowed of 0.05. The T-test gives us an indication of the magnitude of the correlation between the latent variables (Table 2).

Table 2. Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis path	T value	P value	Decision
IT →MKDA	3.582	0.000	Supported
EPT →MKDA	1.207	0.228	Rejected
NIAC →MKDA	5.620	0.000	Supported
SCC →MKDA	2.674	0.008	Supported
DEAMD →MKDA	2.698	0.007	Supported
TCD →MKDA	3.308	0.001	Supported

Source: Smart PLS 4 software processing

Hypothesis 1: Technological innovations (IT) have a significant impact on AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).

This hypothesis is supported by the results, with a positive path coefficient of 0.433, a T-value of 3.582, and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that technological innovations significantly contribute to the success of AI-driven digital marketing strategies in tourism. As such, companies in the tourism sector need to adopt AI technologies to enhance marketing efficiency.

Hypothesis 2: Evolving technology platforms (EPT) significantly influence AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).

This hypothesis is not supported, as the path coefficient is negative (-0.160), and the T-value (1.207) and p-value (0.228) do not reach statistical significance ($p > 0.05$). These results suggest that evolving technology platforms alone do not have a significant impact on AI-influenced marketing strategies, at least within the context of this study.

Hypothesis 3: The Level of AI Implementation in companies from the tourism sector (NIAC) is positively associated with AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).

The results support this hypothesis, with a positive path coefficient of 0.440, a T-value of 5.620, and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the degree of AI implementation within tourism companies is a strategic enabler for AI-influenced digital marketing outcomes.

Hypothesis 4: The changes in Consumer Behavior (SCC) impact AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).

This hypothesis is supported, with a path coefficient of 0.276, a T-value of 2.674, and a p-value of 0.008 ($p < 0.05$). The results highlight that shifts in consumer behavior significantly influence the effectiveness of AI-influenced marketing strategies.

Hypothesis 5: The necessity to streamline digital marketing activities (DEAMD) is positively correlated with AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).

This hypothesis is also supported, with a positive path coefficient of 0.276, a T-value of 2.698, and a p-value of 0.007 ($p < 0.05$). The findings suggest that streamlining digital marketing activities through AI tools enhances marketing performance, allowing companies to manage campaigns more efficiently.

Hypothesis 6: Digital consumer trend (TCD) is positively related to AI-influenced Digital Marketing (MKDA).

This hypothesis is supported with a strong positive path coefficient of 0.558, a T-value of 3.308, and a p-value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$). The results indicate that trends in digital consumption are a significant driver of AI-influenced digital marketing strategies, reinforcing the need for companies to align their marketing efforts with digital consumer behavior.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research has highlighted the significant impact that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has on the process of transforming digital marketing strategies within the tourism sector. The findings support the hypotheses that factors such as the level of AI implementation, changes in consumer behavior, and the necessity to streamline marketing activities are positively correlated with AI-influenced digital marketing. Moreover, AI technologies offer tourism companies the ability to enhance customer engagement through personalized content, predictive analytics, and automated processes, enabling them to adapt quickly to evolving consumer trends. The results further suggest that AI-driven marketing not only improves the efficiency of marketing activities but also increases the effectiveness of campaigns by targeting the right audiences at the right time. Overall, AI is a powerful tool that allows tourism companies to remain competitive in an increasingly digital landscape, offering significant opportunities for innovation in marketing strategies.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on AI applications in marketing, particularly within the tourism industry. Findings are valuable for developing the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Diffusion of Innovation Theory, by explaining how AI adoption provides a competitive advantage by streamlining marketing activities and personalizing customer engagement. The findings highlight the need for further theoretical exploration into the specific factors driving AI adoption in service industries, particularly in the context of evolving digital consumer trends.

From a practical perspective, the study provides valuable insights for tourism companies looking to optimize their digital marketing strategies through AI. Marketers should prioritize AI adoption to enhance customer segmentation, automate repetitive tasks, and personalize marketing efforts. Thus, companies will be able to reduce operational costs while improving the precision and impact of their campaigns. Additionally, the ability of AI to adapt in real-time to changes in consumer behavior positions companies to respond faster to market demands, making their marketing strategies more agile and effective. Tourism companies, particularly those with lower AI adoption, should consider investing in AI technologies to stay competitive in the digital marketing environment.

This study has several limitations. First, the data collection relied on self-reported surveys from marketing professionals in tourism operators, which may introduce biases such as over-reporting AI adoption. Second, the research focused on a limited sample size within a specific time frame. Additionally, the study did not consider external factors such as economic conditions, regulatory changes, or technological barriers that could influence the adoption of AI in digital marketing.

Future research will explore a broader range of companies from tourism across diverse regions. Comparative studies between tourism sectors and other service-oriented industries could also provide valuable insights into AI-driven marketing strategies. Moreover, investigating the long-term impact of AI on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand reputation in tourism would be interesting. Finally, as AI technologies continue to evolve, future research attempts to examine the role of emerging tools such as generative AI and augmented reality in creating more immersive and interactive digital marketing experiences for consumers.

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