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THE EFFECT OF TOE FACTORS AND DIGITAL MARKETING ON TOURISM PERFORMANCE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract:

Tourism remains an important part of Malaysia's economic activities and provides employment across the industry. As tourism becomes more digital, Malaysian tourism organisations are facing changes in the way they communicate with visitors and market their offerings. National initiatives, including the National Tourism Policy (NTP) 2020-2030 and the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint (MyDIGITAL), have also encouraged greater use of digital technology and innovation. Yet, the ability to make use of these developments is not the same across tourism organisations. This makes it useful to understand the conditions that may support Digital Marketing and how they relate to Tourism Performance. This conceptual paper proposes a framework that examines Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage as factors associated with Tourism Performance in Malaysia. The framework considers their direct relationships with Tourism Performance and also examines Digital Marketing as a mediator. The Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework provides the main theoretical basis. Technological Readiness is considered within the technological context, Management Commitment within the organisational context, and Cultural Heritage within the environmental context because it is connected to the destination and local community. Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) provide additional support for explaining how resources and capabilities may be used and adjusted as conditions change. The proposed relationships are intended for future empirical testing among tourism organisations in Malaysia. The framework may also support discussion among tourism authorities and organisations on the use of technology, management support, local heritage and Digital Marketing in tourism development.

DOI:10.35631/JTHER.1145052 **Keyword:**

Cultural Heritage; Digital Marketing; Management Commitment; Technological Readiness; TOE Factors; Tourism Performance



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Introduction

Tourism contributes to economic activity and creates employment opportunities for local communities. However, the tourism business environment changed considerably after the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital technology has become increasingly important as tourism businesses respond to new market conditions and changing customer behaviour. In Malaysia, the National Tourism Policy (NTP) 2020–2030 supports the use of digital technology in tourism while maintaining attention to local culture and heritage (MOTAC, 2020). The Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint (MyDIGITAL) also supports the digital transformation of Malaysian businesses (EPU, 2021). These initiatives show the growing importance of digital capabilities within the tourism industry. Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, big data analytics and the Internet of Things (IoT) are changing business operations and the way tourism firms interact with customers (Frank et al., 2019; Hermann et al., 2016; Sigala, 2020; Stankov & Gretzel, 2020). Digital marketing has also moved beyond its traditional promotional role. It now supports customer engagement, market visibility and how firms respond to developments in the market.

Existing studies have examined digitalisation, Digital Marketing and organisational performance in tourism. However, the factors that support Digital Marketing and their links with Tourism Performance are often considered separately. In the Malaysian context, there is value in examining technological, organisational and environmental conditions within the same framework. Technological Readiness reflects the technology and digital capabilities available to an organisation, while Management Commitment concerns the support and resources provided by management. Cultural Heritage represents a tourism-specific environmental condition because it is rooted in the destination and local community. How these factors relate to Digital Marketing and Tourism Performance remains an important area for further examination.

This paper therefore proposes a framework linking Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage with Tourism Performance. Each factor is examined as having a direct relationship with Tourism Performance. Digital Marketing is also positioned as a mediator, allowing the framework to consider whether these factors may influence performance through the way tourism organisations communicate with and reach the market.

The framework draws mainly on the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework, supported by the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). TOE is used to organise the technological, organisational and environmental conditions considered in the study. RBV helps explain the role of resources available to tourism organisations, while DCT considers how organisations use and adjust their capabilities when market and technological conditions change. Together, these perspectives support the proposed relationships among Technological Readiness, Management Commitment, Cultural Heritage, Digital Marketing and Tourism Performance in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Underpinning Theory

Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) Framework

How organisations approach innovation is influenced by the technological, organisational and environmental conditions in which they operate (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990; Baker, 2011; Oliveira & Martins, 2011). In this study, these three areas are represented by Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage. Cultural Heritage is positioned within the environmental context because tourism activities are closely connected to the characteristics of destinations and their surrounding communities. Cultural assets, local values and identities are generally embedded within a destination rather than controlled exclusively by an individual organisation. Nevertheless, these environmental characteristics can influence how tourism organisations position their offerings, communicate with potential visitors and undertake Digital Marketing activities. The TOE framework therefore provides a suitable basis for examining how technological, organisational and environmental conditions are associated with Digital Marketing and, subsequently, Tourism Performance.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) explains differences in firm performance through the resources and capabilities available to an organisation (Barney, 1991; Barney et al., 2001). In this paper, RBV is used to support the explanation of how tourism organisations make use of resources connected with technology, management support and Digital Marketing. Access to resources alone may not lead to better Tourism Performance. Their value also depends on how they are used in business and marketing activities. RBV therefore supports the proposed relationships between the resources available to tourism organisations, their use of Digital Marketing and Tourism Performance.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT)

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) focuses on how organisations use, develop and adjust their capabilities when business conditions change (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007). This is relevant to tourism because customer behaviour, digital technologies and market conditions continue to change. Tourism organisations may need to adjust how they use technology, management support and Digital Marketing as these conditions develop. In the proposed framework, DCT helps explain why the ability to use and adapt organisational capabilities may

matter for Tourism Performance. It therefore complements TOE and RBV in explaining the relationships proposed in this paper.

Variables

Technological Readiness

Technological Readiness refers to an organisation's preparedness to adopt and use digital technologies in its business activities (Baker, 2011; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). It includes the technological infrastructure, digital skills and IT resources available within the organisation. In tourism, these resources can support the use of digital platforms and strengthen Digital Marketing, customer engagement and service delivery (Abate et al., 2025; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). In this study, Technological Readiness is expected to influence Tourism Performance directly and also through Digital Marketing.

Management Commitment

Management Commitment refers to the support given by top management to organisational initiatives, including the allocation of resources and setting of priorities (Baker, 2011; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). In tourism organisations, management support can encourage investment in digital technology, employee skills and marketing activities. It can also influence how Digital Marketing is used to engage with customers (Abate et al., 2025; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). Management Commitment may also affect how organisational resources are used to support business activities. In this study, Management Commitment is expected to influence Tourism Performance directly and also through Digital Marketing.

Cultural Heritage

Cultural Heritage includes traditions, practices, knowledge and values passed from one generation to another and maintained within communities (UNESCO, 2003). In tourism, these cultural resources are usually connected to the destination and local community rather than owned by individual tourism organisations. For this reason, Cultural Heritage is treated as an environmental factor within the TOE framework in this study. Tourism organisations can use cultural elements in their products and experiences and communicate them through Digital Marketing. This may include cultural storytelling, visitor engagement and the promotion of local identity. Previous studies have linked cultural heritage with destination attractiveness, visitor experience and competitive positioning (García-Villaverde et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Szromek et al., 2022). In this study, Cultural Heritage is expected to influence Tourism Performance directly and also through Digital Marketing.

Digital Marketing

Digital Marketing uses digital technologies and online platforms to communicate with customers and reach the market (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). Tourism organisations have several channels available for this purpose. These include websites, social media, email, search engines, online advertising and mobile applications (Deb et al., 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). Their use allows tourism organisations to maintain contact with customers and promote their offerings across different

digital channels. In this study, Digital Marketing has a mediating role. It is examined as the pathway between Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage on one side, and Tourism Performance on the other.

Tourism Performance

Tourism Performance refers to the results achieved by tourism organisations through their business activities. These results can include financial and non-financial outcomes, such as service quality, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency and market performance (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022). Digital Marketing may support these outcomes by helping tourism organisations communicate with customers, respond to market changes and promote their products and services (Deb et al., 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). In this study, Tourism Performance is the main outcome examined in relation to Technological Readiness, Management Commitment, Cultural Heritage and Digital Marketing.

Research Objectives

- **RO1:** To examine the effects of Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage on Tourism Performance among tourism organisations in Malaysia.
- **RO2:** To examine the effects of Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage on Digital Marketing among tourism organisations in Malaysia.
- **RO3:** To examine the effect of Digital Marketing on Tourism Performance among tourism organisations in Malaysia.
- **RO4:** To examine whether Digital Marketing mediates the relationships between Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage, and Tourism Performance among tourism organisations in Malaysia.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework links Technological Readiness, Management Commitment, and Cultural Heritage to Tourism Performance both directly and through Digital Marketing. Drawing on TOE, RBV, and DCT, the framework recognises that technological, organisational, and tourism-specific environmental conditions may provide important resources and support for tourism organisations. However, their presence alone does not necessarily improve performance. Digital Marketing provides a means of putting these conditions into practice by enabling organisations to use technological capabilities, managerial support, and heritage-related content to engage customers, strengthen market visibility, create value, and respond to changing tourist expectations.

Digital Marketing is therefore positioned as the mediator linking Technological Readiness, Management Commitment, and Cultural Heritage with Tourism Performance. At the same time, the framework retains direct relationships between each of the three antecedents and Tourism Performance, recognising that their influence may also occur independently of Digital Marketing. The model consequently captures both direct and mediated pathways to Tourism Performance, as illustrated in Figure 1.

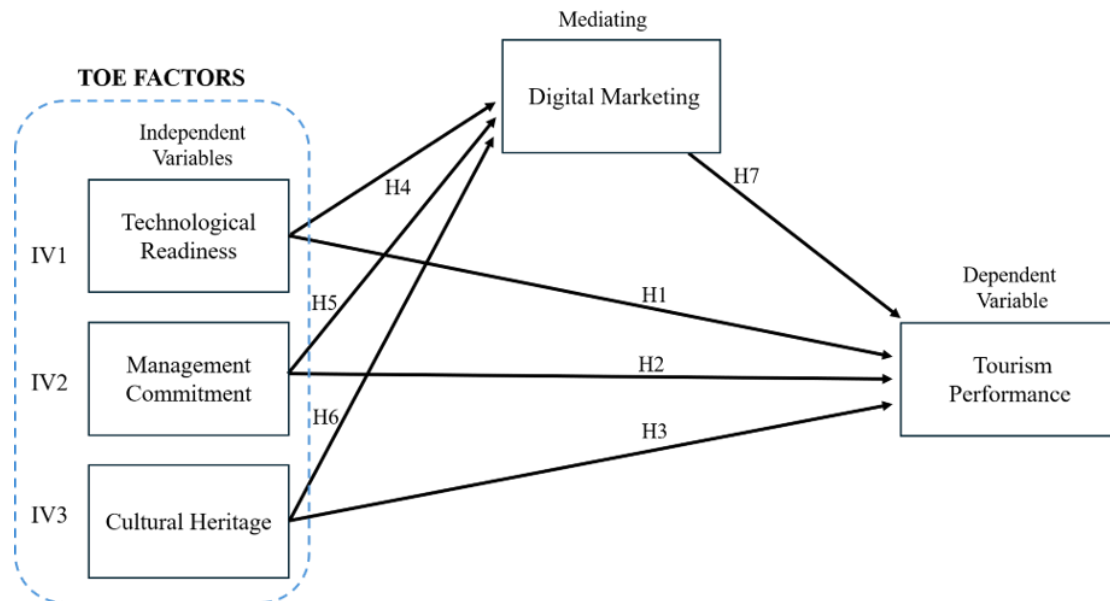


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis Development

Technological Readiness and Tourism Performance

Technology has become important in the daily operations of tourism organisations. However, organisations differ in their ability to use it effectively. Technological Readiness reflects whether an organisation has the technology and digital capabilities needed to support its activities (Baker, 2011; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). When these are available, organisations are better able to manage their operations, introduce changes to their services and respond to customer needs. Recent research has also reported a relationship between technological readiness, the use of technology and organisational performance (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). This suggests that the level of Technological Readiness may affect the performance achieved by tourism organisations. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Technological Readiness positively influences Tourism Performance.*

Management Commitment and Tourism Performance

Management decisions play a pivotal role in determining organizational priorities and resource allocation. In the tourism sector, dedicated management can provide strategic direction, channel resources toward key initiatives, and support the adoption of technology and operational improvements (Baker, 2011; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). Recent studies demonstrate a link between management commitment and organisational support and the more robust implementation of digital initiatives, as well as superior outcomes (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). Consequently, by allocating resources and championing organisational change, committed management can strengthen the critical factors necessary to achieve outstanding tourism performance.

H2: *Management Commitment positively influences Tourism Performance.*

Cultural Heritage and Tourism Performance

Cultural Heritage is an important part of many tourism destinations. Traditions, local identity, historical assets and cultural experiences can form part of what visitors experience when they visit a destination. Tourism organisations can include these elements in their products and services to offer experiences that reflect the local setting. Previous studies have associated cultural heritage with visitor experience, innovation and competitiveness in tourism (García-Villaverde et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Szromek, 2022). The use of local heritage may therefore contribute to the performance of tourism organisations by adding value to their tourism offerings. Based on this relationship, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Cultural Heritage positively influences Tourism Performance.

Technological Readiness and Digital Marketing

The use of Digital Marketing requires organisations to have suitable technology and the skills to use it. For tourism organisations, this can include digital infrastructure and the ability to work with online platforms, data, artificial intelligence and other digital communication channels. Without these resources, some marketing activities may be difficult to carry out. Technological Readiness can therefore affect how tourism organisations use Digital Marketing in their business activities. Previous studies have also linked technological readiness and related capabilities with the adoption and use of Digital Marketing (Abate et al., 2025; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). This provides the basis for the following hypothesis:

H4: Technological Readiness positively influences Digital Marketing.

Management Commitment and Digital Marketing

Management support can influence how Digital Marketing is used within an organisation. The availability of technology alone may not be sufficient if management does not give attention and resources to its use. In tourism organisations, management can support Digital Marketing by providing resources, developing employee skills and encouraging the use of digital tools in marketing activities. Studies have also linked management and organisational support with digital readiness and the implementation of Digital Marketing (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). This suggests that Management Commitment may influence the extent to which tourism organisations use Digital Marketing. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Management Commitment positively influences Digital Marketing.

Cultural Heritage and Digital Marketing

Cultural Heritage represents an important source of content that tourism organisations can incorporate into their Digital Marketing activities. Local traditions, historical narratives, cultural values and distinctive experiences can be communicated through digital channels to strengthen the representation of a destination and its cultural identity. Through such communication, tourism organisations can provide potential visitors with greater exposure to the cultural characteristics and experiences associated with the destination. Previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of cultural heritage to destination appeal, cultural tourism experiences and destination identity (García-Villaverde et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Szromek, 2022). The integration of these cultural elements into digital communication

may consequently influence how tourism organisations develop and implement their Digital Marketing activities. Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H6: Cultural Heritage positively influences Digital Marketing.

Digital Marketing and Tourism Performance

Digital Marketing can influence Tourism Performance by changing how tourism organisations reach customers, respond to market needs, and create value. Strategic use allows organisations to strengthen customer engagement, improve market visibility, and adapt communication and service delivery as tourist expectations change. These capabilities align with the RBV and DCT view that organisational performance depends on how effectively organisations deploy and adapt resources and capabilities to changing market conditions (Barney, 1991; Barney et al., 2001; Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). Evidence from tourism and related organisational settings also links digital marketing to stronger customer engagement, market effectiveness, competitiveness, and organisational performance (Deb et al., 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Rajagopal & Vinayachandran, 2026). Effective Digital Marketing is therefore expected to contribute positively to Tourism Performance.

H7: Digital Marketing positively influences Tourism Performance.

Methodology

This conceptual paper is based on a review of literature related to Digital Marketing, digital transformation, organisational factors, Cultural Heritage and Tourism Performance. The review also considered studies from tourism and hospitality that discuss technological and organisational factors associated with the use of digital technology. The literature was used to identify the main relationships relevant to the proposed framework. Based on this review, Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage were selected as the antecedents, while Digital Marketing was positioned as the mediator between these factors and Tourism Performance.

The proposed relationships were then considered using the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) Framework, Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). These theories are used to explain the different parts of the proposed model and the relationships among its constructs. As this is a conceptual paper, no primary data were collected, and no statistical analysis was conducted. Future empirical research may test the proposed model among tourism organisations in Malaysia. PLS-SEM may be used for this purpose.

Results and Discussion

As this is a conceptual paper, no empirical results are reported. The paper proposes relationships between Technological Readiness, Management Commitment, Cultural Heritage and Tourism Performance. Digital Marketing is included as a mediator in these relationships. TOE provides the main theoretical basis for the framework, while RBV and DCT are used to explain how organisational resources and capabilities may contribute to performance.

The framework suggests that having technological resources, management support and access to cultural resources may not by themselves lead to better Tourism Performance. How tourism organisations use these factors is also important. Digital Marketing may be one way through

which they are applied in reaching customers and supporting marketing activities. The proposed framework therefore considers both the direct effects of the three antecedents on Tourism Performance and their indirect effects through Digital Marketing. These relationships have yet to be tested empirically among tourism organisations in Malaysia.

Conclusion

As a conceptual study, this paper does not report empirical findings. Instead, it proposes a framework that examines Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage in relation to Tourism Performance. These relationships are considered both directly and through Digital Marketing. TOE provides the main basis for the framework, while RBV and DCT are used to support the explanation of the proposed relationships.

Having technology, management support and cultural resources may not be enough to improve Tourism Performance. Tourism organisations also need to make use of these resources in their business activities. In this framework, Digital Marketing is examined as one way this may occur. It allows organisations to use digital technology, management support and cultural content in communicating with the market. The framework therefore considers whether Digital Marketing helps explain the relationships between the three antecedents and Tourism Performance. These relationships will need to be tested empirically among tourism organisations in Malaysia.

Contributions / Practical Implications

Theoretical Contribution

This paper contributes to the tourism literature by examining Technological Readiness, Management Commitment and Cultural Heritage within the same framework. Cultural Heritage is considered within the environmental context of TOE because it is associated with the destination and local community. Digital Marketing is then examined as a mediator between these three factors and Tourism Performance. RBV supports the explanation of how resources may contribute to performance, while DCT considers how organisations use and adjust their capabilities when conditions change. Using these theories together provides a basis for examining both the direct relationships with Tourism Performance and the relationships that may occur through Digital Marketing.

Practical Contribution

The proposed framework may help tourism organisations consider how technology, management support and cultural resources relate to their Digital Marketing activities. Having suitable technology is important, but organisations also need management support and employees who are able to use digital tools. Local heritage can also be included in tourism products and digital communication where it is relevant to the destination. These areas may help owners and managers when making decisions about digital activities, employee development and the use of local cultural content in their tourism offerings.

Policy Contribution

The proposed framework may also be useful to government agencies, tourism authorities and organisations involved in tourism development in Malaysia. Support for tourism digitalisation can include access to technology as well as programmes that develop digital and management capabilities. Attention can also be given to how local heritage is presented through digital channels without separating it from the communities and destinations from which it comes. These areas may be considered when developing training, digital support programmes and other initiatives for tourism organisations.

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Ethics Statement: This is a conceptual study based on existing literature. No human participants or animals were involved, and no sensitive data were collected. Ethical approval was therefore not required.

Author Contribution Statement: Abdul Aziz Ismail developed the study concept and conceptual framework and prepared the initial manuscript. Zaharuzaman Jamaluddin contributed to the literature review and reviewed the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the development of the paper and approved the final version for submission.

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