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# DOMESTIC TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTENTION TO USE DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS AND PLATFORMS

**Mavis CHAMBOKO-MPOTARINGA**
University of Johannesburg, School of Tourism and Hospitality, College of Business and Economics, Johannesburg, South Africa, e-mail: mavischamboko@yahoo.co.uk

**Tembi M. TICHAAWA***
University of Johannesburg, School of Tourism and Hospitality, College of Business and Economics, Johannesburg, South Africa, e-mail: tembit@uj.ac.za

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**Abstract:** This study built its premise upon the notion that digital technologies have created new bridges for communication between tourists and marketers. The study aims to determine the influence of domestic tourists' perceptions on the intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model and the updated DeLone and McLean Information Systems, regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses based on 401 surveys conducted with tourists using self-administered questionnaires. Surveys were selected following a non-probability, convenience procedure and stratified proportional sampling technique. The study findings highlight that perceived usefulness, information quality, system quality, service quality and user satisfaction are significantly related to the intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms. The success of digital marketing strategies employed by tourism marketers depends on tourists' use and adoption of tourism digital marketing tools and platforms. The study findings have policy and practical implications for policymakers, managers and marketers in developing effective and efficient digital marketing strategies that meet tourists' needs and expectations.

**Key words:** tourism, digital marketing, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), DeLone and McLean Information Systems (D and M IS) success model

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Within the tourism industry, the increased use of the internet and technological developments have revolutionized communication, the gathering of information and the dissemination of information (Jansson, 2022). The rapid growth of technology has digitally empowered tourists through the proliferation of smartphones and mobile digital devices (Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019), fostered gratification (Zollo et al., 2022) and has also increased tourists' access to information (Kotoua and Ilkan, 2017). Technology has disrupted the status quo of businesses and levelled the marketing field by giving birth to digital marketing - a marketing strategy leveraging business success on tourists' prolific touchpoints, the internet and smartphones.

Digital marketing allows businesses to adapt to technological innovations such as websites, social media and travel applications, which are easily accessed by tourists. Digital marketing strategies aim to attract prospective consumers and maintain existing customers to continue using the services provided by the seller (Yel et al., 2020) thereby creating buyer-seller relationships (Ababneh, 2022). The technological mediatization in digital marketing has disrupted the traditional marketing and buying bubble by providing dynamic online marketing channels which allow tourism products to be purchased virtually. Tourists are therefore no longer passive receivers of marketing information or isolated when they travel. They now play a role in content creation, sharing, and communication (Fan et al., 2019; Villamediana et al., 2019). Furthermore, while travelling, tourists now interact and engage digitally with other people such as family, friends, co-workers, service providers and other travellers using different platforms such as social networks. Thus, online social contact has become a norm for tourists to share their travel experiences and provide reviews for service providers (Fan et al., 2019; Yusuf and Tanvir, 2022).

Tourism is a highly experiential product. Tourists cannot perceive the quality of tourism products in advance by relying on online information from marketers and other travellers who have experienced the tourism products (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019). That said, tourists do make use of the different digital marketing tools and platforms available to them in order to access information on tourism (from the initial trip-planning stage, during the trip and after the trip) and tourists have the autonomy to decide when, how, which or whether to use digital marketing tools and platforms. Tourism businesses can only survive when tourists use their services, meet customer needs and exceed customers' satisfaction when using digital marketing tools and platforms (Singh, 2017; Sotiriadis, 2021). Previous studies have been conducted to try and understand users' behavioural intentions to use technology in different contexts (Singh and Srivastava, 2019; Kim and Hall, 2020; Al-Rahmi et al., 2021). Singh and Srivastava (2019) explored the acceptance and usage of social media for travel

* Corresponding author

purposes by outbound leisure travellers. Kim and Hall (2020) and Al-Rahmi, et al. (2021) findings highlight that perceptions influence behavioural intentions. Despite previous studies on users' behavioural intentions, several omissions persist in the literature. Many studies focused on demographics as determinants of user intentions (see Hudson et al., 2019; Acheampong and Siiba, 2020). Attention has been placed on the young generation (see Matikiti-Manyevere and Hattingh, 2020). Singh and Srivastava (2019) limited their study to outbound tourists. Hence, less attention has been placed on the diverse range of tourists. Secondly, attention has often been afforded to the impact of technologies on the behaviour of tourists (see Harb et al., 2019; Alghizzawi et al., 2020; Chamboko-Mpotaringa and Tichaawa, 2021; Ababneh, 2022). Harb et al. (2019); Yusuf and Tanvir (2022) focused on social media as a marketing tool while Alghizzawi et al. (2020) focussed from a Facebook perspective. In their paper, Chamboko-Mpotaringa and Tichaawa (2021) highlighted the impacts of digital marketing tools. Ababneh (2022) focussed on the impact of electronic word of mouth on marketing tourism services. The studies neglect the influence of factors that affect users' intentions to use technology. The study aims to close these gaps. Moreover, since technology adoption in the tourism industry is constantly growing, it is paramount to understand tourists' perceptions of the intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism purposes.

Using ICT in globally competitive markets gives organizations a significant competitive advantage (Ababneh, 2022; Zollo et al., 2022). The study used Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the updated DeLone and McLean Information Systems (D and M IS) success model to determine the influence of domestic tourists' perceptions on the use and intended use of digital marketing tools and platforms. Combining constructs from TAM and the updated D and M IS success model offers new perspectives for explaining technology adoption and usage. Thus, the combined model aids in a more comprehensive model that can more explicitly offer an understanding of technology adoption behaviour by tourists in digital marketing, with particular reference to the context of developing nations. It is crucial for tourism marketers, managers and policymakers to have an insight into tourists' perceptions regarding digital marketing. Taking advantage of digital marketing enables tourism destinations to enhance their competitiveness.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

In the extant technology adoption literature, there appears to be an agreement that TAM offers a basis for understanding user usage and adoption (Cross, 2019; Mathew and Soliman, 2021; Chou et al., 2022). Moreover, TAM has gained popularity because of its adaptability, simplicity and soundness (Al-Qaysi et al., 2020). The use of TAM in different contexts has also enhanced its explanatory ability and validity in technology usage and adoption studies. Davis (1989) posits that when any new technology is introduced, 'perceived usefulness' (PU) and 'perceived ease of use' (PEOU) of the new technology lead to acceptance by the targeted users. TAM reflects that the actual usage of new technology depends upon the user's perceived usefulness or benefits derived from using the new technology and the perceived ease of use. The use of the TAM alone has received criticism and has led to scholars modifying the original theory to improve its validity, applicability and understanding of user acceptance behaviour (Huang et al., 2019; Singh and Srivastava, 2019). Moreover, within the context of technology adoption studies, scholars have of late been blending different theoretical models to strengthen the applicability of the study findings (Matikiti et al., 2018; Al-Rahmi et al., 2021). Following suit, this study thus adopts the use of TAM in conjunction with the updated DeLone and McLean Information Systems (D and M IS) success model.

### Updated DeLone and McLean Information Systems (D and M IS) success model

Several scholars have advocated for the updated D and M IS success model in order to identify success factors of e-platforms (see Nugroho and Prasetyo, 2018; Isaac et al., 2019; Yel et al., 2020). The D and M IS success model was adopted after the original D and M IS (1992) success model received criticism from different scholars (Shannon and Weaver, 1949; Mason, 1978). The original model suggests that user beliefs about the quality of the information and system precede technology's actual use (or intention) and overall satisfaction. Actual usage is influenced by satisfaction, and satisfaction is generated through actual technology usage, which ultimately produces individual and organizational impact (Hung-Joubert, 2017). Following the critique received as well as rapid technological changes, DeLone and McLean proposed an updated D and M IS success model, which considered 'service quality' and 'net benefits'(DeLone and McLean, 2003). Thus, the updated D and M IS success model has five factors: information quality, system quality, service quality, use/intention, user satisfaction and net benefit. These factors help to better understand consumer intentions and the success of the technology. The benefits of new digital marketing technology can only be realized if and when the new technology is broadly acknowledged, accepted and used (Alkawsi et al., 2018). The success of digital marketing strategies employed by tourism marketers depends on tourists' use and adoption of tourism digital marketing tools and platforms. Understanding the different variables that may determine a person's eagerness to use new technology is vital in improving the success of digital marketing strategies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU)

From the TAM, the study adopts the variables, usefulness and ease of use in order to explain tourists' motivation for using and intention to use technology (Estriegana et al., 2019). PU refers to the possibility that one is convinced that adopting new technology would be useful and PEOU refers to the extent to which individuals perceive how easy it is to use the new technology (Davis, 1989). In the study context, PU refers to the possibility that digital marketing tools and platforms that marketers use in their digital marketing strategies would be useful in trip planning, during and after engaging

in the trip for tourism purposes. According to Alkawsi et al. (2018), technology users are likely to accept new technology that they can benefit from and which do not require prior familiarisation. Matikiti-Manyevere and Hattingh (2020) argue that technology users are willing to learn new features if the new technology is easy to understand and use and if it will be useful to them. Thus, with the help of digital marketing tools and platforms, tourists can ascertain which holidays will satisfy them. Moreover, tourism marketers can modify their digital marketing strategies so that their digital marketing tools and platforms are easy to use. For example, by providing customers with the option to select the language in which they most comfortable reading and conversing. Thus, the study proposes that PU and PEOU affect tourists' intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms, which in turn affect usage:

**$H_1$:** PU of digital marketing tools and platforms is significantly related to the use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms.

**$H_2$:** PEOU of digital marketing tools and platforms is significantly related to the use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms.

**Information quality**

Quality information evokes emotions, creating memorable experiences and is associated with usage intention. In today's world, customers worldwide are aware of truthful information owing to the help provided by technology and the internet. As a result, tourism businesses have little or no choice but to move towards providing quality information effectively and efficiently (Cross, 2019). Information quality is multidimensional as it encompasses format, accuracy, comprehensiveness, reliability and appropriateness. Li et al. (2017) highlight that digital marketing tools and platforms are virtual gateways to destinations which mainly provide information to minimize the perceived risks of visitation. In support, Jiménez-Barreto et al. (2020) state that official destination websites provide official destination information. Chamboko-Mpotaringa and Tichaawa (2021) concur that users of destination websites perceive content marketed on destination websites to be credible. Thus, informative value positively influence trust which affects users' intentions (Wengel et al., 2022). Based on the above discussion, we hypothesized the following:

**$H_3$:** Information quality of digital marketing tools and platforms significantly affects the use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms.

**$H_4$:** Information quality significantly affects tourists' overall travel satisfaction.

**System quality**

In the current study, the system refers to digital marketing tools and platforms such as websites, social network sites, travel applications and online review sites. The definition of system quality is contested as it differs among scholars. According to Dedeke (2016), system quality includes navigability, interface design, graphics and user interface. DeLone and McLean (2003) believe system quality encompasses technical aspects such as navigability, aesthetics, and functionality. This study adopts the position of DeLone and McLean (2003). The system's design is an essential foundation of persuasion in digital marketing. The updated D and M IS success model postulates that digital tourism destination marketing strategies are venues wherein potential tourists access destination information and generate their first impression of the destination. If, for example, the system's quality is low, it is anticipated that the potential tourists would leave the low-quality system, seek another source of information, or even change their travel destination. Consumers' perceptions of a visually attractive website create pleasant feelings that may increase their search behaviours (Busca and Bertrandias, 2020). According to Li et al. (2017), one of the aims of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) is to feed traffic to local tourism businesses and their websites instead of maximizing DMOs business benefit. Hence, in this study, we propose:

**$H_5$:** System quality of digital marketing tools and platforms significantly affects the use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms.

**$H_6$:** System quality significantly affects tourists' overall satisfaction

**Service quality**

In today's world, how customers perceive service delivery is important for the business's success since it influences customer loyalty. As Li et al. (2017) point out, the 'tech savvy' who are the new generation of tourists, publicize their experiences in the virtual world. These tourists represent a paradigm shift whereby users proactively use eWOM (electronic word of mouth) to communicate their perceived customer service. Furthermore, technology has brought about additional new determinants in order to measure excellent customer service which did not emerge in the traditional service delivery platforms and changed the conceptual view of service quality (Nugroho and Prasetyo, 2018). These determinants include speed, high interactivity, navigation and 24/7 availability of service providers. Service quality is perceived as high if a prompt service is provided, if customers feel involved when using the interactive digital marketing tools, if the information provided is trustworthy and if businesses respond to customer enquiries. Perceived service quality reflects the judgments tourists make about product and service quality based on their needs Tavitiyaman et al (2022), which consequently affects tourists' usage intentions (Kim and Niehm, 2009). Based on the above views, we propose the following hypotheses:

**$H_7$:** Service quality of digital marketing tools and platforms significantly affects the use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms.

**$H_8$:** Service quality significantly affects tourists' overall travel satisfaction.

**$H_9$:** Information quality significantly affects service quality

**$H_{10}$:** System quality significantly affects service quality

**Satisfaction**

Digital marketing tools and platforms offer users many benefits. These include providing personalized information that suits individual needs, interfaces that allow customers to use either their mobile devices or their desktops and permits users to be involved in content creation. Tourists can freely post reviews of their travel experiences in a user-friendly setting and comment, like or share content made available to them in their news feeds (du Plessis, 2017; An et al., 2020). Research has indicated that technology users engage most with platforms when they are consistent, interactive and vivid (Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019; Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). For instance, a study by Kuhzady et al. (2020) revealed that involvement results in familiarity. Tourists already have specific needs and expectations that they assume digital marketing channels will meet and satisfy. For this study, expectations are a reflection of the net benefits that customers expect to receive from digital marketing tools and platforms. The concept of customer satisfaction can be referred to as consumer fulfilment, whereby consumers experience contentment with the tourism destinations visited. If the tourism destination, products and services meet customer expectations then the customer is said to be satisfied. Quality is important for technology users who have favourable, vivid and familiar images about destinations as it leads to higher satisfaction and the more robust behavioural usage and intentions of digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism. Overall, satisfaction positively correlates to use (Pai et al., 2020). Consequently, in this study, we hypothesized that:

**$H_{11}$-** Tourist satisfaction is significantly related to the use and intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms.

**$H_{12}$:** Tourists, overall satisfaction is significantly related to benefits.

**$H_{13}$:** The use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms is significantly related to net benefits

Based on the above literature, the study proposed a model (Figure 1) which indicates the different constructs and the relationships thereof. The proposed model made use of TAM variables as well as the updated D and M IS success model. The model proposed that perceived usefulness, ease of use, information quality, service quality, system quality, and tourist overall satisfaction significantly affect the use of and intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms. Similarly, the study argues that information, service, and system quality also significantly affect tourists' overall satisfaction. The study further argues that tourists' overall satisfaction and use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms are significantly related to net benefits.

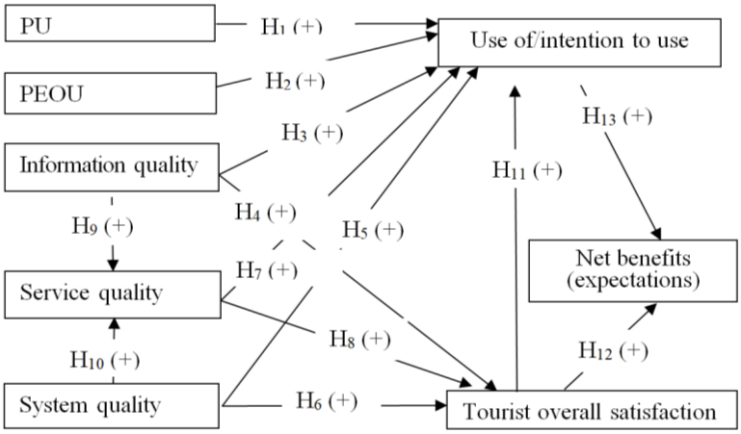


Figure 1. Proposed model (Source: Authors)

## METHODOLOGY

The current study adopted a quantitative research design. Data were collected from domestic leisure tourists visiting the Free State province in South Africa. To qualify, the participants had to be travelling for recreation, holidays and/or leisure purposes either as day visitors or overnight visitors but not exceeding a period of sixty nights, given that with such extended stays, the tourists tend to experience life in the same way as the locals (Stats SA, 2020). Respondents whose province of permanent residence was the Free State province were only included in the study if they were travelling outside of their permanent municipal area. Non-probability, convenience, and stratified proportional sampling techniques were employed. Respondents were selected based on their availability, ease of access, convenience and willingness to participate. The Free State province is well known for its Big five wildlife, geographically spread throughout the province's municipalities (Mangaung - the district's metropolitan municipality, and the four district municipalities: Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa, Xhariep and Thabo Mofutsanyana). Thus, the study area was stratified into five statums based on each stratum's tourism features and geographical location, which acts as the province's municipal boundaries, to ensure statistical representation of the whole province. The domestic tourists were targeted at popular tourist attractions in each stratum. The study made use of the latest statistics available during fieldwork in order to determine the study population as well as the sample size. The study population was informed by the fact that 410 000 domestic tourists visited the Free State province (Stats SA, 2020). Analyzing the province's domestic tourist arrivals revealed an uneven spread whereby Mangaung received 41%, Thabo Mofutsanyane 25%, Xhariep 15%, Fezile Dabi 11% and Lejweletutswa 9%. The study mirrored the domestic arrivals on completed surveys. Table 1 shows the distribution of the completed surveys.

Table 1. Distribution of surveys (Source: Authors)

| Municipality | Completed surveys | % of completed surveys |
|---|---|---|
| Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality | 165 | 41.2 |
| Fezile Dabi District Municipalities | 102 | 25.4 |
| Xhariep District Municipalities | 55 | 13.7 |
| Lejweleputswa District Municipalities | 44 | 11.0 |
| Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipalities | 35 | 8.7 |

Based on an in-depth literature review, items were adapted to suit the study, and a questionnaire was developed to measure the study constructs. The first section of the questionnaire solicited the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The following sections contained questions related to the constructs of the study. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was utilized in the study. The variables of the research and indicators are presented in Table 2. The questionnaire used for this research was pilot tested on a sample of twenty domestic leisure tourists in order to check the ease

of administering the questionnaire, its appropriateness, its reliability and its validity before the full-scale study (see Alkawsi et al., 2018). Taking into account the effects of missing information when analysing data, the questionnaires were self-administered (Babagana and Ibrahim, 2019). The pilot study was useful as it allowed for the validation of the survey instrument. No major issues were uncovered. The researchers therefore proceeded with the primary data collection with the assistance of trained fieldworkers. Since the questionnaire had a self-administrate design, some of the respondents decided to complete it at their own convenience and hand it to the fieldworkers since they were available at the tourist sites. To ensure quality responses, the researcher explained the requirements of the questionnaire (Matikiti-Manyevere and Hattingh, 2020). In total, 420 questionnaires were distributed at the different tourist attractions between September and October 2021. The researcher made attempts to leave with the completed questionnaires from a destination. After the data collection was completed, 401 completed surveys were considered usable and informed the results. Since 19 of the questionnaires were incomplete, they were deemed unusable and were therefore removed from the analysis (Mahmoud et al., 2018).

Table 2. Variable of research (Source: Adapted from Davis, 1989; Jeng et al., 2017; Breda et al., 2019; Flavián et al., 2019; González-Reverté and Liviano-Solís, 2020; Singh and Srivastava, 2019; Dyk et al., 2020)

| Variables | Indicators |
|---|---|
| PU | useful on trips, enhances the quality of trips, enables convenient trips, allows for instant feedback, gives ideas about possible next trips |
| PEOU | part of lifestyle, user-friendly, familiarity, content is readily and easily available, flexibility |
| Information quality | easy to understand, updated, comprehensive, accurate and reliable, recommendations based on personal interests |
| System quality | available 24 hours a day, accessibility, high level of creativity, easy to learn |
| Service quality | involvement, trustworthy, high chance of getting a response |
| Use of/Intent | tourism destination websites and tourism businesses websites, specialized search engines, blogs, consumer review sites, online sharing economy platforms, social network sites, travel applications |
| Net benefits (Expectations) | user-friendly interface, personalized information, high interactivity, helpful service personnel, personal information safe |
| Tourists overall satisfaction | satisfied with the trip, satisfied with the enhancement of the travel experience, visit exceeded expectations |

Descriptive and inferential statistics were performed on the collected data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 27, was used to capture and analyze data. To summarise the variables, descriptive analysis of the data was performed. Regression analyses were also performed to test hypotheses in the study.

**Sample description**

Out of the 401 completed questionnaires, as shown in Table 3, findings reveal that most respondents were young (68.6%), aged between 18 and 40. In terms of income, most respondents earned more than R20 000. In terms of gender, the study found that most of the respondents (55.3%) were female. Findings also showed that most of the respondents (66.8%) were from provinces other than the Free State, with Gauteng representing the region from which a significant share of the respondents originated (43.3%).

Table 3. Respondents' profile (Source: Authors)

| Variables | Data |
|---|---|
| Age (n=401) | 18-30 (N=144; 35.9%) |
| | 31-40 (N=131; 32.7% |
| | 41-50 (N=67; 16.7% |
| | 51-60 (N=31; 7.7% |
| | ≥61 (N=28; 7%) |
| Monthly income (n=365) | ≤R1000 (N=85; 23.3%) |
| | R1001-R5000 (N=56; 15.3%) |
| | R5001-10000 (N=39; 10.7%) |
| | R10001-R15000 (N=50; 13.7%) |
| | R15001-R20000 (N=47; 12.9%) |
| | ≥R20001 (N=88; 24.1%) |
| Gender (n=401) | Female (N=222; 55.3%) |
| | Male (N=179; 44.7%) |
| Province of permanent residence (n=401) | Free State (N=133; 33.2%) |
| | Other provinces (N=268; 66.8%) |
| Distribution of other provinces (n=268) | Eastern Cape (N22=;8.2%) |
| | Gauteng (N=116;43.3%) |
| | KwaZulu Natal (N=11;4.1%) |
| | Limpopo (N==25;9.3%) |
| | Mpumalanga (N=4;1.5%) |
| | North West (N=18;6.7%) |
| | Northern Cape (N=61;22.8%) |

Table 4. Reliability results (Source: Authors)

| Constructs | No. of items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| Perceived usefulness | 5 | 0.932 |
| Perceived ease of use | 5 | 0.949 |
| Information quality | 5 | 0.923 |
| System quality | 4 | 0.906 |
| Service quality | 3 | 0.889 |
| Use of/Intention | 9 | 0.846 |
| Net benefits (Expectations) | 5 | 0.917 |
| Tourists overall satisfaction | 3 | 0.865 |

Table 5. KMO and Bartlett's test (Source: Authors)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| KMO measure of sampling adequacy | 0.922 | |
| Bartlett's test of sphericity | Approximate Chi-square | 4822.737 |
| | Df | 171 |
| | Sig. | 0.000 |

**Reliability of the constructs**

The constructs' reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha test - a technique well known for testing studies with several Likert scales (Kim and Hall, 2020). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests were performed to assess sampling adequacy. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability results showed satisfactory internal consistency and reliability levels with a minimum score of 0.84, indicating that the constructs are reliable. These results are shown in Table 4.As illustrated in Table 5, the obtained KMO for the scale items was 0.922 - higher than the recommended level of 0.6 (Hair et al., 1998). Bartlett's test of sphericity measured Chi-Square = 4822.737, $p < 0.000$, indicating that it is significant, thus validating the study sample size of 401.

Regression analyses were performed to test the statistical significance of the variables. Following the work of Wang (2017) and Matikiti-Manyevere and Hattingh (2020), the variables were examined for multicollinearity by checking collinearity statistics, specifically Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance.

As shown in Table 6, the obtained tolerance values ranged from 0.237 to 0.607. Tolerance values of less than 0.7 are deemed acceptable since they infer no evidence of multicollinearity issues (Balachandran and Tan, 2015). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value was below five, indicating no collinearity problems (Sohil et al., 2022).

The study identified four dependent variables. As such, four different models were tested. Table 7 shows the results of model 1. In model 1, multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to assess the influence of the six perceptions variables on tourists' use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism.

Table 6. Multicollinearity and Correlation analysis (Source: Authors)

| Independent variables | Direction of path | Dependent variables | Correlations | Collinearity statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| PU | → | Use of/intention | 0.578 | 0.262 | 3.787 |
| PEOU | → | Use of/intention | 0.494 | 0.261 | 3.833 |
| Information quality | → | Use of/intention | 0.602 | 0.237 | 4.212 |
| System quality | → | Use of/intention | 0.443 | 0.288 | 3.380 |
| Service quality | → | Use of/intention | 0.541 | 0.321 | 3.082 |
| Overall satisfaction | → | Use of/intention | 0.562 | 0.296 | 3.80 |
| Information quality | → | Overall satisfaction | 0.602 | 0.280 | 3.577 |
| System quality | → | Overall satisfaction | 0.563 | 0.347 | 2.879 |
| Service quality | → | Overall satisfaction | 0.463 | 0.335 | 2.982 |
| Information quality | → | Service quality | 0.795 | 0.381 | 2.624 |
| System quality | → | Service quality | 0.737 | 0.381 | 2.624 |
| Use of/intention | → | Net benefits (Expectations) | 0.521 | 0.607 | 1.103 |
| Overall satisfaction | → | Net benefits (Expectations) | 0.450 | 0.607 | 1.103 |

Table 7. Model 1 results of hypothesis testing $H_1$, $H_2$, $H_3$, $H_5$, $H_7$ and $H_{11}$ (Source: Authors)

| **Dependent variable: Use of/Intention** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goodness of fit: R=0.615, $R^2$=0.378, Adjusted $R^2$=0.368, Standard error of estimate= 0.723** | | | | | | | |
| **Analysis of variance** | | **Df** | | **Sum of squares** | | **Mean square** | |
| Regression | | **6** | | **123.801** | | **20.634** | |
| Residual | | **390** | | **203.732** | | **0.522** | |
| *F* static=39.498 | | | | | | | |
| Significant *F*=.000 | | | | | | | |
| **Hypotheses** | **Independent variables** | **Unstandardized coefficients** | | **Standardized coefficient Beta** | ***t*-Value** | **Sig.** | **Hypothesis supported?** |
| | | **B** | **Standard error** | | | | |
| **Constant: Use of/ Intention** | | 1.398 | 0.159 | | 8.794 | .000 | |
| $H_1$ | PU | 0.376 | 0.067 | 0.438 | 5.617 | .000 | Yes |
| $H_2$ | PEOU | 0.022 | 0.063 | 0.027 | 0.344 | .731 | No |
| $H_3$ | Information quality | 0,482 | 0,088 | 0.444 | 5.498 | .000 | Yes |
| $H_5$ | System quality | 0.123 | 0,061 | 0.149 | 2.003 | .046 | Yes |
| $H_7$ | Service quality | 0.222 | 0,058 | 0.269 | 3.820 | .000 | Yes |
| $H_{11}$ | Overall satisfaction | 0.240 | 0.074 | 0.234 | 3.242 | .001 | Yes |

Table 8. Model 2 results of hypothesis testing $H_4$, $H_6$, and $H_8$ (Source: Authors)

| **Dependent variable: Overall satisfaction** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goodness of fit: R=0.623, $R^2$=0.388, Adjusted $R^2$=0.383, Standard error of estimate= 0.88** | | | | | | | |
| **Analysis of variance** | | **Df** | | **Sum of squares** | | **Mean square** | |
| Regression | | **3** | | **194.580** | | **64.860** | |
| Residual | | **394** | | **306.790** | | **0.779** | |
| *F* static=83.297 | | | | | | | |
| Significant *F*=.000 | | | | | | | |
| **Hypotheses** | **Independent variables** | **Unstandardized coefficients** | | **Standardized coefficient Beta** | ***t*-Value** | **Sig.** | **Hypothesis supported?** |
| | | **B** | **Standard error** | | | | |
| **Constant: Overall satisfaction** | | 1.175 | 0.182 | | 6.449 | .000 | |
| $H_4$ | Information quality | 0.529 | 0.081 | 0.488 | 6.546 | .000 | Yes |
| $H_6$ | System quality | 0.276 | 0.068 | 0.271 | 4.046 | .000 | Yes |
| $H_8$ | Service quality | 0.254 | 0.069 | 0.250 | 3.660 | .000 | Yes |

The model explains 38% ($R^2$=.38) of the variance in tourists' use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism purposes. Model 1 is statistically significant ($p$<0.01), with five of the six perception variables significantly related to tourists' use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism purposes: PU (β=.438; $t$=5.617; $p$=.000); Information quality (β=0.444; $t$=5.498; $p$=.000); System quality (β=.149; $t$=2.003; $p$=.046); Service quality (β=0.269; $t$=3.820; $p$<.000) and overall satisfaction (β=.235; $t$=3.242; $p$=.001). Information quality surfaces

as the greatest influence (β=0.444) on the use of/intention, followed by perceived usefulness (β=.438). Based on the results (Table 7), hypotheses $H_1$, $H_3$, $H_5$, $H_7$ and $H_8$ were supported, and $H_2$ was rejected. In model 2 (as shown in Table 8), three perceived quality variables were regressed in order to determine their influence on overall tourist satisfaction.

Model 2 explains that 39% ($R^2$=.39) of the variance in tourists' overall satisfaction after using digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism purposes can be explained by tourists' perceptions of the quality of the information, system and service. The model is statistically significant ($p$<0.01), with the three perception variables related to quality being statistically significant: Information quality (β=0.488; t=6.546; $p$=.000), System quality (β=-0.271; t=4.046; $p$=.000), and Service quality (β=0.250; t=3.660; $p$=.000). Similar to the first model, it was found that Information quality has the most significant influence (β=0.488) on overall satisfaction. Based on the findings (Table 8), $H_4$, $H_6$ and $H_8$ were confirmed.

Model 3 was developed and tested in order to assess the impact of perceived system quality and information quality on service quality. Results are illustrated in Table 9 below. Model 3 is statistically significant ($p$<0.01). The high multiple $R^2$ static of 0.67 indicates a good model fit. In as much as Information quality (β=0.565; $t$=11.975; $p$=.000) and System quality (β=0.292; $t$=6.188; $p$=.000) significantly impact service quality, system quality (β=0.292) appears to have a lower impact than information quality (β=0.565). The results (Table 9) reveal that $H_9$ and $H_{10}$ are both accepted.

Model 4 assessed the importance of use/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms and overall satisfaction on net benefits (expectations). Results are depicted in Table 10. Model 4 is statistically significant ($p$<0.01), with the variables tourist overall satisfaction (β=0.423; $t$=10.058; $p$=.000) and use of or intention to use significant (β=0.321; $t$=7.623; $p$=.000) significantly related to net benefits or expectations. The results prove that tourists' overall satisfaction (β=0.423) has more predictive power on expectations than use/intention (β=0.321). Based on the results (Table 10), $H_{12}$ and $H_{13}$ were supported. By assessing the structural relationships between the different constructs, twelve out of the thirteen hypothetical relationships were found to be empirically supported (Tables 7-10 and Figure 2). The paths had positive associations.

Table 9. Model 3 results of hypothesis testing $H_9$ and $H_{10}$ (Source: Authors)

| **Dependent variable: Service quality** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goodness of fit: R=0.815, $R^2$=0.665, Adjusted $R^2$=0.663, Standard error of estimate=0.641** | | | | | | | |
| **Analysis of variance** | | **Df** | | **Sum of squares** | | **Mean square** | |
| Regression | | **2** | | **321.593** | | **160.797** | |
| Residual | | **395** | | **162.292** | | **0.411** | |
| *F* static=391.360 | | | | | | | |
| Significant *F*=.000 | | | | | | | |
| **Hypotheses** | **Independent variables** | **Unstandardized coefficients** | | **Standardized coefficient Beta** | ***t*-Value** | **Sig.** | **Hypothesis supported?** |
| | | **B** | **Standard error** | | | | |
| **Constant:Service quality** | | 0.280 | 0.073 | | 3.861 | .000 | |
| $H_9$ | Information quality | 0.602 | 0.050 | 0.565 | 11.975 | .000 | Yes |
| $H_{10}$ | System quality | 0.293 | 0.047 | 0.292 | 6.188 | .000 | Yes |

Table 10. Model 4 results of hypothesis testing $H_{12}$ and $H_{13}$ (Source: Authors)

| **Dependent variable: Net benefits (Expectations)** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goodness of fit: R=0.604, $R^2$=0.365, Adjusted $R^2$=0.362, Standard error of estimate=0.82** | | | | | | | |
| **Analysis of variance** | | **Df** | | **Sum of squares** | | **Mean square** | |
| Regression | | **2** | | **152.741** | | **76.370** | |
| Residual | | **396** | | **266.033** | | **0.672** | |
| *F* static=113.680 | | | | | | | |
| Significant *F*=.000 | | | | | | | |
| **Hypotheses** | **Independent variables** | **Unstandardized coefficients** | | **Standardized coefficient Beta** | ***t*-Value** | **Sig.** | **Hypothesis supported?** |
| | | **B** | **Standard error** | | | | |
| **Constant: Net benefits (Expectations)** | | 0.038 | 0.128 | | 0.295 | .000 | |
| $H_{12}$ | Overall satisfaction | 0.477 | 0.047 | 0.423 | 10.058 | .000 | Yes |
| $H_{13}$ | Use of/Intention | 0.293 | 0.038 | 0.321 | 7.623 | .000 | Yes |

## DISCUSSION

The study's main aim was to assess the influence of domestic tourists' perceptions on the use of and intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism purposes. In order to achieve this, the study adopted a multidimensional theoretical framework by adopting TAM variables and the updated D and M IS success model. The results confirmed that combining widely acceptable models as reflected in literature offers an all-embracing model which can assist in effectively understanding technology usage and the adoption of digital tourism marketing by tourists.

The study findings confirmed that tourists' perceptions of digital marketing influence the use of and intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism. Perceived usefulness, information quality, system quality, service quality and tourists' overall satisfaction were found to be significant predictors of the use of and intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism purposes. Information quality and perceived usefulness were found to be the most significant perceptions influencing tourists' use of and intention for future use of digital marketing tools and platforms for tourism purposes. As Davis (1989) highlighted, people tend to use and adopt new technology they view as useful. The

existence of digital platforms, such as social networks and online sharing economy platforms like Airbnb and Uber, that are related to leisure tourism can influence tourists' digital usage and adoption behaviour (Díaz-Meneses, 2019). It can be inferred from the findings that tourists use tools and platforms that they view as relevant and with complete information that is useful to them. These findings are consistent with the results of studies conducted by Im and Hancer (2017), Dayour et al. (2019) and Tavitiyaman et al. (2022) which highlight the importance of perceptions in adopting new technology.

The study could not establish a relationship between perceived ease of use and use of/intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms. This is consistent with scholars such as Musina and Gao (2016). The authors argue that factors related to ease of use become less critical once users have learnt how to use the system and become less influential in predicting the use of/intention to use the technology. In support, Díaz-Meneses (2019) suggested the notion that the use of digital technologies is a consequence of the frequent use of technological devices and not how easy it is to use them.

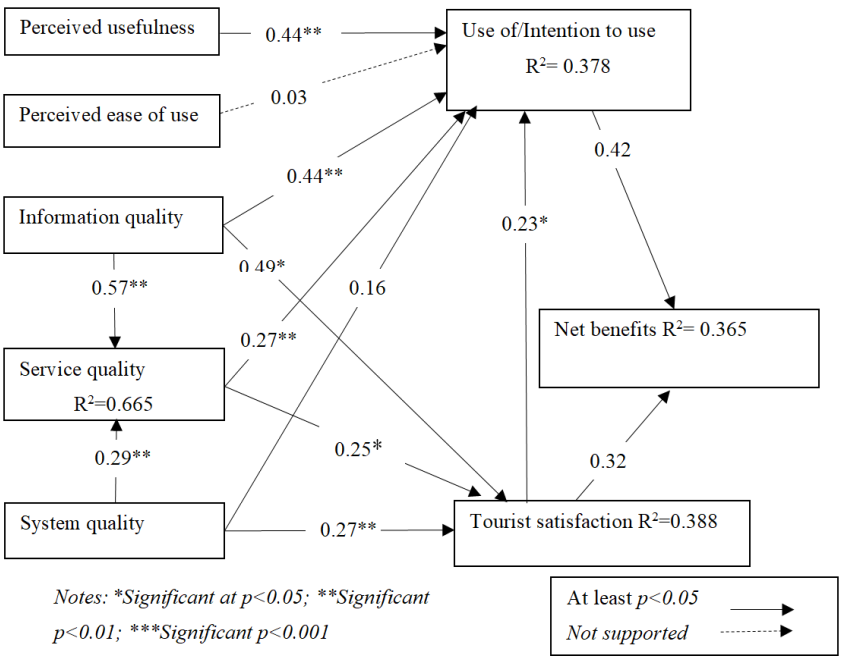


Figure 2. Results of empirical model testing (Source: Authors)

Another important discovery of the study was the influence of perceived quality in terms of information quality, system quality and service quality on tourists' overall satisfaction. Satisfaction is subjective, technical and based on tourists' individual exposure to information at their disposal. This implies that even the most high-quality digital tools and platforms can only be satisfactory if they meet users' needs and avoid user dissatisfaction (Díaz-Meneses, 2019). Interestingly, information quality-related factors strongly influenced tourists' overall satisfaction among the three factors. Thus, information quality was a stronger predictor than the other variables. These findings correlate with other scholars (Kim and Niehm, 2009; Nugroho and Prasetyo, 2018) who argue that information is a response to fulfilling user needs. In tourism, quality information is an important predictor of use, considering that the tourism industry is information-intensive.

The study confirms that information, system, and service quality affect overall satisfaction. Tourists assess the quality of the information provided to them by digital marketing tools and on platforms as a service rendered to them (Nugroho and Prasetyo, 2018). The study confirmed that information quality and system quality affects service quality. Assuming the information provided in digital marketing is poor, tourists will therefor judge the service as poor and vice-versa. In this technologically enabled world, tourists already have expectations and net benefits to fulfil when they use digital tools and platforms. The study established a link between the use of or future intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms and the net benefits of tourists' expectations. Previous studies confirmed that tourists' overall satisfaction has a positive correlation with intention to use and fulfilment of expectations (Pai et al., 2020).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established the influence of perceptions as a psychological mechanism behind tourists' intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms and further extended the utility of the TAM and the updated D and M IS success model in the digital marketing context. The study confirms that perceptions influence tourists' intentions to use digital marketing tools and platforms. The study explained how perceived usefulness, information quality, system quality, service quality and tourists' overall satisfaction act as important variables for using and adopting digital marketing technology.

The study further argues that how tourists view the quality of information, service quality, and system quality significantly affects tourists' overall satisfaction and tourists' use of or future intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms. In addition, the study confirms that tourists' overall satisfaction and use of or future intention to use digital marketing tools and platforms is significantly related to net benefits and the expectations of tourists.

The study has advanced the literature on digital marketing tools and platforms' usage and adoption in tourism. Technology innovation is constantly advancing such that there is a need for the constant updating of information. The study offers a comprehensive understanding of the influence of perceptions on tourists' intention to use tourism digital marketing tools and platforms. Additionally, the study contributes towards the body of literature through the developed, tested and statistically validated model. The developed model was found to be statistically robust regarding the measurement quality criteria such as reliability, validity, multicollinearity, and goodness of fit. The study adopted the current trend in research of combining different models to explain technology usage and adoption as a strategy to strengthen the predictive power and applicability of the research study. The developed model proved constructs that are useful in explaining tourists' behavioural intention in technology usage. The study has some practical implications. Lately, the improvement of new technological advancements has energized businesses to adjust their marketing strategies to new forms of marketing.

Understanding the influence of perceptions on technology usage, intention and satisfaction in the 21st century is the cornerstone for policy development and intervention. The study identified factors that offer managers and marketers insights into areas they need to consider in order to effectively harness their digital marketing efforts and influence behavioural intention. When tourism businesses understand modified tourists' perceptions, expectations and preferences, they can exceed customer satisfaction. Tourists are likely to use services that exceed their satisfaction and travel, resulting in job creation and an improved way of life for local communities. In managerial terms, the study advocates for managers to use marketing strategies that make use of digital tools and platforms on which tourists have a favourable view.

Although the researchers tried to be precise, the study has some limitations. Due to the pandemic's impacts, the study was only limited to domestic tourists. The research participants were only limited to the Free State province in South Africa. The limitation was minimized by conducting the research in different municipalities, towns and tourist attractions within the province. Despite its limitations, the study paves the way for future studies in digital marketing adoption which can focus on disruptive technologies within the context of developing nations.

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