



Digital marketing in active sports tourism: Enhancing the quality of services for tourism companies in the hail region


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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 10 January 2025

Revised: 3 March 2025

Accepted: 7 March 2025

Published: 12 March 2025

Keywords

Digital marketing
Electronic marketing
Quality services
Sports tourism.

The primary objective of this study was to determine the role of digital marketing strategy in increasing tourism companies' services regarding active sports tourism. Data was collected through 307 questionnaires filled out by managers and employees in the Hail region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The results showed that digital marketing improves service quality. However, there are serious issues related to customer awareness and customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. It was also found that there are some major barriers to the successful implementation of digital marketing, including low awareness of the need for digital marketing, insufficient funding by sponsors and promoters, and lack of adequate training in the use of marketing tools. The study indicates that more qualitative studies in future studies are still needed in other areas, including evaluating consumer responses to digital marketing campaigns, enhancing the use of technology in customer satisfaction, and evaluating different types of media to win consumers. Developing a dedicated digital platform for sports tourism can help attract a niche market of active tourists by offering tailored content and experiences. Providing employees with adequate training in digital marketing tools and techniques is essential to overcome skill gaps.

Contribution/Originality: The research stands out because it examines active sports tourism in the Hail region while presenting practical digital marketing insights about challenges and opportunities. The research forms the basis for additional analysis, and it offers concrete methods that stakeholders in tourism should use for their future activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry now faces significant changes in business operations, products and services, and customer experiences due to digital technology developments. Digital evolution has transformed service provider relationships with their customers through new business models and mandatory skills, yet it has changed their relative roles in the industry. Several online platforms have expanded tourism products, quickened transactions, and built rapid feedback capabilities. Emerging opportunities and obstacles await small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the tourism industry while they undertake customer requirement fulfillment alongside market expansion (Dredge, Giang, Renuka, Eóin, & Elena, 2018). Digital transformation platforms have completely transformed business frameworks

and tourism services while modifying the tourism industry's market structure (Tajeddini, Vanessa, & Thorsten, 2019). Tourism institutions require organizational quality management to maintain their key sensitive framework due to intense industry competition and technological progress. As the tourism sector develops, so does the requirement for hotels to become ready with high-quality e-tourism products for enhancing customer value and technology utilization. Quality management requires a diverse set of approaches to fulfill its goal of quality assurance. In a competitive tourist market, premium services create essential competitive benefits that enhance marketplace placement for tourism businesses (Chen, Meng, & Zhang, 2015). The study establishes that implementing production standards in service delivery produces vital service quality benchmarks that enable sustainable, competitive tourism operations. Quality Management Systems (QMS) ensure service quality protection and enhance the entire tourist journey, which results in contented customers with increased loyalty (Chimbo, Chimbo, Loor Rodríguez, & Ulli Flores, 2023). Organizations that embrace quality standards achieve superior performance along with enhanced competitiveness compared to those entities that implement fewer quality management standards (Tarí, Pereira-Moliner, Molina-Azorín, & López-Gamero, 2020). Additionally, services extend the simplification and effectiveness of customer interactions in embracing digitization, which is useful in ensuring high levels of service quality (Narahari, Kumar, & Guptha, 2023). By applying smart technologies, the management of quality processes can be accelerated and increased in flexibility in response to market changes (Mazur, 2023).

Marketing communication technology acts as a central force that utilizes information and communication technologies (ICTs) for better performance in tourism service marketing. The delivery of improved visibility, together with enhanced customer-service interactions and operational efficiency, enables this accomplishment. Tourism businesses continue to adopt digital strategies because the evolution of customer patterns drives essential market adaptation, which results in stronger global market competition. Tourism service promotion successfully uses internet platforms, along with social media and search engine marketing strategies (Trišić, 2024). Digital tools allow businesses to establish direct customer communications through social media platforms and mobile apps, which build satisfaction and loyalty among their customers (Zhang & Ren, 2024). The implementation of information communication technologies, like booking systems with CRM platforms, allows businesses to minimize their operational expenses. Such technological systems enhance customer engagement by providing efficient record management that generates meaningful analytical data (Kuzman, Petkovic, & Milovancevic, 2024). Tourism businesses that accept innovative solutions will both satisfy contemporary customer needs and enhance their operational capabilities toward improved sustainability and competitiveness.

Active sports tourism is the use of technological tools and the Internet in marketing and advertising sporting activities and events. This approach does more than increase the scope of visibility; it also involves potential tourists in various ways. The following sub-headings attempt to capture the place of digital marketing as follows: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) are two important applications of internet marketing that can enhance accessibility and attract more and more sports tourists to different events and places (Saura, Reyes-Menendez, & Palos-Sanchez, 2020). Hence, through Facebook and Instagram, there is direct communication between sports organizations and fans, leading to building loyalty and encouraging events (Yu, 2024). Incorporating existing famous sports influencers can also widen exposure and legitimacy, making people more interested in sports tourism activities (Saura et al., 2020). Furthermore, these technologies give a preview of what a certain event or place looks like to the intended tourists, thus improving their choices (Kumar & Barua, 2024). Technology such as mobile devices is recent; therefore, it provides real-time communication and updates, enabling tourists to easily access information on sporting events (Yu, 2024). However, digital marketing in sports tourism also has several limitations, which include data privacy concerns and the need for genuine content. Marketers must be aware of these challenges while consumer behavior is in transition as well as technological progress (Kumar & Barua, 2024).

Digital marketing is essential for the promotion of sports-related activities in the Hail region, particularly within

the framework of active sports tourism. By utilizing online platforms, tourism companies can significantly enhance their visibility and engagement with prospective travelers (Mallick, 2023). As consumers increasingly rely on digital channels for travel planning, these companies must adopt effective digital marketing strategies that expand their audience reach and elevate the quality of their services. This strategic approach not only drives bookings but also fosters brand loyalty among consumers. Social media platforms, including Instagram and Facebook, serve as critical tools for engaging potential travelers, allowing companies to highlight unique experiences and interact directly with their audience (Rai & Dahal, 2024). Moreover, improving online visibility through targeted search engine optimization (SEO) practices is vital for attracting environmentally conscious tourists, thereby aligning with current market trends (Trišić, 2024). The application of big data analytics enables companies to gain valuable insights into consumer preferences and market dynamics, facilitating informed decision-making (Kuzman et al., 2024). In a competitive landscape, maintaining high service quality is crucial, as it directly influences customer satisfaction and retention (Rhena & Kraugusteeliana, 2024). Furthermore, engaging consumers in the value-creation process not only enhances their overall experience but also reinforces their loyalty to the brand (Zhang, 2023).

As the sports tourism industry in the Kingdom relates to the challenges and opportunities faced by tourism companies in the Hail region, it is essential to consider the rapid digital transformation. With the increasing reliance on digital marketing, these companies face the need to improve their digital marketing strategies and expand their distribution channels. The main problem is how to use digital marketing tools and online advertising effectively to enhance the quality of services provided. This requires understanding the relationship between the elements of the digital marketing mix and the requirements of tourism service quality. Therefore, the study aims to identify the role of digital marketing in sports tourism in improving the quality of services provided to tourism companies in the Hail region and analyze the use of digital marketing tools and the extent of their effectiveness. Additionally, it examines the impact that can be associated with digital marketing in enhancing the services offered to tourism firms in the Hail region. Through these points, the study seeks to provide practical recommendations to improve the marketing performance of tourism companies in the Hail region and enhance the quality of services provided.

1.1. Importance of Study

This research creates new knowledge within sports tourism in KSA by addressing identified gaps, even though numerous actors operate in this sector. Tourism service quality improvement requires tourism organizations to adopt and effectively understand digital marketing tools because these tools produce positive effects on tourism service marketing and delivery. The worldwide expansion of digital marketing needs highlights that it deserves attention because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) utilizes digital tools at a minimal operational level. This research investigates the digital marketing functions within tourism enterprises to reveal possible digital marketing techniques that will foster industry sports tourism competitiveness. This research demonstrates the necessity of tourism service quality as an essential element in developing highly competitive advantages for firms within the tourism sector, using dubious marketing communication methods to gain better tourism company recognition. The research intends to demonstrate why tourism firms should adopt Digital Marketing (DM) tools to improve their tourism service quality to promote a sustainable tourism sector. The study will use this basis to provide corrective advice that enhances digital marketing optimization for improved service delivery and organizational performance of tourism companies.

1.2. Study Questions

Considering the research objective, we pose the following questions:

Q1: What is the reality of applying digital marketing for active sports tourism in Saudi tourism companies?

Q2: What challenges hinder effective digital marketing for active sports tourism in Saudi tourism companies?

Q3: How has digital marketing affected the enhancement of quality services being offered by Saudi tourism firms concerning active sport tourism?

1.3. Literature Review

The study by [Velentza and Metaxas \(2023\)](#) aims to explore the extent of digital marketing tool utilization for tourism companies, their level of satisfaction regarding this usage, and the effect of digital marketing after the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasizes those factors that make these companies unique and helps to design an effective marketing strategy that will respond to the expectations of new customers and increase a company's income. To answer the theoretical questions posed in this paper and to reach the overall goal, an empirical survey among tourism companies was conducted since these businesses have not efficiently implemented digital media as a strategic marketing instrument. In a study conducted by [Forghani, Sheikh, Hosseini, and Sana \(2022\)](#), we assess the effects of these strategies on customers' purchasing behavior in online shopping stores in Tehran. The five most popular websites selling clothes and accessories were chosen, and 79 questionnaires were completed for each website. The collected data was gathered using a 2-tuple fuzzy linguistic representation model that captures linguistic information from customers. Two methods from rough set theory were employed during data analysis, and the rules of customer behavior during online purchasing, which were identified using Rosetta software, were confirmed. These rules were further supported by comparison with RapidMiner software and matched the experts' observations. Certain work highlights that, in terms of importance, search engine optimization occupies the paramount position, as do social media marketing and recommender engines in the field of marketing management. The changes and challenges brought by digitization in the hospitality and tourism sector, combined with the need for adapting to new shifts and the proactive building of new tools resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, involve a strategy for tourism businesses with the support of marketing professionals. This strategy is designed to successfully market the tourism product, improve consumers' satisfaction with the service, ensure the accuracy and credibility of information provided, deliver information in multiple languages, avoid information gaps, assist users in navigation, develop applications for mobile devices, and become acquainted with the available tools and platforms. Businesses can collect and consolidate large amounts of information about customers and specific Internet channels to measure their efficiency ([Munjal & Singh, 2021](#)).

In the study by [Olha et al. \(2020\)](#), the authors pay attention to the terminus of sports tourism and selected types of sports tourism, the stages of creating tours, as well as the methods for the promotion of sports tours. It also works well in comparing traditional media marketing with digital marketing. Worth stressing is that within the scope of promotional tactics, the study highlights the importance of digital marketing instruments, the use of which is deemed essential today because of the growing significance of the online distribution of information caused by the sophistication of society. Marketing communication that still relies on traditional or 'analog' methods can no longer guarantee good performance. Another precondition for effective marketing and promotion of sports tourism is the use of all available sources of digital marketing together with traditional marketing and, in some cases, the transition to online technology. An essential strength for the digital economy, e-commerce, and digital marketing is that visitor behavior in the tourism segment can be quantified and assessed efficiently ([Mahmutović, 2021](#)). Such an orientation assists tourism businesses in tailoring and channeling their marketing strategies more appropriately by collecting marketing-oriented data ([Sakas, Reklitis, Terzi, & Vassilakis, 2022](#)). As stated by [Das \(2021\)](#), the present-day customer interacts with businesses through digital marketing at the rate of 72 percent, and organizations that adopt digital marketing as a strategic plan for operations may expect an increase in revenue by 2.8-fold as well as a 300 percent improvement in their Return on Investment (ROI). Some of the issues evident from these findings point to some of the limitations of digital marketing compared to traditional marketing. However, the research also discusses challenges related to digital marketing, such as data breaches.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Participants

The participants in the current study comprised the managers and employees of tourism-related firms in the Hail

region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Out of 350 members, only 307 were chosen to join this study since they had over three years of experience as per the research criteria set. They were selected randomly. The researcher adopted a descriptive approach to the study. The characteristics of the study sample are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. The study sample.

No.	Tourism companies	Basic sample
1	Moghader tourism	36
2	Feed travel and tourism	41
3	Iqlaa Tourism	37
4	Al Qafilah tourism	44
5	Statco tourism	32
6	Areej tourism	38
7	Al-Rowad tourism	42
8	Alboraq tourism	37
Total		307

2.2. Measures and Procedures

The survey was a structured electronic questionnaire, and information was downloaded from the respondents. The main questionnaire used in the current research was prepared by several other researchers who used variables and adopted them to test the study questions. Three types of electronic questionnaires were employed; all three were in Arabic. To collect respondents' answers to the questions posed here, Google Drive forms were administered to a quota purposive sample of managers and employees in the evaluated tourism firms in the Hail region in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire was emailed to the tourism companies, to companies that have their own Facebook page, and to managers/employees of respective tourism companies in their linked personal LinkedIn accounts. The survey was completed between August 2024 and October 2024, respectively, and 307 questionnaires were collected and distributed, and the values in the questionnaires were filled in neatly for analysis.

In the study, three questionnaires were used to gather data. The first questionnaire sought to gather data from managers and employees of tourism companies on the real picture of digital marketing in active sports tourism. It consisted of 19 questions and focused on two main axes: the reality of collecting and analyzing marketing information and the reality of applying digital marketing. The second questionnaire was developed to reveal the factors that restrict the application of DM by tourism companies. The third questionnaire was developed to determine the role of DM in the enhancement of the quality of services for sports tourism by tourism companies and included 18 statements. All the questions/answers to the questions analyzed were answered on a 5-point Likert scale, which included options ranging from 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (not applicable), 4 (often), and 5 (always) (see [Appendix A-C](#)). Like other types of scales, Likert scales are ordinal; that means the data collected by this scale is also a rating scale, ranging from a minimum to a maximum. The use of a five-point Likert scale was conducted because, at the value level, there often are more than two responses; in other words, various conditions are established through which responses can be analyzed quantitatively using quantitative variables ([Virginia Phelan, Chen, & Haney, 2013](#)). Moreover, the cross of the even-numbered scales enables the respondents to tick the middle position (value 3) that categorizes the respondent as being neutral or average or simply select one side of the scale that shows an extreme stance ([Velentza & Metaxas, 2023](#)). The scores were calculated as specified below. Therefore, to test for the internal reliability of the developed questionnaires, a Cronbach alpha was conducted. The reliability coefficients calculated according to the first, second, and third questionnaires were 0.83, 0.79, and 0.81, respectively, all of which are reasonable values.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics and inferential analysis were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 (IBM

Corporation, USA, Armonk, NY). To check the normality of the data, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed, which yielded $p = 0.001$, and the data was found to be normally distributed. Statistical techniques that were used included mean responses, standard deviation, and chi-squares. The degree of correlation was measured by the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the credibility of the tool was tested with Cronbach's alpha. Using system-generated statistics, the level of significance was set at 0.05.

3. RESULTS

The following Table 2 presents the opinions of managers and employees of companies through a questionnaire on the reality of digital marketing for active sports tourism in tourism companies. The average response to the MI axis was 2.99, the average response to the REM axis was 2.91, and the average response to the entire questionnaire was 3.10, $P = 0.001$.

Table 2. The role of digital marketing for active sports tourism for tourism companies.

No.	Item	Mean	Std.	Std. err.	X ²	Sig.
The first axis: Marketing Information (MI)						
1-	The company can be accessed for the marketing information systems.	3.08	1.13	0.06	158.52	0.001
2-	The company has a relatively young record system in its modern context, and it is regularly updated.	3.18	1.46	0.08	28.49	0.001
3-	The company has its own database that bears a certain similarity to the previous formulas.	3.34	1.29	0.07	152.01	0.001
4-	The company relies on those who are familiar with and most productive in handling data and information.	2.83	1.51	0.09	32.11	0.001
5-	This became evident in all data and marketing information that form the basis for setting the prices of goods and services provided by the company to the customers.	3.50	1.51	0.09	97.52	0.001
6-	The company is interested in what data and information will be useful for the formulation of a strategy for selling club services and products.	3.16	1.39	0.08	36.62	0.001
7-	The company is interested in determining which promotional tool suits the company's available budget size appropriately.	3.11	1.42	0.08	31.23	0.001
8-	It is carrying out periodic assessments and market status updates at the company on a regular basis.	3.26	1.33	0.08	74.98	0.001
9-	It helps the company assist in offering improved services to the consumer.	2.79	1.52	0.09	2.90	0.410
10-	The current customers are protected through special programs, which is an area on which the company will greatly depend.	2.79	1.27	0.07	109.53	0.001
Total axes (MI)		2.99	1.23	0.07	175.24	0.001
The second axis: The Reality of Electronic Marketing (REM)						
11-	The company has a page on its own website where it offers goods, products, and services.	2.60	1.31	0.08	18.41	0.001
12-	The company owns a database and some marketing administrative information.	2.87	1.47	0.08	31.10	0.001
13-	Discuss with customers through the company's page.	3.15	1.36	0.09	115.42	0.001
14-	A website comprises all the services as well as goods provided by the company.	3.56	1.51	0.09	108.86	0.001
15-	To achieve marketing success for various services and goods, the company employs different pages and electronic applications.	3.47	1.59	0.09	92.73	0.001
16-	It could also use emails to market its products.	3.54	1.52	0.09	99.79	0.001
17-	The company offers all the capacities needed to provide services through websites and e-pages.	3.28	1.57	0.09	56.92	0.08
18-	The company can be found in the company and system subsisting based on the digital information system.	2.93	1.55	0.08	6.76	0.001
19-	Ongoing development of plans and programs for electronic marketing is being carried out.	2.50	1.33	0.08	53.51	0.001
Total axes (REM)		2.91	1.33	0.08	75.51	0.001
Total A survey		3.10	0.71	0.04	179.81	0.001

The results of the questionnaire on the reality of digital marketing for sports tourism are statistically significant ($P < 0.05$), as shown in Table 2. The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) values for the questionnaire axes (MI, REM) were, respectively, (0.65, 0.67), indicating an average level. The KMO values for the full questionnaire, according to Kaiser (1974), were 0.78, indicating a high level, and the results of the Bartlett test of sphericity were statistically significant ($P = 0.001$). The statistics indicate a consensus (averages ranging from 2.50 to 3.56 on all questionnaire questions). While for the questionnaire, it was 3.10, which indicates the use of digital marketing by tourism companies to a large extent. Kaiser (1974)

Table 3. Challenges that hinder the use of electronic marketing for sports tourism activities in tourism companies.

No.	Item	Mean	Std.	Std. err.	X ₂	Sig.
1-	Lack of adequate technology supports communication and information systems within the company.	2.94	1.18	0.07	80.54	0.001
2-	Slow internet can cause a reduced flow and effectiveness of electronic marketing operations.	3.26	1.19	0.07	119.91	0.001
3-	Lack of a strong wireless communication network.	3.06	1.39	0.08	52.51	0.001
4-	The high cost incurred while establishing a website for a company.	3.42	1.22	0.07	191.52	0.001
5-	The few appliances that are used in the company.	3.49	1.03	0.06	307.70	0.001
6-	Lack of skills and knowledge about handling the electronic devices of the company.	3.56	1.40	0.08	145.61	0.001
7-	Expense of converting to electronic marketing as a result of high material costs.	3.39	1.43	0.08	84.77	0.001
8-	Lack of adequate financial commitment for public expenditure on the information structure.	3.32	1.44	0.08	86.00	0.001
9-	Uncertainty of using electronic payments as a medium of exchange.	2.64	1.55	0.09	71.23	0.001
Total survey		3.23	0.80	0.05	221.22	0.001

The results of the questionnaire on the obstacles that limit the use of digital marketing in tourism companies are statistically significant ($P < 0.05$), as shown in Table 3. As for the KMO values for the full questionnaire, according to Kaiser (1974), they were (0.87), indicating a high level, and the results of the Bartlett test of sphericity were statistically significant ($P = 0.001$). The statistics indicate a consensus (averages ranging from 2.64 to 3.56 on all questionnaire questions), and the average for the questionnaire was 3.23 ($P = 0.001$).

Table 4. The usefulness of e-marketing in enhancing the provision of quality services by tourism firms.

No.	Item	Mean	Std.	Std. err.	X ₂	Sig.
1-	E-marketing helps avoid time and effort that would otherwise have been spent trying to understand what services the company offers.	3.08	1.13	0.06	158.52	0.001
2-	Through e-marketing to its customers, the company presents insight into all the services offered by the company.	3.19	1.46	0.08	29.43	0.001
3-	It aids in delivering all services to clients at a low price and with maximum efficiency, and I might add, idealism.	3.35	1.29	0.07	153.60	0.001
4-	E-marketing helps players in the tourism industry improve the standard of services delivered to consumers.	2.83	1.51	0.09	32.11	0.001
5-	It is also observed that marketing services through websites and electronic pages help in enhancing institutional performance.	3.50	1.51	0.09	97.52	0.001
6-	E-marketing enables the smooth undertaking of everyday clerical activities.	3.16	1.39	0.08	36.62	0.001
7-	It plays a crucial role in presenting and advertising different kinds of products and services that have a favorable impact on the growth of the firm.	3.11	1.42	0.08	31.23	0.001

Continue.

No.	Item	Mean	Std.	Std. err.	X2	Sig.
8-	It helps to increase the company's sales. E-marketing.	3.26	1.33	0.08	74.98	0.001
9-	E-marketing influences enhance the company's marketing activity.	2.79	1.52	0.09	2.90	0.410
10-	It assists in meeting the wants and goals that the customers of the company have.	2.80	1.27	0.07	109.17	0.001
11-	This way, it helps create demand for the company's activities and services.	2.62	1.31	0.07	17.91	0.001
12-	Creating luxury for consumers of the services and products that are provided on the pages and in websites.	2.87	1.47	0.08	31.10	0.001
13-	It helps in customer acquisition, along with its club memberships, due to the excellent service provided to its customers.	3.15	1.36	0.08	115.42	0.001
14-	It assists in providing the right details and facts about the different services and products that the company offers.	3.57	1.50	0.09	111.46	0.001
15-	It contributes to helping solve all the challenges that customers experience continuously.	3.48	1.59	0.09	95.02	0.001
16-	It assists in improving the rate of access for a variety of customers.	3.54	1.52	0.09	99.79	0.001
17-	It plays a role in attaining the company's competitiveness.	3.28	1.57	0.09	56.92	0.001
18-	It supports satisfying customers' needs and wants electronically.	2.93	1.55	0.09	6.71	0.08
Total survey		3.14	0.71	0.04	248.25	0.001

The results in Table 4 show the importance of e-marketing in making tourism companies more effective in service. Participants also agreed on these statements, with the mean value ranges of 2.62–3.57 along a Likert scale. Stronger agreement corresponds to higher mean values, and more consensus between responses to items corresponds to a lower standard deviation. The highest mean (3.57) was for Statement 14 (accurate information about services and products), which means that participants perceived the important role of e-marketing in providing accurate information. Statement 15 (assistance in solving customer problems) was also high (3.48), indicating that e-marketing is better than in-store help in assisting the buyer experience. The lowest mean (2.62) is for e-marketing statement 11 (creating demand for the company activities), indicating that the employers do not consider running an online marketing effort as significantly useful in creating demand.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study impact active sports tourism digital marketing to improve the quality of services offered by the tourism organizations. Table 2 also indicates that marketing information is available to companies, although the marketing information systems that are in place may not be robust. They also maintain records to current, which implies they are trying to be in tune with developments, though not very effective in periodic updating. It depends on people who know how to work with data, but a lack of competence or training is possible here. They are still struggling with the selection of the right tools for advertising but may require further categorization to identify the best. Further, there is an urgent need to enhance the kind of services delivered to the customers because the mean score is still wanted in this area. It is also important for companies to establish customer protection programs that suggest the presence of a problem in this regard. It is also evident from the axis of reality of digital marketing that more firms may not have a good website through which they can get customers. In the quest to enhance their competitive edge, companies make use of management information systems (MIS), which are, however, still limited to a few functions and can be further explored in many ways. Some baby companies are forced to be stuck with primitive MIS that denies them the ability to use analytics or other forms of digital strategies that would enable them to gather and process vast amounts of information. Others must use very old-school MIS means where the leaps in analytical technology or other digital options can't collate and process data very well (Shumkova, Shumkova, Krasnik,

Tymchenko, & Loboda, 2024; Ślusarczyk, 2020; Velentza & Metaxas, 2023). The lack of linkages between these systems may do this and be an obstacle to most of such fusion of data, which is useful for the strategic decision-making processes in the organization (Zeng, Lee, & Lo, 2020). In addition to this, there are also mismatches. Companies are slow in the provision of marketing changes, which are vital for adaptation to the market environment, including the habits of consumers (Rahman, Hossain, Abdel Fattah, & Akter, 2020). In the case of overhauls, the expectations of the market and the customers are likely to improve the marketing strategy so that it is up to date with the current (Shumkova et al., 2024). Marketing knowledge and information systems may only realize their full potential when there are skilled, knowledgeable, and trained personnel on the ground to operate them; otherwise, power-throwing becomes the order of the day (Rahman et al., 2020). It is paramount to invest in training programs so that the staff can be more competent and, in turn, can make better use of MIS (Broadstock & Zeng, 2020). Customer concerns over their protection indicate a gap in brand management that is detrimental to their loyalty and credibility (Farida & Setiawan, 2022). Effective customer protection strategies are critical in ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty, which translates into improved business performance (Shumkova et al., 2024). Companies can use MIS, but updating, training, and customer protection still pose challenges in the realization of ideal performance and market competitiveness.

Table 3 shows that several barriers exist that act as a thorn in the efforts of various firms to embrace e-marketing. The case suggests that there is a critical need for these companies to improve the technological framework they employ and enhance their employees' skills. Through the aforementioned concerns, it is possible to eliminate the challenges that companies face and enhance the efficacy of e-marketing in utilizing sports tourism activities. According to Tarighi, Talebi Kharkeshi, and Salehi Rostami (2022) and Csiszár (2023), several major challenges can hinder e-marketing. These include resistance to change, a lack of awareness of the benefits of digital marketing, inadequate technological support, and costly implementation. Furthermore, legal requirements, such as data protection regulations, also pose a challenge to digital marketing (Guzana & Msosa, 2022). Mismatches in digital proficiency also contribute to the failure to optimally exploit electronic marketing tools (Mohan & Ali, 2019; Tarighi et al., 2022). Considering these issues, Csiszár (2023) stressed that businesses need to implement qualitative digital tools and platforms to maintain efficient digital marketing. Additionally, the incorporation and continuation of comprehensive training activities that lead to the enrichment of employees' abilities are essential for improving interactions with the concept of digital marketing. These challenges can be considered and summarized comprehensively by Celly and Furness. Given the perceived risks of digital transformation, these challenges may be compounded, highlighting the need for a balanced approach to the adoption of digital marketing in the sports tourism domain (Das, 2021; Tyo & Nikitinsky, 2022).

The results derived in Table 4 suggest that e-marketing has a significant positive impact on the quality of services delivered by tourism firms. However, some areas still need improvement, and the most improvement needed concerns the customers' need for creation. In a bid to improve the value added to their products and services, organizations should make efforts to enhance their e-marketing techniques. Such an investment is not only going to enhance delivery service but is also going to pave the way towards the responsiveness of the customers' needs. This is consistent with Zhang and Ren (2024) and Forghani et al. (2022), who pointed out that through e-marketing, customer engagement is enhanced by electronic devices like Facebook and mobile applications to make the experience a personalized one and, hence, satisfying. It also influences the perceived customer value, where the authors conclude that e-marketing enriches service quality (Hassoon, Al-Saedi, & Al-Musawi, 2022; Olha et al., 2020). Thus, it means that companies need to emphasize using digital channels to understand customer needs to facilitate the value co-creation process and increase companies' proactivity (Munjal & Singh, 2021; Sakas et al., 2022; Zhang & Ren, 2024). According to Mgoduka, Kaseeram, and Heeralal (2024), e-marketing means direct communication between businesses and buyers, wherein customers can provide feedback and participate, which is crucial for business collaboration that leads to shared value. Thus, to enhance client satisfaction and loyalty, personal customer service experiences across

social media and mobile applications are used (Zhang & Ren, 2024). Improving the intensity of customer interaction through effective promotion over social media can improve overall service quality and responsiveness (Mgoduka et al., 2024). Hence, overall, e-marketing has another task of delivering service quality; the strategic question would be to enhance understanding of customers' needs and ensure viable value creation for tourism. However, there are several concerns regarding such a scenario that rogue digital tools might undermine interpersonal interaction with customers, which is also essential in-service delivery.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study was carried out in the Hail region, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and was meant to identify the use of digital marketing to improve the services that sports tourism organizations offer to their clients. From a data collection of 307 questionnaires from managers and employees in these companies, the findings established that digital marketing enhances service quality. Nevertheless, the results have shown that there are still some issues that remain critical, the principal of which is the issue of customer awareness and satisfaction. Some of the challenges were also outlined that limit companies' abilities to successfully implement digital marketing, which requires enhancing the technological platform employed and building employees' competencies. In the same light, the study identified the challenges encountered in the application of digital marketing in sports tourism activities, and some of them include the following: Awareness of the importance of digital marketing in sports tourism activities remains low. Most often, patrons or promoters of the various sports tourism activities have little money to spend on digital marketing. Insufficient or no training in the usage of digital marketing as a method of advertising sports tourism activities. In further qualitative research, several areas can be recommended, which are: How does the digital marketing campaign influence customers to decide on sports tourism destinations? Alongside understanding the ways by which technologies can be employed to enhance customer experience in sports tourism, while also testing various media sources (social networks, e-mail, websites, etc.) for customer acquisition. These areas are relevant to the general understanding of the significance of digital marketing in sports tourism and to offer specific recommendations about how to improve the quality of a sports tourism service.

6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1. Practical Recommendation

The study demonstrates that qualitative research methods should be used to explore customer interactions with digital marketing programs. Scientists need to study both the behavioral changes affected by marketing efforts and customer responses to marketing signals in these campaigns. The study promotes research on the technical evolution of new technologies and digital platforms to uncover a better understanding of customer satisfaction improvement.

Tourism businesses should blend conventional approaches into their marketing strategies because an integrated plan creates a better customer experience and strengthens customer loyalty. The study recommends that government institutions, together with marketing bodies, actively promote digital marketing awareness to companies. Organizations should deliver training programs for their staff to develop effective use of digital marketing platform resources.

Sports tourism needs a dedicated marketing platform because it will streamline the attraction of active tourists to grow business audiences while boosting tourist activities throughout the region. Businesses must implement strong monitoring approaches for digital marketing strategy evaluations to produce data-based choices that advance future success. Promoting tourism companies to digital marketing investments requires that government bodies and tourism organizations allocate more financial resources.

6.2. Recommendation for Future Research

The study focuses on the role of digital marketing in sports tourism with the aim of enhancing the quality of

services offered by tourism companies. Consequently, we recommend that future research should explore ways to leverage technology to enhance customer experience, particularly through the development of mobile applications and online self-service options. Additionally, the investigation of current sports tourism trends, especially sustainable initiatives and event-focused activities, will improve knowledge of marketing strategy implications. Different analyses should compare sports tourism markets from various regions to show how cultural factors affect digital marketing success rates in diverse local markets. Such a holistic strategy will yield meaningful knowledge about maximizing digital marketing strategies for the sports tourism industry.

Funding: This research is supported by Deanship of Scientific Research at Northern Border University, Arar, KSA (Grant number: NBU-FFR-2025-214-01).

Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the University of Hail, Saudi Arabia has granted approval for this study on 16 February 2024.

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. The role of digital marketing for active sports tourism for tourism companies.

No.	Item	Always	Often	Not applicable	Rarely	Never
The first axis: Marketing information (MI)						
1-	The company can be accessed for the marketing information systems.					
2-	The company has a relatively young record system in its modern context, and it is regularly updated.					
3-	The company has its own database that bears a certain similarity to the previous formulas.					
4-	The company relies on those who are familiar with and most productive in handling data and information.					
5-	This became evident in all data and marketing information that form the basis for setting the prices of goods and services provided by the company to the customers.					
6-	The company is interested in what data and information will be useful for the formulation of a strategy for selling club services and products.					
7-	The company is interested in determining which promotional tool suits the company's available budget size appropriately.					
8-	It is carrying out periodic assessments and market status updates at the company on a regular basis.					
9-	It helps the company assist in offering improved services to the consumer.					
10-	The current customers are protected through special programs, which is an area on which the company will greatly depend.					
The second axis: The Reality of Electronic Marketing (REM)						
11-	The company has a page on its own website on which it offers goods, products, and services.					

12-	The company owns a database and some marketing administrative information.					
13-	Discuss with customers through the company's page.					
14-	A website comprises all the services as well as goods provided by the company.					
15-	To achieve marketing success for various services and goods, the company employs different pages and electronic applications.					
16-	It could also use emails to market its products.					
17-	The company offers all the capacities needed to offer services through websites and e -pages.					
18-	The company can be found in the company and system subsisting based on the digital information system.					
19-	Ongoing development of plans and programs for electronic marketing is being carried out.					

Appendix B. Challenges that hinder the use of electronic marketing for sports tourism activities in tourism companies.

No.	Item	Always	Often	Not applicable	Rarely	Never
1-	Lack of adequate technology supports communication and information systems within the company.					
2-	Slow internet can cause a reduced flow and effectiveness of electronic marketing operations.					
3-	Lack of a strong wireless communication network.					
4-	The high cost incurred while establishing a website for a company.					
5-	The few appliances that are used in the company.					
6-	Lack of skills and knowledge about handling the electronic devices of the company.					
7-	The expense of converting to electronic marketing is a result of high material costs.					
8-	Lack of adequate financial commitment for public expenditure on the information structure.					
9-	Uncertainty of using electronic payments as a medium of exchange.					

Appendix C. The usefulness of e-marketing in enhancing the provision of quality services by tourism firms.

No.	Item	Always	Often	Not applicable	Rarely	Never
1-	E-marketing helps avoid time and effort that would otherwise have been spent trying to understand what services the company offers.					
2-	Through e-marketing to its customers, the company presents insight into all the services offered by the company.					
3-	It aids in delivering all services to clients at a low price and with maximum efficiency, and I might add, idealism.					
4-	E-marketing helps players in the tourism industry improve the standard of services delivered to consumers.					
5-	It is also observed that marketing services through websites and electronic pages help in enhancing institutional performance.					
6-	E-marketing enables the smooth undertaking of everyday clerical activities.					
7-	It plays a crucial role in presenting and advertising different kinds of products and services that have a favorable impact on the growth of the firm.					
8-	It helps to increase the company's sales. E-marketing.					

No.	Item	Always	Often	Not applicable	Rarely	Never
9-	E-marketing influences enhance the company's marketing activity.					
10-	It assists in meeting the wants and goals that the customers of the company have.					
11-	This way, it helps create demand for the company's activities and services.					
12-	Creating luxury for consumers of the services and products that are provided on the pages and in websites.					
13-	It helps in customer acquisition, along with its club memberships, due to the excellent service provided to its customers.					
14-	It assists in providing the correct details and facts regarding the various services and products that the company offers.					
15-	It contributes to helping solve all the challenges that customers experience continuously.					
16-	It assists in improving the rate of access to a variety of customers.					
17-	It plays a role in attaining the company's competitiveness.					
18-	It supports satisfying customers' needs and wants electronically.					

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