



## THE IMPACT OF DIGITISATION ON CONSUMER TRUST, SATISFACTION, AND BOOKING INTENTION IN SMALL TOURISM ENTERPRISES: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING APPROACH

<sup>1</sup>Wallamkumar Dkhar ,<sup>2</sup>Dr. Benjamin .F. Lyngdoh ,<sup>3</sup>Paramjeet Kumar ,<sup>4</sup>Sunita Boro

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Shillong Commerce College, Meghalaya, India & Research Scholar, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, North-Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya, India

Email Id: [wallamdkhar@gmail.com](mailto:wallamdkhar@gmail.com) , Orcid Id: 0009-0000-3483-5661

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, North-Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya, India, Email Id: [blyngdoh@gmail.com](mailto:blyngdoh@gmail.com), Orcid Id: 0000-0002-6345-8954

<sup>3</sup>Research Scholar (Pursuing PhD) Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India, Email Id: [paramjeetchoudhary35@gmail.com](mailto:paramjeetchoudhary35@gmail.com)  
Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3824-2289>

<sup>4</sup>Research Scholar (Pursuing PhD) Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India, Email Id: [099sunitaboro@gmail.com](mailto:099sunitaboro@gmail.com)  
Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0901-8539>

---

### Article History:

Received : 2026-03-02

Revised : 2026-04-11

Accepted : 2026-05-08

Published : 2026-05-18

---

### Abstract

Digitalization has changed buying experience as well as processes in companies, consequently, customer satisfaction and loyalty. With an emphasis on how digital components affect trust, customer satisfaction, and booking intention, this study investigates how tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions toward small tourism companies (STEs) are affected by digitization. The study assesses six important constructs: Digital Presence (DP), Digital Communication Effectiveness (DCE), Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services (PUDS), Trust (TR), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Booking Intention (BI) using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and a sample of 300 tourists who have booked services from STEs using digital platforms. The results show that the effectiveness of digital communication greatly increases customer trust, suggesting that prompt, transparent, and tailored communication is essential to fostering favorable opinions of STEs. Although digital presence is a fundamental component, it has little effect on trust until interactive interaction is included. It's interesting to note that customer happiness was not significantly impacted by perceived usefulness of digital services, indicating that travelers increasingly view these capabilities as standard expectations rather than value drivers.

**Keywords:** Digitisation, Tourism, Small Tourism Enterprise, Satisfaction, Booking Intention

## **1. Introduction**

The ever-growing tourist business has been significantly impacted by the quick advancement of technology. The Internet is one of the most important technical developments influencing the travel and tourism sector (Pencarelli, 2020). Travelers may now more easily plan their trips, compare prices, and book flights, hotels, and activities online. Travelers' use of online booking sites like Expedia, Booking.com, and Airbnb has changed dramatically as a result of the Internet. Due to their affordability and simplicity of use, these platforms have grown in popularity, which has raised competition in the travel sector. Since online booking is becoming more and more popular in the tourist sector, businesses must compete worldwide by providing comparable services (Gossling & Lane, 2015). For example, both hosts and investors who are optimistic about the possible financial advantages and visitors who find it fun, refreshing, and affordable value Airbnb's creative business concept.

The rise of digital culture has come with its share of challenges, exposing particular negative effects on the travel and tourist industry, most notably the possibility of fraud and frauds (Kassem & Santamaria, 2023). Therefore, in order to stay competitive, tourist enterprises need to adjust to the internet economy. Travelers find it difficult to distinguish between reliable and dishonest websites due to the proliferation of internet booking platforms. Travelers are vulnerable to frauds in which they pay for trip plans that may not exist or correspond to the descriptions given. When making decisions regarding their travel arrangements, travellers mostly rely on information they find online (Ben-Elia & Avineri, 2015). This information needs to be reliable to prevent tourists from being duped or misled. Therefore, it's critical to address the mistrust and worries brought on by fraudulent online travel plans. Negative experiences and possible financial losses might result from travelers being misled or misled by unreliable internet information.

Digitalization has altered business procedures and the purchasing experience, which has affected consumer loyalty and happiness. This occurred particularly quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when businesses worldwide used digital platforms to combat the epidemic's effects. The usage of technology in both private and professional life has increased due to the global pandemic. New digital goods and services have emerged as a result of digitalization. According to the needs of the customer, these new goods and services are developed with a great deal of flexibility (Jin & Oriaku, 2013). The transition from analog to digital business almost happened overnight, upending the industry and influencing a shift in customer expectations and behavior (Siebel, 2019). In the tourism sector, trust, affordances, and technological preparedness are all important determinants of how travelers use technology. Technology readiness affects travelers' desire and capacity to embrace and utilize technology, affordances affect how tourists see the technology's utility and usability, and trust affects how technology is adopted and used (Shariffuddin et al., 2023). The perceived actionable potential of technology is referred to as affordability. Features like online trip booking, user reviews, and interactive maps are examples of affordances in the tourist industry. These affordances have the power to change how visitors view the value and utility of technology in the travel sector. Tourists find it harder to trust online information sources because of the anonymity and lack of in-person connection associated with online transactions, which increases their sense of uncertainty and mistrust. Tourists' decision-making processes clearly depend heavily on trust, particularly when it comes to online tourism, where they frequently lack firsthand knowledge of the place and must rely on internet information to make their trip decisions. The tourism sector can create a more secure and reliable environment for travelers and improve their overall travel experiences by addressing and reducing fraudulent acts and ensuring the accuracy of online information. The subsequent part of the paper thoroughly reviews existing literature and focuses on examining how digitisation influences tourist perceptions and behaviour toward small tourism enterprises.

## **2. Literature Review**

Digitalization had already begun before the worldwide pandemic, but the epidemic has accelerated the use of new technology. The whole globe switched to internet operations overnight. With the epidemic ongoing and the world about to adopt 5G technology, businesses, managers, and individuals are standing on "digital doors" that present new opportunities, the repercussions of which we have yet to witness. As a result, practically all businesses worldwide are either considering or have already made the switch to online platforms. The use of digital technology and data to generate income, enhance operations, replace or modify corporate procedures, and establish a digital business environment of which digital information is at the center is known as digitalization (Zaki, 2019). The use of digital

technology alters business models and procedures, resulting in significant investment expenses for businesses. However, given the evidence of improved business performance and the production of new value along the company's supply chain (Agus & Shukri Hajinoor, 2012), businesses today must reinvent their business models by using new technology. Ultimately, the customer's perception of this newly produced value will determine whether or not they are satisfied, which will impact the firm's success. One of the main objectives that organizations pursue is customer satisfaction. Numerous studies examine the characteristics of consumer satisfaction across various sectors. As a result, the industry and the kind of service offered determine the essential components of customer satisfaction. Since customers are active consumers of goods and services, addressing customer loyalty becomes crucial for businesses looking to maintain their competitiveness in the modern marketplace. As loyal customers have an influence on a company's profitability, keeping them as customers is a challenging strategy for businesses nowadays (Arslan, 2020). Building a customer loyalty base is undoubtedly aided by conducting business online and utilizing online platforms and apps (Cheng et al., 2020). Since everything is now done online, businesses must overcome many obstacles to keeping customers. Since digitalization made it possible for people to purchase goods and use services anywhere in the world, physical barriers are not a major issue, but businesses now need to be more innovative in delivering positive customer experiences through various online and digital sources. One of the most significant external sources of information for booking and travel nowadays is the Internet. In order to discover information about reserving accommodations, hotel guests utilize a variety of online resources, such as comparison websites, specialized supplier websites, and online travel agencies (Murphy et al., 2016). In order to foresee and predict ultimate demand, the hotel sector depends on the booking data collected (Antonio et al., 2019). It's also noteworthy that many travellers today have a limited amount of time each year to travel, so they want to prepare ahead to avoid a negative experience. As they have access to all the information they need to make decisions, the new generation of customers known as digital natives think and act more quickly, which significantly lowers costs for businesses (Philip & KA, 2019). Many businesses have shifted to online booking services as a result of the hospitality industry's need to adjust to the rising expectations and needs of its clientele in order to remain relevant. The majority of internet reservations are for airline tickets, with hotel accommodations coming in second. Therefore, in order to meet the expectations of customers, it is crucial to have an efficient online booking platform. To maintain their place in the market, hoteliers need to be active online and be abreast of emerging technology (Buhalis, et al., 2019). The most crucial elements for customers to visit and make a purchase were determined by the researchers. These included a user-friendly design, safe payment options, a variety of pricing points, and quick access to pertinent information. Making the reservation itself was the least crucial element (Pokhrel et al., 2024). This study focuses on analysing the association between Digital Presence (DP), Digital Communication Effectiveness (DCE), Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services (PUDS), and Booking Intentions (BI) with Trust (TR) and Customer Satisfaction (CS). The methodology applied in this study are discussed below.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a quantitative research design to explore the impact of digitisation on consumer trust, satisfaction, and booking intention within the context of Small Tourism Enterprises (STEs).

#### **Sampling Population & Method**

The target population for this research comprises tourists who have previously booked services from small tourism enterprises using digital platforms such as websites, mobile applications, or social media. The inclusion criteria required that participants had at least one experience booking with a small tourism service provider online in the past 12 months. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only relevant and experienced respondents were included. A minimum of 300 responses were collected, meeting the recommended threshold for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to ensure sufficient model strength and statistical power. The final dataset consisted of responses from various age groups, educational backgrounds, and travel frequencies to ensure representativeness.

#### **Research Instrument:**

The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire, designed based on existing literature and refined to suit the context of Indian STEs. The responses for the various items of each factor were collected on a 7-point scale with 1 being the lowest degree of agreement and 7 being the highest degree of

agreement. Responses were checked for completeness and consistency prior to analysis.

**Statistical Approach:**

SEM was used to analyze data collected, and this was carried out using AMOS software. SEM was chosen as it allows for simultaneous assessment of multiple dependent and independent relationships, and is particularly effective in testing theoretical models involving latent constructs.

**4. Results and Analysis:**

As mentioned above there are a total of 300 responses were collected for the purpose of the study. The process to be followed in analysing these datasets is to divide into sub-sections investigating each category of the respondents. But before that a demographic understanding about the respondents is provided below.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the variable - Age Group**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18–24 yrs	30	10.0	10.0
25-34 yrs	82	27.3	37.3
35-44 yrs	83	27.7	65.0
45-54 yrs	75	25.0	90.0
55 yrs and above	30	10.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the variable - Gender**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	144	48.0	48.0
Female	156	52.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the variable - Educational Qualification**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
High School Graduate	103	34.3	34.3
Graduate	141	47.0	81.3
Postgraduate	56	18.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the variable – Frequency of Travel for leisure**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rarely	15	5.0	5.0
Occasionally	144	48.0	53.0
Frequently	141	47.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

The demographic profile of the 300 participants in the study is done prior to the main analysis, as this will provide a proper background for results interpretation.

The respondents' age distribution is displayed in Table 1. More than half of the sample is composed of the largest age groups, which are 25–34 years old (27.3%) and 35–44 years old (27.7%). This implies that persons in their prime working and travel years provide the majority of the study's insights. While younger respondents (18–24 years old) and elderly respondents (55 years and beyond) make up 10% of the sample, respondents 45–54 years old also make up a sizable part (25%). With a higher representation from the middle-aged group, this suggests a well balanced distribution throughout adult age groups.

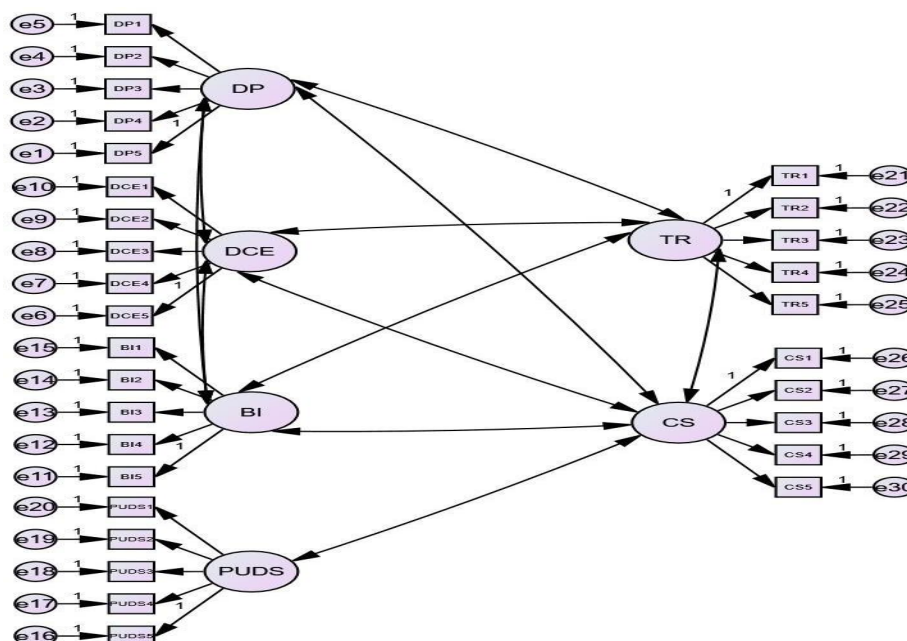
The gender distribution can be observed in Table 2, where there is a nearly equal distribution of men and women, with slightly more women than men (52% vs 48%). The findings' applicability to both genders is supported by this balance. The respondents' educational backgrounds are shown in Table 3. The sample appears to be well-educated, as evidenced by the large majority having a graduate (47%) or postgraduate (18.7%) degree. Of the participants, 34.3% are high school graduates. Given the study's aim, this education profile suggests that the respondents are probably technologically literate and able to interact with online travel platforms. The frequency of leisure travel is summarized in Table 4. Just 5% of respondents said they travel rarely, but nearly all said they travel frequently (47%) or sometimes (48%) or both. This demonstrates that the sample is mostly made up of active leisure travellers who are probably familiar with dealing with small travel businesses and making reservations through internet platforms.

To examine how digitisation influences tourist perceptions and behaviour toward small tourism enterprises, SEM was conducted. Before conducting the SEM, analysis Reliability test was conducted. The results of the same are shown below:

**Table 5: Reliability Test results**

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha
Digital Presence	.842
Digital Communication Effectiveness	.878
Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services	.859
Trust	.871
Customer Satisfaction	.881
Booking Intention	.833

The reliability test findings in Table 5 show that all of the constructs utilized in the study have strong internal consistency. It is suggested that the items in each construct accurately measure the intended dimension since the Cronbach's alpha values for each scale are significantly higher than the generally accepted limit of 0.70. These results collectively affirm that the questionnaire used in the study is a dependable tool for evaluating the impact of digitisation on consumer trust, satisfaction, and booking intention in small tourism enterprises.



**Fig 1: Path Diagram**

The structural equation model (SEM) used to investigate how digitization affects customer happiness, trust, and booking intention within small tourist businesses is depicted in the route diagram. The model consists of six important latent variables—Digital Presence (DP), Digital Communication Effectiveness (DCE), Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services (PUDS), Trust (TR), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Booking Intention (BI), each assessed by a set of observable indicators. The single-headed arrows connecting these observed variables to their corresponding constructs show how they contribute to capturing the underlying dimension. The structural component of the model outlines hypothesised causal relationships among these constructs. For instance, Digital Presence and Digital Communication Effectiveness both influence Trust, while Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services contributes directly to Customer Satisfaction. Trust further influences both Customer Satisfaction and Booking Intention, and in turn, Customer Satisfaction has a direct effect on Booking Intention. Each observed variable also has an associated error term, acknowledging the variance not explained by the latent construct. The diagram provides a clear visual representation of the complex interrelationships among digital service attributes and consumer perceptions in the context of small tourism enterprises, serving as a robust foundation for SEM analysis using AMOS.

**Table 6: Regression Weights**

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
DP5	<---	DP	1.000			
DP4	<---	DP	.050	.161	.314	.754
DP3	<---	DP	.054	.169	.318	.750
DP2	<---	DP	.030	.121	.245	.806
DP1	<---	DP	.023	.109	.208	.835
DCE5	<---	DCE	1.000			
DCE4	<---	DCE	-.099	.027	-3.709	***
DCE3	<---	DCE	-.039	.015	-2.621	.009
DCE2	<---	DCE	.998	.001	1687.661	***
DCE1	<---	DCE	-.154	.038	-4.013	***
BI5	<---	BI	1.000			
BI4	<---	BI	-.088	.048	-1.825	.068
BI3	<---	BI	1.087	.028	38.260	***
BI2	<---	BI	-.221	.048	-4.632	***
BI1	<---	BI	-.082	.048	-1.702	.089
PUDS5	<---	PUDS	1.000			
PUDS4	<---	PUDS	.012	.250	.048	.962
PUDS3	<---	PUDS	.040	.790	.050	.960
PUDS2	<---	PUDS	-.089	1.765	-.051	.960
PUDS1	<---	PUDS	-.002	.103	-.018	.986
TR1	<---	TR	1.000			
TR2	<---	TR	-.037	.087	-.425	.671
TR3	<---	TR	.207	.121	1.706	.088
TR4	<---	TR	.167	.106	1.574	.116
TR5	<---	TR	.207	.121	1.706	.088
CS1	<---	CS	1.000			
CS2	<---	CS	.152	.197	.769	.442
CS3	<---	CS	.025	.103	.243	.808
CS4	<---	CS	.063	.123	.513	.608
CS5	<---	CS	.152	.197	.769	.442

The table shows the standardized regression weights, standard errors (S.E.), critical ratios (C.R.), and p-values (P) for every indicator of the six latent constructs in the structural model. They are critical in assessing the validity, reliability, as well as the total contribution of every observed variable in the measurement of the latent constructs. The regression weights presented in Table 6 reflect the strength and significance of the relationships between each latent construct and its respective observed indicators in the measurement model. For most constructs, one indicator was fixed at 1.000 to serve as a reference point for estimating the remaining loadings. In the case of Digital Presence (DP), only the item DP5 served as a significant anchor, while the other indicators (DP1 to DP4) showed low standardized estimates and high p-values, suggesting weak and statistically insignificant contributions to the latent variable.

For Digital Communication Effectiveness (DCE), some indicators (DCE2, DCE3, DCE4, and DCE1) displayed strong and significant loadings. DCE2 had an exceptionally high estimate (0.998) and a critical ratio (C.R.) over 1600 with  $p < .001$ , indicating its strong contribution. Under Booking Intention (BI), BI3 stood out with a very high estimate (1.087) and a highly significant p-value ( $p < .001$ ), making it a key indicator for this construct. For Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services (PUDS), the loadings across PUDS1 to PUDS4 were weak, with all p-values well above the 0.05 threshold, indicating that these indicators were not strong reflections of the latent construct in the sample data. In the Trust (TR) construct, the indicator TR1 held firm. For Customer Satisfaction (CS), only CS1 was observed to be strong.

**Table 7: Model Fit Indices**

	<b>Model</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
GFI	0.917	Good Fit
AGFI	0.901	Good Fit
PGFI	0.814	Good Fit
RMR	0.098	Good Fit
CMIN/df	3.46	Acceptable Fit

The model fit indices in Table 7 indicate that the proposed structural equation model fits well overall. The Adjusted Goodness-of-match Index (AGFI) of 0.901 and the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) of 0.917, both of which are over the accepted threshold of 0.90, suggesting that the model matches the observed data well. The Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI), which accounts for model complexity, is equally high at 0.814, indicating a good balance between model fit and simplicity. The Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) value of 0.098 is within an acceptable range for social science research, although being somewhat over the ideal range ( $<0.08$ ). The CMIN/df (Chi-square/degrees of freedom) value of 3.46, which falls inside the acceptable range (often  $<5$ ), provides additional evidence for the model's appropriateness. According to these indices, the structural model represents the data quite well.

## 5. Discussion

The 300 participants' demographic profile offers crucial background information for understanding the study's conclusions. The findings' generalizability across adult age cohorts is supported by the evenly distributed age representation. The findings are more broadly applicable to both genders since gender representation is almost equal. According to the stated education levels, a significant majority of respondents are graduates or postgraduates, indicating a technologically competent sample capable of engaging with digital tourist platforms. Additionally, 95% of respondents travel regularly or rarely, according to the travel frequency statistics, confirming the sample's applicability to leisure travel and digital booking intention.

The six constructs - Digital Presence (DP), Digital Communication Effectiveness (DCE), Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services (PUDS), Trust (TR), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Booking Intention (BI), and their hypothesized associations are depicted in the SEM path diagram. Five to seven indicators are used to measure each latent variable, and measurement errors are denoted by error terms. According to the model, CS predicts BI, TR effects both CS and BI, DP and DCE predict TR, and PUDS directly affects CS. Together, these interactions show how digital service elements influence travelers' happiness, trust, and intention to book. Although just one indicator (DP5) made a substantial contribution to the construct, the study showed that Digital Presence (DP), which includes social media engagement, mobile accessibility, and website quality, positively affected Trust (TR). According to earlier research, digital touchpoints that are easily available and well-maintained contribute to the early development of customer trust and confidence (Amerta & madhavi, 2023; Hudson et al., 2012). However, the low factor loadings for

various DP indicators may suggest that, while digital presence is significant, visitors are more impacted by utility and interaction quality than by aesthetics or availability.

Trust (TR) and Digital Communication Effectiveness (DCE) showed a robust and statistically significant association. Building trust required indicators of responsiveness, customization, and clear communication. This supports earlier research showing that prompt and customized communication increases customers' trust in service providers (Maghembe & Magasi, 2024). The significance of service-oriented digital contact is demonstrated by the fact that travelers are more inclined to trust small tourist businesses that actively communicate with them both before and throughout their booking process.

The model predicted that Perceived Usefulness of Digital Services (PUDS) will have a direct impact on Customer Satisfaction (CS). The availability of online information, digital payments, and convenience of booking may not be enough to improve consumer happiness in this situation, as the metrics under PUDS did not demonstrate substantial loadings as expected. These characteristics may not immediately increase satisfaction levels unless they are accompanied by trust or a customized experience, which may suggest that visitors view them as fundamental expectations rather than value-added features (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014).

Trust (TR) was found to have a substantial link with both Booking Intention (BI) and Customer Satisfaction (CS). According to Yen et al., (2018), this supports the well-established theory that trust is a crucial precondition for both emotional fulfillment and future behavioral intention in digital travel services. Travelers are more likely to be pleased with the whole experience and think about making more reservations or recommendations if they perceive STEs to be open, reliable, and safe in their online transactions (Su et al., 2014). Additionally, it was demonstrated that Booking Intention (BI) was positively and significantly impacted by Customer Satisfaction (CS). This aligns with a number of studies in the tourism literature that indicate satisfaction is a predictor of customer advocacy and loyalty in addition to reflecting the caliber of the trip experience (Cetin, 2020). Satisfied consumers are more likely to use a STE's services again and suggest it to others, establishing the backbone of long-term company through repeat customers and word-of-mouth advertising.

According to the model, customer happiness and booking behavior are mostly driven by communication quality and trust, even though digital presence is fundamental. Small tourist businesses with digital skills that put an emphasis on customization, responsiveness, and trust-building are more likely to attract repeat business and loyal customers. The comparatively little importance of PUDS points to a change in consumer expectations, with digital elements now serving as prerequisites rather than differentiators. To capture more dynamic or individualized characteristics of digital service utility, future study might further refine the perceived usefulness assessment.

## **6. Conclusion**

The findings of this study provide meaningful insights into how digitisation impacts tourist perceptions and behavioural intentions toward small tourism enterprises (STEs). In today's increasingly digital travel ecosystem, small tourism providers are under growing pressure to compete not just on traditional service delivery but also on the strength and effectiveness of their digital platforms. The results of the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis underscore the pivotal role that digital component specifically digital presence, communication effectiveness, and perceived usefulness of digital services—play in shaping customer trust, satisfaction, and subsequent booking intentions. The responsiveness, clarity, and personalization of communication whether through email, chat, or social media were highly valued by tourists. This suggests that timely and thoughtful digital communication is not only a value-added feature but also a determinant of the consumer's psychological comfort and confidence when interacting with a tourism enterprise. Unlike large tourism platforms, which often rely on automated systems, STEs can capitalize on their human-centered approach and agility to create more meaningful connections with potential clients through direct and effective communication.

Although Digital Presence (DP) was found to be a foundational factor, its influence was somewhat limited in comparison to DCE. While a digital presence is necessary to establish visibility and provide basic information, it alone does not appear to drive trust or engagement unless complemented by active interaction. This implies that simply having a website or social media page is not enough what matters more is how these platforms are used to build relationships and convey authenticity. The weak factor loadings observed for most DP indicators could be attributed to tourists perceiving such elements as expected standards rather than differentiators.

In this study, the concept of perceived usefulness of digital services (PUDS) had no significant effect on customer satisfaction (CS). This may be an indication of a paradigm change in which digital features like online reservations, payments, and itineraries are now expected rather than unusual. Tourists today assume a

baseline level of digital convenience, and unless these features offer a distinct or novel advantage, they may not significantly affect overall satisfaction. This implies that in order to genuinely engage their clients, small tourist businesses need to provide more than just the typical digital services. According to the findings, when digitalization is done well, it may increase customer happiness and confidence, which in turn promotes good behavioral intentions like referrals and repeat business. The consequence is obvious for small tourism enterprises: a well-designed digital strategy should prioritize trust-building and communication quality in addition to creating an online presence. This consists of transparent service offerings, safe digital payment methods, accessible customer reviews, and quick and courteous customer service.

More complex aspects of digital service encounters, such emotional involvement, perceived customization, and follow-up after a booking, may be the subject of future studies. Moreover, qualitative research could further unpack the expectations and pain points of travellers engaging with STEs on digital platforms.

## References

1. Agus, A., & Shukri Hajinoor, M. (2012). Lean production supply chain management as driver towards enhancing product quality and business performance: Case study of manufacturing companies in Malaysia. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 29(1), 92-121.
2. Amerta, L., & Madhavi, I. (2023). Exploring service quality and customer satisfaction in the service industry: A mixed-methods analysis. *Journal on Economics, Management and Business Technology*, 2(1), 1-16.
3. Antonio, N., De Almeida, A., & Nunes, L. (2019). Big data in hotel revenue management: Exploring cancellation drivers to gain insights into booking cancellation behavior. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 60(4), 298-319.
4. Arslan, I. K. (2020). The importance of creating customer loyalty in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. *Eurasian Journal of Business and Management*, 8(1), 11-20.
5. Ben-Elia, E., & Avineri, E. (2015). Response to travel information: A behavioural review. *Transport reviews*, 35(3), 352-377.
6. Buhalis, D., & Amaranggana, A. (2014, December). Smart tourism destinations enhancing tourism experience through personalisation of services. In *Information and communication technologies in tourism 2015: Proceedings of the international conference in Lugano, Switzerland, February 3-6, 2015* (pp. 377-389). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
7. Buhalis, D., Harwood, T., Bogicevic, V., Viglia, G., Beldona, S., & Hofacker, C. (2019). Technological disruptions in services: lessons from tourism and hospitality. *Journal of service management*, 30(4), 484-506.
8. Cetin, G. (2020). Experience vs quality: predicting satisfaction and loyalty in services. *The Service Industries Journal*, 40(15-16), 1167-1182.
9. Cheng, F. F., Wu, C. S., & Chen, Y. C. (2020). Creating customer loyalty in online brand communities. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 107, 105752.
10. Gössling, S., & Lane, B. (2015). Rural tourism and the development of Internet-based accommodation booking platforms: a study in the advantages, dangers and implications of innovation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 23(8-9), 1386-1403.
11. Hudson, S., Roth, M. S., & Madden, T. J. (2012). *Customer communications management in the new digital era*. Center for marketing studies, Darla moore school of business, University of south Carolina, 21.
12. Jin, Y., & Oriaku, N. (2013). E-service flexibility: meeting new customer demands online. *Management Research Review*, 36(11), 1123-1136.
13. Kassem, R., & Santamaria, D. (2023). The impact of tourist perception of fraud risk on tourism planning. In *Handbook on Tourism Planning* (pp. 242-254). Edward Elgar Publishing.
14. Maghembe, M., & Magasi, C. (2024). The Role of Customer Perceived Value, Brand Trust and Service Personalization in Shaping Customer Loyalty. *International Journal of Management, Accounting & Economics*, 11(9).
15. Murphy, H. C., Chen, M. M., & Cossutta, M. (2016). An investigation of multiple devices and information sources used in the hotel booking process. *Tourism management*, 52, 44-51.
16. Pencarelli, T. (2020). The digital revolution in the travel and tourism industry. *Information technology & tourism*, 22(3), 455-476.
17. Philip, A. V., & KA, Z. (2019). Effective engagement of digital natives in the ever-transforming digital world. In *Digital Transformation in Business and Society: Theory and Cases* (pp. 113-125). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
18. Pokhrel, S., Ganesan, S., Banjade, S. R., & Somasiri, N. (2024). Enhancing the Usability, Visibility, and Responsiveness of an Airline Reservation System: A User-Centered Design

- Approach. *International journal of computer communication and informatics*, 6(1), 1-15.
19. Shariffuddin, N. S. M., Azinuddin, M., Yahya, N. E., & Hanafiah, M. H. (2023). Navigating the tourism digital landscape: The interrelationship of online travel sites' affordances, technology readiness, online purchase intentions, trust, and E-loyalty. *Heliyon*, 9(8).
  20. Siebel, T. M. (2019). *Digital transformation: survive and thrive in an era of mass extinction*. RosettaBooks.
  21. Su, L., Hsu, M. K., & Marshall, K. P. (2014). Understanding the relationship of service fairness, emotions, trust, and tourist behavioral intentions at a city destination in China. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31(8), 1018-1038.
  22. Yen, C. H., Chen, C. Y., Cheng, J. C., & Teng, H. Y. (2018). Brand attachment, tour leader attachment, and behavioral intentions of tourists. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 42(3), 365-391.
  23. Zaki, M. (2019). Digital transformation: harnessing digital technologies for the next generation of services. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 33(4), 429-435.