

## KEY DETERMINANT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ADOPTION: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM TOURISM SMEs IN SRI LANKA

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Digital technology (DT) has become decisive for businesses worldwide, and social media has become an integral part of the contemporary marketing domain. The adoption of social media marketing strategies (SMM) has materialized as a significant instrument for businesses to engage with existing and potential customers, promote products and services, and enhance brand visibility in the competitive marketplace. However, the literature indicates a need for digital technology adoption for marketing initiatives among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the situation impacts reaching the fullest potential in competitive advantages. It hinders the growth potential. This is a noticeable problem in the SME marketing domain. This research study identifies the key determinants influencing the adoption of SMM strategies among tourism SMEs. It is particularly relevant to academic researchers, marketing professionals, and SME owners in the tourism sector. The study explores the factors and adopts the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Technology, Organization, and Environmental (TOE) model. A quantitative methodology was employed, using a structured questionnaire to gather data from 120 SMEs in accommodation, particularly owners and managers around Sri Lanka, including peers and competitors. Findings suggest entrepreneurs' perceived ease of use and usefulness significantly impact the decision to adopt SMM. Organizational context, mainly physical and human resources, is critical in determining whether SMEs are geared up with SMM initiatives. Technological infrastructure also has a significant influence on SMM adoption among SMEs. In Addition, the external business environment and fear of competition in the marketplace stimulate SMEs to adopt SMM to remain competitive. All entrepreneurs accept that SMM is crucial to customer reach, engagement, and retention. Conversely, privacy issues, lack of proficiency, and rapidly changing technologies hinder SMM adoption. The study indicates that SME accommodations require an appraisal of their individual, organizational, and technological readiness while maintaining sound knowledge of digital marketing trends, patterns, and customer preferences to execute SMM strategies effectively. The key determinants identified in this study facilitate SMEs' swift transition to a targeted marketing approach to reach potential tourists worldwide.

**Keywords:** Digital marketing, social media marketing, tourism industry, SME