

# Digital Marketing for Sports Tourism in Suphanburi Province

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## Abstract

The study dives into the dynamics of digital marketing for sports tourism in Thailand's Suphanburi Province, with the goal of analyzing the environment and contextual elements. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study assesses both the drivers and challenges of digital marketing in this domain. Insights from in-depth interviews with 20 stakeholders, ranging from policymakers to practitioners, and survey responses from 400 tourists contribute to the qualitative and quantitative data sets, respectively. Content analysis reveals an increasing vibrancy in Suphanburi's sports tourist marketing, which draws on the city's rich tapestry of cultural and gastronomic diversity. The data creates a picture of travelers who prefer digital channels for travel information, indicating a propensity for direct digital engagement via websites, social media influencers, and mobile marketing. A six-fold digital marketing strategy emerges, advocating for fostering a digital mindset among stakeholders, creating holistic customer journeys, identifying the unique demands of sports tourists, making astute media channel selection, implementing strategic content distribution, and conducting rigorous outcome analysis using digital analytics tools.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, Sports Tourism, Suphanburi

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## Introduction

As digital media eclipses traditional forms across industries, consumers are increasingly sourcing information through digital channels, necessitating businesses to adapt their information dissemination to these digital platforms. This shift, driven by the rapid evolution of marketing strategies and consumer habits, mandates a recalibration for both the public and private sectors. Communication, profoundly affected by new technologies, notably social media, reflects these changes (Chaffey & Smith, 2013; Kaur, 2016). Traditional television and print media are in decline as consumers favor media consumption on mobile devices, paralleling a trend towards online spending

over in-person transactions (Gartner, 2022). Dyson (2023) has emphasized the critical role of creating a positive experience for target customers, stating that it is crucial and directly contributes to the success of the organization. Therefore, analysis of tourist behavior becomes imperative for businesses to map the consumer journey in the digital age and plan their marketing strategies accordingly (Jacobs et al., 2018)

Digital transformation has swept across industries, including tourism, prompting a revamp in operational tactics. This has been highlighted by the adoption of digital initiatives to foster community tourism and bridge major and smaller cities, as seen in the 2018 launch of the official website of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand, the 'thailandtourismdirectory.go.th'. This portal consolidates Thai tourism data, encouraging collaborative and ongoing updates, even allowing user contributions to refine its content. In a push towards technology integration, the Deputy Governor for Tourism Products and Business at the Tourism Authority of Thailand recommended in an interview conducted on April 4, 2022, that sports tourism should embrace advancements such as VR and AR in the Metaverse and explore hybrid events combining in-person and virtual experiences (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2018). Additionally, the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant shifts in consumer behavior in the digital age, marking the emergence of the 'new normal' (Cahyadi et al., 2021). This new normal represents a major turning point for businesses as they adapt to meet evolving consumer preferences and market dynamics.

In the digital age, tourism is evolving to include digital marketing capabilities, which encompasses the promotion of sports tourism through online channels and devices, and the creation and sharing of engaging experiences and content with the audience. Gartner (2022) characterizes digital marketing as the fusion of information and technology, enhancing product creation and communication processes, and increasing consumer engagement through the use of influencers to gain and retain customers. This approach, which extends to content marketing efforts such as blogs, videos, and other digital formats, allows sports tourists to contribute significantly to local economies through their diverse spending. (Kolenberg & Batra, 2016; Pornthip Rungreuang & Chawalee Na Thalang, 2021). Despite this, Thailand's sports tourism sector lacks comprehensive market research and suitable digital marketing strategies to gauge its full market potential. This research endeavors to fill that gap by analyzing digital marketing's environment and dynamics for sports tourism, identifying supportive and obstructive elements, and crafting a digital marketing framework for Suphanburi province. This initiative aligns with Suphanburi's 2023-2027 development plan, which seeks to bolster the province's brand through sports and tourism, ultimately enhancing the economic well-being of its inhabitants (Barajas et al., 2016).

The study identifies key flaws in Thailand's approach to sports tourism, most notably the lack of comprehensive market research and antiquated marketing techniques that fail to capitalize on modern digital platforms preferred by consumers. Traditional media's collapse has, with a shift

toward mobile consumption, demonstrates a mismatch between marketing tactics and the changing preferences of the target audience. This gap is increased further by the underutilization of cutting-edge technologies such as VR and AR, which have the potential to increase the appeal of sports tourism. As a result, the absence of a sophisticated digital marketing framework in Suphanburi Province undermines potential economic gains and community benefits, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive digital marketing plan that would bolster the region's identity and prosperity through sports tourism.

### Objectives

1. To study the environment and the digital marketing context of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province.
2. To analyze the supporting factors and obstacles for digital marketing of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province.
3. To establish strategic guidelines for digital marketing of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1. It shows that the digital marketing strategy for sports tourism in Suphanburi Province will be developed based on concepts and theories of digital marketing, digital marketing tools, customer experiences, and consumer behavior in the digital age. Additionally, it involves analyzing the environment and digital marketing context, as well as identifying the factors that facilitate and hinder the digital marketing of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province.

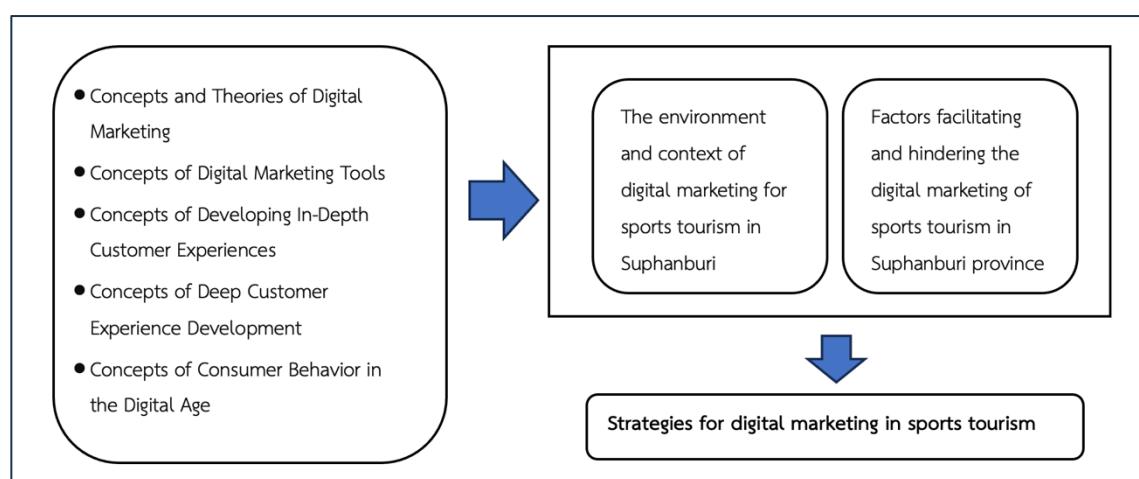


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

## Research Methodology

The study's scope includes a thorough research of digital marketing in Suphanburi Province's sports tourism sector, with an emphasis on its ten districts (Mueang Suphanburi District, Doem Bang Nang Buat District, Bang Pla Ma District, U Thong District, Sri Prachan District, Song Phi Nong District, Don Chedi District, Sam Chuk District, Nong Ya Sai District, and Dan Chang District). It evaluates the digital marketing landscape, identifies the motivations and challenges of such activities, and seeks to create effective digital marketing guidelines for the sports tourism industry. The study, which focuses on Thai visitors, selects a sample of 400 people over a one-year period from October 2021 to September 2022. Digital marketing is investigated as a communicative tool with the potential to actively engage tourists, within the marketing environment's internal and external factors that influence organizational strategies, with a focus on the importance of marketing context in reaching and resonating with the target group.

The primary goal of sports tourism, as defined in this study, is to increase tourists' participation and interest in sports-related activities, while supporting factors and obstacles are examined to develop a strategic framework that improves marketing effectiveness and overcomes barriers to achieving set goals. The study sought to develop a complete digital marketing strategy for sports tourism in Suphanburi Province. The methodology employed a mixed-methods approach to both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative component included a determined sample of 400 Thai tourists chosen by chance to participate in a survey. The qualitative part included in-depth interviews with 20 stakeholders in sports tourism and digital marketing. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using statistical approaches such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Key informants were recruited based on their positions as policymakers, athletes, academics, or specialists, ensuring a wide and educated viewpoint.

The research stressed the importance of validity and reliability testing, albeit no precise test scores were mentioned in the snippet supplied. To ensure full triangulation, the study most likely used various data sources and verification methods, however these procedures were not described in the text. The questionnaire and interviews focused on decision-making behavior in sports tourism, with the questionnaire evaluating agreement on a Likert scale and the interviews potentially eliciting deeper insights into the digital marketing landscape and stakeholders' perspectives.

## Results

The research findings will be presented in three parts, corresponding to each objective. Part 1 will focus on results related to the first objective, which aims to study the environment and digital marketing context of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province. This section will include findings on tourist demographic data, tourist decision-making behavior in sports tourism, and tourists' preferences for

digital marketing in sports tourism. Part 2 will present results from the second objective, which is to analyze the supporting factors and obstacles for digital marketing of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province. Part 3 will provide results from the third objective, which aims to establish strategic guidelines for digital marketing of sports tourism in Suphanburi.

**Part 1: Results from the first objective: To study the environment and digital marketing context of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province.**

*General information of the respondents*

The general information of the respondents comprises gender, age, marital status, educational level, primary occupation, and average monthly income. The nature of the questionnaire is in a checklist format with a total of 6 items. The data were analyzed by the researchers using frequency distribution (Frequency) and percentage. The research results are presented in Figure 2 to 7.

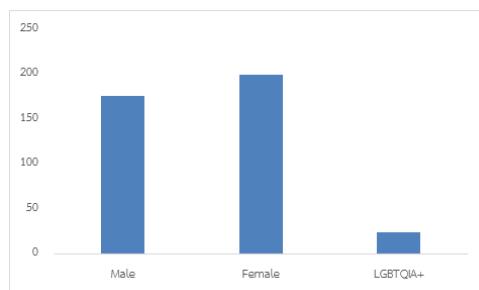


Figure 2. Tourists categorized by gender

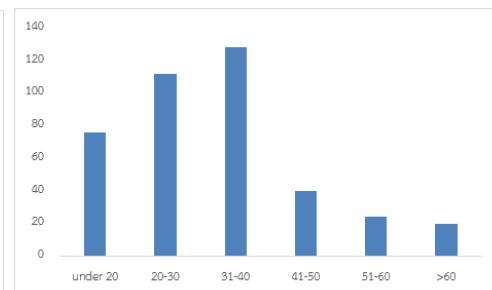


Figure 3. Tourists categorized by age

From Figure 2, it is observed that the majority of tourists are female, totaling 200 people, accounting for 50%. Following this, there are 176 males, comprising 44% of the total, and 24 LGBTQIA+ tourists, representing 6%. From Figure 3, it is observed that the majority of tourists are aged between 31-40 years, totaling 128 people, accounting for 32%. Next, the age group 20-30 years consists of 112 people, representing 28%. The following age group, under 20 years, comprises 76 people, representing 19%. In the next age group, 41-50 years, there are 40 people, accounting for 10%. The age group 51-60 years includes 24 people, making up 6%, and the last age group, over 60 years, consists of 20 people, representing 5%.

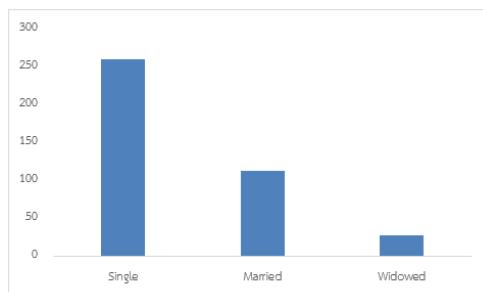


Figure 4. Tourists categorized by marital status

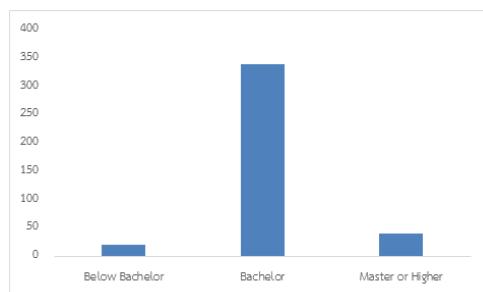


Figure 5. Tourists categorized by educational level

From Figure 4, it is observed that the majority of tourists, totaling 260 people, are single, accounting for 65% of the total. Following this, 112 tourists are married or living together, representing 28%. Lastly, there are 28 tourists who are widowed, divorced, or living separately, comprising 7% of the total. From Figure 5, it is observed that the majority of tourists, totaling 340 people, hold a Bachelor's degree, accounting for 85% of the total. Those with a Master's degree or higher number 40, making up 10%. Lastly, there are 20 tourists with an educational level below a Bachelor's degree, comprising 5% of the total.

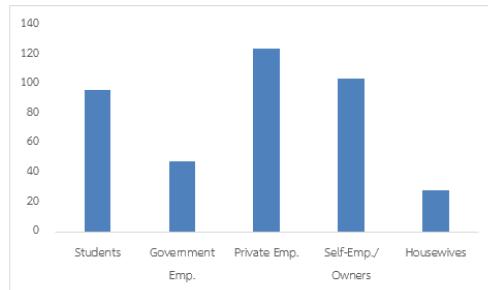


Figure 6. Tourists categorized by occupation

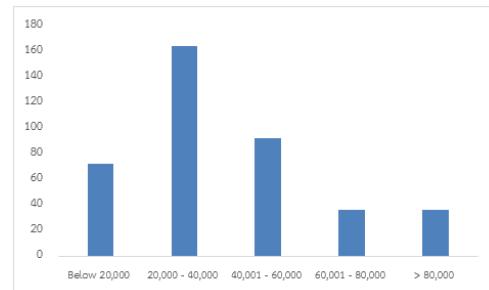


Figure 7. Tourists by Monthly Income

From Figure 6, it is observed that the majority of tourists, totaling 124 people, are primarily employed in private companies, accounting for 31% of the total. Following this, 104 tourists are self-employed or business owners, making up 26%. Next, there are 96 students, comprising 24% of the total. Government or state enterprise employees number 48, accounting for 12%. Lastly, there are 28 tourists who are housewives or househusbands, making up 7% of the total. From Figure 7, it is observed that the majority of tourists, totaling 164 people, have an average monthly income of 20,000 - 40,000 baht, accounting for 41% of the total. Next, 92 tourists fall within the income bracket of 40,001 - 60,000 baht per month, representing 23%. Following that, 72 tourists have an income below 20,000 baht per month, comprising 18% of the total. Lastly, 36 tourists each fall into the income groups of 60,001 - 80,000 baht per month and above 80,000 baht, both accounting for 9% of the total.

*Information on Decision-Making Behavior in Sports Tourism*

The questionnaire data on sports tourism decision-making encapsulates participants' preferences for sports-related activities, their motivations, trip planning and preparation, information-seeking behaviors, and openness to both receiving information and new experiences. Respondents rated aspects of sports tourism on a scale from 1 (least agree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results, including average scores, percentage distributions, standard deviations, and interpretations, are presented in Tables 1 to 8.

Table 1 Preference Levels for Various Sports Tourism Activities (Question 1)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
1. Preferred or desired sports tourism activities				
1.1 Marathon running	4.16	83.13	0.46	high
1.2 Triathlon	4.04	80.88	0.71	high
1.3 Car rallying	3.53	70.51	1.00	high
1.4 Bicycle rallying	2.81	56.16	0.85	moderate
1.5 Motorcycle rallying	3.36	67.28	0.85	moderate
1.6 Hiking	4.06	81.28	0.58	high
1.7 Participating in or watching various sports like golf, football, rowing	4.25	84.94	0.55	high
1.8 Mountain biking	3.96	79.25	0.61	high
1.9 Rock climbing/abseiling	2.81	56.16	0.85	moderate
1.10 Thrill rides	2.52	54.13	0.85	moderate
1.11 Scuba diving, coral viewing	4.03	80.59	0.62	high
Overall	3.59	72.21	0.72	high

From Table 1, question 1, which pertains to general interest in sports tourism activities, reveals an average score of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 0.72. Thrill rides, such as roller coasters, sit at the bottom of the preference list, registering a moderate interest level with a score of 2.52 and a standard deviation of 0.85. Bicycle rallying and rock climbing/abseiling both share a score of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 0.85, denoting moderate interest. A slight uptick is seen with motorcycle rallying, which scores an average of 3.36 with a standard deviation of 0.85, indicating a maintained moderate interest. In contrast, activities such as golf, football, and rowing lead the pack with a robust interest score of 4.25 and a lower standard deviation of 0.55. Marathon running nearly matches this

enthusiasm with a score of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 0.46, while hiking and triathlon are also highly favored, scoring 4.06 and 4.04 with standard deviations of 0.58 and 0.71, respectively.

Table 2 Motivations for Participating in Sports Tourism (Question 2)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
2. Motivation in Sports Tourism				
2.1 Clean and beautiful tourist destinations	4.23	84.50	0.42	High
2.2 Renowned tourist destinations	4.27	85.47	0.48	High
2.3 Natural tourist destinations	4.28	85.70	0.50	High
2.4 Safe tourist destinations for life and property	4.33	86.58	0.50	High
2.5 Standardized services	4.03	80.59	0.62	High
2.6 Reasonable travel expenses	4.24	84.81	0.43	High
2.7 Appropriate travel and tourism duration	4.27	85.34	0.48	High
2.8 Tourism offering new experiences	4.25	84.94	0.55	High
2.9 Availability of preferred sports activities	4.19	83.80	0.53	High
2.10 Government-supported projects	4.06	81.28	0.58	High
2.11 Desire to relieve stress	4.23	84.50	0.42	High
2.12 Desire to learn about local culture and lifestyle	4.27	85.47	0.48	High
Overall	4.22	84.42	0.50	High

Table 2, which pertains to motivations for participating in sports tourism, indicates a strong overall average score of 4.22 and a standard deviation of 0.50. Standardized services, such as hotel accommodations or tour packages, while the least motivating factor, still denote a high motivation level with a score of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.62. Government support programs are similarly high with a score of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.58. The availability of preferred sports activities earns a score of 4.19 and a standard deviation of 0.53, suggesting strong motivation. Both clean, beautiful destinations and the desire for stress relief score a very high motivation level at 4.23 with a lower standard deviation of 0.42. The safety of tourist destinations tops the motivation factors with a score of 4.33 and a standard deviation of 0.50. Natural tourist spots follow closely with a score of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.50, while renowned destinations, appropriate travel duration, and

a wish to learn local culture and lifestyle each score 4.27 and a standard deviation of 0.48, all indicating a high motivation for engaging in sports tourism.

Table 3 Importance of Trip Planning Factors in Sports Tourism (Question 3)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
3.Trip Planning				
3.1 Planning the travel route	4.04	80.88	0.71	High
3.2 Planning the travel expenses	4.16	83.13	0.46	High
3.3 Planning for health care during travel	3.53	70.51	1.00	High
3.4 Planning for government financial support for expenses	4.17	83.31	0.56	High
3.5 Planning for the necessary sports equipment	3.56	71.21	0.88	High
Overall	3.89	77.81	0.72	High

Table 3, which pertains to Question 3, underscores the significance of meticulous trip planning in sports tourism, as reflected by a high average importance score of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.72. Government financial support, such as grants or subsidies, is deemed the most critical aspect of planning, scoring 4.17 with a standard deviation of 0.56. Planning for sports equipment, such as gear or gear rental, while still important, ranks slightly lower in priority with an average score of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.88. Health care planning during travel, despite having the lowest average score at 3.53, exhibits the greatest variance among respondents, with a standard deviation of 1.00, indicating diverse perceptions of its importance.

Table 4 Travel Preparation (Question 4)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
4. Travel Preparation				
4.1 Preparing Health for Sports Tourism Travel	4.17	83.31	0.56	High
4.2 Prepare Transportation for Travel	4.21	84.15	0.56	High
4.3 Prepare essentials for travel such as clothing and medications	3.53	70.51	1.00	High
4.4 Download necessary travel applications	4.15	83.09	0.53	High

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
4.5 Search for reviews from experienced travelers in sports tourism on social media	4.27	85.34	0.55	High
Overall	4.07	81.28	0.64	High

Table 4, which pertains to Question 4, indicates that experienced sports tourists place a high value on thorough travel preparation, scoring it an average of 4.07 with a standard deviation of 0.64. Reviews from these tourists on social media platforms reflect this sentiment, with a high average score of 4.27 and a standard deviation of 0.55. Transportation planning is similarly important, averaging 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.56. Health readiness for sports tourism also scores highly, at 4.17 with a standard deviation of 0.56. The use of travel applications is almost as important, with an average score of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.53. Lastly, the preparation of essential travel items, including clothing and medications, while somewhat lower in priority, is still considered significant, with an average score of 3.53 and a more variable standard deviation of 1.00.

Table 5 Travel Experience in Sports Tourism (Question 5)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
5. Travel				
5.1 There is an evaluation during the travel, such as location, convenience, cleanliness, etc.	4.21	84.15	0.56	High
5.2 There is an evaluation of the value for money of accommodation and food prices	4.20	84.02	0.59	High
5.3 There is word-of-mouth recommendation to let others know about that tourist destination through social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and so on	4.27	85.34	0.55	High

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
5.4 There is the utilization of state-sponsored programs during travel, such as half-price privileges, group travel privileges, and so on	4.15	83.09	0.53	High
Overall	4.21	84.15	0.56	High

Table 5 showcases that the aspect of travel, including factors such as transportation and mobility, receives a high appreciation score of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.56. This high rating is bolstered by robust word-of-mouth promotion via social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, which reflect positive sentiments about travel experiences, scoring an average of 4.27 with a standard deviation of 0.55. Travel aspects such as location, convenience, and cleanliness receive similarly favorable evaluations, each scoring an average of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.56. The assessment of value for money in terms of accommodations and food garners an average score of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.59. State-sponsored programs for travelers, offering benefits like half-price and group travel privileges, also score highly with an average of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.53. Together, these factors point to a high overall satisfaction with the travel experience in sports tourism.

Table 6 Information Seeking Behavior (Question 6)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
6. Information Seeking Behavior				
6.1 If you have free time, you tend to seek travel information online	4.24	84.81	0.43	High
6.2 You search for travel information from online media as a reference for making decisions about choosing destinations to visit on holidays	4.25	84.94	0.55	High
6.3 You have made travel decisions to various destinations after receiving information about	4.07	81.31	0.73	High

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
those destinations online, without prior planning				
Overall	4.19	83.69	0.57	High

Table 6, which pertains to Question 6, illustrates a strong inclination towards seeking travel information among travelers, as indicated by an impressive average score of 4.19 with a standard deviation of 0.57. Travelers frequently turn to online platforms, such as websites and social media, to gather travel information, which greatly influences their holiday destination choices, evident from the high average score of 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.55. Additionally, travelers often utilize their leisure time for online research related to travel, achieving an average score of 4.24 with a standard deviation of 0.43, further emphasizing the high reliance on digital information sources. Even spontaneous travel decisions, made post-information gathering online and without prior planning, are rated highly, with an average score of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 0.73, confirming the significant role of online content in travel decision-making processes.

Table 7 Information Reception Behavior (Question 7)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
7. Information Reception Behavior				
7.1 You use online media to explore the highlights, beauty, and interesting activities of a destination you are interested in visiting	4.19	83.80	0.53	High
7.2 You use online media to study service prices, including promotions or various discounts, of a particular tourist destination you are interested in visiting	4.21	84.28	0.54	High
7.3 You use online media to study routes and travel methods to a particular tourist destination you are interested in visiting	4.25	84.94	0.55	High
Overall	4.22	84.34	0.54	High

Table 7, which pertains to Question 7, demonstrates that tourists' habits of receiving travel information are robust, as evidenced by an average score of 4.22 with a standard deviation of 0.54. Travelers actively engage with online platforms, such as websites and apps, to research routes and modes of transport to their chosen destinations, a task they rate highly, with an average score of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 0.55. Additionally, the evaluation of pricing for services such as accommodations and activities via online media, which includes scouting for promotions and discounts at these destinations, also receives a high score of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.54. Tourists are similarly diligent in using online resources to discover the attractions, beauty, and activities available at their destinations of interest, with this aspect scoring 4.19 and a standard deviation of 0.53, indicating a high level of engagement in digital information-gathering.

Table 8 Experience Reception Behavior (Question 8)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
8. Experience Reception Behavior				
8.1 You use online media to read about the experiences of travelers who have visited tourist destinations that you are interested in visiting.	4.24	84.81	0.43	High
8.2 You use online media to inquire about information regarding those tourist destinations directly from travelers who have visited them	4.21	84.28	0.54	High
8.3 You use online media to exchange travel experiences at those specific tourist destinations with other travelers	3.96	79.25	0.61	High
Overall	4.14	82.78	0.53	High

Table 8, which pertains to Question 8, indicates a high level of engagement in receiving travel experiences among individuals, as evidenced by the overall high average scores and low standard deviations for various activities. Specifically, individuals frequently use online platforms, such as travel forums and social media, to engage with the experiences of others who have visited tourist destinations of interest, as evidenced by an average score of 4.14 with a standard deviation of 0.53. This includes reading about other travelers' experiences, which receives a high average score of 4.24 with a low standard deviation of 0.43, directly inquiring about destinations from those who have

visited them, also scoring high at 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.54, and exchanging travel experiences, with an average score of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.61, indicating strong engagement with online media for travel-related information exchange.

*Tourist's Preferences for Digital Marketing in Sports Tourism*

Data from the questionnaire regarding digital marketing in sports tourism, which includes 1) Advertising, 2) Public Relations, 3) Direct Marketing, and 4) Sales Promotion, yielded average percentages, standard deviations, and interpretations of average values as shown in Table 9 - 12.

Table 9 Advertising (Question 1)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
1. Advertising				
1.1 Communicating through search engine media such as Google helps you to conveniently and quickly access information	4.23	84.50	0.42	High
1.2 Native advertising through other websites is a form of communication that instantly generates interest in sports tourism information	4.27	85.47	0.48	High
1.3 Recommendations of tourist destinations through live broadcasts provide up-to-date information	4.28	85.70	0.50	High
1.4 Recommendations of tourist destinations through live broadcasts provide the most genuine information because they are free from image and sound editing	4.33	86.58	0.50	High
1.5 Recommendations of tourist destinations through live broadcasts facilitate two-way communication, allowing viewers to inquire about	4.03	80.59	0.62	High

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
additional information of interest at that moment				
Overall	4.23	84.57	0.50	High

Based on the data from Table 9, Question 1, it's evident that advertising in the context of tourist destinations is performing robustly. Live broadcasts are a particularly effective medium, averaging a high score of 4.23 with a standard deviation of 0.50, offering the most accurate information due to their unedited nature, which itself scores even higher at 4.33 with the same level of variance. Fresh information relayed through live broadcasts also rates highly, with an average of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.50. Other forms of embedded website advertising generate immediate interest, scoring an average of 4.27 with a slightly lower standard deviation of 0.48. Searching for information via search engines like Google is also highly rated, with an average score of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.42. Finally, the interactive nature of recommending tourist destinations through live broadcasts, which allows for real-time viewer queries, receives a high average score of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.62.

Table 10 Public Relations (Question 2)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
2. Public Relations				
2.1 Providing news and public relations in sports tourism through well-known individuals on online media platforms increases the popularity of sports tourism	4.06	81.28	0.58	High
2.2 Uploading clips or videos related to sports tourism activities on online media creates a positive image of sports tourism	4.19	83.80	0.53	High
2.3 Providing news and public relations through online media platforms such as YouTube	3.96	79.25	0.61	High

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
increases your interest in sports tourism even more				
2.4 Having admins for sports tourism pages on online platforms such as Facebook or the main website, ready to answer questions, helps build good relationships	4.25	84.94	0.55	High
Overall	4.12	82.32	0.57	High

Table 10, Question 2 shows that Public Relations in sports tourism is highly effective, as indicated by an average score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.57. Dedicated page administrators for sports tourism on platforms like Facebook significantly contribute to this success, ready to engage with and answer user queries, achieving a high score of 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.55. Moreover, posting videos or clips related to sports tourism on various online media platforms positively affects the sector's image, evidenced by a score of 4.19 and a standard deviation of 0.53. Utilizing well-known personalities to provide news and publicity on online media enhances the popularity of sports tourism further, reflected by a score of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.58. Finally, leveraging platforms such as YouTube for disseminating news and publicity also stirs up interest in sports tourism, shown by a slightly lower yet high score of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.61.

Table 11 Direct Marketing (Question 3)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
3. Direct Marketing				
3.1 Sending direct e-mails about sports tourism programs directly to you increases your interest	3.36	67.28	0.85	Moderate
3.2 You often search for sports tourism information through applications	3.56	71.21	0.88	High

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
3.3 Continuous updating of news and promotions creates a positive image for sports tourism	4.15	83.09	0.53	High
3.4 Communicating privately through digital media creates satisfaction	4.14	82.87	0.56	High
3.5 Direct communication through Line Official creates closeness between you and the organizers of sports tourism activities	3.93	78.63	0.75	High
Overall	3.83	76.62	0.71	High

Table 11, Question 3 illustrates that Direct Marketing in sports tourism is notably effective, achieving a mean score of 3.83 with a standard deviation of 0.71. A significant factor in this success is the continuous update of news and publicity which bolsters the image of sports tourism, reflected by a high mean score of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.53. Personal communication through digital media also scores highly at 4.14 with a standard deviation of 0.56, attributable to the exclusive benefits it offers. Additionally, direct engagement through Line Official is shown to enhance the relationship between sports tourism event organizers and individuals, scoring 3.93 with a standard deviation of 0.75. The act of searching for sports tourism information via applications is also well-regarded, with a mean score of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.88. Lastly, the practice of sending out sports tourism program emails directly to potential participants is moderately effective, indicated by a mean score of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 0.85.

Table 12 Sale Promotion (Question 4)

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
4. Sale Promotion				
4.1 The reduction in prices of tourist attractions affects your travel decision-making	3.72	74.35	0.81	High
4.2 Having giveaways or freebies affects your travel decision-making	3.56	71.21	0.88	High

Question	Mean	Percentage	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Indication
4.3 Competitions, playing games, or sweepstakes for prizes affect your travel decision-making	2.81	56.16	0.85	Moderate
4.4 Participating in tourism spending policies for tax deductions, or other government-defined policies such as 'We Travel Together' or 'Tour Thai', affects your travel decisions	4.20	84.02	0.59	High
4.5 The cooperation between tourist destinations and the sports industry increases the chances for you to travel more	4.07	81.41	0.66	High
Overall	3.67	73.43	0.76	High

According to Table 12, Question 4, sales promotions in the context of travel are highly effective, indicated by an average score of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 0.76. The data suggests that policies aimed at encouraging tourism spending, such as tax reductions and initiatives like 'We Travel Together' or 'Tour Thai', significantly influence travel decisions, with a high average score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.59. Furthermore, collaborations between tourist attractions and sports businesses, which broaden travel opportunities, are also highly rated, with an average score of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Price reductions at tourist sites are equally influential, with an average score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.81. Incentives such as giveaways and freebies play a substantial role as well, with an average score of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.88. Finally, the impact of competitions, games, or sweepstakes on travel decision-making scores at a moderate level, with an average of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 0.85.

#### **Part 2: Results from the second Objective: To analyze the supporting factors and obstacles for digital marketing of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province.**

The research aimed at analyzing digital marketing's supportive and challenging factors for sports tourism in Suphanburi Province, Thailand. This involved quantitative research and interviews with sports tourism professionals and experts to pinpoint these factors. The analysis revealed substantial growth in sports tourism marketing within the province, driven by its appealing tourism offerings—from heritage sites to local culture and cuisine which have elevated tourist numbers.

Suphanburi's strategic position, robust infrastructure, and recognized educational and sports facilities are strengths for its digital tourism marketing. However, issues such as technological adoption reluctance, targeted marketing deficiencies, and inadequate cooperative business models present as weaknesses, while environmental challenges persist. Opportunities lie in government policies supporting agriculture and disaster management, regional economic strategies, and a surging interest in nature and sports tourism. Yet, economic uncertainties, competition, and environmental changes pose potential threats. Strategically, digital marketing for sports tourism in Suphanburi aims to capitalize on these dynamics to boost the economy, in line with the provincial development plans for 2018-2022, enhancing income from tourism-related sectors and promoting the sports industry to fuel economic advancement.

Suphanburi Province has adopted a comprehensive approach to tourism and sports development, focusing on upgrading tourist attractions, services, and staff to international standards, improving tourism infrastructure, and promoting local and community attractions including heritage sites, community tourism spots, 'One Tambon One Product' (OTOP) locales, and agricultural tourism sites. There is an emphasis on raising the quality of tourism and sports by supporting sports events at various levels and boosting sports tourism. Additionally, marketing and public relations efforts are being stepped up to enhance the tourism profile. Data from Google's "Traveler's Road to Decision" in 2021 indicates that 65% of tourists seeking relaxation use online resources for planning their trips, pointing to the importance of digital channels in the tourism industry. This is supported by forecasts that show a significant increase in digital travel revenue, particularly from the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the essential role digital technology plays in travel planning. Findings from research on Suphan Buri's digital marketing environment for sports tourism suggest high tourist engagement with a preference for online planning, yet the province faces competition and evolving tourist expectations. To remain economically stable and competitive as a top-tier destination, Suphan Buri must actively adapt to these market dynamics.

Table 13: The digital marketing situation of Suphanburi province from Phase 1 to Phase 5

Static/Analog	Scattered	Connected	Optimized/ Automated	Predictive/ Engage
Offline marketing	Online marketing has begun, but it is still quite limited	Online marketing is becoming widespread but still has limitations in addressing specific tourist groups	Marketing through digital media to reach the target audience	Proactive digital marketing with predictive analytics based on the context of the target audience

Static/Analog	Scattered	Connected	Optimized/ Automated	Predictive/ Engage
Tourists search for information from books or brochures.	Tourists can search for information through the website	There is a tourism planning system, but it is scattered	There is a comprehensive tourism planning system.	Real-time marketing and advertising using advanced technologies such as Virtual Reality

### **Part 3 Results from the third Objective: To establish strategic guidelines for digital marketing of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province**

In crafting strategic digital marketing guidelines for sports tourism in Suphanburi Province, our research highlights the efficacy of content strategies that cater to the information desires and experiential needs of the audience, fostering a beneficial rapport between managers and tourists. Emphasizing the superior influence of viral and influencer marketing over traditional media, it's crucial for managers to adeptly navigate digital marketing avenues to provide satisfying online experiences that attract tourists swiftly. The internet's role is pivotal in forging these connections, demanding current and captivating communication. Building lasting relationships via digital channels, especially social media and influencer collaborations, offers a distinct competitive edge, although such rapport requires time, understanding of tourist profiles, and regular communication. Comprehensive analysis shows sports tourists' preferences for online engagement, from trip planning to sharing experiences on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Adapting to digital marketing means progressing towards digital proficiency, employing Big Data, and producing tailored content, with a phased approach benefiting all tourism stakeholders. Ultimately, the ambition is to ascend to a global standing and sustain provincial economic prosperity through tourism.

### **Discussion**

The paper adopts a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research to explore the digital marketing environment for sports tourism in Suphanburi Province. The use of surveys provided a detailed picture of the current digital engagement, revealing a diverse sports tourism audience that uniformly leans towards digital channels for information and planning activities. The findings underscore a clear preference for social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, which are extensively used for garnering reviews and trip planning, aligning with Gartner's (2022) study which emphasized the shift towards digital media for consumer information and engagement. By comparing these findings with Gartner's study, the research confirms the

increasing dependency on digital channels and adds specific regional insights into how government initiatives like 'We Travel Together' and 'Tour Thai' shape travel decisions, emphasizing the role of local policies in consumer behavior. The study goes further by quantifying the influence of these factors, offering new perspectives on the impact of digital marketing in this context. Moreover, while confirming the effectiveness of public relations and direct marketing in digital engagement, the research presents a nuanced understanding of sales promotion tactics, like competitions and sweepstakes, which appear to have a moderate influence on travel decisions in the sports tourism sector of Suphanburi, suggesting a possible shift in consumer preferences or regional distinctions.

This discussion enriches the research by situating its outcomes within the wider body of knowledge, showing how the findings both support and expand upon established theories. The study offers actionable insights for future marketing strategies, potentially contributing to the economic development of Suphanburi, and exemplifies the interplay between global digital marketing trends and local consumer behaviors, demonstrating the study's relevance to academic discourse and practical application in the field of digital marketing for sports tourism.

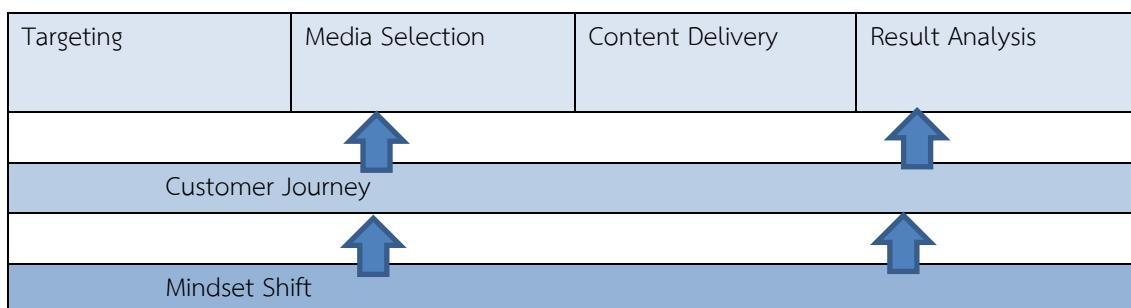


Figure 8. Approaches to digital marketing for sports tourism in Suphanburi province

In the context of sports tourism in Suphanburi Province, the study advocates for a paradigm shift in the mindset of both travelers and business entities towards a digitally-focused approach. Emphasizing the significance of digital savviness, the research underscores the necessity for stakeholders to master online marketing tools and strategies. Central to this shift is a deep understanding of the sports tourist's journey, transforming their experience from initial interest to dedicated patronage. Effective targeting that resonates with the audience's unique preferences, judicious selection of media channels for message dissemination, and precision in content delivery are crucial components of successful digital communication. Moreover, the analysis of outcomes, leveraging an array of digital analytics tools, is vital to measure and refine marketing initiatives. The scope of the research is methodically defined by geographical locations, content specificity, demographic considerations, and temporal frames. It meticulously assesses existing and emergent digital marketing practices within the province's districts to chart the digital terrain of sports tourism, identify driving and restraining forces, and formulate actionable guidelines for the industry's digital

marketing strategies. Utilizing data from 400 Thai tourists collected across a span from October 2021 to September 2022, the research contributes to strategic digital communication practices. It takes into account the multifaceted nature of the marketing environment and the pivotal role context plays in shaping messages that engage and resonate with the intended demographic. The ambition of this research is to elevate the proficiency of digital marketing to boost sports tourism in Suphanburi Province, thus advancing the region's broader strategic marketing objectives.

### **Suggestion**

Suphanburi's sports tourism industry is undergoing a digital marketing transformation to better engage modern audiences and align with Thailand's 4.0 development strategy. Key aspects include:

1. Adopting a New Marketing Mindset Sports tourism officials are shifting from the classic 4Ps (product, price, place, promotion) to the 4Es - focusing on creating engaging experiences, making offerings available everyplace, facilitating two-way exchange with customers, and inspiring brand evangelism. This aligns with societal changes driven by digital technology.
2. Understanding the Sports Tourist's Journey Marketers aim to guide sports tourists from casual observers to devoted fans who actively promote the province's offerings. Achieving this requires identifying optimal digital channels and timing interventions along the unique customer journey of sports fans.
3. Strategic Target Marketing Using segmentation, targeting and positioning strategies helps identify sports tourists' distinct interests and cater offerings accordingly. Initiatives like "Chang Suek Yutha Hatti" and "Suphanburi FC" leverage digital marketing to engage this audience.
4. Selecting Effective Digital Channels From websites to social media, understanding each channel's strengths is key to crafting an integrated digital strategy that maximizes impact for sports tourism promotion.
5. Streamlining Content Delivery Content must be conveyed through a seamless mix of digital formats (video, images, text, audio) tailored for sports tourists as receivers.
6. Comprehensive Campaign Analysis A three-stage process of tracking results, evaluating significance, and optimizing future campaigns based on insights from analytics platforms guides continuous improvement.

This holistic digital approach aims to elevate Suphanburi as a leading sports tourism destination by delivering engaging, data-driven experiences.

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