

# Adoption of Social Media Marketing among Small and Medium Enterprises in Arusha's Culinary Tourism Sector, Tanzania

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## Abstract

Social media has become a vital marketing channel for tourism enterprises, transforming how businesses attract visitors and build destination appeal. However, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in emerging economies still struggle to adopt Social Media Marketing (SMM), limiting their competitiveness in digital tourism markets. This study explored factors influencing SMM adoption among 164 food-based SMEs in Arusha's culinary tourism sector. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis and Binary Logistic Regression, the study identified technological, environmental, organizational, and innovativeness factors as key determinants. Findings show that environmental pressures including tourist expectations, institutional influences, and e-reputation, exert the strongest impact on adoption, while technological usefulness and innovativeness also encourage uptake. Conversely, organizational barriers such as limited resources, weak digital systems, and insufficient entrepreneurial orientation hinder adoption. Guided by the Technology-Organization-Environment framework and Diffusion of Innovation theory, the study demonstrates how external pressures and perceived innovation benefits shape adoption. It recommends investing in digital capabilities, content quality, and structured customer engagement to enhance overall competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing; Small and Medium Enterprises; Culinary Tourism Sector; Arusha; Tanzania

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, the adoption of social media marketing (SMM) among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector has grown significantly. Tourism based SMEs have invested heavily in social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, through which these enterprises engage their customers and advertise their services (Adeoye et al., 2022). It was approximately that 80% of global businesses, including tourism-based SMEs, use social media for marketing purposes (Amoah et al., 2023; Lim, 2023). This trend is especially evident in the tourism industry where enterprises use SMM to attract foreign visitors, demonstrate popular and unique sites within the country, and advertise particular products.

The adoption of SMM is crucial for tourism-based SMEs because firstly, it provides an affordable and efficient means to reach a global audience as well as increase sales (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mataruka & Muzurura,

2023). Unlike traditional marketing methods, social media allows for targeted advertising, ensuring that promotional content reaches potential tourists interested in specific destinations or experiences. It was indicated that businesses using SMM experienced a substantial increase in brand visibility, customer engagement and sales performance (Silva, 2022). Additionally, SMM facilitates real-time communication with tourist, enabling businesses to respond to inquiries, gather feedback, and build stronger relationships.

Regionally, the adoption of SMM among tourism-based SMEs varies, but there is a growing recognition of its importance across Africa. In East Africa, countries like Kenya and Uganda are leading in digital marketing adoption, setting a precedent for neighboring countries. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) reported in 2022 that SMEs in Sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly utilizing digital tools, with social media being a key platform. Tourism-based SMEs are gradually embracing SMM to enhance their market reach and competitiveness. This regional trend reflects a broader movement towards digital transformation in the tourism sector, driven by the need to attract a tech-savvy, global tourist base.

In Tanzania, the adoption of SMM among tourism-based SMEs is gradually increasing. With the rise of internet penetration and the widespread use of smartphones, more SMEs are recognizing the potential of SMM to reach a larger audience. According to the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) (2024), internet penetration in Tanzania reached more than 50%, a significant increase from previous years. This growing access to the internet has encouraged tourism-based SMEs to use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to market their products to domestic and foreign tourists (Chenga, 2019; Swallehe, 2021).

Despite the growing role of social media marketing (SMM) in enhancing competitiveness in the tourism and hospitality industry, limited empirical attention has been directed toward its adoption by tourism-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing regions like Arusha, Tanzania. This claim is validated by prior studies that has highlighted factors like perceived usefulness, relative advantage, compatibility, cost, presence (visibility), top management support, resource availability, entrepreneurial orientation/ innovativeness, employee capability, competitor pressure and customer pressure (customer needs/expectations) in tourism marketing (e.g. Khaki & Khan, 2024; Mariani & Borghi, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022; Pateli et al., 2020; Sigala, 2023; Styliadis & Cherifi, 2023; Thai & Minh, 2025). Noteworthy, although these studies examined digital marketing usage in tourism, few studies (Matikiti et al., 2018; Ndekwa & Katunzi, 2016) have focused specifically on food-based tourism enterprises in sub Saharan African, which play a unique role in culinary tourism through the integration of local culture, food identity, and visitor experiences.

Furthermore, while aforementioned studies identified influencing factors for SMM usage, few (Khaki & Khan, 2024; Matikiti et al., 2018) assess the relative influence of those factors. This limit practical applicability in policymaking or capacity-building interventions. Without understanding which determinants matter most, be it resource availability, brand visibility, or eWOM, support efforts remain unfocused.

Therefore, this study fills an important research gap by:

- i. Providing empirical data on the drivers of SMM adoption among tourism based culinary SMEs in Arusha, Tanzania.
- ii. Quantifying the relative strength of predictor variables on SMM adoption, thus, supporting more targeted interventions.

This study selected tourism-based food processing enterprises because in the context of culinary tourism, the consumption of local foods and food experiences plays a crucial role in enriching the overall experience of tourists

visiting a destination. Food is not only a basic necessity but also a cultural expression that allows tourists to connect with the heritage and traditions of the places they visit (Horng & Tsai, 2012; Son, 2013). Experiencing local cuisine can be a significant draw for tourists, as it offers a unique and authentic taste of the destination's culture, enhancing their satisfaction and making their visit more memorable (OECD, 2012). Culinary tourism, therefore, highlights the importance of food as an integral part of the travel experience, driving the demand for diverse and high-quality food products, including those offered by small and medium tourism-based food processing enterprises.

## **2. Theoretical Underpinning**

This research can be effectively grounded in two interrelated theories: Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework and the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory. The TOE framework (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990) explains technology adoption through three dimensions: Technological (i.e., perceived effectiveness, compatibility), Organizational (i.e., resource availability, leadership support), and Environmental (i.e., customer pressure, competitive dynamics). This framework is suitable for exploring adoption decisions among SMEs in Arusha's culinary tourism sector, as it allows assessment of both internal capabilities and external influences. However, TOE limitation lies in being descriptive rather than predictive and requiring customization to specific sectors (Baker, 2019).

The DOI (Rogers, 2003) focuses on how innovations like social media are communicated and adopted over time. Key attributes include relative advantage, compatibility, and observability which influence the adoption process. In Arusha, food-tourism SMEs might adopt social media due to perceived advantages in visibility and engagement. While DOI captures individual perceptions well, it has been critiqued for underestimating organizational and environmental complexity, which TOE addresses (Taherdoost, 2018). Therefore, TOE complements DOI in describing adoption of innovation and usage.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is popular and it can serve as alternative model. TAM considers Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) as the most influential factors affecting a consumer's behavioral intention in using a particular technology (Davis, 2022). TAM has been criticized to pay greater attention on the significance of consumers' decisions, disregarding the role of extraneous factors such as the influence of friends, colleagues, market rivalry, and governmental regulations. Furthermore, TAM does not predict the stages of adoption or the innovation characteristics that might impact the phases of adoption as DOI does. Basing on these grounds, synthesis of TOE and DOI provide a richer, multi-level understanding, making them ideal for this study.

### **2.1 Empirical Literature Review**

Critical review of related literature led to the recognition about the unique digital demands of culinary tourism. Therefore, this study extends the TOE and DOI frameworks to include a more comprehensive set of SMM adoption determinants. It combines well-established adoption factors with variables traditionally treated as adoption outcomes to capture the full spectrum of motivations influencing adoption.

Traditional technological factors such as perceived effectiveness/relative advantage (Matikiti et al., 2018) and brand visibility/presence (Pateli et al., 2020) are retained, while organizational factors such as entrepreneurial mindset/innovativeness (Pateli et al., 2020) and organizational resources (Ndekwa & Katunzi, 2016) are

integrated to reflect SMEs' internal capabilities. Environmental determinants such as tourist expectations and institutional pressure (Thai & Minh, 2025) are also incorporated.

Importantly, the study reconceptualizes variables widely treated as outcomes of SMM, including e-reputation management, customer engagement, content quality, social media content, CRM capability, and destination image building as drivers of adoption. This is based on the premise that culinary tourism SMEs adopt social media to proactively shape reputation, enhance experiential value, and strengthen market visibility. This broadened determinant set refines TOE/DOI applicability in tourism.

### ***2.1.1 Brand Visibility***

Brand visibility refers to the extent to which a culinary tourism enterprise becomes recognizable through social media. SMM enhances reach, brand recall, and awareness among potential tourists. Increased visibility helps small food enterprises compete with larger brands by showcasing local uniqueness. Fusté-Forné and Filimon (2021) found that SMM significantly improved brand visibility and customer engagement for small food-related enterprises during periods of market disruption. Similarly, Nurfarida and Sudarmiati (2021) emphasized visibility as a core motivator for digital marketing adoption among SMEs. However, Wantchami et al. (2020) argue that while visibility increases, it doesn't always translate to customer loyalty or revenue in saturated markets, cautioning that visibility alone may not justify SMM investments.

### ***2.1.2 Customer Engagement***

Customer engagement reflects how businesses interact with their customers via social media platforms. In culinary tourism, engagement can occur through responding to comments, sharing user-generated content, or creating interactive campaigns that build trust and brand community. Alboji et al. (2024) emphasized that higher engagement on restaurant Instagram pages leads to stronger customer relationships, loyalty, and increased visit intention, highlighting the role of social media engagement in culinary destinations. Engagement allows businesses to understand consumer preferences in real-time. However, Hargyatni et al. (2022) warn that over-reliance on engagement metrics may lead to misleading assumptions, because engagement indicators do not always translate into actual conversions such as bookings or purchases.

### ***2.1.3 Content***

Content refers to the quality, relevance, and frequency of posts shared by businesses. In culinary tourism, visually appealing and informative content (e.g., food photos, behind-the-scenes cooking videos) can attract and inform tourists. Michael, Chunawala & Fusté-Forné (2025) found that high-quality photographic content significantly shapes destination and food brand perceptions in social-media marketing for tourism. Engagement allows businesses to understand consumer preferences in real time. However, Abbasi et al. (2022) caution that limited content-creation capabilities in SMEs may hinder the effectiveness of content as a driver of SMM adoption, especially when resources are constrained.

### ***2.1.4 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)***

The eWOM refers to online reviews and customer-shared content about a business. In culinary tourism, positive eWOM builds trust and encourages new tourists to visit local food spots. Hoang et al. (2022) highlight that eWOM significantly influences tourists' destination selection and experience-seeking in food-tourism contexts. Tourists often trust peer reviews over advertisements. However, Çelik et al. (2025) caution that eWOM can be double-edged as negative reviews can damage brand reputation if not properly managed.

### ***2.1.5 Tourist Expectations***

This refers to how well the business's online presence matches the evolving expectations of modern, tech-savvy tourists who often plan trips based on digital content. Skočajić et al. (2024) argue that tourists increasingly expect real-time interaction and immersive previews through social media before visiting destinations, especially food venues. Nevertheless, Saleh et al. (2024) argue that not all tourist demographics rely on social media; some still prefer traditional recommendations or on-the-ground exploration.

#### ***2.1.6 Resource Availability***

Resource availability includes access to skilled staff, internet, time, and financial investment needed to implement and maintain social media marketing. Elnadi and Moustafa (2022) confirm that resource-rich SMEs are more likely to adopt SMM effectively. A well-equipped business can manage content, engagement, and performance tracking consistently. In contrast, Kainat (2020) notes that some SMEs succeed using low-cost, grassroots digital strategies despite limited resources, questioning whether resource abundance is always necessary.

#### ***2.1.7 Perceived Effectiveness***

Perceived effectiveness relates to how beneficial the business owner or manager believes SMM will be in achieving marketing goals. Abbasi et al. (2022) found that when SMEs perceive social media marketing as beneficial for outreach and performance, they are more likely to adopt it. However, Kikawa (2022) point out that perceived usefulness may sometimes be negative or misleading when SMEs overestimate what SMM can achieve without proper strategy or resources.

#### ***2.1.8 Destination Image Building***

SMM contributes to shaping how a location is perceived through visuals, storytelling, and shared experiences. Culinary enterprises can play a pivotal role in defining a destination's identity. Ibrahim et al. (2025) found that food-tourism marketing via social media significantly enhances a destination's image and attractiveness to visitors. However, Tran (2022) argues that destination branding via social media may have limited reach without coordinated efforts across stakeholders (e.g., tourism boards, influencers, local businesses).

#### ***2.1.9 Entrepreneurial Mindset***

An entrepreneurial mindset encompasses innovation, proactivity, and a willingness to embrace risk-traits that significantly influence the adoption of social media marketing (SMM). In the culinary tourism sector, businesses led by entrepreneurs with such mindsets tend to explore new digital tools to enhance market reach and customer engagement. Fan et al. (2021) found that entrepreneurial orientation was a key driver of SMM adoption among SMEs in emerging economies. However, others argue that such a mindset is not universally essential because in regions where traditional marketing methods are still effective, the drive for innovation may be secondary (Yacob et al., 2024).

#### ***2.1.10 Institutional Pressure***

Institutional pressure refers to external forces such as regulations, industry standards, and competitive dynamics that influence business decisions. In culinary tourism, this can include the pressure to conform to peers' marketing practices or government expectations. Qalati et al. (2022) revealed that environmental pressures (competitive, mimetic) significantly motivated SMEs in developing countries to adopt social media marketing. In contrast, Yusuf & Hussein (2025) noted that in loosely regulated markets, institutional pressure has minimal impact, as the absence of strict norms allows businesses to rely on traditional methods without consequence.

### ***2.1.11 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Capabilities***

CRM capabilities involve managing customer data, interactions, and service quality as key factors in building long-term loyalty. In the culinary tourism sector, effective CRM systems allow businesses to personalize SMM efforts, improving customer satisfaction. Elshaer et al. (2024) found that social customer-relationship-management practices significantly improve customer satisfaction and market effectiveness in hospitality firms when combined with social-media data capabilities. However, Matraeva (2022) notes that many small businesses lack the digital infrastructure and organizational competence to implement advanced CRM systems, limiting their ability to capitalize on social-media marketing tools.

### ***2.1.12 E-Reputation***

E-reputation is a business's perceived credibility based on online reviews, ratings, and digital presence. A strong e-reputation can significantly attract culinary tourists, particularly those who rely on digital feedback when choosing experiences. Perez-Aranda (2024) found that positive e-reputation directly influenced tourist trust and engagement with culinary tourism offerings. However, Zelenka (2021) caution that e-reputation is highly susceptible to misinformation and fake reviews, posing risks for businesses that depend too heavily on online perception.

## **3. Methodology**

### ***3.1 Study Area***

The research was conducted in Arusha, which is one of the regions in the northern part of Tanzania. Arusha is famous for its active cultural and natural tourist attractions as it dominates the northern tourism circuit. It is also the entry point to world famous and natural heritage sites of the Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro crater, and the highest mountain in Africa- Mount Kilimanjaro. The expanding tourism industry has led to the growth of many SMEs that deal with tourists including food processing enterprises that prepare packed foods and traditional local foods for the tourists and the other citizens (Small Industries Development Organisation, 2020). Because Arusha is geographically positioned at a strategic location and it is among the prime tourist destinations in Tanzania, it is suitable to investigate on the use of SMM amongst SMEs.

In Arusha, restaurants, cafés, and food vendors offer a rich variety of traditional foods and local drinks that cater to tourists eager for authentic cultural experiences. Popular dishes include '*nyama choma*' (grilled meat), '*makande*' (a nutritious mixture of maize and beans), and '*makange*' (spiced, stir-fried meat or chicken). Tourists also enjoy '*ugali*' (a stiff maize porridge), '*pilau*' (fragrant spiced rice), '*wali wa nazi*' (coconut rice), and '*chapati*' (soft, layered flatbread). Street food favorites like '*mihogo*' (fried cassava), '*vuruga*' (mix of banana,

potatoes with chicken), '*chipsi mayai*' (French fries omelette), '*mishkaki*' (skewered grilled meat), and '*sambusa*' (savory pastries) are widely available. Sweet treats such as '*vitumbua*' (rice pancakes) and '*maandazi*' (fried dough) are also popular. To complement these dishes, tourists can try traditional drinks such as '*kahawa chungu*' (strong bitter coffee), '*tangawizi tea*' (ginger tea), '*chai ya rangi*' (plain tea), '*banana beer*', '*mbege*' (a traditional Chagga brew), '*juisi ya miwa*' (sugarcane juice), and '*maji ya madafu*' (fresh coconut water), offering a full taste of Tanzania's vibrant culinary culture.

Tourist-focused food-processing enterprises in Arusha are mainly located in districts frequented by international visitors, forming the basis for this study's research sites. The largest concentration is in Arusha City, with additional enterprises in nearby Arusha District. Meru District's proximity to Lake Duluti supports several firms, while Karatu District hosts many serving Ngorongoro and Manyara tourists. Monduli District, particularly Mto wa Mbu, also sustains numerous tourism-linked enterprises.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This research is posited in quantitative approach, employed a descriptive design to systematically describe the factors influencing the adoption of SMM. The descriptive approach involved collecting detailed information about the current state of SMM adoption and identifying the relative importance of crucial drivers for SMM adoption. This design enables the collection of quantifiable data on variables such as number of employees, age of enterprise, type of social media used and frequency of usage. The descriptive design is appropriate for this study as it aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how and why these enterprises adopt SMM.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The target population for this research was owner-managers entrepreneurs with small and medium tourism related food processing enterprises in Arusha. This population was considered because the managers or owners are the ones who can make decision to adopt SMM. There is no a globally accepted- definition for SMEs, as countries apply different criteria based on their economic development levels. Common indicators used to classify enterprise size include the total number of employees, total investment, and sales turnover. In the Tanzania context, micro enterprises typically comprise up to 4 individuals, often family members, or have capital investments of up to Tshs. 5.0 million (2,083 US\$). Majority of micro enterprises operate in the informal sector. Small enterprises are generally formalized businesses with 5 to 49 employees or capital investments ranging from Tshs. 5 million to Tshs. 200 million. Medium enterprises, on the other hand, employ 50 to 99 people or have capital investments between Tshs. 200 million (US\$ 83,333) and Tshs. 800 million (US\$ 333,333). (Tanzania Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2003)

In this study, number of employees was the main indicator considered to define SMEs as well as the requirement that they operate in the food manufacturing and processing industry targeting the domestic and international tourists. These enterprises make significant contribution to the regional economy through marketing of local equatorial foods, snack bars, drinks, and other food-items that suit the tourists' mouth-bling. A total of 314 registered food-processing enterprises, as updated in 2024 at the respective District Councils through the offices of the District Business Officers, was obtained. From this list, a team of District Business Officer's personnel constructed a sampling frame consisting of 173 enterprises primarily serving international tourists, including enterprise-owners' phone and email contacts as well as their physical locations.

### **3.4 Data type and Data Collection Method**

This research collected primary data to give a detailed account of SMM uptake in the small and medium tourism-based food processing businesses in Arusha. The main tool for collecting data was an online structured questionnaire. The tool was set to capture respondent's demographic and enterprise characteristics, adoption of SMM and SMM platform usage. In addition, the tool included a five-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) on items underpinning decision to adopt SMM, including brand visibility, customer engagement, content, e-word of mouth, tourists' expectations, resource availability, perceived effectiveness and destination image. The contents of the questionnaire was initially validated by marketing experts at Moshi Co-operative University, followed by pilot test that involved 20 owners of restaurants, cafes and other food-related businesses that cater to tourists and operate on a small to medium scale in Moshi town. Subsequently, online questionnaire was sent to each of 173 sampled respondents. However, 164 questionnaires (94.79%) were returned.

### **3.5 Ethical Consideration**

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, clearly explaining the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning unique codes to participants instead of using personal identifiers. Ethical approval was sought from Arusha regional authority.

## **4. Results and Discussions**

### **4.1 Respondent Characteristics**

Table 1 shows socio-economic characteristics of the sample constituting 164 owner-managers of small and medium-sized tourism-based food enterprises in Arusha, Tanzania. The demographic and business characteristics provide a detailed overview of the participants' profiles relevant to SMM adoption. Gender distribution shows a slight dominance of male participants, accounting for 56.7%. This reflects the prevailing gender distribution in SME ownership in Tanzania, where men often dominate the entrepreneurial space, especially in urban regions. In terms of ownership type, a majority (70.8%) of the businesses were sole proprietorships. This aligns with the structure of many Tanzanian SMEs, where informal or individually managed ventures are prevalent due to ease of startup and fewer legal complexities.

Regarding educational background, majority (40%) of respondents attained a non-degree qualification in diploma or certificate, while, only 3.3% had postgraduate qualifications, suggesting moderate levels of formal education, with a considerable number equipped with practical or vocational training relevant for operating food-related businesses. In terms of business experience, 40.8% of respondents had been in business for over five years, This indicates a mature business landscape. When considering enterprise size, 42.5% employed 5–10 staff, and 37.5% had between 11 and 49 employees. This confirms their classification as small enterprises. On the other hand, 20% of enterprises employed 50–99 workers, hence, categorized as medium size enterprises, consistent to Tanzania SME policy (Tanzania Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2003).

Social media adoption rate was 86% indicating that tourism-based food SMEs in Arusha are increasingly recognizing the value of digital platforms for engaging with tourists, improving visibility, and enhancing brand image. Finally, in terms of social media usage, adopted enterprises apply more than one platform. Thus, multiple responses indicate usage of Facebook (32%) and Instagram (28%) were the most utilized platforms, followed by WhatsApp (24%) and TikTok (16%), indicating strong digital presence and potential for SMM adoption among respondents.

**Table 1.** Respondents and Enterprises' Characteristics (n = 164)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	93	56.7
	Female	71	43.3
<b>Ownership Type</b>	Sole Proprietorship	116	70.8
	Partnership	32	19.2
	Family-Owned	16	10.0
<b>Education Level</b>	Secondary Education	52	31.7
	Diploma/Certificate	66	40.0
	Bachelor's Degree	41	25.0
	Postgraduate	5	3.3
<b>Years in Business</b>	Less than 3 years	40	24.2
	3–5 years	57	35.0
	Over 5 years	67	40.8
<b>Business Size (Employees)</b>	5–10	70	42.5
	11–49	61	37.5
	50–99	33	20.0
<b>Social Media adoption</b>	Adopted	141	86
	Not adopted	23	14
<b>Social Media Use</b>	Facebook	136	32
	Instagram	119	28
	WhatsApp	102	24
	TikTok	66	16

## 4.2 Preliminary Analysis

### 4.2.1 Reliability and Validity of Data

The initial analysis of the data demonstrated strong item reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7 for all variables, and "reliability if item deleted" results indicating minimal changes, confirming internal consistency. The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) test, based on expert judgment, showed all items exceeding the Lawshe (1975) threshold, establishing strong content validity. Item-total correlations further supported construct relevance. Multicollinearity diagnostics showed Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 2 and tolerance levels above 0.5, indicating no significant multicollinearity among the independent variables. These results validate the dataset's suitability for further inferential analysis and model development.

## 4.3 Main Analysis

Given the nature of study objectives: (i) To explore factors underpinning decision to adopt SMM, (ii) To assess the relative influence of predictor factors on adoption of SMM among tourism-based food processing enterprises, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was appropriate for the former objective, while Binary Logistic Regression was suitable for the later.

### 4.3.1 Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is appropriate for exposing underlying factors influencing SMM adoption among tourism-based food processing enterprises because it uncovers latent constructs from observed predictor variables. EFA identifies patterns and groups related variables, revealing hidden dimensions in SMM adoption decision-making processes. The results of EFA shows The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.703, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2 = 907.811, p < .001$ ), supporting factorability. Using principal component extraction with varimax rotation, four factors emerged, explaining 77.824% of the total variance. Table 2 shows variables used with respective factor loadings.

**Table 2.** Rotated Component Matrix

Variables	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Perceived Effectiveness	0.896			
CRM Capabilities	0.895			
Content Quality	0.891			
Tourist Expectations		0.897		
Institutional Pressure		0.881		
E-Reputation		0.865		
Entrepreneurial Mindset			0.888	
Resource Availability			0.880	
Customer Engagement			0.831	
Brand Visibility				0.877
Destination Image Building				0.867
eWOM				0.864

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Basing on theoretical and empirical grounds, the four components/constructs in Table 2 were labelled as: Technological (1<sup>st</sup> Factor); Environmental (2<sup>nd</sup> Factor); Organizational (3<sup>rd</sup> Factor) and Innovativeness (4<sup>th</sup> Factor).

**4.3.1.1 Technological Factors**

The EFA results identified three technological constructs: perceived effectiveness, CRM capabilities, and content quality, with strong loadings (0.896–0.891), indicating that SMEs strongly associate SMM adoption with tangible performance benefits. This affirms Rogers’s DOI attributes of relative advantage and compatibility, suggesting that SMEs adopt SMM when the technology aligns with their operational needs and offers visible improvements in efficiency.

Perceived effectiveness reflects SMEs’ belief that SMM enhances marketing reach, provides real-time access to customer feedback, and improves promotional performance. CRM capabilities are equally influential, as social media enables personalized engagement, faster response times, and stronger relationship-building which is a critical component in hospitality and culinary tourism. Finally, content quality plays a central role in adoption because the sector relies heavily on visual appeal, storytelling, and consumer experience. High-quality photos, menus, and cultural narratives improve destination attractiveness, supporting findings from *Social Media in Marketing: A Review and Analysis of the Existing Literature* (Alalwan et al., 2017), *Usage of Digital and Online Marketing Channels in SMEs* (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015), Picazo Peral et al. (2025), and Xiao et al. (2020).

Overall, the strong technological readiness suggests that SMEs in Arusha view SMM as a practical and beneficial marketing innovation.

#### **4.3.1.2 Environmental Factors**

Environmental factors in terms of tourist expectations, institutional pressure, and e-reputation, recorded the highest loading values (0.897–0.865), underscoring the dominance of external forces in shaping SMM adoption. These results strongly support the TOE framework, which posits that the external environment can be more influential than internal capabilities in determining innovation adoption.

Tourist expectations emerged as a particularly strong driver, reflecting modern tourists' reliance on social media for reviews, images, menus, and recommendations. Arusha's culinary tourism sector depends heavily on digital visibility, making SMM adoption an operational necessity rather than a strategic preference. Institutional pressure also contributes significantly, as government bodies, tourism authorities (e.g., Tanzania Tourism Board), and branding initiatives encourage SMEs to adopt digital tools to enhance the city's competitive image. Additionally, e-reputation influences adoption because online reviews and customer-generated content significantly affect tourist decision-making. These findings align with research by Madila et al. (2022) and Hussain Shahadat et al. (2023), which highlight environmental and organizational pressures as key enablers of digital technology/adoption among tourism SMEs. Therefore, contrary to the claim by Soares et al. (2020) that environmental pressures may not translate into adoption where SMEs lack enabling resources, in Arusha's tourism-dependent market, environmental expectations appear particularly influential.

#### **4.3.1.3 Organizational Factors**

Organizational factors in terms of entrepreneurial mindset, resource availability, and customer engagement practices, loaded strongly (~0.888–0.831), indicating that internal readiness plays a meaningful role in SMM adoption. An entrepreneurial mindset reflects the willingness of SME owners to explore new digital opportunities, take calculated risks, and embrace innovation. Leadership attitudes shape the pace and extent of technology adoption, supporting Elshaer et al. (2024).

However, resource availability including financial, human, and technological remains a challenge for many SMEs. While some Arusha SMEs show readiness, limited budgets, insufficient digital skills, and weak internal systems often restrict full adoption. Customer engagement practices also influence adoption; SMEs lacking structured interaction channels may view SMM as burdensome. These findings echo Amegbe, Zungu and Hanu (2023), who observed that resource constraints often hinder SME adoption of digital technologies. Thus, although SMEs may have positive attitudes toward SMM, weaknesses in organizational capacity can limit implementation.

#### **4.3.1.4 Innovativeness Factors**

Innovativeness factors in terms of brand visibility, destination image building, and eWOM, also emerged as strong motivators (loadings 0.877–0.864). This demonstrates that SMEs adopt SMM not only for functional benefits but also to leverage strategic opportunities. Brand visibility is critical in differentiating culinary businesses in a

saturated tourism market. SMM enables SMEs to showcase products, ambiance, and cultural narratives that appeal to visitors.

Destination image building further motivates adoption, as SMEs recognize the role of SMM in shaping travelers' perceptions of Arusha as a culinary destination. eWOM also plays a central role; SMEs appreciate the value of user-generated recommendations and social proof in attracting tourists. These findings reflect DOI attributes of observability and trialability, emphasizing that visible promotional outcomes encourage adoption. Studies in tourism marketing (Leung et al., 2013; Mariani & Borghi, 2021) similarly highlight the influence of branding and eWOM on digital adoption.

### **4.3.2 Results of Binary Logistic Regression**

Binary logistic regression is an appropriate econometric technique when the dependent variable is dichotomous—in this case, whether a tourism-based small or medium food enterprise has adopted social media marketing (coded as “1” for adoption and “0” for non-adoption). The method estimates the probability that a given enterprise will adopt social media marketing based on various predictor factors. Instead of fitting a straight line as in linear regression, logistic regression uses the logistic function to ensure that the predicted probabilities lie between 0 and 1. Estimation is typically done via maximum likelihood estimation (MLE), which finds the parameter values that best explain the observed outcomes.

Results of binary logistic regression analysis shows the model has good fit ( $\chi^2 = 36.512$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ; Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.359$ ), suggesting that the predictors accounted for 36% of the variation in SMM adoption. Noteworthy,  $R^2$  values between 0.2 and 0.4 represent good fit (Hair et al., 2019). Table 3 presents results of factors (i.e., FAC\_1 for Technological; FAC\_2 for Environmental; FAC\_3 for Organizational and FAC\_4 for Innovativeness), coefficients and levels of significances. Overall, the model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors reliably distinguished between adopters and non-adopters of SMM.

#### **4.3.2.1 Technological Predictors**

Binary Logistic Regression indicated that technological factors (FAC\_1) significantly increased the likelihood of SMM adoption ( $B = 0.749$ ,  $p = 0.020$ ;  $\text{Exp}(B) = 2.115$ ). This finding affirms that SMEs who perceive SMM as useful, CRM-enhancing, and content-supportive are more than twice as likely to adopt it. The 95% confidence interval for the odds ratio ranged from 1.126 to 3.975. These results extend DOI theory by demonstrating that perceived functional benefits remain strong motivators in service-oriented sectors. Similarly, these findings are consistent with studies showing that technology perceptions and content value enhance digital adoption among SMEs (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Abbasi et al., 2022).

#### **4.3.2.2 Environmental Predictors**

Environmental factors (FAC\_2) produced the highest odds ratio ( $B = 1.224$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ;  $\text{Exp}(B) = 3.402$ ), making them the strongest predictor of SMM adoption. Whereby, environmental driven culinary enterprises were three times more likely to adopt SMM than those that were less environmental focused. Several reasons explain this dominance: firstly, digital dependency of tourists: culinary tourists rely heavily on social media for information, increasing pressure on SMEs to meet digital expectations. Secondly, intense competition: the sector is saturated, and SMEs risk losing customers if they lack digital visibility. Thirdly, reputation sensitivity: online reviews influence tourist choices, motivating SMEs to actively manage e-reputation. Fourthly, institutional norms: tourism

authorities encourage digital adoption through branding initiatives and compliance requirements. Fifthly, urgent, non-optional pressures: unlike organizational or technological enhancements, environmental demands cannot be delayed.

These factors combine to create a high-pressure environment where SMEs are compelled to adopt SMM to remain competitive and relevant. This finding aligns with research showing that customer demands and competitive pressures drive SMM adoption in tourism SMEs (Hussain Shahadat et al., 2023; Madila et al., 2022).

**4.3.2.3 Organizational Predictors**

Organizational factors (FAC\_3) were the only predictor with a negative influence ( $B = -0.685, p = 0.014; \text{Exp}(B) = 0.504$ ). Specifically, the odds were reduced by approximately 50 % ( $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.504$ ), with a 95 % confidence interval between 0.292 and 0.871. Although organizational constructs showed strong loadings during EFA, the regression results reveal that internal limitations, particularly resource constraints, weak engagement mechanisms, and limited entrepreneurial orientation, significantly reduce the probability of adoption. This suggests that even when SMEs recognise the value of SMM, structural weaknesses hinder implementation.

Resource constraints are especially impactful: limited funds, inadequate staff skills, and lack of digital tools make it difficult for SMEs to consistently maintain online presence. This aligns with Nair (2019), who argue that internal organisational readiness (resources, staff competence, digital infrastructure) often determines whether technological innovations can be operationalised.

Additionally, research by Jamoah & Amoah (2023) shows that in tourism-SMEs, the lack of digital skills and organisational capacity significantly restricts adoption of social-media marketing, even when attitudes are favourable.

**4.3.2.4 Innovativeness Predictors**

Innovativeness (FAC\_4) significantly increased SMM adoption likelihood ( $B = 0.942, p = 0.006; \text{Exp}(B) = 2.566$ ). SMEs motivated by brand visibility, destination image building, and eWOM amplification are over two-and-a-half times more likely to adopt SMM. Innovative SMEs recognise social media as a powerful tool for enhancing brand exposure through visuals, storytelling, and promotional campaigns. Culinary tourism relies heavily on image marketing, showcasing food culture, ambience, and authenticity. Innovators leverage social media to shape destination perceptions. Similarly, SMEs that value consumer-generated content and online recommendations are more inclined to adopt SMM, recognising its influence on tourist decision-making.

These findings align with Rogers’s (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which highlights innovativeness as a key determinant of early technology adoption. Contemporary evidence confirms that SMEs with stronger innovation orientations are more likely to adopt SMM for visibility and market expansion (Domma & Errico, 2023; Fan et al., 2021).

**Table 3.** Results of Binary Logistic Regression.

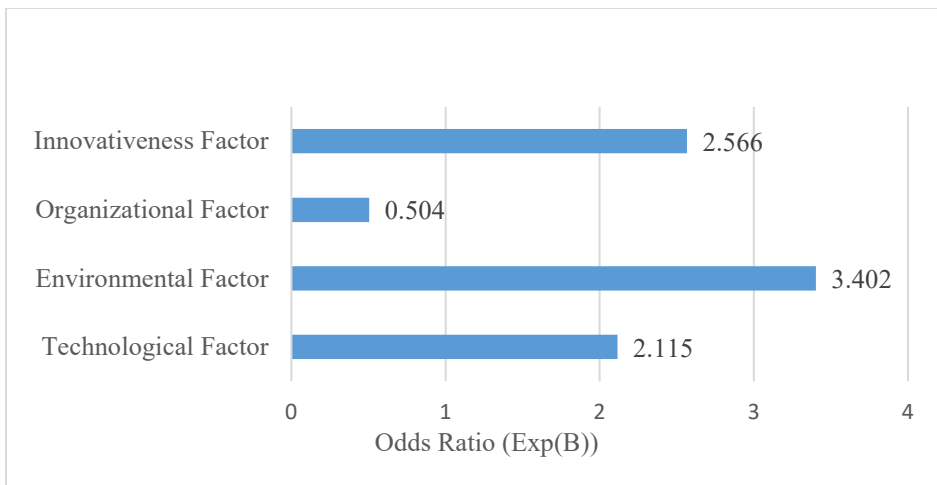
Factors	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for Exp(B)	
							Lower	Upper

FAC_1	0.749	0.322	5.420	1	0.020	2.115	1.126	3.975
FAC_2	1.224	0.367	11.150	1	0.001	3.402	1.658	6.980
FAC_3	-0.685	0.279	6.024	1	0.014	0.504	0.292	0.871
FAC_4	0.942	0.344	7.515	1	0.006	2.566	1.308	5.033
Constant	2.760	0.426	41.996	1	0.000	15.799	1.126	3.975

From Table 3, the four factors, were statistically significant predictors of SMM adoption among culinary SMEs. Technological factors, Environmental factors and Innovativeness factors increased the likelihood of adoption. Noteworthy, the relatively higher odds for SMM adoption was to SMEs that were more environmental oriented while organizational factors were associated with lower odds of adopting SMM.

The Figure 1 illustrate the bar graph showing the predictive strength of each factor (in terms of odds ratio) on the adoption of social media marketing in the culinary tourism sector in Arusha, Tanzania.

**Figure 1.** Relative Odds of adopting SMM by Predictor Factors



**5. Theoretical Contributions**

This study contributes to theory by integrating the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework with the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory to explain SMM adoption in a tourism-based SME context. The Exploratory Factor Analysis confirmed distinct technological, environmental, organizational, and innovativeness

constructs, supporting the multidimensional nature of digital adoption. The technological dimension, characterized by perceived effectiveness, CRM capability, and content quality, reinforces DOI's attributes of relative advantage and compatibility. The strong influence of environmental forces in terms of tourist expectations, institutional pressure, and e-reputation provides empirical validation of TOE's assertion that external conditions can outweigh internal capabilities in shaping innovation decisions. Furthermore, the significance of innovativeness constructs such as brand visibility, destination image building, and eWOM extends DOI by demonstrating how visibility-driven motivations accelerate adoption in tourism settings. The negative effect of organizational barriers highlights the moderating role of internal readiness. Collectively, the study advances theoretical understanding of digital marketing adoption in resource-constrained, tourism-dependent economies.

### **5.1 Managerial Implications**

The findings offer several actionable insights for SME managers and tourism stakeholders. First, managers should prioritize building technological capabilities by investing in basic digital tools, social media content development, and CRM functionalities that enhance customer interaction. Strengthening these capabilities can significantly increase the likelihood of adoption. Second, SME owners must actively monitor tourist expectations and digital trends, recognizing that customer demand for online visibility and fast communication is now a competitive necessity. Enhancing e-reputation through consistent posting, timely responses, and proactive review management can improve market positioning. Third, addressing organizational barriers is essential; managers should allocate resources for staff training, digital skills development, and structured customer engagement mechanisms. Finally, SMEs should adopt an innovation-oriented culture that leverages social media for brand visibility, storytelling, destination image building, and eWOM amplification. Collectively, these managerial actions can enhance SMM integration and strengthen competitiveness in Arusha's culinary tourism market.

### **5.2 Areas for Further Research**

Future studies should extend this work by incorporating longitudinal designs to examine how SMM adoption evolves over time, particularly as digital tourism trends intensify. Comparative studies across different Tanzanian regions or East African countries may reveal contextual variations in adoption drivers. Qualitative research could also provide deeper insights into managerial perceptions, implementation challenges, and SMM success factors not captured by quantitative surveys. Additionally, examining platform-specific usage patterns such as Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok would offer more targeted recommendations for SMEs. Finally, future research could explore how SMM adoption influences performance outcomes such as sales, customer loyalty, and tourist satisfaction.

### **6. Conclusion**

The study examined the determinants influencing the adoption of Social Media Marketing among food-related SMEs operating within Arusha's culinary tourism sector. Using EFA and binary logistic regression, the findings reveal that SMM adoption is shaped by a combination of technological readiness, environmental pressure, organizational conditions, and innovativeness orientation. Environmental factors emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that customer expectations, competitive forces, and reputation management exert significant influence on digital marketing decisions. Technological and innovativeness factors also positively contributed to adoption, suggesting that SMEs embrace SMM when they perceive clear performance benefits and opportunities

for brand visibility and destination image enhancement. Conversely, organizational limitations, particularly inadequate resources, weak engagement practices, and limited entrepreneurial orientation, significantly reduce adoption likelihood. Overall, the study concludes that while SMEs in Arusha recognize the strategic value of SMM, adoption is highly dependent on both external market pressures and internal preparedness.

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