

## Effect of competitive advantage, digital marketing to supply chain management on tourism business performance in Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

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The aim of the current study is to examine the effects of competitive advantage and digital marketing on tourism business performance (BP). The indirect effect of supply chain management (SCM) is also considered by the current study. Quantitative research approach is used and data collection is made through a survey instrument. 225 responses were received and used in data analysis to examine the relationship between variables. Five direct effect hypotheses and two indirect effect hypotheses are tested in this study. Smart PLS is used to test the direct and indirect relationship. It is found that; competitive advantage has a positive effect on BP. It also has a positive effect on SCM. Furthermore, digital marketing has a positive effect on BP. Similarly, digital marketing has a positive effect on SCM. Additionally, SCM is a mediating variable between competitive advantage and BP of the tourism industry.

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### 1. Introduction

The tourism industry of Thailand is one of the famous industries globally since it has major contribution nationally as well as internationally (Chaigassem & Tunming, 2019; Klinsrisuk & Pechdin, 2022; Sawatsuk, Darmawijaya, Ratchusanti, & Phaokrueng, 2018; Zhang, Khan, Kumar, Golpīra, & Sharif, 2019). The current industry of Thailand is producing a number of employment opportunities for the people of Thailand and it plays a major role to enhance the welfare of the people. Furthermore, this industry contributes to the welfare of the people with the help of generating business opportunities and contributing significantly to the Thai economy (Chaigassem & Tunming, 2019). Therefore, the business performance (BP) of this industry has major value for the economy. However, in recent years the performance of this industry in Thailand is lower than previous years. Although performance is still achieving a higher growth rate as compared to other countries, the performance of this industry is lower as compared to the last two years. There are several reasons for this declining performance of the tourism industry in Thailand. But one of the most important reasons is the coronavirus which disturbed the whole economy globally. In this way, there is a need to provide various important strategies to cope with this situation and increase the declining performance of this industry. The declining performance of this industry has several disadvantages for Thailand because this industry is producing several benefits for the people but due to the decrease in performance, these benefits may not be more helpful. Therefore, it is important to address different techniques as well as strategies to increase the BP of the tourism industry in Thailand.

The current study proposed the strategies related to the competitive advantage as well as digital marketing which are most significant to achieve higher BP. As proved by several previous studies that competitive advantage has central importance to enhance BP in any industry (Lestari, LEON, Widyastuti, BRABO, & Putra, 2020; Mehta, Ali, Farooq, & Tariq, 2020).

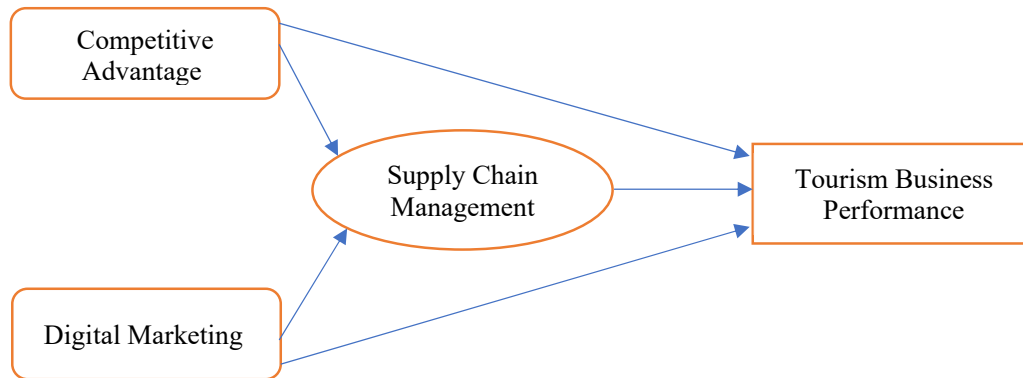
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Furthermore, in a highly advanced technological environment the role of digitalization cannot be neglected. And it is indicated in several studies that digitalization has an influential role in BP. Therefore, the study proposed that digital marketing can play the most important role to boost up the BP of the tourism industry. Similarly, the study also proposed that supply chain management (SCM) activities among the tourism companies of Thailand also has positive influence. The supply chain activities are the most significant part of any industry. These activities are also more helpful in the tourism industry of Thailand. The services provided by this industry can be promoted through better supply chain activities. In this way, along with the competitive advantage and digital marketing the role of supply chain also has importance. Therefore, along with the competitive advantage and digital marketing, the SCM is also important to promote BP. Thus, the objective of the study is to examine the role of competitive advantage and digital marketing on tourism BP in Thailand through SCM.

## 2. Literature Review

The framework development in the current study is carried out with the help of literature as well as resource-based view (RBV). The current study reviewed the extensive literature to develop the current study framework by considering the important aspects of tourism BP for the major contribution as well as for the practical implications. In this way, the current study proposed the effect of competitive advantage and digital marketing on tourism BP along with the indirect effect of the supply chain. This framework is supported with the help of RBV. According to the study, it is important to have sufficient resources for the business. The business success is majorly based on the resources of the business. Competitive advantage and digital marketing capabilities of the company are the major resources which can help to promote BP. Additionally, effective SCM capabilities of companies also become one of the important resources of the company. Because the capabilities related to the technology to run a business are the intangible resources of company which can contribute significantly. Finally, the current study proposed the relationship between competitive advantage, digital marketing, SCM and tourism BP which is shown in Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1.** The relationship between competitive advantage, digital marketing, SCM and tourism business performance

### 2.1 Tourism Business Performance

The competition is increasing in the tourism industry because it is one of the most revenue generating industries for most of the countries (Inversini & Cantoni, 2011; Suau-Sanchez & Voltres-Dorta, 2019). Thailand is also one of the countries which is competing with other countries in respect to the various tourism opportunities as well as BP. Therefore, this study considered BP which is most important for Thailand's tourism industry. The study considered BP with the help of return on assets. It is also considered in relation to the return on equity. The BP of the tourism industry of Thailand is also measured by using the return on sales as well as profitability. These figures are considered in relation to the competitor for the last three years. The increase or decrease in BP is considered. Various studies also measured the BP by examining the number of visitors visited in each year. However, the current study considered BP by the recommendations of several previous studies.

### 2.2 Supply Chain Management (SCM)

Supply chain can be described as one of the important networks of several individuals, organizations, different activities of the businesses and a chain of organizations which may involve in sales of different products as well as manufacturing of different products (Asamoah, Agyei-Owusu, Andoh-Baidoo, & Ayaburi, 2021). Supply chain is involved from the first step of service to the last step to the delivery to the consumer. Therefore, it is most important because it is linked with the very first step to the last step. Any change at any stage of product may lead to the delay in the product and decrease in the overall quality. Similarly, in the tourism industry of Thailand, the role of supply chain is also most important. The supply chain process in tourism is based on various activities and its nature is quite different as compared to the other supply chain activities. The tourism supply chain (González-Torres, Rodríguez-Sánchez, & Pelechano-Barahona, 2021) can be described as the network of various tourism companies which may involve in different series of activities dealing with the people as well as services such as accommodation, food, reception and sale of various tourism products. Thus, there is an important connection between supply chain as well as tourism activities and ultimately it has a positive role to influence the industry. Majorly, it is based on the management of various tourism organizations to facilitate tourists. Therefore, the supply chain has

a relationship with tourism BP. As reported in previous studies, the supply chain has considerable effect on BP (Kusumawati, 2021; Wong, Sinnandavar, & Soh, 2021). Any change in the supply chain activity may lead to the change in BP.

**Hypothesis 1.** *SCM has a positive effect on BP.*

### 2.3 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is based on the strengths of a company which the competitor does not have by the competitor (Ismail, 2012; Lestari et al., 2020). It is generally based on the unique strength of a business in the market which can provide better benefits to the business as compared to the other businesses. Generally, competitive advantage can be described as the edge on the competitive in relation to the skills, services as well as technology. In a highly competitive business market, it is not easy to gain competitive advantage and the companies require a significant level of struggle to gain competitive advantage. All the companies are always trying to gain competitive advantage because it has many advantages for the company. The tourism industry is one of the most popular industries globally and most of the nations are trying to promote this industry to generate a high level of revenue. In this way the competition is increasing in the tourism industry globally. Therefore, it is needed for the companies to gain a competitive advantage to survive in the competitive market which is helpful to get success in these activities because previous studies highlight that competitive advantage has a positive role to influence BP. Thus, higher BP in the tourism industry can be achieved with the help of competitive advantage (Van Zyl & Mathur-Helm, 2007; Kerdipitak, 2022). Along with the positive role of competitive advantage in BP it also has an effect on supply chain activities. Better competitive advantage can enhance the supply chain activities in any organization which has major importance for the businesses. According to this study, competitive advantage led to the supply chain which can increase the BP in the tourism industry.

**Hypothesis 2.** *Competitive advantage has a positive effect on BP.*

**Hypothesis 3.** *Digital marketing has a positive effect on supply chain.*

### 2.4 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing which is also known as online marketing, is the promotion of brands to connect with possible customers using the internet as well as other forms of digital communication. This comprises not only email, social media, and web-based advertising, however, also text and multimedia messages as a marketing channel. Due to the increasing benefits of digital marketing, most of the companies are trying to promote their products as well as services with the help of digital marketing. It is one of the important platforms to various businesses which connect with the customer with the help of the internet as well as other media. Therefore, digital communication between the employees as well as the customers resolve the problems. Generally digital marketing through email marketing, social media marketing and various advertising through web-based resources is important. The need for digital marketing has increased significantly in the last two years. Still its need is increasing significantly because it has a number of advantages. Therefore, the concept of digital marketing is emerging which has an influence on BP. Previous studies reported that digital marketing has a significant relationship with BP (Purba, Simanjutak, Malau, Sholihat, & Ahmadi, 2021; Rompis, Pangemanan, & Tumewu, 2021). Thus, the tourism industry of Thailand can be promoted with the help of BP improvement through digital marketing. Digital marketing is also connected with supply chain activities (Agus, Yudoko, Mulyono, & Imaniya, 2021). The management of various activities through digital systems or simply with the help of digitalization can resolve various issues and it can save the cost as well as time. Therefore, this study proposed that digital marketing has significant influence to promote supply chains which further has the potential to increase the BP of the tourism industry.

**Hypothesis 4.** *Digital marketing has a positive effect on SCM.*

**Hypothesis 5.** *Digital marketing has a positive effect on BP.*

**Hypothesis 6.** *SCM mediates the relationship between competitive advantage and BP.*

**Hypothesis 7.** *SCM mediates the relationship between digital marketing and BP.*

## 3. Methodology

The extensive research is carried out on tourism BP in Thailand as well as all other countries. Each study addressed BP with the help of different methods. Most of the studies used primary measures to consider BP, other studies considered BP with the help of secondary data. Therefore, studies are mixed to measure BP which are based on a mix method approach also including the quantitative as well as qualitative research. However, this study considered the nature of the study to select the study method. The relationship between competitive advantage, digital marketing, supply chain and BP is considered in the study and it is observed that it is suitable to measure this relationship with the help of primary data by conducting a questionnaire survey. Hence, a questionnaire survey is considered in the study to collect data from respondents. Furthermore, cross-sectional research design is used in the study. While measuring the competitive advantage, this study considered various strengths of the tourism company. The strengths of the company are considered as the competitive advantage. Digital marketing is considered by considering the preference of the company to adopt various digital marketing technologies.

Furthermore, supply chain is measured by considering various measures related to the supply of various goods as well as services. Finally, this study measured BP by considering the return on assets, return on equity, return on sales and profitability of the company. By considering these measures of BP the current study used primary data rather than secondary data. 500 questionnaires were distributed among the employees of tourism companies in Thailand. Area cluster sampling is used in the study to distribute the questionnaire. Various reminders are also sent to the respondents and 225 valid questionnaires received by the current study. Data statistics are given in Table 1.

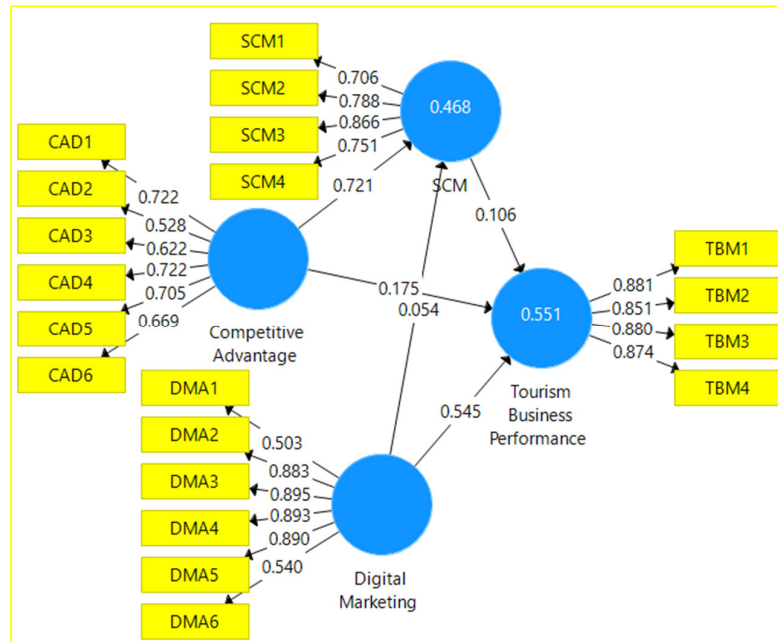
**Table 1**  
Data Statistics

	No.	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
CAD1	1	0	4.094	4	1	5	1.082	1.678	-1.933
CAD2	2	0	3.656	4	1	5	1.136	-0.315	-2.637
CAD3	3	0	3.596	4	1	5	0.938	-1.433	-0.587
CAD4	4	0	3.909	4	1	5	0.995	0.61	-1.002
CAD5	5	0	4.138	4	1	5	0.84	1.217	-2.013
CAD6	6	0	3.839	4	1	5	0.978	-0.083	-0.782
DMA1	7	0	4.007	4	1	5	1.181	-1.352	-2.765
DMA2	8	0	3.606	4	1	5	1.142	-0.359	-0.616
DMA3	9	0	3.67	4	1	5	0.917	-1.344	-2.649
DMA4	10	0	3.739	4	1	5	1.129	-0.315	-0.663
DMA5	11	0	3.679	4	1	5	1.083	0.169	-0.73
DMA6	12	0	3.954	4	1	5	0.877	1.224	-2.939
SCM1	13	0	3.913	4	1	5	0.998	-0.342	-0.603
SCM2	14	0	4.133	4	1	5	0.876	0.183	-2.758
SCM3	15	0	3.922	4	1	5	0.893	-0.214	-0.547
SCM4	16	0	3.917	4	1	5	1.001	0.704	-0.965
TBM1	17	0	3.583	4	1	5	1.069	-0.228	-2.557
TBM2	18	0	3.725	4	1	5	1.052	0.067	-0.713
TBM3	19	0	3.587	4	1	5	1.265	-0.75	-0.526
TBM4	20	0	3.606	4	1	5	1.249	-0.922	-0.427

Note: CAD = Competitive Advantage; DMA = Digital Marketing; SCM = Supply Chain Management; TBP = Tourism Business Performance

**4. Findings**

Findings of the study are based on the data analysis through statistical tools. The statistical tool namely; Partial Least Square (PLS) is employed in this study and analysis is based on two major steps. The first step is given in Figure 2 which shows the factor loadings. According to the literature, factor loading must achieve a minimum threshold level to retain, otherwise the scale items should be deleted (Basco, Hair Jr, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021; Joe F Hair Jr, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020). The results of factor loadings are given in Table 2 which shows that all the items have factor loadings above 0.5 which is acceptable.



Note: CAD = Competitive Advantage; DMA = Digital Marketing; SCM = Supply Chain Management; TBP = Tourism Business Performance

**Fig. 2.** Measurement Model

**Table 2**  
Factor Loadings

Construct	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Competitive Advantage	CAD1	0.722	0.746	0.825	0.501
	CAD2	0.528			
	CAD3	0.622			
	CAD4	0.722			
	CAD5	0.705			
	CAD6	0.669			
Digital Marketing	DMA1	0.503	0.863	0.903	0.619
	DMA2	0.883			
	DMA3	0.895			
	DMA4	0.893			
	DMA5	0.89			
	DMA6	0.54			
Supply Chain Management	SCM1	0.706	0.81	0.86	0.608
	SCM2	0.788			
	SCM3	0.866			
	SCM4	0.751			
Tourism BP	TBM1	0.881	0.894	0.927	0.759
	TBM2	0.851			
	TBM3	0.88			
	TBM4	0.874			

Note: CAD = Competitive Advantage; DMA = Digital Marketing; SCM = Supply Chain Management; TBP = Tourism Business Performance

This study addressed composite reliability (CR) which must be higher than 0.7. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) must be higher than 0.5. These results of CR and AVE are given in Table 2. Discriminant validity examined by using cross-loadings as given in Table 3. It is found that, CR is above 0.7 and AVE is above 0.5 which confirmed the convergent validity.

**Table 3**  
Cross-Loadings

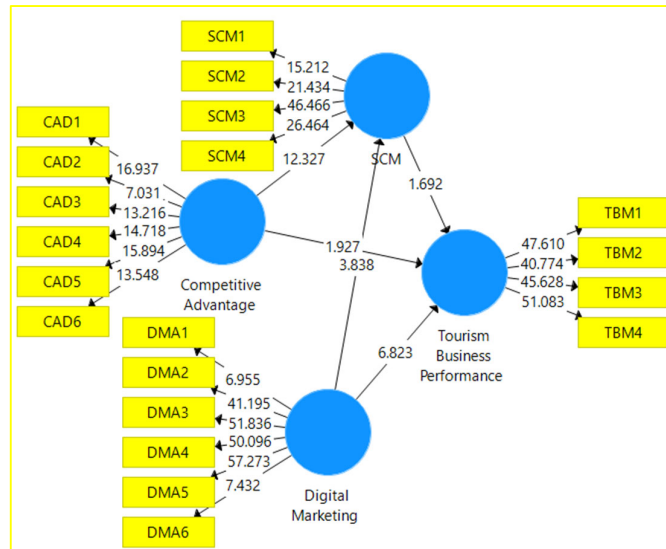
	Competitive Advantage	Digital Marketing	SCM	Tourism BP
CAD1	0.722	0.469	0.442	0.438
CAD2	0.528	0.339	0.249	0.367
CAD3	0.822	0.776	0.328	0.698
CAD4	0.722	0.385	0.52	0.315
CAD5	0.705	0.346	0.628	0.355
CAD6	0.669	0.743	0.51	0.292
DMA1	0.603	0.803	0.449	0.344
DMA2	0.578	0.883	0.35	0.663
DMA3	0.586	0.895	0.323	0.66
DMA4	0.537	0.893	0.393	0.656
DMA5	0.556	0.89	0.311	0.591
DMA6	0.48	0.54	0.351	0.368
SCM1	0.422	0.317	0.706	0.239
SCM2	0.42	0.3	0.788	0.316
SCM3	0.604	0.394	0.866	0.46
SCM4	0.622	0.382	0.751	0.405
TBM1	0.527	0.629	0.341	0.881
TBM2	0.56	0.68	0.381	0.851
TBM3	0.547	0.583	0.491	0.88
TBM4	0.564	0.599	0.438	0.874

Note: CAD = Competitive Advantage; DMA = Digital Marketing; SCM = Supply Chain Management; TBP = Tourism Business Performance

The next and second step of data analysis is based on the PLS structural model (Hair et al., 2021; Joseph F Hair Jr et al., 2021; Hameed, Nisar, & Wu, 2021) which is considered by examining the relationship between variables. Results are given in Table 4. This step shows that competitive advantage has a positive effect on SCM and BP. SCM has a positive effect on BP. Furthermore, digital marketing has a positive effect on BP and SCM. Therefore, all the five direct hypotheses are supported. The indirect effect hypotheses results are given in Table 5 which shows that the mediation effect of SCM is significant between competitive advantage and BP. However, it is not significant in the case of digital marketing and BP.

**Table 4**  
Direct Effect Results

	Beta	(M)	SD	T Statistics	P Values
Competitive Advantage → SCM	0.721	0.726	0.058	12.327	0
Competitive Advantage → Tourism BP	0.175	0.184	0.091	1.927	0.027
Digital Marketing → SCM	0.054	0.056	0.054	3.838	0
Digital Marketing → Tourism BP	0.545	0.543	0.08	6.823	0
SCM → Tourism BP	0.106	0.101	0.063	1.692	0.046



Note: CAD = Competitive Advantage; DMA = Digital Marketing; SCM = Supply Chain Management; TBP = Tourism Business Performance

Fig. 3. Structural Model

Table 5  
Indirect Effect Results

	Beta	(M)	SD	T Statistics	P Values
Competitive Advantage → SCM → Tourism BP	0.077	0.074	0.046	1.67	0.047
Digital Marketing → SCM → Tourism BP	0.006	0.006	0.009	0.609	0.272

5. Discussion

The objective of the study was to consider the role of competitive advantage and digital marketing in tourism BP. This study carried out a survey for data collection with the help of a questionnaire. Finally, the data analysis is carried out with the help of statistical tools. To achieve the study objective, the current study proposed various direct effects and mediation effects. To consider the direct effect this study proposed five hypotheses. On the other hand, to purpose the mediation effect, the current study develops two hypotheses. First of all, while considering the direct effect, the study proposed the relationship between competitive advantage and BP of the tourism industry. It is found that competitive advantage has a positive effect on BP of the tourism industry. It indicates that the increase and competitive advantage by the companies can increase the overall BP. Therefore, there is a direct relationship. It is important for the Thai tourism companies to enhance competitive advantage because in a competitive business market the business success is most crucial and achievement of higher BP is not easy. Furthermore, the relationship between competitive advantage and supply chain is also considered along with the other industries. The supply chain is also most important. The management of the supply chain can lead to a higher BP. In this way the study shows that competitive advantage has a positive effect in tourism activities. Results indicated that competitive advantage had a positive effect on SCM. Results of the study proved that competitive advantage has a positive effect on the supply chain which further causes an increase BP of tourism companies. Similarly, the results found a positive effect of SCM activities on BP. Better management of the supply chain among the tourism companies can better manage the higher BP. The study also addressed the important role of digital marketing in BP of the tourism industry. Results proved the positive effect of digital marketing on BP, therefore, the increase in digital marketing activities can increase the BP. Similar to competitive advantage, the role of digital marketing is also helpful to promote supply chain which further causes to increase BP. Finally, it is concluded that competitive advantage and digital marketing has a positive role to promote supply chain which further causes BP to improve the tourism industry of Thailand.

Results of the current study are consistent with previous studies. Because consistent with this, earlier previous studies also highlighted the significant relationship between competitive advantage and BP (Ismail, 2012). The other studies also highlighted the significant relationship of competitive advantage with the supply chain. Additionally, it is also found in other studies that digital marketing has a relationship with BP (Gunawan & Sulaeman, 2020). Therefore, the current study also found similar outcomes in relation to the previous studies.

7. Implications

The tourism industry of Thailand always remains an important topic among academicians as well as practitioners. However, still several literature gaps are available which are needed to be addressed by the researchers. In this way, the current study contributed to the literature by considering various important gaps. Most importantly this study considered the relationship between competitive advantage, digital marketing, supply chain and BP which is rarely addressed by previous studies in the

tourism industry. Additionally, the current study also contributed by proving supply chain as a mediating variable between competitive advantage and BP. None of the earlier studies has proved supply chain as a mediating variable. Consistent with these implications the study also has practical implications which may help the practitioners to promote BP of various tourism organizations with the help of competitive advantage, digital marketing as well as supply chain activities.

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