

# Digital Management and Sustainable Competitiveness: Using Eco-innovation and Green Absorptive Capacity in Travel and Hospitality Enterprises

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## Abstract

The worldwide movement for sustainable activities aligns with progress in intelligent technology. This research examines the influence of digital dynamic capability—a company's capacity to rapidly employ digital technology for invention and adaptation—on green competition within the hotel and tourist sectors, with green creativity as a mediating factor. This research examines the impact of Digital Leadership (DL) on Sustainability Competitive Advantages (SCA) within hospitality and travel enterprises, emphasizing Green Absorptive Capacity (GAC) and Eco-Innovation (EI) as mediating factors. This research examined middle management within travel firms and hotels in Saudi Arabia. An analysis tool called WarpPLS 7.0 was used to look at all 325 acceptable responses. The study found that GAC and EI significantly affected the connection between DL and SCA. This research adds to the Dynamic Capabilities Concept. It gives tourism and hotel managers the information they need to use digital strategies and environmental efforts to advance in a market that cares about the environment.

**Keywords:** Eco-Innovation; Green Absorptive Capacity; Digital Management; Sustainability.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The rise of digital technology (DT) has caused many problems for businesses, especially in the tourist and leisure industries (Ashok et al., 2022). These new technologies have drastically changed how businesses compete with each other and how customers act, forcing businesses to adapt through digital change. In this digital age, businesses in the travel and hotel industries use technology to improve services and improve the customer experience. DT has significantly impacted how the tourism and hotel industry has changed, affecting how businesses work, what products and services they offer, and even how businesses look overall. DT has made the tourism and hotel industry more appealing, efficient, easy to get to, and environmentally friendly.

Much technological progress has been made in the tourism and hospitality businesses, primarily by adding online booking systems for flights and hotels. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been used since the 1970s when computer scheduling systems were first introduced. In the 1980s, worldwide delivery networks came into being (Nyarko & Kozári, 2021).

Tourism and hotel businesses use more advanced DT to get customers involved, learn more about customers' wants, and make operations run more smoothly. This business revolution is being driven by a lot of new technologies, such as AI, blockchain (BC), the Internet of Things (IoT), big data (BD), Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), intelligent gadgets, sensors, drones, mobile computing, and Near-Field Communications (NFC).

Digital technology (DT) and all of its different uses have changed leadership by adding new traits and making Digital Leadership (DL) a valuable tool for managers to push employees to be creative and do their best (Benitez et al., 2022). Beyond just using DT, the company is becoming more digital in many other ways. It's closely connected to the leaders who steer the company in a digital path and affect its general path. A business needs leaders who encourage freedom, creativity, and forward-thinking to succeed in the digital age.

Managers must be DL-savvy to navigate the constantly changing business world effectively, address new issues, and drive strategic changes within their companies. DL is the process of planning how digital operations will work and putting those plans into action while running a company. Supervisors need to know how to use electronics to change their behavior and their team members' behavior, which will improve the company (Volberda et al., 2021). Including new technologies in management tasks, changing how leaders think and act, and improving the organization's success are the three main parts of this idea.

Good digital leaders have the knowledge, skills, and vision to use data and technology to reach strategic goals, encourage new ideas, and make the company more efficient. They do well when they embrace new technology, work to build a digital culture, and connect digital efforts to the goals of the company. DL puts a high value on flexibility, adaptability, and continued learning to stay ahead of the competition in a digital world that changes quickly. Digital administration helps companies take advantage of chances, deal with problems, and stay ahead of the competition in today's digital business world by supporting digital projects, encouraging teamwork, and giving people the power to make decisions.

DL is essential for maintaining a competitive edge because it ensures that companies are aware of critical technological changes and actively working on new ideas. Businesses must use modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data research. This combination makes things run more smoothly, makes people more productive, and creates unique value propositions that are hard for rivals to copy. DL is a strategy that looks ahead and expects future trends. This helps the business adapt to new ways of doing things, which keeps it competitive and viable in the market.

Getting digital and technology projects up and running can take a lot of work. This includes problems like workers who don't want to change, need to learn more about it, and have trouble combining new systems and tools. DL, which involves proactively integrating and using advanced technology, is essential for improving a company's green absorptive capacity, or its ability to see the value in green technologies and use them effectively. Technologically savvy leaders make it easier for people to use sustainable practices by using data analysis, the IoT, and AI to find and fix environmental problems, use resources more efficiently, and carry out sustainable proceedings.

Incorporating sustainability into the strategy for digital transformation allows digital executives to improve their organizations' green absorptive capability, ensuring compliance with regulatory standards, fulfilling customer sustainability expectations, and achieving a competitive edge. This approach enhances conformity and effectiveness while fostering innovation in sustainable technologies and procedures, emphasizing the interdependent link between digital management and green absorptive capacity. DL is essential in cultivating a culture that emphasizes and prioritizes long-term viability, including environmentally sustainable activities, as fundamental business objectives.

The research on leadership and digital change is extensive, encompassing multiple studies investigating various dimensions, including interaction, technology, government, and small to medium firms. Although many studies have examined the competencies necessary for collaborating with online teams, more thorough evaluations of the overall effects of digital change on leadership capacities still need to be conducted. Acknowledgment is increasing regarding the necessity for a transformation in conventional leadership methods to succeed in the digital era; however, a unified theory connecting digital management competencies to long-term competitive advantage still needs to be explored, underscoring the need for additional theoretical progress in this domain.

This study aims to bridge the knowledge gap by elucidating how ecological absorptive capacity and eco-innovation influence the relationship between digital management and long-term competitive edge in the tourist and hospitality sector. Exploring these linkages offers significant opportunities to enhance academic discourse for three main reasons. Initially, in the dynamic tourist and hospitality sector, the influence of digitization on financial growth and social advancement is substantial, as it promotes creativity, employment, and the improvement of goods and services. Companies that deeply comprehend how to utilize technological advances and dynamic skills to improve performance acquire a competitive advantage. This results in expedited innovation, agile responsiveness to market changes, and practical value delivery to clients. Analyzing these relationships assists firms in efficiently distributing resources, allowing them to decide which initiatives in digital growth efforts and flexible capabilities have the most significant performance benefit.

## II. RELATED WORKS

The advancement of the tourist sector relies on incorporating ICT, and the impact of ICT on the industry has been thoroughly studied. ICT's benefits for the tourist sector are rapid information dissemination, reduced geographical barriers between countries, and improved transparency. The study examined the impact of the digital economy on the travel and tourism industry.

The report highlighted technology adoption by enterprises such as airlines, hotels, car rentals, and travel companies, transforming their operational practices (Dube, 2024). The poll indicates that guidelines must be set to implement digitalization in the sector successfully. The proliferation of digitization in the hotel sector has resulted in the development of electronic client connections. The research investigated the impact of websites, networking sites, and other digital marketing strategies on hotel marketing and financial performance. ICT's impact on the travel company's efficiency and competitiveness was analyzed.

The study determined that although digitalization has diminished efficiency and competitiveness, it has transformed difficulties associated with NFC in the tourist industry. The study recommended employing uniform corporate frameworks alongside pulling and pushing market techniques to facilitate the industry's adaptation to new technologies. The study examined the utilization of smartphone service booking by young, educated individuals using their cell phones. The research revealed that price threshold, comparative advantage, and intricacy significantly influenced smartphone bookings. The study examined the utilization of information and communication technologies within Zimbabwe's tourist sector (Chiwaridzo & Masengu, 2023).

The research identified several obstacles to technology adoption in the tourist sector, including insufficient government guidance, inadequate ICT oversight, inconsistent network availability, and lack of organizational commitment. The paper advocated implementing a national plan to disseminate technology within the tourist sector. The service sector has profoundly affected the growth of several industrialized economies. The poll recognized the sharing economy as a prominent trend in the hotel business, driven by innovations stemming from digitization.

The poll indicates that consumers increasingly desire increased digitalization. This research examined the application of ICT in the hospitality industry, particularly within the hotel sector. The study recommends the utilization of ICT in hotels to enhance service quality. The necessity for funding was seen as a considerable barrier to ICT deployment in the hospitality sector. The European tourism sector's stakeholders have been necessitated to make changes regarding their offerings and client service due to decreased visitor numbers, average length of stay, and revenue. The results indicate that more research into creativity within the tourism and hospitality sectors is essential. The policy should focus on medium and small enterprises within the tourist sector. The research analyzed the role and importance of ICT and its impact on the travel and tourist industry. The study aimed to determine the influence of ICT on the hospitality business and managers' views of ICT's role in the tourism and lodging industries (Santos-Jaén et al., 2022).

This research examined the impact of automation and digitalization on the travel and tourism industries via case studies. The study advised stakeholders to adopt digitization instead of resisting it. This would enhance user satisfaction and generate new avenues for relevant future study. The study analyzed the impact of the digital age on the tourism industry via initiatives such as Digital India and delineated the benefits obtained by the sector. Digitalization has transformed travel by providing benefits such as streamlined payment methods, enhanced travel decision-making, and the emergence of contemporary travel trends. The study examined the effects of digital amnesia on prospective travelers. The research revealed that digitalization influences visitors' decision-making, contacts with marketers, and recollections of their trip experiences. Tourism organizations increasingly prioritize organizing events using digital technologies, reflecting the rising influence of visitors utilizing internet-based resources for purchasing. The travel and tourism sectors predominantly depend on the Internet.

Enterprises are increasingly formulating their marketing plans with a heightened focus on digital channels. The internet has become more vital for the tourism sector as it links individuals' interests in exploring diverse nations and customs with their capacity to search for and book a range of services and products effortlessly. The tourism industry is segmented into many sectors,

primarily accommodation, dining, and drinking services. As the environment has developed, the tourism sector has transformed into a more commercialized endeavor, wherein consumers compensate for the products and services utilized at accommodation facilities with monetary transactions. Compared to other global businesses, the tourism sector is considered extensive. Using tourism lodgings involves establishing several specialized firms for customer pleasure and recreational needs. The primary driver propelling the sustained expansion of this business, which predominantly relies on providing luxury services to consumers, is the emphasis on customer happiness and meeting their needs.

An empirical research was conducted in Germany to ascertain the potential benefits of digitization for the travel and tourist industry. The research examined the advancements achieved by the tourist sector in digitization and identified areas for further improvement. The study utilized structural equation modeling to identify the key factors influencing digitalization in travel and tourism. Reports indicate that reserving a ticket on the website is estimated to take around 30 seconds. A government report suggests that around 62% of ticket bookings occur online, increasing total ticket sales. The capacity for online check-in ensures time efficiency and alleviates the anxiety associated with early airport arrival. Daily, one receives several offers from portals such as Yatra.com, MakeMyTrip and meal delivery services like Swiggy and Zomato.

Due to digitization, the firms extend these customized deals to visitors. Digitalization has profoundly influenced emerging prospects in niche tourism. Zomato, an application for locating restaurants and hotels, provides a compilation of esteemed dining establishments featuring the area's most prominent and established eateries. Traveler learn about any dining establishment's atmosphere, cuisine, and service quality with just a brush of their fingertips. This is especially advantageous for small, authentic food enterprises with limited marketing budgets. Digitalization has enabled the hotel business to provide information to tourists rather than only gathering it from them.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated that tourism is essential for preserving natural and cultural resources. As many areas and nations advance their tourist sectors, they will substantially impact their natural resources, consumer patterns, pollution rates, and social structures. The growth of tourism is now being linked with adverse environmental impacts, including the exhaustion of the earth's resources and biodiversity loss. Instances of this phenomenon are being observed globally.

Specific locations have restricted the maximum number of tourists permitted at any given moment. Boracay Island in the Philippines has been closed to visitors for the past two years to recover from the adverse environmental impacts of prior tourism. Although tourism can generate diverse financial benefits for the host country, its expansion significantly abuses citizens, assets, and customs of culture. Given that tourism facilitates nature protection, albeit to differing extents, it is essential to evaluate its environmental impact as the industry evolves comprehensively. Assessing tourism's economic, social, environmentally friendly, and cultural effects is necessary.

Renewable Hospitality and Tourism Administration has emerged as the new mantra for travel industry stakeholders to attain a healthy equilibrium among tourism growth's environmental, economic, and social dimensions (Baloch et al., 2022). The sustainability of the tourist industry is

pursued through this intricate balancing act. Achieving sustainability necessitates an evaluation of the effects of activities on environmental integrity and the economic and social well-being of individuals. The foundation of sustainable travel comprises social equity, ecological sustainability, and economic development. The primary objective of this article is to assess digitalization's impact on sustainable hospitality and tourism. The essay examines digitalization's effect on various stakeholders in the tourism business.

### **III. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **1. Design of Questionnaires and Study Metrics**

A systematic study examined the influence of technological dynamic capacity and green innovation on green competition within hotel and tourist firms. The survey has two sections: one addressing participants' gender, age, education, and employment, and the other evaluating the three studied factors on a scale of five.

The research employed validated measuring scales from prior research to examine the four factors being studied. The survey was adapted into Arabic by a bilingual expert and subsequently translated into English by another bilingual specialist. The reliability of the material was validated by analyzing the preceding and subsequent translations to English. The survey was conducted in Arabic to facilitate understanding of the phrases and maximize the response percentage.

The assessment of digital dynamic competence was conducted using a 12-item measure. For example, The research can evaluate the identified signals and assess future digital situations, and The research possesses the capability to create new environments. The present study evaluated green competition utilizing a seven-item measure. For instance, the company provides superior green goods and services compared to the primary competition, and Its principal opponents need to supplant the distinctive advantage of the company quickly. The research evaluated green creativity utilizing the six-item scale developed by Chen and Chang, which includes items such as The company staff would reconsider new ecological concepts and The people of the company would discover creative approaches for environmental issues.

#### **2. Procedures for Sample and Information Collection**

This study investigated middle managers inside five-star hotels and travel companies in Saudi Arabia. The selection of these two sectors is attributed to their substantial role in Saudi Arabia's accommodation and tourist business, their shared focus on serving foreign visitors, and their commitment to ecologically sustainable practices and environmentally friendly initiatives. Scholars have always shown a keen interest in examining managerial actions and their impact on worker productivity and organizational effectiveness. The initial emphasis was exclusively on leaders, their actions, and the attributes that made them successful. As the study advanced, the viewpoints of adherents were considered to comprehend how leaders develop, act, and exert influence over others. Researchers have delineated three primary domains in which followers' conduct towards their bosses is analyzed: their opinions, principles, and traits, their distinct job-related encounters, and their perceptions of their leadership. Middle management was selected as the primary focus of this research because of its crucial function in influencing company strategy, promoting creativity in creating goods, and facilitating the transmission of concepts

from lower-level personnel to upper management. A survey was distributed to businesses following the acquisition of their verbal consent. Three hundred twenty-three valid questionnaires were collected from 60 travel businesses and 35 five-star lodging establishments.

### 3. Measures

A four-item scale was employed to assess green competitiveness, featuring statements like The firm possesses a low-cost competitive benefit in environmental management relative to major rivals and provides superior quality green goods compared to major competitors. The green absorptive capacity was also evaluated using a four-item scale with phrases such as The strategic firm can swiftly assimilate, master, and utilize outside green apparatus and manufacturing procedures. The firm excels at obtaining and employing external environmentally friendly equipment and expertise. A 7-item scale was used to evaluate green innovation, with phrases such as In the past 2 years, the firm has developed goods that minimize material usage. In the past 2 years, the firm has created goods with elements intended for reusing or recycling.

### 4. Data Analysis

This research employed a statistical technique for theory verification and, consequently, for confirming and exploratory analyses in tourism and hospitality studies. It is well-designed for strategic and managerial study. This research employed WarpPLS statistical program version 7.0 for data assessment and performed a multi-group assessment to discern substantial disparities in route coefficients among hotels and travel agents.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Two hundred individuals completed the surveys, and data was collected based on their responses. The demographic attributes of the participants are presented in the subsequent research in proportions.

### 1. Evaluation of Participants' Age Groups

Two hundred individuals were polled, with fifty-six percent belonging to the 41-50 age demographic. The balance of 52.3% is divided among the age categories 31-40 and 21-30, comprising 32.4% and 12.5%, correspondingly. 87.5% of the respondents are aged 30 years or older. Participants aged 50 years or older are excluded (Figure 1).

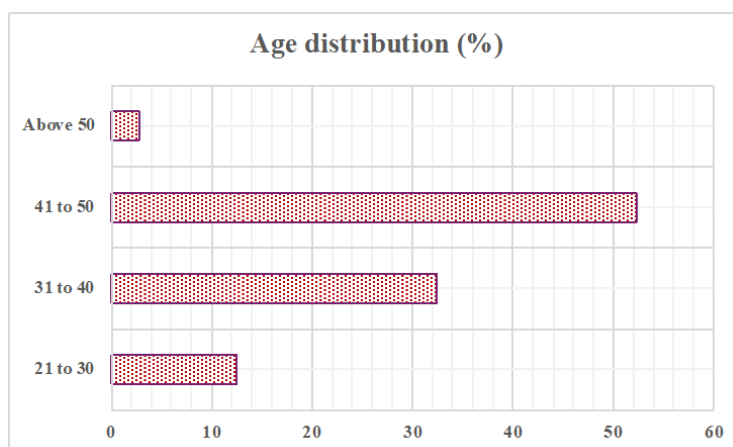


Figure 1: Age Distribution Analysis

### 2. Gender Representation Among Participants

The entire participant base is comprised of equal numbers of men and women. The graph illustrates that both genders are distributed evenly at 50% each. The findings are gender-neutral because of the equal sex makeup of the participants' baseline in the selected scenario (Figure 2).

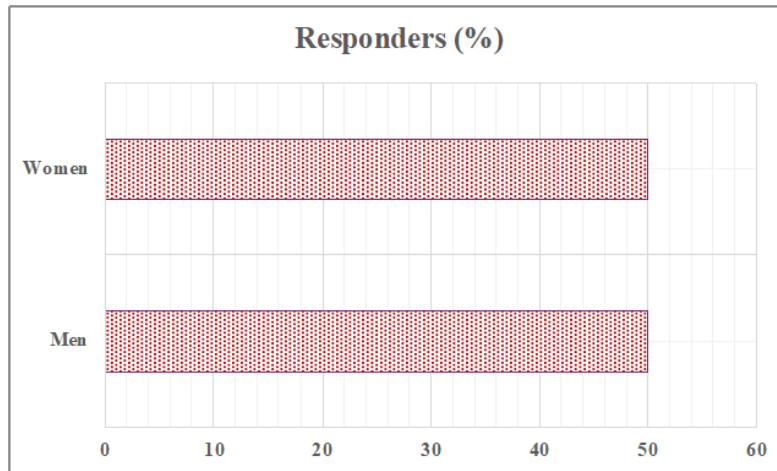


Figure 2: Gender Analysis

### 3. Areas of International Visitors

The following pie chart illustrates the representation of tourists by area. Information indicates that just 6 percent, or three respondents, represent the most minor proportion of tourists from Asian countries. 43.6% of respondents were visitors from the United Kingdom, while fifty-one percent predominantly hailed from other European countries. The chart indicates that 43.6% of the participants originated from the United Kingdom, representing a significant proportion (Figure 3).

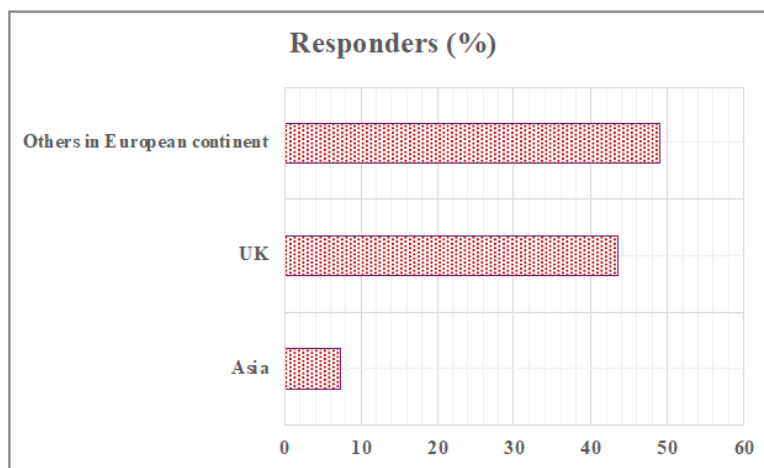


Figure 3: Location Analysis of Tourists

### 4. Visit Frequency

The pie chart illustrates the visitor count for the Delhi and NCR areas. The graph indicates that 55% of tourists report this as their subsequent or fourth trip to the Delhi and NCR area. First-time tourists and individuals awarded a maximum of five times each receive two percent (Figure 4).

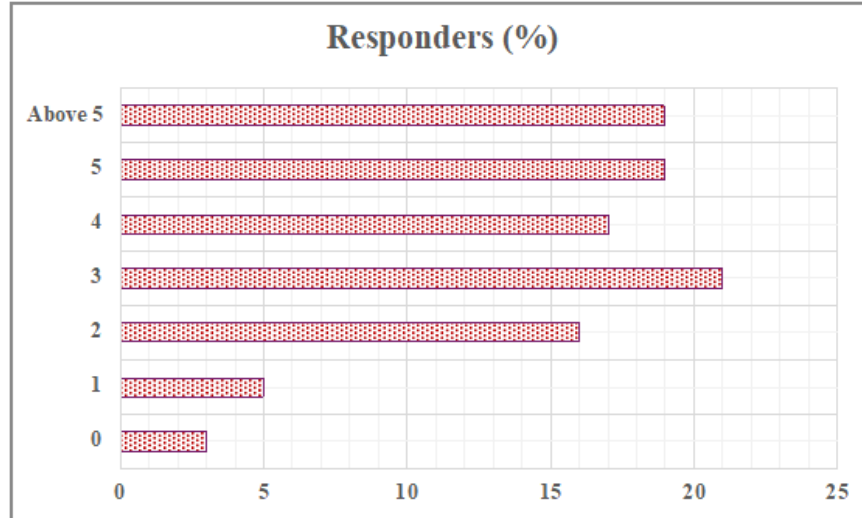


Figure 4: Visit Frequency Analysis

**5. Method for Reserving Hotel Accommodations**

Examining hotel guests' reservation techniques revealed that 90% utilized the Internet for bookings. This illustrates the utilization of digital resources for bookings. Notable evidence of the prevalence of online booking is seen in the fact that just 10% and 5% of bookings are made by phone and travel agencies, correspondingly. This indicates that clients are increasingly inclined to utilize the business's website for finalizing appointments (Figure 5).

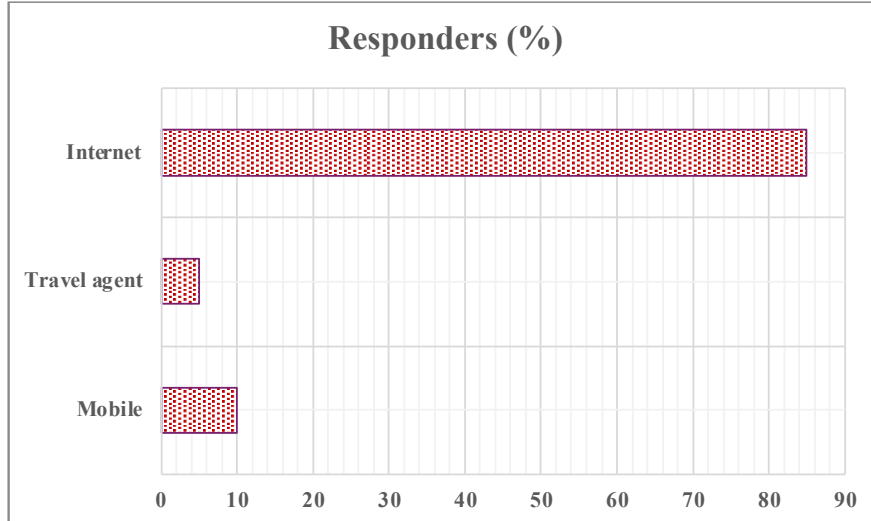


Figure 5: Room Booking Analysis

**6. Digitalization and Stakeholders**

An assessment of digitization among tourism and hospitality stakeholders reveals that 70 percent (about 34 from each cohort of 45) perceive digitalization as advantageous for all stakeholders. The findings of a student t-test indicate that digitalization significantly benefitted all stakeholders according to their demands (Figure 6). YouTube clips and social media marketing from travel firms, hotels, and tourist planning organizations across various countries and states

significantly facilitated passengers in choosing their trip destinations. Travelers can select hotels according to their budget and available facilities by consulting evaluations from other tourists on social media and hotel websites, which are also very beneficial. Digitization considerably assists eateries, hotels, and tourism business owners in attracting clients. The findings suggest that as the utilization of digital technologies increases, unconventional locations surmount the deficiencies in understanding and curiosity amongst visitors from abroad, lower travel costs, and consequently attract more tourists.

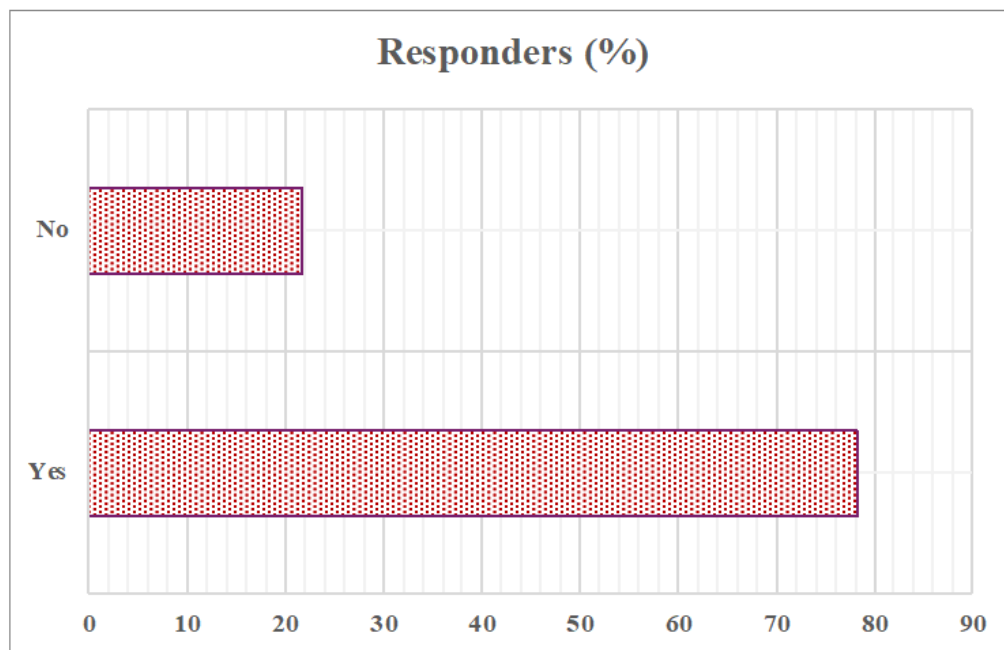


Figure 6: Digitalization and Stakeholder Analysis

### 7. Correlation Analysis

The correlation among the four factors—digitalization, tourism, the commercial viability of hotels and travel companies, the natural environment, and cultural heritage—is strong. All components have a strong correlation with each other. Digitalization markedly enhances their strategy for recruiting new visitors, positively influencing their financial situation and enabling them to compensate their personnel adequately, give stable employment, and ensure sufficient leisure time. Facilitating an excellent work-life balance for their workers has enhanced the socioeconomic status of hotel and travel company personnel. Furthermore, when the economy of hotels and tourist enterprises is improved, they increase their expenditures in preserving the region's natural and cultural assets. Tourism is consistently and strongly ( $p < 0.001$ ) drawn to ecological systems and historical sites. The digital age has facilitated the transition to sustainable tourism. Green tourism often denotes a traveler's awareness of environmental issues or offering eco-friendly services to visitors. Digital tools, including social networks, chatbots, and virtual assistants, facilitate the spread of efficient procedures, the advancement of sustainable development goals, and the availability of information regarding the various aspects of sustainable growth in the hospitality and tourism industries.

## V. CONCLUSION

The research examines the relationship between digital fluidity, green innovation, and green competitiveness within the hotel and tourist industries while recognizing limits and proposing avenues for future investigation. This study sought to examine the influence of digital management on sustainable competitiveness within tourism and hospitality enterprises, emphasizing green absorptive capabilities and eco-innovation as mediating factors. The results indicate that digital management positively influences long-term competitive edge. Digital leadership promotes teamwork and adaptation in response to technological advances and changing market conditions.

Leaders who advocate for digitization and foster employee empowerment build a culture of adaptability and continuous learning. This philosophy allows firms to respond to evolving trends rapidly, capitalize on digital opportunities, and anticipate possible obstacles. Organizations leverage agility and flexibility to seize new opportunities and maintain their competitive advantage in dynamic and uncertain environments, such as the tourism and tourist industry.

The results show that DL has a good effect on the ability to absorb green light. DL supports training and teaching programs that teach people how to protect the earth. Leaders use digital tools to offer online training, workshops, and lectures on new environmental laws, rules, and trends. Companies improve their workers' green absorptive capacity by giving them easy access to and involvement in learning opportunities focusing on sustainability. The results show that sustainable absorptive talent affects sustainable competitiveness, and DL and a sustainable edge over competitors are linked.

The green absorptive ability helps businesses stay relevant in ever-changing business environments. As sustainability becomes more important to customers, owners, and government agencies, companies that are good at gathering, blending, and using green information and methods will be successful in the long run.

Companies can improve their marketplace, keep customers interested, attract investment, and adapt to changing sustainability standards by ensuring their strategies, products, and activities are all good for the environment. This gives them a more extensive competitive edge in sustainability. In the same way, DL and green absorptive capacity are essential for promoting ongoing improvement and adaptability needed to stay ahead of the competition. Continuous changes mean that digital methods and environmentally friendly ways of doing things are always being looked at and made better to meet changing environmental standards and market needs. Green absorptive ability helps companies adapt to new digital technologies and make the necessary process changes. This ongoing improvement and change ensures that companies stay ahead of the competition.

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