

Integrated Marketing Communication and Human Resource Competency on Brand Awareness Destination through Digital Marketing Utilization

Factor Influencing
Brand Awareness
Destination

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ABSTRACT

Tourism destinations require effective communication and digital capabilities to compete. This study investigates the causal relationships among integrated marketing communication, human resource competency, digital marketing utilization, and brand awareness destination within the tourism sector. Framed by the Resource-Based View (RBV), a quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted. Data were gathered from 360 purposively selected tourism stakeholders, including village tourism managers, village-owned enterprise officials, local tourism board representatives, and private service providers actively involved in digital marketing initiatives. Using a structured questionnaire, key constructs were measured with validated Likert-scale indicators and analyzed via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings confirm that both integrated marketing communication and human resource competency have significant positive effects on digital marketing utilization, which, in turn, substantially influences brand awareness destination. Further analysis reveals that digital marketing utilization fully mediates the human resource competency-brand awareness destination relationship and partially mediates the integrated marketing communication-brand awareness destination link, underscoring its strategic function in bridging organizational capabilities and market-level brand awareness. This research extends the Resource-Based View by positioning digital marketing utilization as a resource activation mechanism and provides practical guidance for aligning integrated marketing communication, capacity-building, and digital execution to strengthen destination branding.

Keywords: Brand Awareness Destination, Digital Marketing Utilization, Human Resource Competency, Integrated Marketing Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has become a cornerstone of local economic revitalization, offering communities pathways to leverage their ecological and cultural capital. In Indonesia, the formal designation of tourism villages has served as a strategic initiative to stimulate inclusive and sustainable development. Bongkasa Pertiwi Village, located in Bali's Badung Regency, exemplifies this initiative, having been officially designated both as a tourism village and a conservation tourism area. Despite its advantageous position in a

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rich ecological-agricultural landscape, the tourism potential of Bongkasa Pertiwi has not been fully realized. This makes it difficult for the village to find more visitors, and the economic benefits of the tourism activities on offer are limited (Rodrigues et al., 2023).

Various structural constraints continue to affect rural tourism, leading many tourism operations to perform poorly. This also includes strategic constraints such as fragmented marketing, underutilization of digital media, and tourism actors with limited competence, especially when they have to run tourism village management. When viewed in terms of resources, these problems stem from underutilizing internal capabilities, thereby hindering rural tourism's ability to leverage competitive advantages (Amrullah et al., 2023). Nowadays, as tourism becomes more competitive due to digitalization, a communication strategy is needed so that tourist villages can build a brand identity and provide a tourism experience that sticks with visitors (Stylianou et al., 2025).

One way to try is to implement integrated marketing communication. This framework will address the various challenges in tourism villages, as described above. Promotion and recognition are achieved through collaboration with digital media, including social media, digital advertising, public relations, and experiential marketing, integrated into the promotion strategy. Integrated marketing communication helps create consistent messages and values and touches the target audience's emotions (Azmi et al., 2025). Integrated marketing communication applied in the context of rural tourism will serve as a catalyst, bringing the destination to the public eye, involving the community in its development, and building brand loyalty (Sustacha et al., 2024).

Recently conducted research confirms the relevance of integrated marketing communication to improving tourism competitiveness. That promotions conducted through digital storytelling and experience sharing are highly effective, fostering emotional connections and tourist satisfaction (Pahor & Zabukovec, 2025). Similar findings, promotion through sharing experiences, when combined with integrated marketing communication, positively affect tourist satisfaction and repeat visits (Wong et al., 2024). Promotions that are more relatable to the younger generation through digital marketing also support long-term destination sustainability (Oka & Subadra, 2024; Sukenda et al., 2025).

Although external messages are important for growing rural tourism, internal organizational readiness is also necessary because achieving success requires adaptability and adjusting to the needs of the target, in terms of content creation, digital strategy, and adaptive communication competencies that are still not well applied to grassroots tourism (Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2025). An organization in a dynamic sector must be able to identify new opportunities, capitalize on them, develop innovations, and adjust its internal processes (Corvello et al., 2023). For this reason, the application of integrated marketing communication becomes a strategic tool and managerial challenge for tourism village management, especially when adjusted to the capabilities of existing human resources.

Despite growing interest in digital tourism promotion and rural branding, prior research tends to examine integrated marketing communication or human resource capacity in isolation. Few studies have explored the interaction between communication strategies and organizational competencies in village-level tourism enterprises. The study conducted is an effort to overcome the existing gap. This was done by examining the dual roles of integrated marketing communication quality and human resource competence in shaping brand image and tourism performance. Making Bongkasa Pertiwi the subject of this case study aims to examine how the combined effects of strategic communication and internal capability dimensions affect rural tourism's ability to compete in the market. This study will provide a better understanding of Village-Owned Enterprises (*Badan Usaha Milik Desa*/BUMDes) to help them adjust their promotional activities by maximizing the environment's capacity through digital means.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Effect on Digital Marketing Utilization

This study adopts the Resource-Based View (RBV) to explain how internal capabilities drive external outcomes in tourism. Integrated marketing communication functions as a strategic communication approach that integrates multiple promotional tools to deliver consistent messages across digital and traditional channels, thereby enhancing visibility and engagement (Šerić & Mikulić, 2023; Butkouskaya & Llonch-Andreu, 2024). In rural tourism contexts with limited resources, integrated marketing communication enables efficient outreach and strengthens emotional connections with visitors, while also helping destinations become more visible and distinctive (Pahor & Zabukovec, 2025; Azmi et al., 2025; Forero et al., 2025). However, its effectiveness is often constrained by fragmented communication, limited marketing knowledge, and underutilized digital platforms, highlighting the need for stronger digital integration to maximize digital marketing utilization (Stojanovic et al., 2022; Stylianou et al., 2025).

In addition, human resource competency plays a critical role in enabling the effective utilization of digital marketing. Human resource competency reflects an organization's ability to leverage knowledge, skills, and technological capabilities to achieve marketing objectives, which is essential in dynamic environments such as tourism (Corvello et al., 2023). RBV emphasizes that resource strength alone is insufficient without the capability to deploy it effectively, and thus, capacity development is necessary to transform tourism potential into economic value (Atiku & Lawal, 2022; Amrullah et al., 2023). In practice, the success of Integrated marketing communication implementation is highly dependent on human resources, particularly in terms of digital literacy, content development, and strategic communication planning (Stylianou et al., 2025; Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2025). Although digital platforms offer scalable and cost-effective marketing channels, their effectiveness ultimately depends on the readiness and competence of human resources, reinforcing the role of human resource competency in enhancing digital marketing utilization.

H1: Integrated marketing communication has a positive effect on digital marketing utilization.

H2: Human resource competency has a positive effect on digital marketing utilization.

The Effect of Digital Marketing Utilization on Brand Awareness Destination

Brand awareness destination is a central construct in consumer-based brand equity and a vital precursor to destination competitiveness, referring to the extent to which consumers can identify, recall, and associate a destination under various decision-making conditions (Keller et al., 2010). In tourism, brand awareness significantly influences destination choice, progressing through stages such as recognition, recall, top-of-mind awareness, and dominance (López-Rodríguez et al., 2024). Among these, top-of-mind awareness plays a crucial role in shaping tourist decisions, as destinations that are most easily recalled are often perceived as superior. Prior studies by Brus et al. (2025) confirm that brand recall contributes to competitive advantage, while Hakala et al. (2012) show that it strengthens customer-based brand equity. In the digital era, awareness can be enhanced through consistent communication and interactive engagement, particularly via online platforms, where social media marketing further supports brand recognition and customer loyalty, especially among younger audiences such as TikTok users (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020; Rizomyliotis et al., 2024).

Digital marketing utilization reflects the extent to which organizations leverage digital platforms such as social media, content marketing, SEO, and websites to promote tourism. Effective utilization of these channels has been linked to increased tourist visits and stronger destination visibility. In this context, digital marketing utilization serves as a key mechanism in enhancing brand awareness of a destination, as greater exposure, engagement, and content dissemination improve the likelihood of a destination being recognized and remembered by potential tourists (Šerić & Mikulić, 2023; Kamyabi et al.,

2025). Therefore, it can be argued that digital marketing utilization plays a significant role in strengthening brand awareness destination.

H3: Digital marketing utilization has a positive effect on brand awareness destination.

Digital Marketing Utilization as a Mediating Variable

Digital marketing utilization plays a crucial mediating role in linking integrated marketing communication to destination brand awareness. Integrated marketing communication strategies that integrate various communication channels become more effective when supported by digital platforms such as social media, websites, and online advertising. These platforms enhance message consistency, interactivity, and audience reach. Through digital marketing utilization, integrated marketing communication efforts can be transformed into more engaging and personalized communication, which significantly strengthens brand recognition and recall (Juska, 2021). According to Rehman et al. (2022), this mediating mechanism ensures that communication strategies are not only delivered but also effectively perceived by target audiences, ultimately improving destination brand awareness.

According to Humaira et al. (2024), human resource competency is a key internal capability that influences the effectiveness of digital marketing utilization. Employees with strong digital, analytical, and creative skills are better equipped to manage and optimize digital marketing tools. In this context, digital marketing utilization mediates the relationship between human resource competency and destination brand awareness by translating internal skills into strategic marketing actions. Competent human resources can leverage digital platforms to create relevant content, analyze consumer behavior, and implement targeted campaigns, thereby enhancing brand visibility and awareness. This highlights the importance of digital capabilities as an intermediary mechanism that converts human capital into tangible branding outcomes (Apasrawirote et al., 2022).

H4: Digital marketing utilization mediates the relationship between integrated marketing communication and brand awareness destination.

H5: Digital marketing utilization mediates the relationship between human resource competency and brand awareness destination.

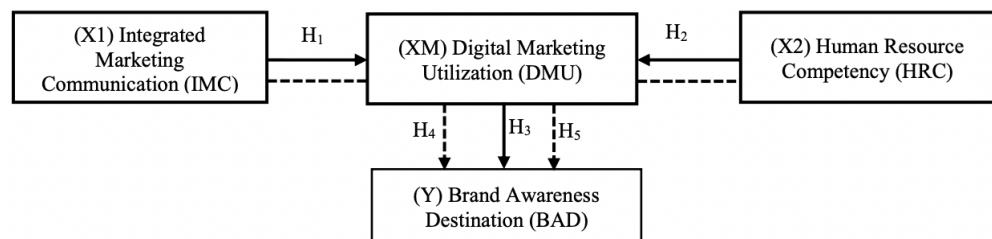


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Figure 1's example demonstrates how integrated marketing communication and human resource competency serve as internal strategic competencies that impact the use of digital marketing, which in turn affects audience recognition of the brand (brand awareness). According to the resource-based view perspective, these internal competencies are essential in determining how successful digital marketing initiatives are, which eventually results in better branding outcomes. This theory views the use of digital marketing as a mediating tool that converts organizational capabilities into quantifiable brand performance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional causal design aligned with the Resource-Based View (RBV) to examine the relationships among internal capabilities, digital marketing utilization, and destination brand awareness (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The population consisted of tourism stakeholders involved in digital destination promotion, including marketing actors, managers, BUMDes administrators, and private tourism service providers. Using purposive sampling, 360 respondents were selected based on their active involvement in marketing and destination branding activities. The sample size met SEM requirements using the 10:1 indicator ratio approach (Hair et al., 2021). Primary data were collected through a standardized five-point Likert scale questionnaire distributed online and offline (Jebb et al., 2021). A pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to assess clarity, validity, and reliability, followed by revisions based on expert feedback. Measurement indicators were adapted from previous studies and adjusted to the digital destination branding context (Izzah & Islam, 2024).

This study uses four main variables, namely, integrated marketing communication, human resource competency, digital marketing utilization, and brand awareness destination. Integrated marketing communication refers to the consistency and integration of digital communication across platforms, reflected in indicators such as message consistency, synchronization, cross-media integration, content coordination, and training alignment, adapted from Šerić and Mikulić (2023). Human resource competency relates to the capability of human resources in digital marketing, measured through technical skills, use of digital tools, data analysis ability, training participation, and understanding of technology-based strategies, adapted from Nguyen et al. (2024).

Furthermore, digital marketing utilization represents the effective use of digital channels for promotion, indicated by active digital use, data-driven strategies, interactive features, platform optimization, and systematic management, adapted from Kamyabi et al. (2025). Brand awareness destination reflects public recognition of the destination, measured through recognition, memorability, visibility, search presence, and brand strengthening, adapted from Stylianou et al. (2025). In addition, digital marketing utilization also acts as a mediating variable between integrated marketing communication and human resource competency on brand awareness destination, using the same indicators within the PLS-SEM model, as referred to Nguyen et al. (2024).

Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess reliability; an internal consistency of $\alpha > 0.70$ was deemed satisfactory. PLS-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data in two steps, first, the measurement model was evaluated for convergent validity using standardized factor loadings (> 0.5), Composite Reliability ($CR \geq 0.7$), and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE \geq 0.5$), second, the measurement model was evaluated for discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values were below the suggested threshold and the square root of AVE exceeded inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the structural model was assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples to determine the importance of mediating effects and estimated route coefficients to test the hypotheses (H1–H5) (Hayes & Preacher, 2014).

RESULTS

Managers of village-owned enterprises, destination marketers, and employees of tourist offices were among the stakeholders involved in tourism marketing who provided 360 valid replies. According to the demographic split, 68.3% of respondents said they often utilize digital platforms in their professional roles, and 56.1% of respondents had more than three years of experience in tourism branding. The remaining 60% came from local government and commercial sector organizations, while the remaining 60% were connected to community-based tourist organizations. The sample's applicability for assessing strategic communication and human resource capabilities in tourism village contexts is confirmed by this distribution.

Table 1. Outer Model – Reliability and Convergent Validity of Research Constructs

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Brand Awareness Destination (BAD)	BAD1	0.942	0.956	0.975	0.966	0.850
	BAD2	0.934				
	BAD3	0.963				
	BAD4	0.815				
	BAD5	0.950				
Digital Marketing Utilization (DMU)	DMU1	0.936	0.951	0.956	0.963	0.840
	DMU2	0.810				
	DMU3	0.968				
	DMU4	0.954				
	DMU5	0.904				
Human Resource Competency (HRC)	HRC1	0.941	0.943	0.964	0.956	0.814
	HRC2	0.927				
	HRC3	0.937				
	HRC4	0.831				
	HRC5	0.868				
Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)	IMC1	0.886	0.939	0.960	0.954	0.808
	IMC2	0.928				
	IMC3	0.941				
	IMC4	0.973				
	IMC5	0.750				

Table 1 presents the assessment of convergent validity by examining the outer loadings of each indicator for the respective latent constructs. All indicators for brand awareness destination (BAD1–BAD5), digital marketing utilization (DMU1–DMU5), human resource competency (HRC1–HRC5), and integrated marketing communication (IMC1–IMC5) demonstrate loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. The loading values range from 0.750 (IMC5) to 0.973 (IMC4), indicating strong and consistent reflection of the intended constructs. These results confirm that all constructs in the model meet the criteria for convergent validity. Composite reliability values for all constructs exceeded the 0.70 threshold, ranging from 0.954 to 0.966. Cronbach's alpha values were similarly high, ranging from 0.939 to 0.956. These results demonstrate excellent internal consistency and confirm that the constructs are reliable for further analysis.

Table 2. Fornell-Lacker Result

Variable	BAD	DMU	HRC	IMC
Brand Awareness Destination (BAD)	0.922			
Digital Marketing Utilization (DMU)	0.728	0.917		
Human Resource Competency (HRC)	0.747	0.735	0.902	
Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)	0.772	0.741	0.756	0.899

The findings of the discriminant validity evaluation utilizing cross-loading analysis and the Fornell-Larcker criterion are shown in Table 2. The square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, shown on the diagonal, are greater than the equivalent inter-construct correlations, according to the Fornell–Larcker assessment. For instance, the square root of AVE for brand awareness destination (0.922) is higher than its associations with integrated marketing communication (0.772), digital marketing utilization (0.728), and human resource competency (0.747). According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, this pattern is consistent across all constructs, indicating sufficient discriminant validity.

Additionally, the cross-loading result shows that, in comparison to other constructions, each indicator has the largest loading on its own construct. In contrast to digital marketing utilization (0.717), human resource competency (0.768), and integrated marketing communication (0.749), BAD1 loads best on brand awareness destination (0.942). This pattern supports discriminant validity using the cross-loading approach by confirming that all items are significantly correlated with their intended latent components.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Construct	BAD	DMU	HRC
Digital Marketing Utilization (DMU)	0.743		
Human Resource Competency (HRC)	0.746	0.693	
Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)	0.792	0.683	0.773

The results of the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) evaluation are shown in Table 3. The results show that all inter-construct correlations are below the suggested cutoff of 0.90, with integrated marketing communication and brand awareness destination having the highest value (0.792). The use of digital marketing is moderately correlated with both integrated marketing communication (0.683) and human resource competency (0.693). These findings verify that the HTMT criterion also supports discriminant validity.

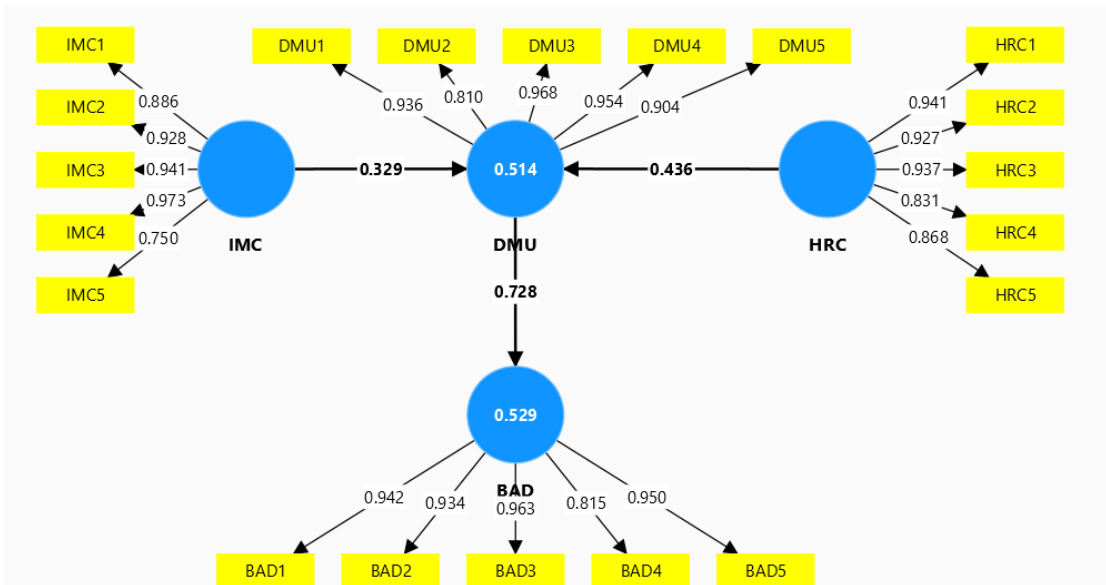


Figure 2. Outer Model

The outer model estimate in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), which evaluates the measurement model by looking at the connections between latent constructs and their observed indicators, is shown in Figure 2. Every reflective indicator’s outer loading is higher than the suggested cutoff of 0.70, demonstrating that each indicator is closely linked to its underlying construct and meeting the convergent validity requirement. This confirms that the latent constructs are accurately reflected by the corresponding measurement items. Furthermore, the model’s explanatory power for the endogenous constructs is indicated by the R-square (R²) values. Digital marketing utilization has an R² of 0.514, which indicates that integrated marketing communication and human resource competency account for 51.4% of its variance, while brand awareness digitalization has an R² of 0.529, which indicates that digital marketing utilization accounts for 52.9% of its variance. These values suggest a moderate level of explanatory power and show that the model effectively explains the important endogenous variables.

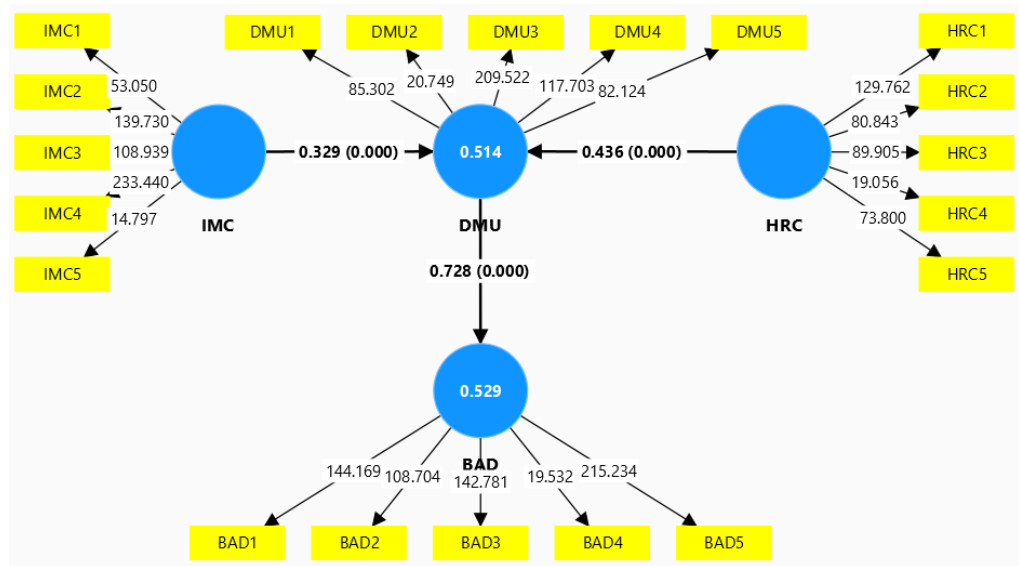


Figure 3. Inner Model Estimation

Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Path	β (Original Sample)	t-statistics	p-values	Information
Integrated Marketing Communication → Digital Marketing Utilization	0.329	4.454	0.000	H ₁ Supported
Human Resource Competency → Digital Marketing Utilization	0.436	5.850	0.000	H ₂ Supported
Digital Marketing Utilization → Brand Awareness Destination	0.728	28.238	0.000	H ₃ Supported
Integrated Marketing Communication → Digital Marketing Utilization → Brand Awareness Destination	0.240	4.333	0.000	H ₄ Supported
Human Resource Competency → Digital Marketing Utilization → Brand Awareness Destination	0.317	5.758	0.000	H ₅ Supported

Figure 3 and Table 4 provide an overview of the structural model analysis using PLS-SEM. For every proposed relationship, including direct and mediated effects, the table displays the path coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values. The findings show that integrated marketing communication significantly and positively affects digital marketing utilization ($\beta = 0.329$, $t = 4.454$, $p = 0.000$). This demonstrates that the utilization of digital marketing increases with the effectiveness and integration of the marketing communication plan. A positive route coefficient suggests that the adoption and optimization of digital marketing strategies are improved by consistent, synergistic messaging across communication channels.

Human resource competency has a significant and beneficial impact on digital marketing utilization, according to the path analysis ($\beta = 0.436$, $t = 5.850$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that more efficient and widespread use of digital marketing is correlated with higher levels of human resources proficiency. The potential of digital marketing techniques is maximized by skilled staff who are better able to operate, adapt, and create inside digital platforms. Digital marketing utilization and brand awareness destination have a highly significant, strongly positive connection ($\beta = 0.728$, $t = 28.238$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that increasing destination brand recognition is mostly dependent on how much digital marketing is used. The significant influence of digital marketing tactics on destination brand recall and consumer awareness is seen in the big coefficient.

The mediation analysis reveals that digital marketing utilization significantly mediates the effect of integrated marketing communication on brand awareness destination ($\beta = 0.240$, $t = 4.333$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that effective integrated marketing

communication indirectly enhances brand awareness by increasing the use of digital marketing, which subsequently boosts destination brand awareness. This result confirms that integrated marketing communication strategies should be aligned with the digital platform used, as it determines a stronger brand positioning. The mediation test confirms that digital marketing utilization significantly mediates the relationship between human resource development and brand awareness destination ($\beta = 0.317$, $t = 5.758$, $p = 0.000$). This means that human resources competence plays a role in creating brand awareness, as this drives the use of digital marketing. With the right competencies, human resources will be able to design, implement, and manage it effectively. This will result in higher destination brand awareness.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that integrated marketing communication has a positive effect on digital marketing utilization, highlighting its role as a strategic catalyst in translating communication plans into measurable digital practices. This result suggests that consistency, interactivity, and connectivity within communication strategies enable organizations to execute digital marketing more effectively. Qi et al. (2024) support this finding by demonstrating that the consistency and interactivity of integrated marketing communication significantly enhance brand equity through increased brand awareness and product image. Furthermore, the results align with Masrianto et al. (2022), who emphasize that the successful realization of digital strategies depends on organizational readiness, including infrastructure and digital adoption. Similarly, Abate et al. (2025) highlight the importance of managerial orientation and resource allocation in strengthening digital execution. Although technological advancements such as artificial intelligence can amplify communication reach, Bormane and Blaus (2024) note that challenges related to privacy, security, and competence must also be managed, reinforcing that integrated marketing communication must be supported by proper governance to maximize its impact on digital marketing utilization.

In addition, human resource competency is found to have a positive effect on digital marketing utilization, confirming that the capability of human resources plays a critical role in enabling effective digital practices. This finding indicates that digital literacy, analytical skills, and adaptability are essential in ensuring that digital tools are not only adopted but also utilized optimally. Jia (2025) supports this result by showing that higher digital marketing capability among employees significantly improves organizational performance. Likewise, Orero-Blat et al. (2025) find that organizations with advanced digital and analytical competencies experience smoother digital transformation and better performance outcomes. This is further reinforced by AlNuaimi et al. (2022), who link employee digital competence to innovation and operational success. These findings collectively suggest that beyond strategic planning, the effectiveness of digital marketing utilization largely depends on the ability of human resources to execute, adapt, and continuously improve digital initiatives.

Furthermore, the results reveal that digital marketing utilization has a positive effect on destination brand awareness, indicating that the use of digital platforms significantly enhances the visibility and memorability of tourism destinations. This implies that active engagement through social media, online promotions, and electronic word-of-mouth contributes to stronger brand recognition among potential visitors. González-Rodríguez et al. (2022) support this finding by showing that digital marketing activities increase destination visibility and influence tourists' memory. In line with this, Liu et al. (2024) highlight that consistent digital interactions strengthen emotional connections, while Khan et al. (2024) demonstrate that electronic word-of-mouth mediates the relationship between digital marketing and brand equity. These results confirm that digital marketing utilization not only functions as a communication tool but also as a mechanism to build trust, engagement, and long-term brand positioning.

Moreover, the mediating role of digital marketing utilization is strongly supported, indicating that it acts as a strategic bridge linking internal capabilities to external branding

outcomes. The findings show that both integrated marketing communication and human resource competency contribute to destination brand awareness through digital marketing utilization, emphasizing that internal resources must be operationalized to generate market impact. Homburg and Wielgos (2022) support this perspective by identifying digital marketing as a key mechanism connecting organizational capabilities with market performance. Similarly, Santarsiero et al. (2024) highlight that digital marketing has evolved into a transformational channel driving measurable outcomes in tourism. In the same vein, Gato et al. (2022) and Kalsum et al. (2025) emphasize that human capital capabilities translate into brand visibility only when activated through digital engagement strategies. These findings underscore that digital marketing utilization serves not merely as a technical activity but as a strategic orchestrator that aligns communication strategies and human competencies to enhance destination brand awareness and competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the Resource-Based View (RBV), demonstrating that digital marketing utilization is significantly influenced by integrated marketing communication and human resource competency, which in turn enhance brand awareness and destination. This confirms that internal organizational resources function as an interconnected system that drives digital performance and reinforces branding outcomes. Integrated marketing communication improves the effectiveness of digital marketing through consistent messaging and coordinated strategies across platforms, while human resource competency ensures the availability of technical, analytical, and adaptive skills required for effective implementation. Importantly, digital marketing utilization acts as a mediating mechanism that translates these internal capabilities into measurable brand outcomes, highlighting its role as a critical link between organizational resources and market-level performance.

This study extends the RBV literature by explaining how communication strategies, human capital, and digital capabilities interact to generate competitive advantage in the context of rural tourism branding. From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that successful digital brand-building requires the integration of communication planning and human resource development within a cohesive digital ecosystem. Tourism village enterprises are therefore encouraged to adopt holistic strategies, such as strengthening cross-platform communication consistency, investing in digital skill development, and enhancing infrastructure for content creation, analytics, and platform optimization. Policymakers and tourism authorities can further support this by providing capacity-building programs, digital literacy training, and improved access to digital marketing tools. However, this study has several limitations. The use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to capture dynamic changes over time, and the focus on a specific tourism context may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal approaches, expand the scope to different regions or sectors, and incorporate additional variables such as technological readiness or customer engagement to further enrich the model.

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