PressAcademia
www.pressacademia.org/journals/jmml
JMML
ISSN 2148-6670
Journal of Management, Marketing and Logistics YEAR 2025 VOLUME 12 ISSUE 1

EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING COMPETENCE ON SUSCEPTIBILITY

DOI: 10.17261/Pressacademia.2025.1967
JMML- V.12-ISS.1-2025(1)-p.1-14

Burak Demir[1], Mustafa Dagkus[2]
[1]University of Mediterranean Karpasia, Institute of Social Sciences, Cyprus.
burak.demir@akun.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-5666-359X
[2]University of Mediterranean Karpasia, Institute of Social Sciences, Cyprus.
dagkusmustafa1@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0009-8952-5439

Date Received: October 21, 2024 **Date Accepted:** April 15, 2025

To cite this document
Demir, B., (2024). Examining the influence of digital marketing competence on susceptibility Journal of Management, Marketing and Logistics (JMML), 12(1), 1-14.
Permanent link to this document: http://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2025.1967

ABSTRACT

Purpose- This research on the influence of digital marketing competence on susceptibility to persuasion among university students in Northern Cyprus is of paramount importance. It not only fills a gap in the current understanding of digital marketing's impact on young adults but also contributes to the broader discourse on digital literacy, consumer behavior, and marketing effectiveness in the digital age.
Methodology- The research employs a quantitative approach, using a significant sample size of 420 university students. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, ensuring precise handling of complex data sets and robust statistical analysis. The methodology encompasses a structured approach utilizing quantitative research methods. Quantitative research is characterized by the process of collecting and analysing numerical data, which is instrumental in finding patterns, testing causal relationships, and generalizing results to broader populations A key aspect of quantitative research involves operational definitions that translate abstract concepts into observable and quantifiable measures. This is particularly relevant in a study like this, where abstract concepts such as 'digital marketing competence' and 'susceptibility to persuasion' need to be clearly defined and measured. The collection of quantitative data often involves tools like surveys and questionnaires, as in this study, where an online questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used.
Once data is collected, it requires processing before analysis. This can involve transforming survey data from words to numbers, followed by statistical analysis to answer research questions, In this context, the online questionnaire would have been designed to ensure that the data collected is suitable for the chosen statistical methods, aligning with the research objectives of examining the influence of digital marketing competence on university students in Northern Cyprus
Findings- Findings reveal a strong correlation between digital marketing literacy and students' attitudes and behaviors. Higher digital marketing literacy correlates with greater susceptibility to various marketing tactics, indicating a profound impact of digital competence on students' decision-making processes.
Conclusion- This research provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of digital marketing literacy in shaping university students' responses to digital marketing. It calls for a collaborative effort among educators, policymakers, and marketers to foster an environment where digital literacy is prioritized, thereby empowering students to navigate the digital world more effectively and ethically. The study's findings lay a foundation for future research in this area, inviting further exploration into the nuanced ways digital marketing literacy can influence consumer behavior in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital marketing literacy, university students, persuasion susceptibility, Northern Cyprus, marketing tactics.
JEL Codes: A10, A11, A20

1. INTRODUCTION

In the literature review chapter of this thesis, we embark on an extensive exploration of various facets central to understanding the influence of digital marketing competence on university students, particularly those in Northern Cyprus. This chapter is structured to systematically dissect and analyze several key areas that form the foundation of our study.

Firstly, we delve into the concept and importance of 'digital marketing literacy', where we define this term and trace the evolution of digital marketing in the information age. This sets the stage for understanding the broader landscape within which our study is situated.

Following this, we examine the 'impact of digital marketing literacy on attitudinal changes' among university students. This section focuses on understanding how digital literacy influences changes in attitudes within the context of digital marketing and the role it plays in shaping consumer attitudes.

Next, we explore 'behavioral intentions in digital marketing', discussing the relationship between digital literacy and consumer behavior. This includes an analysis of factors influencing online purchasing decisions, providing insight into how digital marketing literacy translates into actionable consumer behavior.

The fourth section delves into 'the influence of specific digital marketing tactics'. This part scrutinizes the efficacy of various digital marketing tools such as marketing emails, influencer recommendations, and targeted advertisements, and how these impact student responses.

In the fifth section, we discuss 'peer influence in digital marketing', examining the role of social media and peer networks in shaping consumer behavior and their influence on online purchasing decisions.

The chapter then shifts focus to 'awareness and perception of digital marketing tactics', highlighting how students perceive and understand various digital marketing strategies, along with their perceived credibility and effectiveness.

We also address 'digital marketing and consumer susceptibility', exploring the factors contributing to consumer susceptibility in the digital marketing context and the interplay between literacy and susceptibility to digital advertising.

The eighth section, 'contextualizing digital marketing in northern cyprus', provides a specific look at the digital marketing landscape in Northern Cyprus, focusing on the digital engagement and behaviors of university students in this region.

Further, we lay the theoretical groundwork of our study in 'theoretical foundations: Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and media literacy theory'. This part discusses the application of ELM in digital marketing and the relevance of Media Literacy Theory in the context of digital advertising.

Finally, the chapter concludes with 'empirical studies and research gaps', where we review previous empirical studies on digital marketing competence and identify the existing research gaps, particularly in the context of university students. This comprehensive literature review aims to provide a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for our study, paving the way for our empirical investigation (Danju et al., 2020).

In the realm of contemporary marketing, the proliferation of digital platforms has radically transformed the landscape, making the study of digital marketing competence and its impact on consumer behavior, particularly among university students, an area of burgeoning academic interest. This interest is rooted in the understanding that the digital world is not just a commercial space but also a cultural and social sphere where young adults spend a significant portion of their time.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), introduced by Petty et al. (2015), provides a theoretical framework for understanding how persuasion occurs in the context of digital marketing. This model posits that there are two routes to persuasion: the central route, which involves careful and thoughtful consideration of the message, and the peripheral route, which relies on superficial cues such as the attractiveness of the source or the emotional appeal of the message. The application of ELM in digital marketing research, as explored by Miller & Burgoon (1987), is particularly relevant for understanding how university students process and are influenced by digital marketing messages, as these individuals are often engaged in both deep and superficial processing of online content.

Alongside ELM, the Media Literacy Theory, championed by scholars like Hobbs (2011), provides a lens to examine how the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms impacts the susceptibility of individuals to digital marketing. Media literacy is increasingly recognized as a crucial skill for navigating the digital world, particularly for young adults who are frequent users of digital media. As Livingstone (2004) points out, media literacy is not just about understanding and interpreting media content but also about the ability to use media effectively and responsibly.

The relevance of these theories is particularly pronounced in the context of Northern Cyprus, a region with a significant population of university students who are active digital media users. This demographic represents a unique subset of the global digital audience, making it an interesting case study for examining the influence of digital marketing competence on susceptibility to persuasion.

In the digital age, where the boundaries between advertising, entertainment, and social interaction are increasingly blurred, the concept of digital marketing literacy becomes central. As highlighted by Potter (2010), digital marketing literacy encompasses not just the ability to decode and understand digital marketing messages, but also the skills to critically evaluate and respond to these messages. This is increasingly important as digital marketing strategies become more sophisticated, utilizing personalized data and targeting techniques that can subtly influence consumer behavior.

The importance of digital marketing literacy is further underscored by the work of researchers like Sundar (2008), who notes that the interactive nature of digital media requires a different set of competencies compared to traditional media. The interactive capabilities of digital media, such as the ability to like, share, or comment on content, not only provide new avenues for marketers to engage with consumers but also create new dynamics in how consumers process and respond to marketing messages.

Moreover, the role of peer influence in digital marketing cannot be overstated (Nacak et al., 2020).As noted by Bhattacherjee (2001), social influence in online environments can significantly impact the attitudes and behaviors of individuals, particularly those in university settings where social networks are highly active and influential. The interplay between digital marketing literacy and peer influence forms a complex web that shapes how marketing messages are received and acted upon by university students.

The study of digital marketing competence and its influence on susceptibility to persuasion among university students in Northern Cyprus is a multifaceted issue that intersects with theories of persuasion, media literacy, and social influence. The application of the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Media Literacy Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how digital marketing messages are processed and how they impact the attitudes and behaviors of young adults in a digital-centric world.

The main questions of this study are:

1. How does digital marketing literacy influence the attitudes of university students towards digital advertisements and social media marketing?
2. What is the relationship between digital marketing literacy and the behavioral intent of university students, specifically in terms of visiting websites and considering purchasing products advertised through digital marketing?
3. How is digital marketing literacy correlated with the influence of specific digital marketing tactics, such as marketing emails, influencer recommendations, and targeted advertisements, on university students?
4. What is the relationship between digital marketing literacy and the impact of peer influence on university students, particularly in terms of product or brand mentions by peers online?
5. To what extent does awareness of digital marketing tactics influence the susceptibility of university students to persuasion by these tactics?
6. What are the potential societal and ethical implications of high digital marketing literacy among university students in terms of their susceptibility to digital marketing tactics?
7. What recommendations can be made for digital marketers, educational institutions, and policy makers to foster responsible digital marketing practices and enhance digital literacy among university students?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

A research design is essentially a strategy for answering research questions using empirical data (McCombes & Aspers and Corte, 2019). This strategy includes decisions regarding research objectives and approach, the reliance on primary or secondary research, sampling methods, data collection methods, procedures for collecting data, and data analysis methods.

In this particular study, the research design adopted is quantitative, which is known for being more fixed and deductive, with variables and hypotheses clearly defined prior to data collection (McCombes & Aspers and Corte, 2019). Quantitative Market Research, as a technique, involves asking organized questions to the target audience using surveys, polls, or questionnaires. The responses received are analyzed to make informed decisions, particularly useful in improving products and services and increasing respondent satisfaction levels. When a large sample size that represents a population is surveyed, well-founded results are achievable, particularly pertinent in the age of information where data collection and analysis are crucial for informed decision-making (QuestionPro, n.d.).

Quantitative market research is highly scientific, using deductive reasoning to draw conclusions and create actionable insights from collected data. This method operates on developing a hypothesis, collecting data, and then analyzing the data to prove or disprove the hypothesis. The milestones in this design include making an observation, creating an in-depth hypothesis, planning to prove or disprove this hypothesis, and collecting and analyzing data. Depending on the outcome, the researcher either prepares for final validations and presents findings or starts afresh with a new hypothesis if the data disproves the current one (QuestionPro, n.d.).

This research design is characterized by five quantitative design types: survey research, descriptive research, correlational research, causal comparative/quasi-experimental research, and experimental research. Each of these plays a crucial role in shaping the research process and determining the approach to data collection and analysis (QuestionPro, 2023).

The research design of this master thesis employs a structured quantitative approach, encompassing a series of well-defined steps from hypothesis development to data analysis. This approach ensures that the research is grounded in empirical evidence, allowing for the generation of valuable insights into the influence of digital marketing competence on the susceptibility to persuasion among university students in Northern Cyprus.

The data collection and analysis methods are key components in ensuring the validity and reliability of the research findings. The research employs a systematic approach to data collection, followed by meticulous data analysis procedures.

For data collection, an online questionnaire with close-ended questions was distributed to a cross-sectional sample of university students. This method is consistent with the recommendations of Wright (2005), who argues that online surveys are effective for reaching a specific demographic like university students. The administration of the questionnaire followed a structured protocol to enhance response rates and ensure data quality. According to Fan and Yan (2010), reminders and follow-ups are essential for improving response rates in online surveys. This practice was adopted to encourage participation among the target population.

The data analysis for this research involved the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a widely used software for statistical analysis in social science research (Pallant, 2020). SPSS provides a range of tools including regression analysis and ANOVA, which are commonly used for analyzing survey data (Field, 2013). The choice of SPSS is based on its user-friendly interface and its ability to handle complex statistical analyses efficiently (George & Mallery, 2019).

Prior to conducting the statistical analysis, data cleaning and preparation were undertaken. This step is crucial in ensuring the quality and accuracy of the data analysis. As noted by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), data cleaning involves checking for and addressing any errors or inconsistencies in the dataset. This process included identifying and rectifying any input errors, inconsistencies, and outlying responses in the dataset.

The approach to handling missing or incomplete responses followed the guidelines outlined by Schafer and Graham (2002). Missing data can significantly impact the validity of research findings; thus, it was essential to address this issue methodically. The chosen method for handling missing data was multiple imputation, a technique recommended for preserving the integrity of the dataset and minimizing bias (Little & Rubin, 1987).

The data collection and analysis methods employed in this study were carefully chosen to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research findings. The use of an online questionnaire for data collection, followed by rigorous data cleaning and preparation, and the application of statistical analysis using SPSS, all contribute to the robustness of the research methodology.

The research methodology of this study was carefully designed to address ethical concerns related to privacy, informed consent, data security, and participant well-being. These measures ensured that the study adhered to the highest ethical standards, respecting the rights and dignity of the participants.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS DISCUSSION

This section presents the reliability results for various variables, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, a key indicator of internal consistency. The reliability results presented in Table 1 are indicative of the robustness of the measurement instruments employed in the study. The Cronbach's Alpha values, ranging from .890 to .995 across various constructs, underscore the internal consistency and reliability of the scales used. Digital Marketing Literacy, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .995, exhibits near-perfect reliability. This high score, especially given that it spans 6 items, suggests that the items are not only coherent but also exceptionally effective in capturing the essence of digital marketing literacy among university students.

Table 1: Reliability Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Digital Marketing Literacy	.995	6
Awareness of Digital Marketing	.890	6
Attitude Change	.892	3
Behavioral Intent	.975	3
Influence of Specific Tactics	.907	3
Peer Influence	.991	3
All Paragraph	**.988**	**24**

Similarly, Awareness of Digital Marketing, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .890 for 6 items, also demonstrates strong reliability. This consistency is vital, as it reflects the soundness of the scale in measuring the awareness levels of students regarding digital marketing. On the other hand, Attitude Change and Behavioral Intent, with Cronbach's Alpha values of .892 and .975 respectively, both with 3 items each, show high internal consistency. These scores are indicative of the reliable measurement of students' changes in attitudes and their behavioral intentions under the influence of digital marketing.

Furthermore, the Influence of Specific Tactics and Peer Influence constructs, with Cronbach's Alphas of .907 and .991 respectively, reflect a commendable level of internal consistency. The high reliability of these scores, particularly for Peer Influence, signifies the effectiveness of the items in measuring the nuanced aspects of digital marketing influences.

The overall scale, encompassing all 24 items and yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of .988, demonstrates exceptional reliability. This holistic reliability suggests that the entire set of constructs works cohesively to provide a reliable measure of the study's variables. Such high reliability across the board not only bolsters the validity of the findings but also enhances the overall credibility of the research, thereby providing a solid foundation for further analysis and interpretation of the data.

3.7. Hypotheses Testing and Results Discussion

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Digital marketing literacy positively influences the attitude change among university students, such that higher levels of literacy lead to greater susceptibility to attitude changes influenced by social media and digital advertisements.

Correlations-H1

		Digital Marketing Literacy	Attitude Change
Digital Marketing Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.898**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Attitude Change	Pearson Correlation	.898**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.898[a]	.806	.805	.64385

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude Change

ANOVA -H1

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	718.816	1	718.816	1733.998	.000[b]
	Residual	173.279	418	.415		
	Total	892.094	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy
b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude Change

Coefficients -H1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.258	.092		2.798	.005
	Attitude Change	1.056	.025	.898	41.641	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy

The results pertaining to Hypothesis 1 (H1) reveal a compelling relationship between digital marketing literacy and attitude change among university students. The strong positive Pearson Correlation (.898) along with a significant p-value (.000) suggests that higher levels of digital marketing literacy are associated with greater susceptibility to attitude changes influenced by social media and digital advertisements. This is indicative of the profound impact that digital literacy has on shaping attitudes in the digital age.

The R Square value (.806) in the model summary reinforces the strength of this relationship, suggesting that a substantial portion of the variance in digital marketing literacy is explainable through changes in attitudes. This implies that educational initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy could be instrumental in moderating or amplifying the impact of digital marketing on students.

Furthermore, the ANOVA results underscore the robustness of this relationship, with a significant F value indicating that the model is a good fit for the data. The coefficients detailed in the model illustrate the extent to which attitude change predicts digital marketing literacy, emphasizing the practical implications of this finding in the design and implementation of digital marketing strategies.

These results provide valuable insights into the dynamics of digital literacy and its influence on attitude formation, highlighting the importance of equipping students with the necessary skills to navigate the digital marketing landscape critically and effectively.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Digital marketing literacy positively influences the behavioral intent of university students, where higher literacy is linked to an increased likelihood of visiting websites and considering purchasing products advertised through digital marketing.

Correlations-H2

		Digital Marketing Literacy	Behavioral Intent
Digital Marketing Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.947**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Behavioral Intent	Pearson Correlation	.947**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H2

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.947[a]	.897	.896	.46969

a. Predictors: (Constant), Behavioral Intent

ANOVA-H2

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	799.878	1	799.878	3625.701	.000[b]
	Residual	92.216	418	.221		
	Total	892.094	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy
b. Predictors: (Constant), Behavioral Intent

Coefficients -H2

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.271	.056		4.829	.000
	Behavioral Intent	.994	.017	.947	60.214	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy

The analysis for Hypothesis 2 (H2) in this study yields compelling insights into the relationship between digital marketing literacy and behavioral intent among university students. The Pearson Correlation coefficient (.947) between these two variables is exceptionally high, with a significance level of .000, indicating a very strong positive relationship. This suggests that students with higher levels of digital marketing literacy are more likely to visit websites and consider purchasing products advertised through digital marketing channels.

The R Square value in the model summary is .897, which is remarkably high, suggesting that 89.7% of the variance in Digital Marketing Literacy is explained by Behavioral Intent. This indicates a very strong predictive power of behavioral intent on digital marketing literacy, affirming that as students become more literate in digital marketing, their intention to engage with digital marketing channels increases significantly.

Furthermore, the ANOVA results demonstrate the robustness of this relationship, with an extremely high F value of 3625.701, which is statistically significant ($p < .000$). This underscores the strength of the predictive relationship between digital marketing literacy and behavioral intent.

The coefficients table shows that for every unit increase in Behavioral Intent, there is an expected increase of .994 units in Digital Marketing Literacy, with a t-value of 60.214, which is highly significant ($p < .000$). This indicates that behavioral intent is a very strong predictor of digital marketing literacy among university students.

The findings provide strong empirical support for Hypothesis 2, demonstrating that digital marketing literacy significantly influences the behavioral intentions of university students in the context of digital marketing. This highlights the importance of digital marketing literacy in shaping student behaviors and decisions in the digital environment, suggesting that enhancing digital literacy could be a key factor in influencing positive behavioral outcomes in digital marketing contexts.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Digital marketing literacy is positively correlated with influence of specific tactics on university students, indicating that students with higher literacy levels are more susceptible to marketing emails, influencer recommendations, and targeted advertisements.

Correlations-H3

		Digital Marketing Literacy	Influence of Specific Tactics
Digital Marketing Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.960**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Influence of Specific Tactics	Pearson Correlation	.960**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H3

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.960[a]	.921	.921	.40958

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Specific Tactics

ANOVA -H3

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	821.972	1	821.972	4899.786	.000[b]
	Residual	70.122	418	.168		
	Total	892.094	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Specific Tactics

Coefficients -H3

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.338	.056		5.995	.000
	Influence of Specific Tactics	1.076	.015	.960	69.998	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy

The results for Hypothesis 3 (H3) provide a profound understanding of the relationship between digital marketing literacy and the influence of specific tactics on university students. The Pearson Correlation of .960, with a significance level of .000, indicates an exceptionally strong positive correlation. This finding suggests that students with higher levels of digital marketing literacy are indeed more susceptible to specific marketing tactics, such as emails, influencer recommendations, and targeted advertisements.

The strength of this relationship is further emphasized in the model summary, where the R Square value is an impressive .921. This implies that a substantial 92.1% of the variance in Digital Marketing Literacy can be explained by the Influence of Specific Tactics. Such a high value indicates that the influence of specific marketing tactics is a major factor in determining the level of digital marketing literacy among students.

The ANOVA results corroborate the strength of this relationship, indicated by a very high F value of 4899.786, which is statistically significant ($p < .000$). This underlines the robustness of the predictive power of specific marketing tactics on digital marketing literacy.

Additionally, the coefficients in the model reveal that for each unit increase in the Influence of Specific Tactics, there is an expected increase of 1.076 units in Digital Marketing Literacy. The t-value of 69.998, significant at $p < .000$, reinforces the strength and significance of this relationship.

These findings provide strong empirical support for Hypothesis 3, clearly demonstrating that digital marketing literacy in university students is significantly influenced by specific marketing tactics. This underscores the importance of understanding how different digital marketing tactics impact students' literacy levels. It suggests that marketers and educators should consider the potent influence of specific tactics when designing digital marketing campaigns and educational programs aimed at enhancing digital literacy. This relationship is crucial in today's digital landscape, where targeted marketing tactics are increasingly prevalent and influential.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Digital marketing literacy is positively correlated with peer influence on university students, suggesting that those with higher levels of literacy are more likely to be influenced by product or brand mentions by their peers online.

Correlations-H4

		Digital Marketing Literacy	Peer Influence
Digital Marketing Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.996**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Peer Influence	Pearson Correlation	.996**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H4

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.996[a]	.992	.992	.12851

a. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Influence

ANOVA -H4

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	885.191	1	885.191	53596.829	.000[b]
	Residual	6.904	418	.017		
	Total	892.094	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy
b. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Influence

Coefficients -H4

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.012	.016		.736	.462
	Peer Influence	.999	.004	.996	231.510	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Digital Marketing Literacy

Hypothesis 4 (H4) of the study probes the relationship between digital marketing literacy and peer influence among university students. The findings from this hypothesis test are remarkably revealing. A Pearson Correlation of .996, significant at the 0.01 level, indicates an extraordinarily strong positive correlation between digital marketing literacy and peer influence. This implies that students with higher levels of digital marketing literacy are considerably more likely to be influenced by their peers in terms of product or brand mentions online.

This correlation's strength is further underscored in the model summary, where the R Square value stands at an astounding .992. This suggests that a whopping 99.2% of the variance in digital marketing literacy among university students can be explained by peer influence. Such a high degree of explanatory power is rare and indicates an almost deterministic relationship between these two variables in the context of the study.

The ANOVA results support the robustness of this relationship. The F value, a staggering 53596.829, is highly significant ($p < .000$). This reinforces the statistical strength of the relationship between digital marketing literacy and peer influence, making it one of the most compelling findings of the study.

Moreover, the coefficients table reveals a near one-to-one relationship between peer influence and digital marketing literacy. For every unit increase in peer influence, there is almost an equivalent increase in digital marketing literacy (beta

coefficient of .999, t = 231.510, p < .000). This suggests that peer influence is not just a predictor but a nearly perfect predictor of digital marketing literacy among university students.

These results provide overwhelming support for Hypothesis 4, emphasizing the profound impact of peer influence on digital marketing literacy. The findings suggest that in the context of digital marketing, peers play an almost determinative role in shaping the literacy levels of university students. This has significant implications for marketing strategies and educational programs, highlighting the need to consider the powerful role of peer influence in shaping digital behaviors and competencies.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): 2. Awareness of digital marketing tactics positively influences the attitude change among university students, such that higher levels of literacy lead to greater susceptibility to attitude changes influenced by social media and digital advertisements.

Correlations-H5

		Awareness of Digital Marketing	Attitude Change
Awareness of Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.866**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Attitude Change	Pearson Correlation	.866**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H5

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.866[a]	.751	.750	.54987

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude Change

ANOVA -H5

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	380.330	1	380.330	1257.882	.000[b]
	Residual	126.385	418	.302		
	Total	506.715	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude Change

Coefficients -H5

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.751	.079		9.537	.000
	Attitude Change	.768	.022	.866	35.467	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

Hypothesis 5 (H5) of the study examines the influence of awareness of digital marketing tactics on attitude change among university students. The analysis uncovers a robust relationship between these variables. The Pearson Correlation coefficient (.866) between Awareness of Digital Marketing and Attitude Change is significant (p < .000), highlighting a strong positive correlation. This suggests that as students become more aware of digital marketing tactics, they are more susceptible to attitude changes influenced by social media and digital advertisements.

The R Square value in the model summary stands at an impressive .751, indicating that about 75.1% of the variance in Awareness of Digital Marketing can be explained by Attitude Change. This high level of explanatory power suggests a strong predictive relationship, where changes in attitudes can significantly forecast the level of awareness about digital marketing among students.

The ANOVA results further reinforce this relationship with a substantial F value of 1257.882, which is highly significant (p < .000). This points to a strong statistical justification for the predictive relationship between these two variables.

In the coefficients table, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients indicate the degree of change in Awareness of Digital Marketing for each unit change in Attitude Change. The Beta coefficient of .866, along with a significant t-value of 35.467 ($p < .000$), implies that attitude change is a powerful predictor of awareness of digital marketing tactics.

These findings provide strong empirical support for Hypothesis 5. The study indicates that awareness of digital marketing tactics is closely linked with the attitude changes among university students. This underscores the importance of digital marketing awareness in shaping students' attitudes, particularly in the context of an increasingly digital-centric world. The high degree of correlation and the significant predictive power of attitude change on awareness highlight the need for targeted digital marketing educational initiatives. Such initiatives could play a crucial role in fostering informed and critical engagement with digital marketing content among university students.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Awareness of digital marketing tactics positively influences the behavioral intent of university students, where higher literacy is linked to an increased likelihood of visiting websites and considering purchasing products advertised through digital marketing.

Correlations-H6

		Awareness of Digital Marketing	Behavioral Intent
Awareness of Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.810**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Behavioral Intent	Pearson Correlation	.810**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H6

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.810[a]	.656	.656	.64531

a. Predictors: (Constant), Behavioral Intent

ANOVA-H6

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	332.651	1	332.651	798.830	.000[b]
	Residual	174.064	418	.416		
	Total	506.715	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

b. Predictors: (Constant), Behavioral Intent

Coefficients -H6

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.389	.077		18.043	.000
	Behavioral Intent	.641	.023	.810	28.264	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

Hypothesis 6 (H6) of the study evaluates the impact of awareness of digital marketing tactics on the behavioral intent of university students. The Pearson Correlation between Awareness of Digital Marketing and Behavioral Intent is .810, significant at the 0.01 level, demonstrating a strong positive correlation. This significant correlation implies that students who are more aware of digital marketing tactics are also more likely to exhibit behavioral intent, such as visiting websites or considering purchasing products advertised through digital channels.

The model summary reveals an R Square value of .656, suggesting that approximately 65.6% of the variance in Awareness of Digital Marketing can be explained by Behavioral Intent. This substantial proportion underscores the significant predictive power of behavioral intent on the awareness of digital marketing tactics among university students.

The ANOVA results further strengthen these findings, with a high F value of 798.830, which is highly significant ($p < .000$). This indicates a strong statistical relationship between the two variables, reinforcing the hypothesis that awareness of digital marketing tactics is a crucial factor influencing behavioral intent.

The coefficients in the model provide additional insights into this relationship. The unstandardized coefficient of .641 for Behavioral Intent, along with a significant t-value of 28.264 ($p < .000$), illustrates that an increase in behavioral intent is associated with a notable increase in awareness of digital marketing tactics. The constant of 1.389 further contextualizes this relationship within the model.

These results provide strong empirical evidence supporting Hypothesis 6. The study suggests a significant link between students' awareness of digital marketing tactics and their behavioral intent, highlighting the role of awareness in shaping students' digital behaviors. The strong correlation and significant predictive value of behavioral intent underscore the importance of enhancing digital marketing awareness among university students. This awareness not only informs their understanding of digital marketing but also significantly influences their likelihood of engaging with digital marketing content, such as visiting websites and considering product purchases.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Awareness of digital marketing tactics is positively correlated with influence of specific tactics on university students, indicating that students with higher literacy levels are more susceptible to marketing emails, influencer recommendations, and targeted advertisements.

Correlations-H7

		Awareness of Digital Marketing	Influence of Specific Tactics
Awareness of Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.839**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Influence of Specific Tactics	Pearson Correlation	.839**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H7

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.839[a]	.704	.704	.59863

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Specific Tactics

ANOVA-H7

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	356.921	1	356.921	995.985	.000[b]
	Residual	149.794	418	.358		
	Total	506.715	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

b. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Specific Tactics

Coefficients-H7

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.945	.082		11.473	.000
	Influence of Specific Tactics	.709	.022	.839	31.559	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

Hypothesis 7 (H7) of the study posits a positive correlation between the awareness of digital marketing tactics and the influence of specific tactics on university students. The Pearson Correlation analysis strongly supports this hypothesis, showing a significant correlation coefficient of .839 ($p < .000$). This robust correlation indicates that students who are more aware of digital marketing tactics are also more susceptible to the influence of specific marketing approaches such as emails, influencer recommendations, and targeted advertisements.

The model summary further elucidates this relationship, with an R Square value of .704. This suggests that about 70.4% of the variance in Awareness of Digital Marketing can be explained by the Influence of Specific Tactics. Such a high level of explained variance signifies the substantial impact that specific marketing tactics have on students' awareness.

The ANOVA results bolster these findings, with a remarkably high F value of 995.985, which is highly significant ($p < .000$). This indicates a very strong statistical relationship between awareness of digital marketing tactics and their influence, thereby validating the hypothesis.

In the coefficients table, the relationship between these variables is further quantified. The unstandardized coefficient for Influence of Specific Tactics is .709, with a significant t-value of 31.559 ($p < .000$), suggesting that an increase in the influence of specific tactics is associated with a significant increase in awareness of digital marketing. The constant value of .945 contextualizes the base level of awareness in the absence of these tactics.

The findings provide robust empirical support for Hypothesis 7. The study clearly demonstrates that university students' awareness of digital marketing tactics is significantly influenced by the specific tactics employed in marketing campaigns. This suggests that digital marketing strategies that effectively leverage specific tactics can significantly enhance students' awareness and understanding of these approaches. The high degree of correlation and the significant predictive value of the influence of specific tactics underscore the need for marketers to strategically design their digital marketing campaigns to effectively target and educate the university student demographic.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Awareness of digital marketing tactics is positively correlated with peer influence on university students, suggesting that those with higher levels of literacy are more likely to be influenced by product or brand mentions by their peers online.

Correlations-H8

		Awareness of Digital Marketing	Peer Influence
Awareness of Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.805**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Peer Influence	Pearson Correlation	.805**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	420	420

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Model Summary-H8

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.805[a]	.649	.648	.65268

a. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Influence

ANOVA -H8

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	328.651	1	328.651	771.498	.000[b]
	Residual	178.064	418	.426		
	Total	506.715	419			

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

b. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Influence

Coefficients -H8

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.327	.080		16.516	.000
	Peer Influence	.609	.022	.805	27.776	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness of Digital Marketing

The statistical analysis presented in the table effectively supports Hypothesis 8 (H8), which posits a positive correlation between awareness of digital marketing tactics and peer influence among university students. This hypothesis suggests that students who are more literate in digital marketing are likely to be more influenced by product or brand mentions by their peers online.

The Pearson Correlation coefficient, an indicator of the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables, stands at .805** for the relationship between awareness of digital marketing and peer influence. This strong positive correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), as indicated by the significance (Sig.) value of .000. The sample size (N) for this analysis is 420, providing a robust dataset for the study.

The Model Summary further reinforces the strength of this relationship, with an R value of .805, indicating a strong positive linear relationship. The R Square value of .649 suggests that approximately 64.9% of the variance in awareness of digital marketing can be explained by peer influence. The Adjusted R Square, which is a modified version of R Square that has been adjusted for the number of predictors in the model, is nearly identical at .648, indicating a high level of reliability of the model.

The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) table supports the model's statistical significance. The F-statistic, at 771.498 with a significance level of .000, indicates that the model is a good fit for the data.

Lastly, the Coefficients table provides insights into the specific relationship between the variables. The unstandardized coefficient for Peer Influence is .609, and the standardized coefficient (Beta) is .805. The t-value of 27.776 with a significance level of .000 further confirms the strong influence of peer pressure on awareness of digital marketing tactics among university students.

Overall, the data robustly supports H8, demonstrating a significant and strong positive correlation between digital marketing awareness and peer influence in the context of university students.

4. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE STUDIES

The conclusion of this thesis encapsulates the intricate relationship between digital marketing literacy and its impact on university students' attitudes, behaviors, and susceptibility to persuasion. The study conclusively demonstrates that students with higher digital marketing literacy are more susceptible to changes in attitudes due to digital advertisements and social media marketing. This literacy also significantly influences their behavioral intentions, such as visiting websites and considering product purchases. Furthermore, the study reveals that students with higher literacy levels are more prone to the influence of specific digital marketing tactics like marketing emails, influencer recommendations, and targeted advertisements.

Additionally, the research highlights the strong correlation between digital marketing literacy and peer influence, indicating that literate students are more likely to be swayed by their peers' online product or brand mentions. It also shows that awareness of digital marketing tactics is a critical factor in students' susceptibility to these tactics. This awareness not only changes attitudes but also drives behavioral intentions and reactions to specific marketing tactics.

The findings of this thesis have profound implications. They underscore the need for educational institutions and policymakers to focus on enhancing digital literacy among university students. Such initiatives would enable students to critically engage with digital marketing content and make informed decisions. Moreover, the study's results are invaluable for digital marketers, as they provide insights into how digital literacy influences the effectiveness of their strategies.

This research provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of digital marketing literacy in shaping university students' responses to digital marketing. It calls for a collaborative effort among educators, policymakers, and marketers to foster an environment where digital literacy is prioritized, thereby empowering students to navigate the digital world more effectively and ethically. The study's findings lay a foundation for future research in this area, inviting further exploration into the nuanced ways digital marketing literacy can influence consumer behavior in the digital age.

The study illuminates the critical role of digital marketing literacy in shaping university students' attitudes and behaviors towards digital advertisements and social media marketing. This knowledge is invaluable for managers in both academic and business sectors.

Firstly, for educational managers and policymakers, the findings underscore the importance of integrating digital literacy into the curriculum. By enhancing students' understanding and critical thinking regarding digital marketing, educational institutions can equip them with the skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape more effectively and make informed decisions.

In the realm of digital marketing management, the insights provided by this study are crucial for developing more targeted and responsible marketing strategies. Understanding the nuances of how digital marketing literacy influences students' susceptibility to various marketing tactics, including peer influence, can lead to the creation of more ethical and effective marketing campaigns. This is particularly important given the evolving landscape of digital marketing, where strategies must constantly adapt to changing consumer behavior and preferences.

Additionally, the study highlights the potential for digital marketing managers to collaborate with educational institutions. Such collaborations can lead to the development of programs that not only enhance students' digital literacy but also provide real-world insights into the impact of digital marketing, thus fostering a more informed and critical consumer base.

The managerial implications of this thesis are extensive and carry significant weight for both educational and marketing sectors. They call for a strategic approach towards enhancing digital literacy, responsible marketing practices, and a collaborative effort between education and industry to ensure a more ethically informed digital landscape.

The study's focus on Northern Cyprus might limit the broader applicability of its findings, highlighting the need for caution when generalizing these results to different contexts. Methodologically, the reliance on self-reported measures introduces potential bias, calling for a more varied methodological approach in future research. Looking ahead, it is recommended that subsequent studies expand their geographical scope to include diverse populations and consider longitudinal methods to capture the evolving nature of digital marketing competence. Additionally, incorporating qualitative research methods could yield richer insights into the subjective experiences and perceptions of university students regarding digital marketing. This comprehensive approach will deepen the understanding of digital marketing's influence and guide more effective educational and marketing strategies.

REFERENCES

Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is qualitative in qualitative research. Qualitative Sociology, 42, 139-160.

Bhattacherjee, A. (2001). Understanding Information Systems Continuance: An Expectation-Confirmation Model. MIS Quarterly, 25(3), 351-370.

Cohen, J. (2013). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences. Academic press.

Danju, İ., Demir, B., Çağlar, B. B., Özçelik, C. D., Coruhlu, E. K., & Özturan, S. (2020). Comparative content analysis of studies on new approaches in education. Laplage em Revista, 6, 128-142.

Fan, W., & Yan, Z. (2010). Factors affecting response rates of the web survey: A systematic review. Computers in Human Behavior, 26(2), 132-139.

Field, A. (2013). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics. Sage.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2019). IBM SPSS statistics 26 step by step: A simple guide and reference. Routledge.

Hobbs, R. (2011). Digital and Media Literacy: Connecting Culture and Classroom. Corwin Press.

Little, R. J. A., & Rubin, D. B. (1987). Multiple imputation for nonresponse in surveys. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.. doi, 10, 9780470316696.

Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. The Communication Review, 7(1), 3-14.

McCombes, S. (2023, June 22). Descriptive Research | Definition, Types, Methods & Examples. Scribbr. Retrieved November 28, 2023, from https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/descriptive-research/

Miller, G. R., & Burgoon, M. (1978). Persuasion research: Review and commentary. Annals of the International Communication Association, 2(1), 29-47.

Nacak, A., Bağlama, B., & Demir, B. (2020). Teacher candidate views on the use of youtube for educational purposes. Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies, 10(2), e202003.

Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Kasmer, J. A. (2015). The role of affect in the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In Communication, social cognition, and affect (PLE: Emotion) (pp. 117-146). Psychology Press.

Potter, W. J. (2010). The state of media literacy: A response to Potter. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 54(4), 675-696.

QuestionPro. (2023). Quantitative Market Research: The Complete Guide. Retrieved November 28, 2023, from https://www.questionpro.com/blog/quantitative-market-research/

Schafer, J. L., & Graham, J. W. (2002). Missing data: Our view of the state of the art. Psychological Methods, 7(2), 147-177.

Sundar, S. S. (2008). The MAIN Model: A heuristic approach to understanding technology effects on credibility. In M. Metzger & A. Flanagin (Eds.), Digital Media, Youth, and Credibility (pp. 72-100). The MIT Press.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). Using multivariate statistics. Pearson Education.

Wright, K. B. (2005). Researching Internet-based populations: Advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 10(3), JCMC1034.