DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT FOR TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THAILAND: A CASE STUDY OF COMANCHE GOGOJI

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to explore how digital transformation impacts supply chain management of tourism industry in Thailand. The case study analysis method is conducted using in-depth interview and documentary analysis from relevant organizations. The study found the following; digital technology in supply chain management enables hotels to offer more cohesive and customized services, ultimately improving operational effectiveness and driving customer engagement. While digital transformation offers significant benefits, the industry's unique requirements and financial limitations present substantial obstacles to the widespread adoption of new technologies. A cohesive policy framework and collaborative ecosystem are essential to support digital transformation in the tourism supply chain. Such initiatives would enable businesses to leverage digital tools more effectively, increase operational efficiency, and better meet customer needs.

Keywords: *Digital Transformation, Supply Chain Management, Tourism Industry*

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการเปลี่ยนแปลงสู่ดิจิทัลของการจัดการโซ่อุปทานสำหรับอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทย โดยใช้การวิเคราะห์กรณีศึกษาด้วยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกและการวิเคราะห์เอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้อง ผลการวิจัยพบว่าการใช้เทคโนโลยีดิจิทัลในการจัดการโซ่อุปทานช่วยให้โรงแรมสามารถให้บริการที่เป็นหนึ่งเดียวและสามารถปรับให้เหมาะสมกับลูกค้าได้มากขึ้น ซึ่งส่งผลให้การดำเนินงานมีประสิทธิภาพมากขึ้นและเพิ่มการมีส่วนร่วมของลูกค้า แม้ว่าการเปลี่ยนแปลงสู่ดิจิทัลจะมีประโยชน์อย่างมาก แต่อุตสาหกรรมท่องเที่ยวมีข้อกำหนดเฉพาะและข้อจำกัดทางการเงินที่

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ก่อให้เกิดอุปสรรคสำคัญต่อการนำเทคโนโลยีใหม่มาใช้อย่างแพร่หลาย การมีกรอบนโยบายที่สอดคล้องกัน และระบบนิเวศที่สนับสนุนการทำงานร่วมกันเป็นสิ่งจำเป็นในการสนับสนุนการเปลี่ยนแปลงสู่ดิจิทัลในโซ่อุปทานของการท่องเที่ยว โดยการริเริ่มดังกล่าวจะช่วยให้ธุรกิจสามารถใช้เครื่องมือดิจิทัลได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพมากขึ้น เพิ่มประสิทธิภาพในการดำเนินงาน และตอบสนองความต้องการของลูกค้าได้ดีขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: การแปรรูปทางดิจิทัล การจัดการโซ่อุปทาน อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation is increasingly critical for survival in today's competitive business landscape, particularly within the service industry. Technology has become an essential part of daily life, shaping how individuals interact and perform everyday tasks. As Rassool and Dissanayake (2019) note, technology now deeply influences human behavior and is a fundamental component of modern life. Morabito (2016) further emphasizes that information technology (IT) has evolved from being a simple executive tool to a key element of organizational strategy, crucial for supporting business objectives.

The concept of digital transformation is widely discussed. Bharadwaj et al. (2013) describe digital technology advancements as the integration of information, computing, communication, and connectivity, essential for creating new business model opportunities. Kaplan et al. (2004) explain digital transformation as the sweeping change brought by embracing digital technologies across society. A paperless system, for example, illustrates how digital transformation reshapes organizational operations (Wade, 2015). Digital transformation influences nearly every industry, with a strong impact on business strategy as it integrates information technology into the organizational framework (Jurisic & Kermek, 2011; Bharadwaj et al., 2013). In Thailand, the government underscores the importance of a digital economy, prioritizing technology's role in business and societal activities to drive economic progress. As Aunyawong et al. (2020) suggest, Thailand should expedite the adoption of digital technology as a fundamental tool for economic development.

The tourism industry is a key pillar of Thailand's economy (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023), with supply chain management critical to its success (Chansamut, 2023). The digital transformation of supply chain management is becoming increasingly significant as technology drives efficiencies and innovation (OpenGov Asia, 2023). This study focuses on the implementation of digital transformation in supply chain management within Thailand's tourism industry. It examines literature on digital transformation in supply chain management and explores its current status and impact on the tourism industry in Thailand.

Research Objectives

- To explore how digital transformation impacts supply chain management in the Thai tourism sector.
- To identify the benefits and challenges of integrating digital tools into supply chain management.

- To develop a framework of best practices for digital transformation in tourism SCM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Supply Chain Management in the Tourism Industry

Supply chain management (SCM) literature has evolved with contributions from various disciplines, including procurement, logistics, transportation, operations management, marketing, organizational studies, management information systems, and strategic management (Chen & Paulraj, 2004). Generally, SCM starts with a logistics system that manages the flow of materials and information from suppliers to customers. This system oversees material handling, movement, and coordination both within the organization and across its supplier network (Baddeley & Font, 2011).

SCM also emphasizes strategic collaboration between business partners to improve the performance of individual organizations as well as the entire supply chain. One key goal is to optimize sourcing, production, and delivery processes, leveraging logistics as a competitive advantage (Li et al., 2005).

However, Prasad and Selven (2009) note that while SCM aims to reduce cycle times, inventory, and logistics costs, these objectives don't fully translate to the service sector, where services are intangible and cannot be transferred. In tourism, SCM involves a diverse range of stakeholders, including service providers, tour operators, and travel agencies. Tour operators play a pivotal role by consolidating services from different suppliers, packaging them, and delivering these offerings to tourists or resellers. Their efficiency directly impacts the performance of suppliers, retail agencies, and ultimately, tourist satisfaction (Muhcină & Popovici, 2008).

Tourism SCM includes core services such as accommodation, transportation, dining, and entertainment, as well as supplementary services that support the tourism industry. For effective supply chain management in tourism, a well-integrated system is essential, ensuring seamless coordination across these varied components. Collaboration among industry players, government agencies, and academia enhances tourism development, a well-integrated supply chain improves service quality, economic impact, and destination competitiveness (Mulyani, 2023).

Digital Supply Chain Management

Emerging digital technologies, which are currently being developed or are anticipated in the near future, have the potential to transform both the business landscape and the broader social environment. Digital supply chains are designed to handle vast amounts of data, facilitating seamless collaboration and communication between supply chain partners via digital platforms.

Hoberg et al. (2015) describe digital transformation as the comprehensive process through which organizations adapt and evolve by leveraging digital technologies. This transformation affects not only how companies create value in their products but also how they engage with suppliers, partners, and customers, ultimately reshaping global competition.

Digital supply chain management involves integrating advanced technologies to revolutionize traditional supply chain activities. These include planning, execution, collaboration among participants, and integration across the supply chain, as well as the development of innovative business models. Given the substantial organizational changes that digital transformation entails, each change initiative requires careful management (Wade & Marchand, 2014). Successful implementation depends on effective teamwork within the organization.

Moreover, Farhani et al. (2017) highlight that every supply chain includes essential activities such as procuring raw materials, converting them into finished products, managing inventory, and delivering goods to customers. They outline seven dimensions of the supply chain: suppliers, production, inventory and logistics, customers, information technology, human resources, and performance measurement.

Digitalization is reshaping supply chains by integrating automation, AI, blockchain, and IoT, enhancing real-time tracking, collaboration, and resilience (Pyun & Rha, 2021). Sustainability is a major research focus, particularly in managing tourism SCM efficiently while minimizing environmental impact.

Digital Transformation in Tourism

The location of attractions is a crucial element in defining tourism, and many countries around the globe prioritize this industry to capitalize on its economic benefits (Barykin et al., 2021). Digital transformation spans various sectors, with industries like healthcare, banking, retail, and entertainment leading the way in embracing this shift. The tourism industry is similarly focusing on digital transformation to improve its services (Imtiaz & Kim, 2019).

Traditionally, travelers relied on travel agents to book tickets and accommodations. However, the rise of smartphones and digital technology has brought about a shift towards computerized reservation systems. Online booking directly through airline websites has simplified the process, reducing both time and costs and meeting customer needs more effectively (Chatzisavva, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2015; Lee, 2018).

The rapid advancement of digital technology has also transformed customer expectations in tourism, driven by ubiquitous mobile internet access, real-time information sharing, transparency, and social networking. To improve communication and streamline operations, tourism providers must innovate to capture customer interest with unique ideas (Alexieva, 2016).

Digital marketing enhances brand visibility and customer interaction, driving increased tourist engagement. AI and automation streamline customer service by personalizing travel experiences through chatbots, recommendation systems, and predictive analytics. Meanwhile, big data analytics enables tourism businesses to understand customer preferences, optimize pricing strategies, and forecast demand. The adoption of digital tools is essential for tourism businesses to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving global market (Chorna, Korzh, Kiziun, Onyshchuk, and Antoniuk, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explores the digital transformation of supply chain management (SCM) within Thailand's tourism industry using a qualitative case study approach. The research relies on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, as well as documentary analysis of industry reports, government policies, and other relevant documents.

Research Design and Data Collection

The study adopts a case study design using a purposive sampling with key industry stakeholder actively engaged in digital transformation initiatives, Comanche Gogojii, a leading integrated management system company with expertise in hospitality for hotels and serviced apartments.

Utilizing semi-structured interviews with senior executives and supply chain managers to capture detailed insights into the digital transformation process, covering themes such as technological adoption, operational improvements, digital integration challenges, and supply chain resilience. These interviews allow flexibility for probing specific areas of interest.

In addition to interviews, the study conducts documentary analysis of specific company reports, white papers, policy documents, and websites. These documents provide contextual data to support and validate interview findings. Documentary analysis further complements the interviews, providing context and supporting data for triangulation. Together, these methods facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, trends, and outcomes associated with digital transformation in Thailand's tourism SCM.

Data Analysis

Data is analyzed using thematic analysis, involving familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation. This process identifies recurring themes related to technological advancements, operational improvements, and the impact of digital transformation on SCM within the tourism industry.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the study uses data triangulation by comparing interview findings with documentary analysis and relevant literature. Member checking is also conducted to confirm that the interpretations accurately reflect participant perspectives. Reliability is maintained through detailed documentation of the research process, enabling transparency and replicability.

RESULTS

The results from in-depth interviews and document analysis of this study provide an in-depth understanding of the digital transformation of supply chain management in the tourism industry. The findings align with the study's three research objectives, highlighting the role of digital technology, the challenges faced, and the influence of policies and collaboration on these transformation efforts.

The Role of Digital Technology in Optimizing Supply Chain Processes

Digital technology plays a significant role in enhancing efficiency across the hospitality supply chain by streamlining processes and integrating data for better decision-making. Key technologies, including:

1. **Omni-Channel Communication**: By employing a seamless communication system that connects various customer touchpoints, the technology enables real-time tracking of customer service issues. This integration supports improved customer satisfaction by facilitating prompt responses and efficient resolution processes.
2. **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Systems**: CRM systems are essential for capturing and analyzing customer data, which uses to personalize guest experiences. Through integrated data on guest preferences, spending patterns, and visit frequency, hotels can tailor their offerings, thereby enhancing customer loyalty and retention.
3. **Performance Monitoring Tools**: Digital solutions for performance tracking enable the monitoring of operational metrics across departments. For example, utilizes tools that track customer service response times and resolution rates, optimizing both employee productivity and customer experience.
4. **Digital Reservation and Booking Platforms:** digital reservation and booking platforms have significantly contributed to supply chain optimization. Online booking systems enable seamless customer interactions, real-time updates, and dynamic pricing strategies, reducing reliance on traditional agency-based models. By integrating reservation platforms with CRM and supply chain management systems, businesses can enhance service personalization and streamline operational efficiency.

The findings suggest that digital technology in supply chain management enables hotels to offer more cohesive and customized services, ultimately improving operational effectiveness and driving customer engagement.

Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Digital Transformation

Several challenges in adopting digital solutions, particularly within the context of the hotel and tourism supply chain:

1. **Competition from New Entrants with Advanced Technology**: the influx of new competitors equipped with innovative technologies and aggressive pricing strategies. These competitors present a challenge for established businesses, as they often attract customers with cost-effective solutions. However, while competition from new entrants with advanced technology presents challenges for established businesses, it also serves as a catalyst for digital transformation.
2. **Economic Constraints**: The tourism and hospitality industry faces significant economic pressures, particularly in times of global economic uncertainty. These constraints limit the ability of businesses to invest in digital solutions. While technology can reduce operational costs, the high level of human interaction required in hospitality makes it challenging to fully automate processes without compromising service quality.
3. **Reliance on Human-Centered Service**: Despite the advantages of digital tools, emphasizes the importance of human touch, especially in luxury service settings. While

technology can optimize certain aspects of operations, maintaining quality customer experiences often requires human interaction. This reliance on human services poses a barrier to fully integrating digital solutions in the hospitality supply chain.

The findings indicate that while digital transformation offers significant benefits, the industry's unique requirements and financial limitations present substantial obstacles to the widespread adoption of new technologies.

The Impact of Government Policies and Collaborative Frameworks

The study highlights the role of supportive policies and collaboration in advancing digital transformation in tourism supply chain management. Several policy initiatives could facilitate the adoption of digital technology:

1. **Incentives for Local Technology Solutions**: government-backed incentives for businesses that adopt locally sourced technology solutions, such as Thai-based cloud providers and internet services. These incentives would not only reduce costs for businesses but also support the local economy by fostering domestic technological infrastructure.
2. **Collaborative Ecosystems**: establishing collaborative frameworks between public and private sectors to create a connected and integrated ecosystem. For example, by allowing hotels and tourism services access to immigration data through APIs, the government could streamline guest verification processes, enhance security, and facilitate better data-driven decision-making.
3. **Use of Data for Strategic Planning**: the potential of using data analytics to inform industry-wide planning and marketing strategies. By aggregating data on tourist demographics and travel patterns, policymakers could more effectively promote tourism and target specific tourist segments. This approach would help businesses tailor their services and events, ensuring that offerings align with tourist trends and preferences.

The findings demonstrate that a cohesive policy framework and collaborative ecosystem are essential to support digital transformation in the tourism supply chain. Such initiatives would enable businesses to leverage digital tools more effectively, increase operational efficiency, and better meet customer needs.

The results of this study underscore the transformative potential of digital technology in tourism supply chain management, with the integration of CRM systems, performance monitoring tools, and omni-channel communication leading to enhanced operational efficiency and improved customer experiences. However, the challenges posed by economic constraints, competition, and the need for human-centered services highlight the barriers to full-scale digital adoption. Lastly, the findings emphasize the importance of supportive policies and industry partnerships in facilitating digital transformation. Through incentives for local technology adoption and data-driven strategic planning, government and private sector collaboration could play a pivotal role in creating a resilient and competitive tourism supply chain.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the digital transformation of supply chain management (SCM) within the tourism industry in Thailand, emphasizing the adoption of digital tools to optimize processes and enhance customer satisfaction. The findings reflect the broader SCM literature, which underscores the importance of logistics, strategic collaboration, and stakeholder integration to improve supply chain performance (Chen & Paulraj, 2004). However, the study also reveals unique considerations specific to the tourism industry, such as the intangibility of services and the critical role of digital technology in meeting evolving customer expectations.Digital transformation has emerged as a crucial factor in reshaping SCM across industries. This is consistent with Hoberg et al. (2015), who describe digital transformation as a comprehensive process that redefines how organizations create value, collaborate with partners, and compete globally. In the tourism industry, the use of digital SCM enables seamless communication and real-time data sharing among stakeholders, such as hotels, airlines, and travel agencies. This digital integration streamlines operations, improving the accuracy and efficiency of processes, as identified in this study.

The tourism industry, in particular, has benefited from digital reservation and booking systems, which have shifted from traditional travel agency-based models to online platforms that offer customers quick and convenient access to services. Similar to findings by Chatzisavva (2018), Kim & Kim (2015), and Lee (2018), this study confirms that digital reservation systems enhance customer experiences by reducing time and costs associated with booking. Additionally, real-time access to information and the ability to customize services through digital platforms align with the changing preferences of today's travelers, who prioritize transparency, flexibility, and speed (Alexieva, 2016).

While Prasad and Selven (2010) argue that traditional SCM objectives - reducing cycle time, minimizing inventory, and lowering logistics costs - do not fully translate to service industries, the findings of this study indicate that digital transformation allows tourism businesses to achieve similar efficiency gains through data-driven decision-making, automation, and predictive analytics**.** For example, data-driven demand forecasting helps optimize resource allocation, minimizing inefficiencies even in service-heavy environments. Moreover, the adoption of digital reservation and customer engagement systems enables real-time updates and predictive personalization, reducing operational lag and enhancing service quality. These findings suggest that while SCM strategies differ between goods and services, digital integration offers alternative methods to achieve operational efficiency and cost control in tourism supply chains.

The implementation of digital technologies within tourism SCM requires substantial investment in infrastructure and training, which can be a barrier for many organizations. As Farhani et al. (2017) explain, successful digital transformation in SCM involves seven key dimensions, including suppliers, production, logistics, customers, and IT. Managing these dimensions effectively within the tourism sector requires a well-coordinated effort to ensure that digital tools are compatible with the industry's needs. Moreover, Wade and Marchand (2014) emphasize that successful digital transformation initiatives require careful management and teamwork, which can be challenging for tourism organizations that may lack the resources or expertise to implement such changes on a large scale.

The tourism industry is uniquely positioned to benefit from digital transformation, as customers increasingly seek streamlined, responsive, and personalized services. The shift from traditional, agent-based booking systems to digital platforms reflects a broader trend of digital transformation in tourism (Imtiaz & Kim, 2019). For instance, online booking systems allow customers to make reservations, access itineraries, and adjust travel plans in real time, addressing their need for immediate, flexible, and accessible services.

The study findings align with Barykin et al. (2021), who argue that tourism is a strategic priority for many countries due to its potential economic benefits. The adoption of digital technologies in tourism SCM thus becomes a key factor in enhancing a nation's competitiveness by improving customer satisfaction and optimizing service delivery. To stay competitive, tourism providers must innovate and present unique ideas to capture customer interest, leveraging technology to deliver distinctive and memorable experiences (Alexieva, 2016). Businesses that invested in cloud-based inventory management, digital marketing automation, and predictive analytics tools were more adaptable to market shifts and external disruptions, such as fluctuating travel demands. This aligns with Chorna et al. (2024), who highlight that digital transformation ensures long-term sustainability and market adaptability.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of an integrated supply chain ecosystem, which is essential for effective SCM in the tourism industry. As emphasized by Chen and Paulraj (2004) and Li et al. (2005), strategic collaboration among business partners enhances overall supply chain performance by facilitating information flow and reducing inefficiencies. The study reveals that digital SCM enables seamless collaboration between various stakeholders, improving operational efficiency and customer service.

Tourism supply chains include both core services, such as accommodation, transportation, dining, and entertainment, and supplementary services that support the overall tourist experience. These findings align with the literature on tourism SCM, which underscores the need for a well-integrated system that allows for seamless coordination between these components (Baddeley & Font, 2011). Through digital SCM, tourism providers can develop a cohesive network of services that enhances customer satisfaction and drives the competitiveness of their offerings. While automation and AI improve efficiency**,** companies must ensure that these technologies contribute to long-term environmental and economic sustainability**.** As Pyun & Rha (2021) suggest, future digital supply chain strategies must align with global sustainability frameworks to ensure long-term viability and competitive advantage.

The findings suggest that a supportive policy framework is necessary to facilitate digital transformation in tourism SCM. Countries such as Thailand that prioritize tourism as a strategic industry can benefit from policies that promote investment in digital infrastructure, encourage innovation, and foster collaboration between public and private sectors. As digital transformation continues to reshape SCM, there is a need for more research on how policy frameworks can support tourism organizations in implementing digital technologies to improve service delivery and operational efficiency.

Looking forward, the tourism industry must continue to adapt to the evolving digital landscape by integrating new technologies that align with customer expectations. Digital transformation in tourism SCM not only improves internal processes but also has the potential to enhance the overall tourist experience by enabling personalized, flexible, and efficient services. As the industry moves towards a digital future, an integrated, collaborative, and technology-driven approach to SCM will be essential for sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

Despite the valuable insights provided, this study has several limitations. First, the research relies on qualitative case studies and in-depth interviews, which may limit generalizability to the broader tourism industry. While the selected cases represent key stakeholders, the findings may not fully capture regional variations or industry-specific nuances. Second, the study focuses primarily on hotel and tourism service providers, meaning that perspectives from related industries (e.g., airlines, logistics providers) require further exploration. Third, the study examines current digital adoption trends but does not quantify long-term impacts, suggesting a need for longitudinal studies. Future research could address these gaps by incorporating quantitative data analysis, cross-industry comparisons, and long-term performance metrics to enhance the understanding of digital transformation in tourism SCM.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the digital transformation of supply chain management (SCM) within Thailand's tourism industry, highlighting the role of digital technology in optimizing operations, the challenges hindering widespread adoption, and the importance of supportive policies and collaborative frameworks. The findings reveal that digital transformation in tourism SCM enables more efficient operations, enhances customer experiences, and ultimately strengthens the industry's competitive advantage. Key technologies such as omni-channel communication, CRM systems, and performance monitoring tools play pivotal roles in streamlining processes and personalizing customer interactions, aligning with current industry trends and the needs of a digitally-driven market.

Despite these benefits, several barriers complicate the adoption of digital solutions. Economic constraints, competitive pressures, and the inherent need for human-centric service in hospitality settings present significant challenges. These findings suggest that while digital tools can improve efficiency and data-driven decision-making, tourism businesses must carefully balance technological innovation with the preservation of personal interactions, especially in luxury service contexts. Additionally, the industry's financial limitations highlight the need for strategic investments in technology, underscoring the importance of a gradual and adaptive approach to digital transformation.

The study also emphasizes the role of government policies and industry partnerships in advancing digital transformation. Policies that encourage local technology adoption, combined with public-private collaboration frameworks, are essential to support tourism businesses in their digital transition. By incentivizing the use of Thai-based digital solutions and fostering an integrated ecosystem, the government can help reduce costs and facilitate the adoption of digital tools. Furthermore, collaborative initiatives that leverage data analytics can provide valuable insights

into customer behavior, enabling tourism businesses to tailor their offerings to align with evolving tourist preferences.

In conclusion, digital transformation offers the tourism industry in Thailand an opportunity to enhance SCM, improve customer engagement, and achieve operational excellence. However, achieving these outcomes requires a holistic approach that combines technology adoption, supportive policy frameworks, and industry collaboration. By leveraging these strategies, Thailand's tourism sector can build a resilient, competitive, and customer-focused supply chain that meets the demands of a rapidly changing digital landscape.

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