

Exploring the Usage of Digital Marketing among Selected Agricultural Marketing Co-operatives in Morogoro, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has revolutionized the way businesses attract and engage potential customers for their products and services. It has transformed the traditional marketing mix into a sophisticated digital ecosystem capable of executing millions of marketing activities in seconds. However, the extent to which cooperatives leverage digital marketing remains largely unexplored. This research utilized a quantitative descriptive approach, gathering data from 114 members and management teams of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS) in Morogoro, Tanzania. Data were collected through closed-ended questions directed at AMCOS leaders and members in March 2024 and subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that the concept of digital marketing is not well understood among cooperatives, and its usage is minimal. The most used digital marketing tools include mobile marketing via SMS, voice calls, calendar functions, photos, and videos, followed by social media marketing. The study indicates that where digital marketing is applied, it has increased efficiency, expanded reach, and reduced operational costs. These findings highlight a significant opportunity for cooperatives to enhance their marketing strategies by adopting digital tools more effectively. Policymakers and cooperative leaders should prioritize digital literacy and infrastructure development to fully harness the potential of digital marketing in this sector.

Keywords: Agricultural Marketing Co-Operatives, Digital Marketing, Marketing, Modern Marketing

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's digitalized world everything starts from browsing online before shifting to the physical check (Jadhav et al., 2023). Important marketing decision like where to buy, what to buy, how and where to buy are decided through digitals (Márquez et al., 2024). Digital marketing has revolutionized how businesses attract and engage potential customers for their products and services (Barbosa et al., 2024). Digital marketing is the application of digital tools and medias including mobile and interactive channels, to develop communication and exchanges with customers (Yi, 2018). Digital marketing is about managing online presence of marketing activities and using communication technologies as search engine optimization/marketing, digital promotion, online engagements, online public relations, email and social media marketing to achieve the marketing objectives (Jadhav et al., 2023). With its advanced capabilities, it has transformed the traditional marketing mix into a highly sophisticated digital ecosystem capable of executing millions of marketing activities in a matter of seconds (Márquez et al., 2024). In 2024, prevalent types of digital marketing include social media marketing, search engine optimization, email marketing, content marketing, big data analytics for marketing, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence-enabled marketing facilities. Digital marketing serves a multitude of purposes, from enhancing visibility and reach to conducting market research, aligning offerings with demand and supply, and fostering customer engagement (Márquez et al., 2024). Despite its importances, and popularity little is known regarding the application of digital marketing small entrepreneurs like marketing cooperatives. Paucity of knowledge in these matters affects effective development policy interventions, supportive strategies, capacitation initiatives.

Digital marketing emerged 1990s when there was a massive development and usage of information and communication technologies including internet, mobile phones, digital cameras, and social media (Morozan et al., 2009). According to statistical the spending of digital marketing was 90.1 billion US dollars in 2017 and is expected to reach 870. billion US dollars in 2027 (Statistica, 2024b). All big companies in the world including Airbnb, ZAppos, Dove, Nike, Amazon, Mint, and others deploy more than 80% of their budgets in digital marketing. Small entrepreneurs and groups also use different online tools like social media, internet, and other digital devices to achieve their marketing goals. It is common to find individual entrepreneurs advertising their products through WhatsApp status, and Instagram stories and Facebook. These companies use digital marketing to create experiences and content that draw in consumers and establish a strong connection between their products and their target audiences, hence

improve their brand equity and consumer engagements (Ritz et al., 2019). Despite the recognized advantages of digital marketing, there remains a lack of understanding among small enterprises regarding digital marketing, largely due to the predominant focus of existing literature on larger corporations and organizations.

The genesis of digital marketing traces back to the 1990s, a period marked by the rapid proliferation and utilization of information and communication technologies such as the internet, mobile phones, digital cameras, and social media platforms (Birzu, 2023). Statistics underscore the exponential growth of digital marketing expenditures, soaring from 90.1 billion US dollars in 2017 to a projected 870 billion US dollars by 2027 (Statistica, 2024a). Major global players, including Airbnb, Zappos, Dove, Nike, Amazon, and Mint, allocate over 80% of their budgets to digital marketing strategies. Moreover, small-scale entrepreneurs and grassroots entities harness a myriad of online tools—ranging from social media platforms to internet resources and digital devices—to achieve their marketing objectives (Saura et al., 2023). It's become increasingly commonplace to witness individual entrepreneurs leveraging platforms like WhatsApp status, Instagram stories, and Facebook to advertise their products (Mramba & Rumanyika, 2020). Across the spectrum, companies harness digital marketing not merely to broadcast messages but to craft immersive experiences and compelling content that captivate consumers, fostering a profound connection between their brands and target audiences (Peter & Dalla Vecchia, 2021). This strategic deployment not only enhances brand equity but also cultivates deeper consumer engagement, propelling businesses towards sustained growth and market success.

Small enterprises can harness the power of digital marketing much like their larger counterparts (Jadhav et al., 2023). However, their ability to fully leverage the digital landscape is often constrained by factors such as investment capacity, technical expertise, and available technological infrastructure (Saura et al., 2023). Despite these limitations, small enterprises employ both traditional and conventional digital marketing strategies, sometimes inadvertently. They engage in activities such as sending and receiving SMS, emails, calls, and utilizing various social media platforms to communicate with members and customers (Ayim et al., 2022). While small enterprises do utilize digital marketing platforms, their utilization may not reach the same scale as that of larger companies (Jadhav et al., 2023). Small enterprises have its own way of adopting and using digital technologies, unlike the big businesses/enterprises.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In today's competitive digital landscape and ecosystem, digital marketing and its related functionalities have emerged as critical enablers for businesses to reach and engage their target audiences efficiently and effectively. While many medium and large institutions have embraced this shift, the extent to which small cooperatives, such as Agricultural Marketing Co-operatives (AMCOS) in Morogoro Urban, have implemented and utilized digital marketing remains unclear and understudied. Agricultural cooperatives play a vital role in linking farmers to markets and supporting agricultural development. However, their marketing activities and strategies frequently rely on traditional methods that may not fully capitalize on the advantages offered by digital platforms. This is much attributed by lack of resources and skills necessary to execute it (Ndauka & Matotola, 2023). The limited understanding and application of modern marketing among these cooperatives could hinder their marketing capacity and capabilities hence low performance of AMCOS. This research focuses on assessing the current adoption and utilization of digital marketing tools and examining their impact on market reach and sales performance.

1.2 Research Objective

- i. To evaluate the current adoption and usage of digital marketing among Agricultural Marketing Co-operatives in Morogoro, Tanzania
- ii. To analyze the impact of digital marketing on market reach and sales performance of AMCOS in Morogoro, Tanzania.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is based on the Task-Technology Fit (TTF) theory, which was developed by Goodhue and Thompson in 1995 (Yu & Chen, 2019). TTF posits that technology is more likely to be used effectively when its capabilities align with the tasks that users need to perform. According to TTF, individuals are more likely to achieve better performance when using systems and technologies that are well-suited to their specific tasks (Jeyaraj, 2022). This implies that the effectiveness of technology usage depends on how well it fits the users' task requirements. Goodhue and Thompson's research (1995) suggests that technology usage is explained by its impact on performance. TTF aims to assess how information and communication technology can be leveraged to help employees achieve optimal performance

(Muchenje & Seppänen, 2023). The TTF model asserts that information technology will only be used effectively if it adequately supports the user's activities, and that performance will improve when the technology provides the necessary features and support for the task (Ratna et al., 2018). Overall, the model offers insights into technology usage and the value it generates (Spies et al., 2020).

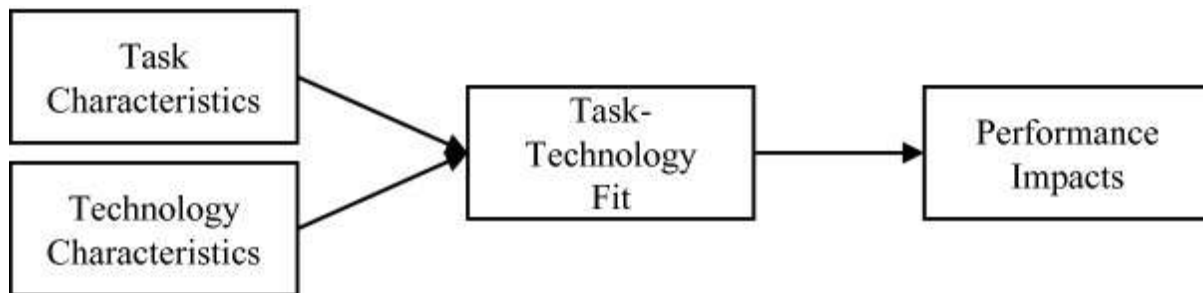


Figure 1
Three Components of TTF

Task Characteristics (The tasks that need to be performed). Task characteristics pertain to the specific activities or actions that users undertake to accomplish objectives (Usoro et al., 2010). These tasks can differ in complexity, frequency, and significance. Examples of tasks include data entry, data analysis, decision-making, communication, and problem-solving. The assessment of task characteristics involves evaluating factors like task non-routineness, interdependence, and job title, which collectively influence the extent to which a user depends on technology (Klopping & McKinney, 2004). Task characteristics are closely tied to the technology that facilitates these tasks and are analyzed at various levels of detail, based on the complexity of the tasks being performed (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995). Technology characteristics are defined as the attributes of information technology, whether in the form of software or hardware, that assist individuals in completing tasks at work (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995). This is technology's capacity and capability to assist individuals in carrying out their range of tasks that are crucial (Muchenje & Seppänen, 2023). Various parameters, such as reliability, processing speed, accuracy, troubleshooting requirements, flexibility, and compatibility, are used to assess the characteristics of technology, which in turn statistically influence its overall fit (Ratna et al., 2018). Technology characteristics refers to technology-specific attributes and functionalities. The alignment between the task requirements and technology capabilities. When technology aligns with the characteristics of the task it is intended to support, as well as the users' abilities, tasks can be carried out more smoothly by the users. According to TTF theory, a stronger alignment between technology, task requirements, and individual abilities leads to improved performance, resulting in more efficient task completion (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995).

2.2 Empirical Review

Digital marketing is a focal agenda for business development in 21 century. Every day, digital marketing gains momentum as internet-based strategies emerge as potent tools. Electronic devices like smartphones, tablets, laptops, digital billboards, portable gaming consoles, and various gadgets play pivotal roles in advancing digital marketing efforts (Denga et al., 2022). Digital Marketing development is highly connected with supporting factors such as innovativeness, proactiveness, organizational agility, and managerial capabilities, which are pivotal in the organization's strategy (Wu et al., 2024). Digital marketing enable buyers to explore product attributes, pricing, availability, and information before and during purchase decision (Singh et al., 2024). Digital facilities allow marketers to know in advance what to produce, how to produce, as well as marketing positioning strategies (Márquez et al., 2024). Digital marketing has become an indispensable tool for businesses in the modern age, offering numerous significant advantages. Firstly, it provides a platforms for targeted promotion, enabling businesses to reach specific intended demographics with precision and efficiency, within the needed time (Alhabash et al., 2017). Through big data analytics and specific user profiling, digital marketers can tailor their marketing campaigns to resonate with the interests and behaviors of the needed audience, thereby maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of their marketing efforts (Verma et al., 2021). Importantly, digital marketing offers unparalleled scalability, enabling institutions of all type to expand their reach and compete on a level playing field in the online marketplace (Sweeney, 2022).

Digital marketing encompasses a variety of strategies and tactics aimed at promoting products, services, or brands through online channels. One of the most prevalent types is social media marketing (Moedeen et al., 2024),

which leverages platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Tik tok, YouTube and LinkedIn to interact with audiences, build engagement, and drive conversions. Search engine optimization (SEO) is another essential type, focusing on optimizing websites to rank higher in search engine results pages (Le et al., 2024), thereby increasing visibility and organic traffic. Email marketing (Mummalaneni et al., 2024) remains a stalwart, enabling personalized communication with customers and prospects through targeted email campaigns. Content marketing (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2024), on the other hand, involves creating and distributing valuable, relevant content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience. Other types include influencer marketing, pay-per-click advertising, affiliate marketing (Ursu et al., 2024), and more, each offering unique avenues for brands to connect with their target audience and achieve their marketing goals in the digital realm. The future of digital marketing is poised to be dynamic and transformative, driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer behaviors, and regulatory changes (Hassani et al., 2020). Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning will continue to play a significant role (Louridas & Ebert, 2016), enabling marketers to personalize experiences, automate processes, and derive actionable insights from vast amounts of data. Chatbots and virtual assistants will become more sophisticated, providing real-time customer support and enhancing the overall user experience (Andrade & Tumelero, 2022).

Digital marketing offers an important role in today's economy by driving development, growth, promotion innovation, and facilitating connectivity (Yuniarta et al., 2023). As businesses increasingly shift their operations online, digital marketing serves as a catalyst for economic expansion by enabling companies to reach wider audiences, enter new markets, and compete more effectively (Kelikume, 2021). Through targeted advertising campaigns, businesses can identify and engage with specific demographics, driving sales and generating revenue (Denga et al., 2022). Moreover, digital marketing empowers small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to compete on a level playing field with larger corporations, as online platforms offer cost-effective marketing solutions and access to a global customer base (Jadhav et al., 2023).

Moreover, virtual marketing technologies offers real-time customer engagement (Valaskova et al., 2022) and interaction with customers, raising a sense of customer caring and brand loyalty (Hassan & Zahran, 2023). Social media platforms, email marketing, and other communication channels allow marketers to engage with their customers, responding to complaints and inquiries, providing support services, and taking feedback in real-time (Ninan, 2022). This real time communication enhances the customer experience and offers valuable insights that can inform future marketing strategies and product development (Valaskova et al., 2022). Digital marketing is also praised for its potential to be cost-effective compared to traditional marketing channels (Denga et al., 2022). By utilizing online platforms such as social media, search engines, and email marketing, businesses can reach their target audience at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising methods like TV or print ads. Ultimately, the significance of digital marketing lies in its ability to drive brand awareness, customer engagement, and ultimately, revenue growth in an increasingly digital world.

Criticism of digital marketing often centers around concerns regarding privacy invasion (Sachdev, 2020), data provided by consumer while buying and seeking information are sometimes used, stored, sold or processed without their consent directly and indirectly. Additionally, there are worries about the fake promotions; the rise in digital marketing has been associated with the proliferation of fake advertising (Nistor & Zadobrischi, 2022). Advertising is considered fake when it makes untrue, misleading, and deceptive statements (Nistor & Zadobrischi, 2022). Critics also argue that digital marketing preserves consumerism and materialism by creating increased pressure to purchase, often promoting deceptive products (Maison & Adamezyk, 2020). Furthermore, there are environmental concerns, with the energy-intensive nature of digital infrastructure contributing to carbon emissions (Alkhatib et al., 2023). Lastly, some critics focus on ethical marketing, absence of transparency and accountability in during the process of exchanging, particularly regarding the use of algorithms and the undisclosed sponsorship of content (Kiemde & Kora, 2022).

Agricultural marketing cooperatives are farmer associations dedicated to addressing various aspects of agricultural marketing, encompassing the identification of markets, sales activities, procurement of agricultural inputs, and provision of fundamental financial services to their members (Rwela, 2023). Agricultural marketing cooperatives gather products from small farmers, consolidating them into larger quantities, and collectively seek out markets on behalf of individual farmers. Furthermore, they assist in meeting specific market requirements, such as product quality, quantities, and other marketing standards. Additionally, some agricultural cooperatives have entered into contracts with international exporters/importers to represent them in trade negotiations (Liu & Wu, 2022). Agricultural marketing cooperatives serve as a fundamental mechanism for small farmers to jointly navigate the difficulties of modern agricultural markets (Candemir et al., 2021). These cooperatives are basically farmer-owned, managed, controlled, and financed organs that simplify the joint marketing initiatives, particularly selling agricultural products (Paraschou & Sergaki, 2024). By combining their resources, farmers can enhance their visibility in the market,



improve their bargaining power for prices, and avail themselves of a range of services that would be otherwise out of reach or too expensive if pursued individually (Paraschou & Sergaki, 2024). From small-scale family farms to larger agricultural enterprises, these cooperatives offer a unified approach to marketing that empowers farmers to compete more effectively in an increasingly competitive marketplace. (Asma et al., 2024).

One of the fundamental principle of agricultural marketing cooperatives is their focus on democratic operations including decision-making, elections, and equality (Kalogiannidis, 2020). Unlike traditional corporate structures where decisions are often centralized and profits flow to external shareholders, cooperatives prioritize the interests of their former members. Each member typically has an equal vote in major decisions, regardless of the size of their operation, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among participants. This democratic governance ensures that the cooperative operates in the best interests of its members, promoting transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability. Moreover, agricultural marketing cooperatives play a crucial role in fostering community resilience and economic development in rural areas. By fostering collaboration and mutual support among farmers, these cooperatives contribute to the social fabric of agricultural communities. They provide a platform for knowledge-sharing, skill development, and collective problem-solving, empowering farmers to adapt to changing market conditions and emerging challenges. Additionally, by retaining a larger share of the value generated from their products through cooperative marketing, farmers can reinvest in their operations, improve their livelihoods, and contribute to the overall prosperity of rural economies. In essence, agricultural marketing cooperatives represent a powerful model for sustainable agriculture that prioritizes cooperation, fairness, and collective prosperity.

The study by (Ndauka & Matotola, 2023) examined the roles of technology adoption by two Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS) in Dodoma, Tanzania. A cross-sectional research design was applied, using return on investment and return on profit as performance criteria. The research did not find a relationship between technology adoption and AMCOS performance. The study recommends that for AMCOS to benefit from technology, they should adopt technologies that are contextualized to their specific ecosystem. The by (Cristobal-Fransi et al., 2020) assessed the impact of websites owned by agri-food cooperatives in facilitating effective communication in an online environment and adapting to e-commerce. The analysis focused on web content and structure based on four criteria: Information, Communication, E-Commerce, and Additional Functions. The findings indicated that extra interventions are needed for cooperatives to fully benefit from technology for effective communication and interaction with their target audience. The study by (Ingale & Sayed, 2022) recommended deeper integration of ICT into all functional areas of cooperatives. Commented that, given the global marketing development cooperatives must harness the application of modern technology platforms to compete effectively in the competitive markets.

Study by (Jorge-Vázquez et al., 2021) analysed the level of digitalization of the European agri-food cooperative sector through the analysis of frequencies and correlations. The findings indicate that the level of digitization among European agri-food cooperatives is suboptimal and varies significantly, influenced by the cooperatives' size and the economic status of their respective countries. To address this, advisable to implement public policies that ensure robust digital connectivity, enhance digital skills training, and encourage the integration of cooperatives.

Table 1
Digital Marketing Strategies

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Search Engine Optimization (SEO) | We use Search Engine optimization (SEM) techniques to promote websites by increasing their visibility on search engine results pages (SERPs)(Nagpal & Petersen, 2021). The goal of SEO to increase the fame of a link on the Search Engine Result Pages (SERP) to appear than others hence driving high traffic |
| 2. | Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC) | Online service that enables marketers to place advertisement on websites and pays the host a service fee for each click (Rezaei et al., 2024). The marketer pays only the ad is clicked. |
| 3. | Social Media Marketing (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok) | Deploying social media networks to undertake marketing activities and strategies(Moedeen et al., 2024). Common marketing activities carried through social media are promotion, engagement, communicating and research |
| 4. | Content Marketing | Content marketing is about creating for sharing to the public to tell the audience about the products. It can be a video, message, photo, or anything to inform, educate, persuade, entertain or engage with identified public (Beard et al., 2021). |

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 5. | Email Marketing | Using email to undertake marketing activities e.g. promotion, information, feedback and branding (Ligaraba et al., 2023). Although old email marketing is still important and used by millions of people around the world to market. These emails can serve various purposes, from promoting products or services to providing valuable content and building relationships with recipients. |
| 6. | Affiliate Marketing | A type of online marketing where a company (the advertiser or merchant) enters into a contract with another company (the publisher or affiliate) to display a link to its website on the affiliate's sites (Tanwar & SAHU, 2024). It is about collaborating with other businesses or individuals who market your products and receive a commission for the sales they generate. |
| 7. | Influencer Marketing- | Is a new kind of independent third-party promoter who influences audience opinions through blogs, tweets, and various other social media platforms (Joshi et al., 2023). These influencers promote the brand's products or services through their social media channels, blogs, or other online platforms, leveraging their credibility and reach to shape the attitudes and behaviors of their followers. |
| 8. | Display Advertising. | Display advertising is a popular online advertising channel that involves placing graphical advertisements on publishers' websites (Broder et al., 2011). Ad selection is based on the content of the web page (contextual targeting) or the user's previous online activities (behavioral targeting). |
| 9. | Video Marketing | Video advertising, or video marketing, is a relatively popular concept. Advertisers use online video ads as a new method to reach global online audiences. Understanding viewers' attitudes and mindsets toward these ads is crucial. Online video ads are among the fastest-growing social media advertising platforms. Marketers can upload videos of their products on various e-commerce websites. Viewers can watch these videos and then visit the specific websites to potentially purchase products from those online stores (Alharthey, 2021) |
| 10. | Mobile Marketing | Marketing through mobile electronic tools including phones, laptop, digital watch, digital cameras and others (Xiao & Wang, 2022) |
| 13. | Voice Search Optimization. | Voice search is a technology that enables users to conduct searches by speaking into a device (Anttila, 2021). The users of voice search appreciate its convenience, finding it easier and quicker to vocalize their search queries rather than typing them on a keyboard. |
| 14. | Podcast Marketing | Podcast Marketing: Developing and promoting audio content to captivate audiences and raise brand awareness (Kreutz & Thalmann, 2023). |
| 15. | Webinars and Online Events | Webinars and Online Events: Conducting live or recorded digital events to inform and interact with potential and current customers. The use of webinars is not just an online marketing medium, but has features to make surveys, share information, and research important after the activity is completed (Salam & Hajriyanti, 2022) |
| 16. | Online Public Relations- | Online Public Relations: Online public relations, often referred to as E-PR or digital PR, involves utilizing the internet to engage with both prospective and existing customers in the public domain (Gifford, 2010). Managing your brand's online image and fostering relationships with digital media and influencers. |
| 17. | Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO). | Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO): Conversion rate optimization (CRO) involves crafting an e-commerce website interface to maximize the number of users who complete a desired action, such as creating an account, requesting contact, or making a purchase (Soonsawad, 2013). Enhancing the efficiency of your website and landing pages to boost the percentage of visitors who become customers. |
| 18. | Interactive Content | Interactive Content: Creating content that engages users through active participation, such as quizzes, polls, and interactive infographics (Sachdev, 2020). |

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional research approach where data will be collected at a single point in time. Cross-sectional research is recommended by (Kesmodel, 2018) when the researcher is interested in assessing the prevalence of a phenomenon. The latest list of AMCOS for Morogoro Municipal was obtained from the Morogoro Municipal Cooperative Officer, and members and the management were used for the study (census). Out of 160 AMCOS, 114

were agreed to participate to the study, 46 were not ready to participate to the study for personal reasons. Questionnaires were sent via SMS (28 respondents) and WhatsApp (86 respondents). The use of both WhatsApp and SMS was motivated by the fact that some respondents did not have the WhatsApp application on their phones. Questions assessing whether, and how MCOS interact with different forms of digital marketing were asked. Although there are several forms of digital marketing (Hassan & Zahran, 2023), we focused on those that, are relevant to small enterprises/organizations ecosystems (Jadhav et al., 2023). For the purpose of this study we focused with the following categories of digital marketing; Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC), Social Media Marketing (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok), Content Marketing, Email Marketings, Affiliate Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Display Advertising, Video Marketing, Mobile Marketing, Remarketing/Retargeting, Native Advertising, Voice Search Optimization, Podcast Marketing, Webinars and Online Events, Online Public Relations, Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO, Interactive Content

The respondents of the study are the top leaders of AMCOS, particularly the Chair and Vice Chair. We believe that the Chair can represent the experiences of other leaders. The questionnaires were developed using Google Forms, and the link to the questionnaires was sent to the respondents. Once the recipient clicks the link, the URL will directly take them to the questions. The questions were written in Swahili, the native language of Tanzania. After sending the questionnaire link to the respondents, phone calls were made to explain the purpose of the study and encourage timely responses. Some AMCOS Chairs were hesitant to complete the questionnaires due to a lack of trust. Some WhatsApp messages were not delivered for up to three days because the recipients did not have internet data. It took almost 30 days for some respondents to complete the questionnaires. Several phone calls were made to prompt quicker responses. Out of 114 questionnaires only 94 qualify for data analysis, the remaining lacked validity since we found unusual reconcondenses; for example, some respondents picked the first choice in likert scale for all questions. Survey experts (Zijlstra et al., 2011) recommend to remove such outliers before moving to data analysis. 94 set of questionnaires were qualified for data analysis. Data were analyzed through descriptive and correlation analysis.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Focused on Assessing the Current Adoption and Utilization of Digital Marketing Tools

The aim of this research question was to assess the extent to which AMCOS in Morogoro Urban have adopted and are utilizing various digital marketing tools and platforms (such as social media, websites, email marketing, and digital advertisements). Understanding the current level of digital marketing adoption will help identify gaps and opportunities for further enhancement. The Task-Technology Fit model (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995) suggests that the alignment between task demands and technology features influences the extent to which the technology is utilized and how well individuals perform. In other words, if the activities of AMCOS align with the available technology, then its utilization is likely to be high and vice versa.

The findings show that AMCOS's utilization of social media marketing remains notably low, as highlighted by the research findings. The study revealed that 95% of respondents were already familiar with the concept of digital marketing (soko mtandao) before participating in this study, while the remaining 5% encountered the term for the first time during the research. Despite this high level of awareness, many respondents could not articulate what digital marketing specifically entailed for their marketing activities. This disconnect suggests a gap between awareness and understanding, underscoring the need for targeted education and training to bridge this knowledge gap.

The majority of AMCOS leaders, many of whom (68%) are retired public servants, are familiar with the term digital marketing but struggle to integrate it into their associations effectively. Their exposure to the concept comes from various sources, including meetings, television, radio, training sessions, and other gatherings. However, this exposure has not translated into practical application, indicating a critical need for more practical, hands-on training that can demonstrate the tangible benefits and methods of implementing digital marketing strategies within their specific contexts. This is perhaps what (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995) highlighted as a lack of fit. This is particularly important as digital marketing could significantly enhance their outreach and engagement with potential markets.

From the question "*Which digital marketing tools does your organization use?*" (Table 2) utilization of social media marketing remains notably low. Despite the proliferation of several high-tech social media marketing tools, AMCOS are predominantly using traditional methods like voice calls, SMS, and photo sharing for their marketing purposes. This preference suggests a significant gap between the availability of modern digital marketing tools and their adoption by AMCOS (digital divide). The primary reasons for this gap appear to be the limited education level of the members and a lack of digital marketing training and exposure, which restricts the utilization of contemporary digital marketing opportunities. This reliance of traditional technologies hampers their ability to streamline processes, access real-time data, and engage in modern marketing strategies, thereby limiting their competitiveness in a rapidly



evolving market. Additionally, the use of obsolete technology can lead to inefficiencies, increased operational costs, and a higher likelihood of errors, ultimately affecting the quality of service provided to members. To remain viable and competitive, it is crucial for AMCOS to embrace digital transformation and leverage contemporary technologies that can enhance productivity, improve decision-making, and foster sustainable growth.

Furthermore, while social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, are frequently used by AMCOS, the extent of their usage is generally basic. The findings in table 1 show that, AMCOS are occasionally use social media for marketing purposes (*Mean = 4 which is sometimes*). The results show that 69% of social media usage is for personal affairs rather than business purposes. Our observations from the respondents' phones reveal that they mostly use free personal WhatsApp services like text messages, voice messages, and photo and video sharing. Advanced features such as WhatsApp video meetings, group chats with up to 1024 participants, WhatsApp for Business, or WhatsApp Channels are rarely utilized. This limited use of advanced features indicates a need for more comprehensive training and support to help AMCOS fully leverage these platforms for marketing and communication.

Additionally, it was noted that all (100%) AMCOS have group WhatsApp accounts that connect all members who own smartphones. However, individual members tend to have personal Instagram and Facebook accounts rather than collective group accounts on these platforms. We did not find Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok account for the group or on individual basis. This fragmentation suggests that while there is some engagement with social media, it is not yet optimized for broader organizational use. The findings highlight the importance of enhancing digital literacy and providing targeted training to enable AMCOS to exploit the full potential of digital marketing tools, thus bridging the gap between current practices and modern marketing opportunities

This suggests that while there is some level of engagement with digital tools, it is limited to more traditional and accessible forms of communication. The reliance on these tools indicates a comfort level with simpler technologies, but also highlights the potential for growth in adopting more sophisticated digital marketing strategies. By expanding their use of diverse digital platforms and tools, AMCOS could enhance their marketing efforts, reaching a wider audience and increasing their overall effectiveness in promoting their products and services.

Table 2
Digital Marketing Strategies Used by AMCOS

| S/N | Digital Marketing strategies | Mean |
|-----|---|------|
| 1. | Mobile Marketing (SMS, voice call, Callender, photo) | 5 |
| 2. | Social Media Marketing (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok) | 4 |
| 3. | Video Marketing | 3.8 |
| 4. | Display Advertising. | 2.9 |
| 5. | Email Marketing | 2.5 |
| 6. | Content Marketing | 2 |
| 7. | Webinars and Online Events | 2 |
| 8. | Search Engine Optimization (SEO) | 1 |
| 9. | Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC) | 1 |
| 10. | Affiliate Marketing | 1 |
| 11. | Influencer Marketing- | 1 |
| 12. | Voice Search Optimization. | 1 |
| 13. | Podcast Marketing | 1 |
| 14. | Online Public Relations- | 1 |
| 15. | Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO). | 1 |
| 16. | Interactive Content | 1 |

The survey asked respondents how frequently they use digital marketing tools for AMCOS-related activities. Only 20% of respondents indicated that they use digital marketing tools daily, suggesting a limited dependency on these tools for day-to-day operations and campaigns. Meanwhile, 30% of respondents reported using digital marketing tools weekly, indicating that while they are not used daily, they still play a regular role in marketing activities. Additionally, 40% of respondents indicated that they use digital marketing tools at least monthly, and 10% reported that they have never used digital marketing to interact with AMCOS.

These findings suggest that individual members of AMCOS have limited engagement with their institutions via digital marketing tools. The relatively low frequency of daily and weekly usage indicates considerable potential for enhancing the integration of digital marketing into routine activities. Increasing the use of these tools could improve

communication, streamline operations, and strengthen member engagement within AMCOS. The data underscores the need for targeted initiatives to raise awareness and provide training on the advantages and practical uses of digital marketing tools in the organization. These results align with Ndauka and Matotola (2023), who pointed out that despite the low adoption of technology among AMCOS, it is essential to ensure its availability, optimal utilization, and accessibility to farmers to boost their performance. Similarly, low technology usage has been observed by Jorge-Vázquez et al. (2021) and other researchers, such as Ingale and Sayed (2022), who emphasized the importance of deeper technology integration for AMCOS.

4.2 Focus was to Examine the Impact of Digital Marketing on Market Reach and Sales Performance

The goal was to investigate the effects of digital marketing strategies and techniques on the market development of agricultural marketing co-operatives in Morogoro Urban. Studying the effect of digital marketing on key performance will provide input into the usefulness of these strategies and their roles in the co-operatives' growth. The TFT *Theory* advocated by Goodhue and Thompson (1995) forecasts job performance as outcome of technology use when there is fit between technology and task characteristics.

The results indicate that digital marketing has notably enhanced the market reach of AMCOS that utilize these tools. Social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, have enabled AMCOS to connect with a broader audience beyond their immediate geographical boundaries. These findings supports (Mramba & Rumanyika, 2020) who saw marketing expansion for informal workers as they adopted Instagram. This expanded reach has allowed AMCOS to attract new customers and engage with a more diverse market, contributing to increased brand awareness and visibility. This expansion is significant for AMCOS, which traditionally relied on localized word-of-mouth and physical interactions for marketing.

By leveraging the extensive networks offered by these platforms, AMCOS have been able to penetrate new markets and increase their customer base. Despite these positive outcomes, the research highlights the need for more structured and collective digital marketing strategies within AMCOS. While individual efforts on social media are beneficial, coordinated group efforts could amplify the impact. Training and support in digital marketing are essential to help AMCOS members effectively use these tools. There is a clear need for education and resources to bridge the digital literacy gap and enable AMCOS to fully leverage digital marketing opportunities. Addressing these needs could lead to even greater improvements in market reach and sales performance. This findings support the idea brought by (Ndauka & Matotola, 2023) who called upon the deeper integration of technology among AMCOS.

The results suggest a strong correlation between digital marketing adoption market reach and sales enhancement. The ability to reach a larger audience through social media and email marketing has translated into higher sales figures. This expanded market reach has not only increased the volume of sales but also diversified the customer base, reducing reliance on local markets and enhancing business stability. The correlation analysis is presented in table 3

Table 3
Coefficient Corrélation

| Factor | Correlation Coefficient | p-value |
|--|-------------------------|---------|
| Increase geographical reach of businesses, enabling to see new markets | 0.75 | 0.001 |
| Reduction in costs for interacting customers | 0.65 | 0.002 |
| Engagement, foster stronger relationships with customers | 0.70 | 0.002 |

The study demonstrates that digital marketing substantially improves market reach, with a p-value of 0.001 and a correlation coefficient of 0.75. This indicates that as AMCOS increasingly adopt and utilize digital marketing, their ability to penetrate new geographical markets expands. In other words, the more they engage in digital marketing, the greater their market expansion. This growth not only increases the number of AMCOS members but also boosts sales, market awareness, and brand recognition. Marketing and ICT scholars generally agree that, effective utilization of digital marketing leads to market growth and expansion (Denga et al., 2022; Ninan, 2022; Sweeney, 2022). By leveraging digital platforms like social media, search engines, and email marketing, businesses can connect with a wider and more varied audience. This increased reach enables companies to enter new markets and demographic segments that traditional marketing methods could not access. The ability to reach these previously untapped markets highlights the importance of investing in digital marketing strategies to achieve greater market penetration.

The findings reveal a positive connection between digital marketing adoption and a reduction in customer interaction costs ($r = 0.65$, $P = 0.002$). This indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that increased use of digital marketing is linked to a significant decrease in costs. The study emphasizes that strategies such as online

advertising, content marketing, and social media campaigns provide a higher return on investment (ROI). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in particular, benefit from the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of digital marketing, allowing them to compete with larger companies. With options like pay-per-click advertising and social media marketing, businesses can achieve substantial results with lower expenditures, suggesting that shifting marketing budgets towards digital channels can lead to better ROI. The research also highlights that digital marketing enhances customer engagement. All previous research confirm that, the adoption and use of digital marketing leads to marketing costs reduction (Denga et al., 2022; Valaskova et al., 2022).

The study highlights the flexibility and scalability of digital marketing. Businesses can swiftly modify their strategies in response to real-time feedback and market shifts. Furthermore, digital marketing campaigns can be easily scaled up or down to align with business objectives and market demand. This adaptability allows companies to continuously fine-tune their marketing efforts, ensuring sustained and improved sales performance. Digital marketing also boosts brand visibility and awareness through various online channels, such as search engines, social media, and content marketing. This increased visibility aids in building brand recognition and consumer trust, indicating that consistent and strategic online branding is essential for long-term success. These findings underscore the transformative role of digital marketing in expanding market reach and enhancing sales performance, highlighting its potential to drive business growth and secure a competitive edge in the digital era.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

In summary, digital marketing and its facilities have significantly changed the way businesses interact and connect with public, establishing an adaptable digital environment that can immediately carry out a variety of marketing activities. This research, which focused Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS) in urban Tanzania, presents that although digital marketing offers substantial advantages, its adoption and usage within cooperatives is still limited and poorly conceptualized. The study indicates that AMCOS mainly utilizes mobile marketing tools such as SMS and voice calls, along with social media marketing for basic communication not strategically to improve their marketing landscape. Even with its limited application, where digital marketing is used, it has resulted in improved efficiency, expanded reach, and lower operational costs. These results highlight a valuable opportunity for cooperatives to enhance their marketing strategies by more effectively adopting digital tools. To fully capitalize on these benefits, it is crucial for policymakers and cooperative leaders to prioritize digital literacy and infrastructure development in the sector.

5.2 Recommendations

The discrepancy between awareness of digital marketing strategies. Additionally, the cost-effectiveness of digital marketing compared to traditional methods supports the need for AMCOS to increasingly focus their marketing efforts online. This shift could lower operational costs, enhance communication, and streamline marketing processes, ultimately improving the sustainability and competitiveness of these cooperatives. The research also suggests that while individual AMCOS members are somewhat engaged with social media, a coordinated group approach could greatly enhance the impact. This calls for a more unified strategy in digital marketing within AMCOS, utilizing shared resources and strategies to maximize reach and effectiveness.

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