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Personal Knowledge Management in a Relationship of Knowledge and Digital Workplace Tools Adoption

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Abstract
The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) explains technology adoption intentions. However, it offers limited attention to personal knowledge capabilities required for actual use. Correspondingly, this study aims to examine how Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) influences use behaviour of digital workplace tools among manufacturing employees. Data was collected through a questionnaire survey from 323 employees in Selangor and analysed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that PKM has a strong and significant effect on use behaviour (β=0.398, $p<0.05$). Implications include recommendations for digital upskilling programmes, limitations, and directing future research.

Keywords: UTAUT; personal knowledge management; digital adoption; digital workplace tools

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1.0 Introduction

Digital transformation is a central driver of competitiveness and organisational resilience worldwide. In Malaysia, initiatives such as the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint (MyDIGITAL) and Industry4WRD are both designed to accelerate technological adoption among Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). These enterprises represent over 97% of total business establishments in the country and contribute significantly to national employment and gross domestic product (SME Corp Malaysia, 2023). Despite this economic prominence, recent reports indicate that digital adoption among Malaysian SMEs remains inadequate, particularly within the manufacturing sector, where digital workplace tools such as collaboration software, cloud platforms, and enterprise systems are not yet fully utilised. Furthermore, reports highlight persistent challenges relating to digital literacy, infrastructure, information overload, and organisational culture (ASEAN Digital Integration Index, 2023).

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Digital workplace tools, including collaboration platforms, cloud systems, workflow software, and data-driven applications, are essential for transforming traditional operational and business processes (Falahat et al., 2022). However, low digital adoption leads to missed opportunities for innovation, hindering their ability to capitalise on emerging opportunities and sustain long-term growth (Falahat et al., 2022). This, in turn, affects job creation, limits international competitiveness, and restricts the potential for economic diversification (Yang & Ming, 2024; Jaish et al., 2023).

The persistence of this gap emphasises the limitations of existing adoption models in fully explaining user behaviour in the workplace. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2012), has been influential in identifying Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), and Facilitating Conditions (FC) as critical factors driving behavioural intentions and usage behaviours (Hsu et al., 2017). Nonetheless, it has been criticised for its inability to adequately address cognitive aspects and Knowledge Management (KM) capabilities, which are essential for users to effectively translate their intentions into actions within complex and information-rich ecosystems (Hashim et al., 2022). In the context of Malaysian SMEs, effective management of knowledge is critical to sustaining consistent and meaningful technology usage (Tran & Nguyen, 2021). This argument is supported by research suggesting that KM significantly influences organisational outcomes, and specifically, that Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) capabilities can enhance the adoption of digital tools (Kumar & Greenhill, 2016). In addition, empirical studies indicated that organisations with stronger KM frameworks tend to adapt more flexibly and effectively to technological changes.

Moreover, some scholars argued that integrating cognitive capabilities into UTAUT could lead to better predictive outcomes for technology adoption processes (Liao et al., 2023). For instance, the understanding and application of knowledge-sharing practices are recognised as pivotal in fostering a competitive advantage in various organisational settings, including SMEs (Khayer et al., 2020). Thus, there is a need for an extended theoretical model that incorporates personal knowledge capabilities to enhance user engagement in technology adoption in Malaysian SMEs (Soong et al., 2020). In other words, developing personal knowledge competencies can significantly impact how technology is utilised, revealing that cognitive and knowledge-driven perspectives are increasingly essential in the discourse on technology adoption (Javed et al., 2023).

This study proposed an extended UTAUT framework incorporating PKM as an individual capability facilitating actual use behaviour. Furthermore, the study argues that PKM enhances employees' efficiency and confidence in using digital tools while also embodying a knowledge-ethical dimension, reinforcing the idea that knowledge leads to purposeful adoption. In line with this purpose, the study aimed to investigate the role of PKM as an individual knowledge capability that influences use behaviour. Accordingly, the study addresses: To what extent does PKM influence use behaviour?

2.0 Literature Review

The literature underpinning this study integrates two distinct yet complementary domains: knowledge capability and modern information systems theory. Both domains converge on the central idea that knowledge and ability are essential precursors to effective and meaningful action. This synthesis provides a more comprehensive understanding of digital workplace tool adoption, particularly in terms of actual usage of digital workplace tools.

2.1 The Relationship of Knowledge, Intention, and Action

The Qur'an explicitly cautions believers against speaking or acting without knowledge (Surah al-Isra': 36), emphasising that ethical and effective action must be grounded in informed understanding. Classical scholars such as Aḥmad (1984) articulated the principle *Iqtiḍā' al-ʿilm al-ʿamal*, which translates to "knowledge necessitates action," to express the inseparable relationship between knowing and doing. From this perspective, knowledge without corresponding action is incomplete, and action devoid of knowledge is misguided. In essence, the relationship between these elements forms a spiritual-cognitive model, where knowledge serves as the foundation, ability as the enabler, and action as the manifestation.

2.2 Personal Knowledge Management

PKM is an evolving discipline focusing on individuals' ability to manage explicit knowledge at the personal level, which is essential for transforming information into meaningful knowledge for informed decision-making. In particular, PKM equips employees with critical skills to navigate vast information landscapes, thus enabling them to process, filter, structure, store, secure, and share knowledge effectively through various information technologies (Sudibjo et al., 2022). Additionally, this personal level of KM plays a crucial role in enhancing cognitive capabilities and organisational learning, facilitating communication, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills necessary for effective performance within organisations (Li et al., 2022).

Empowering individuals with technological and cognitive skills through PKM plays a pivotal role in enhancing fundamental competencies such as cognition, communication, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, lifelong learning, and leadership development. At the same time, effective PKM helps organisations develop, manage, and utilise knowledge assets for strategic advantage. Therefore, integrating PKM into digital transformation and technology adoption frameworks is essential for sustaining both individual and organisational competitiveness.

Despite its growing relevance, PKM remains underexplored within digital workplace adoption frameworks. PKM can serve as a vital individual capability that enhances employees' readiness to adopt and utilise digital tools. Building on this, recent studies indicate that effective PKM practices positively influence individuals' intentions to engage in technology use, fostering a positive attitude towards technology adoption (Tilley et al., 2024). When individuals actively manage their knowledge, they develop a sense of ownership and

motivation that fosters greater engagement with digital workplace tools. Similarly, individuals who built strong personal knowledge infrastructures adapt more effectively to new digital tools and work environments (Jarrahi et al., 2019).

2.3 UTAUT

The UTAUT is an integrated framework based on eight related technology acceptance theories or models: Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), TAM 2, Motivational Model, Diffusion of Innovation, Social Cognitive Theory, and Model of PC Utilisation. The idea was founded on four elements, including PE, EE, SI, and FC, which significantly influence individuals' behavioural intentions to utilise technology.

PE is the degree to which an individual believes that using a system will help them attain gains in job performance (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Accordingly, PE was reported to be the strongest predictor of an individual's intention to use new technologies in an organisational context. Prior studies in the field have observed a positive relationship between PE and continuance intention (Kit et al., 2021). Meanwhile, EE refers to the degree of ease associated with using the system (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In particular, EE is conceptually similar to the perceived ease of use in the TAM, which postulates that systems perceived to be easier to use tend to enhance perceptions of usefulness and thus increase intention to use (Dwivedi et al., 2020). In addition, FC represents the extent to which individuals believe that the necessary resources, technical support, and organisational infrastructure are available to support the use of a particular technology. This construct acknowledges that even if users have a positive attitude toward a technology, they may still be hesitant to adopt it if they perceive significant barriers or a lack of necessary resources. Following this, Lutfi (2022) reported that FC has a positive effect on the continuance intention of accountants to use the Accounting Information System (AIS). Moreover, similar conclusions are drawn by Alquhaif and Al-Mamary (2024), who affirmed that necessary resources, support, and infrastructure play crucial roles in users' decisions to adopt technologies (Alquhaif & Al-Mamary, 2024). Consistent with this, SI is one of the core constructs in UTAUT, referring to the impact of social factors and the influence of others on an individual's decision to adopt a technology. This construct recognises the significance of social interactions, norms, and pressures in shaping an individual's attitude and behaviour toward technology adoption. As such, SI is influencing the usage of public electronic procurement among Malaysian SMEs (Kit et al., 2021).

Consequently, the gap arises due to contextual and cognitive factors, such as information overload, lack of skills, and weak personal knowledge organisation. Hence, integrating PKM into the UTAUT model offers a mechanism to address this gap. Specifically, PKM acts as a knowledge-based capability, enabling individuals to effectively manage information flows, learn from tool interactions, and apply acquired knowledge in work processes.

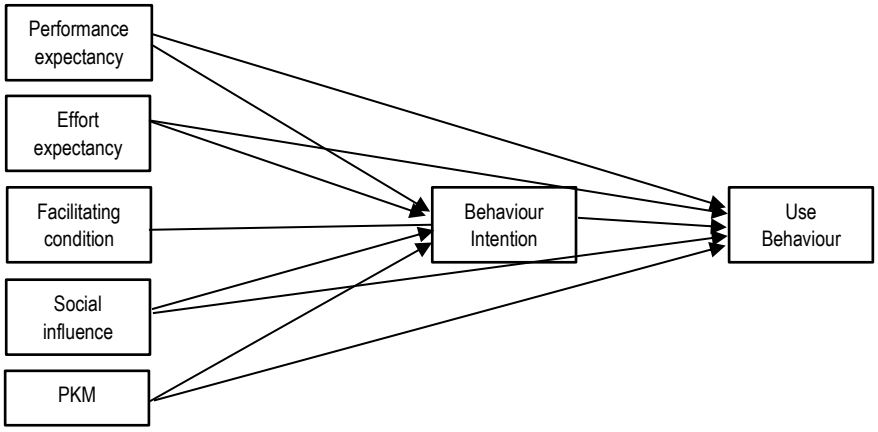

Figure 1: Research framework

3.0 Methodology

The model is empirically assessed among employees of medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in Selangor, representing Malaysia's most industrially advanced state. Selangor was selected as the study location due to its position as Malaysia's leading hub for medium-sized enterprise activity, hosting the highest number of ME establishments and employing approximately 288,598 workers (PERKESO, 2020). The focus on the manufacturing sector is strategically aligned with national industrial priorities outlined in Strategies S1 and S2 of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. The sector is also a focal point of Industry 4.0 transformation, driven by automation, Artificial Intelligence (A), robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT), and advanced data analytics. Notably, this prioritisation is consistent with the objectives of Industry4WRD, the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (12MP), and the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, which position the manufacturing sector as a key driver of Malaysia's digital transformation and economic modernisation.

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique, particularly a purposive sampling method for data collection. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2013). This method allows researchers to focus on individuals or groups who are most likely to provide rich, meaningful data due to their expertise, experiences, or characteristics. For this study, researchers purposely select medium-sized enterprise employees with prior experience using digital workplace tools to ensure relevant insights. Additionally,

targeting information-rich cases allows for the mitigation of bias and enhances the credibility of the findings. The sample size determination is based on established guidelines for survey research. The revised manuscript clarifies that the sample size of 323 respondents exceeds the minimum requirement recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and is also consistent with PLS-SEM requirements for structural model estimation (Hair et al., 2022). Consistent with this, constructs for UTAUT and PKM were measured using validated scales on a Likert-type format. Concurrently, data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire survey and analysed using PLS-SEM (SmartPLS) to assess reliability, validity, and structural relationships. In line with this, common method bias was mitigated through the use of anonymity and a well-designed procedure. At the same time, bootstrapping with 10,000 resamples provided significance testing.

4.0 Results

Table 1: The demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic	Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	194	60.1
	Female	129	39.9
Age	Under 25	35	10.8
	26 – 35	77	23.8
	36 – 45	85	26.3
	46 – 55	91	28.2
	56 – 60	25	7.7
	60 and above	10	3.1
Education	SPM	24	7.4
	STPM	9	2.8
	Certificate	14	4.3
	Diploma	81	25.1
	Bachelor	146	45.2
	Master	45	13.9
	PhD	2	0.6
	Others	2	0.6
Job role	Administrative	119	36.8
	Engineering and Maintenance	114	35.3
	Production	55	17.0
	Others	35	10.8
Work experience	Less than 2 years	30	9.3
	2-4 years	40	12.4
	5-7 years	44	13.6
	8-10 years	32	9.9
	More than 10 years	177	54.8

(Source: The table is developed for the study)

In terms of gender, 60.1% were male (n=194), while 39.9% were female (n=129). Regarding age distribution, most respondents were between 46 and 55 years old, comprising 28.2% (n=91). This is followed by those aged 36 to 45 years at 26.3% (n=85) and 26 to 35 years at 23.8% (n=77). Meanwhile, a smaller proportion of respondents were under 25 years old (10.8%, n=35), between 56 and 60 years old (7.7%, n=25), or over 60 years old (3.1%, n=10).

In terms of the highest level of education, the largest group of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (45.2%, n=146), followed by Diploma holders (25.1%, n=81), Master's degree holders (13.9%, n=45), and those with SPM qualifications (7.4%, n=24). Conversely, smaller percentages had certificates (4.3%, n=14), STPM (2.8%, n=9), PhD (0.6%, n=2), or other qualifications (0.6%, n=2).

Regarding job roles, 36.8% (n=119) were in administrative positions, 35.3% (n=114) in engineering and maintenance, 17.0% (n=55) in production, and 10.8% (n=35) in other positions (Research and Development, Quality Control, Logistics, Supply Chain, and Sales).

In terms of work experience, more than half of the respondents (54.8%, n=177) had over ten years of experience, while 13.6% (n=44) had five to seven years of experience, 12.4% (n=40) had two to four years, 9.9% (n=32) had eight to ten years, and 9.3% (n=30) had less than two years of experience. Moreover, most respondents were from Petaling, with 44.9% (n=145), followed by Hulu Langat with 31.9% (n=103), and Klang with 23.2% (n=75).

The analysis employed a two-stage approach, beginning with the assessment of the measurement model and a subsequent evaluation of the structural model. Correspondingly, the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. In particular, all item loadings exceeded 0.70, and the Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.85, confirming internal consistency. Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were higher than the 0.50 threshold, supporting convergent validity, while the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios were below 0.85, ensuring discriminant validity among constructs. Hence, the dataset met all statistical requirements for structural testing.

The structural model was then evaluated to determine the hypothesised relationships among constructs. The results indicated that the model explained 71.3% of the variance in Use Behaviour ($R^2 = 0.713$), signifying substantial explanatory power in predicting the actual use of digital workplace tools among employees. As summarised in Table 1, out of five hypotheses, three were supported, and two were not supported at the 0.05 significance level.

Additionally, the analysis revealed that PE had a positive yet statistically insignificant relationship with use behaviour (β = 0.053, t = 1.191, p = 0.117, f^2 = 0.006), indicating that employees' perceptions of the usefulness of digital workplace tools did not significantly predict their actual use. Similarly, EE (β = 0.042, t = 0.927, p = 0.177, f^2 = 0.003) and FC (β = 0.005, t = 0.101, p = 0.460, f^2 = 0.000) were reported to have no significant effect on use behaviour. At the same time, these non-significant findings suggest that in the context of Malaysian medium-sized manufacturing enterprises, employees' perceptions of ease of use, technical support, and organisational infrastructure alone were insufficient to drive sustained engagement with digital workplace tools.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Beta	T values	P values	f^2	R^2	Decision
PE -> UB	0.053	1.191	0.117	0.006		Not supported
EE -> UB	0.042	0.927	0.177	0.003		Not supported
FC -> UB	0.005	0.101	0.460	0.000		Not supported
SI -> UB	0.231	4.481	0.017	0.080	0.713	Supported
PKM -> UB	0.398	6.228	0.000	0.244		Supported

PE = Performance Expectancy, EE = Effort Expectancy, FC = Facilitating Condition, SI = Social Influence, PKM = Personal Knowledge Management, UB = Use Behaviour

(Source: The table is developed for the study)

Table 2 outlines that SI has a strong and statistically significant positive effect on use behaviour (β = 0.231, t = 4.481, p = 0.017, f^2 = 0.080). This indicates that encouragement and endorsement from colleagues, supervisors, and organisational leaders substantially contributed to employees' actual use of digital workplace tools. In Malaysia's SME culture, where teamwork, hierarchy, and collective values are prominent, SI plays a crucial role in shaping behavioural norms and reinforcing technology use.

Moreover, the inclusion of PKM as an extended construct revealed a strong and highly significant effect on use behaviour (β = 0.398, t = 6.228, p < 0.001, f^2 = 0.244). This demonstrates that employees who actively capture, organise, and apply knowledge are far more likely to utilise digital workplace tools effectively. Building on this, PKM exhibited the largest effect size among all predictors, highlighting its central role in influencing actual technology use. This suggests that PKM acts as a cognitive enabler, allowing employees to convert information into practical knowledge, which subsequently drives technology adoption.

5.0 Discussion

The findings of this study provide comprehensive insights into the determinants of digital workplace tools adoption. The integration of UTAUT with PKM offers a multidimensional understanding of the factors that influence both behavioural intention and use behaviour. Overall, the structural model explained 71.3% of the variance in use behaviour, reflecting strong explanatory power and confirming the suitability of the extended model for understanding digital tool adoption within Malaysian SMEs. The most outstanding result is the dominant influence of PKM on use behaviour, demonstrating that employees' ability to manage and apply knowledge directly drives their sustained engagement with digital workplace tools. On a similar note, this supports the argument that digital transformation success depends not merely on tool deployment. Rather, it relies on individuals' capacity to manage digital information intelligently. Correspondingly, PKM enables employees to organise workflows, retrieve data efficiently, and convert information into actionable insights, reducing the cognitive load associated with technology adoption. Theoretically, this reinforces PKM as a dynamic individual capability that complements UTAUT's motivational constructs.

For Malaysian SMEs, these findings have important managerial implications. First, policy initiatives under Malaysia's MyDIGITAL Blueprint and Industry4WRD should consider embedding KM literacy within digital upskilling programmes. Encouraging PKM practices can help mitigate this issue by enhancing information retrieval, improving decision quality, and facilitating workflow integration. Second, management should leverage SI and relational cohesion to reinforce technology use. Therefore, establishing digital champions, peer mentors, and collaborative platforms can harness the social fabric of SME workplaces to normalise digital engagement.

6.0 Conclusion

The results highlight that digital workplace adoption in Malaysian SMEs depends on technological factors such as usability and organisational support. Rather, it utilises the cognitive and dynamic capabilities of employees to manage and apply knowledge effectively. Following this, the inclusion of PKM demonstrates that employees who can capture, organise, and transform information into actionable insight are better equipped to sustain technology use. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the literature by (1) extending the UTAUT framework through the inclusion of PKM as a knowledge-based construct that enhances explanatory power, (2) validating this integrative model within the Malaysian SME manufacturing context, thereby addressing a regional research gap in digital transformation studies.

Practically, the findings highlight the need for SME leaders and policymakers to move beyond tool implementation toward developing employees' PKM competencies. For example, training programmes focusing on digital literacy, knowledge organisation, and reflective learning can strengthen employees' ability to manage information effectively. Furthermore, policymakers, through initiatives such as MyDIGITAL and Industry4WRD, should incorporate PKM-oriented learning modules into national digital upskilling frameworks to ensure that technology adoption is accompanied by knowledge discipline and ethical awareness.

Despite its significant contributions, the study is limited to medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in Selangor and may not fully represent other sectors or regions in Malaysia. Accordingly, future research could employ longitudinal designs or multi-group comparisons to examine differences across industries, enterprise sizes, and cultural contexts. Moreover, qualitative or mixed-method studies could deepen understanding of how PKM practices evolve in daily digital workflows and shape technology use at the organisational level.

In conclusion, this study confirms that digital transformation is not solely a technological endeavour. Instead, it is a knowledge-driven and ethically guided process. The integration of PKM and UTAUT demonstrates that intention becomes meaningful only when coupled with ability and knowledge. For Malaysian SMEs aspiring to achieve sustainable digital transformation, investing in the human dimension of knowledge is as vital as investing in the technology itself.

Paper Contribution to the Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the field by extending the UTAUT model with PKM as a knowledge-based capability, which better explains actual use behaviour in digital workplaces. The findings provide theoretical advancements and practical guidance for digital upskilling, capability building, and policy development in SME digital transformation initiatives.

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