



Evaluating the Role of Digital Tools in Enhancing Infrastructure Project Performance

Sanjeev Adhikari¹, Jeffrey Kim², Jaini Hemantkumar Shah¹, and Phuong Nguyen³
¹Kennesaw State University, ²Auburn University, ³South Dakota State University

The construction industry is undergoing rapid digital transformation, driven by the demand for greater efficiency, cost control, and timely project delivery. This study evaluates the role of digital tools such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning in enhancing infrastructure project performance. Using a mixed-method approach that combines survey data and literature review, the research investigates how these technologies influence key performance metrics, including cost efficiency, resource allocation, and schedule adherence. Findings reveal that while digital tools are increasingly adopted, full integration remains limited due to barriers such as limited expertise, high implementation costs, and resistance to change. Technologies like BIM, AI, and 3D printing show significant promise in improving decision-making, stakeholder coordination, and real-time performance tracking. The study highlights actionable strategies for overcoming adoption challenges and optimizing technology integration. By addressing capability gaps and financial constraints, the research underscores the strategic importance of digitalization in achieving sustainable and efficient infrastructure development.

Keywords: Digital Technology, Technology Acceptance, BIM, Machine Learning, Construction Efficiency.

Introduction and Background

The construction industry is experiencing a significant shift toward digitalization, driven by the need for improved efficiency, cost control, and timely project delivery (Dauda et al., 2024). Infrastructure development projects demand robust management strategies to handle complex resource allocation, cost estimation, and risk mitigation. Digital technologies, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), AI and Machine Learning (ML), the Internet of Things (IoT), drones, 3D printing, and cloud-based project management, to name a few, offer promising solutions to these challenges by enabling real-time data collection, visualization, and performance metric tracking. However, despite their potential benefits, the adoption of these technologies in construction remains uneven, especially in emerging markets where integration barriers and implementation challenges persist (Ernstsen et al., 2024).

The increasing complexity of infrastructure projects underscores the need to examine how digital tools directly affect core project metrics. Although prior research has emphasized the general benefits of digitalization such as improved productivity and reduced waste, there remains a gap in empirical evidence regarding its specific impact on cost management, resource allocation, and overall

performance within rapidly growing construction sectors. Notably, Adhikari et al. (2024) found that digitalization positively influences labor productivity, reinforcing the link between technology adoption and performance gains. Furthermore, the industry faces obstacles such as inadequate training, high implementation costs, and resistance to change, which hinder the full realization of digital technologies' benefits (Chen et al., 2024).

Recent years have witnessed a transformative shift in the construction and infrastructure sectors through the integration of advanced digital technologies. Technologies such as BIM, digital twin systems, mobile computing, and data analytics have played a pivotal role in reducing uncertainty in both entrepreneurial ventures and project outcomes by enhancing decision-making, collaboration, and real-time data access (Banihashemi et al., 2025). BIM has demonstrated significant value in improving project coordination and cost estimation accuracy (Adhikari & Roca, 2024), making it a cornerstone of digital transformation in construction.

Parallel to this technological evolution, infrastructure development has emerged as a critical driver of economic growth. Empirical studies using causality analysis have revealed a unidirectional relationship in which infrastructure development stimulates output growth. For example, Ghosh (2023) applied Granger causality tests in the Indian context and confirmed that infrastructure development leads to economic growth, indicating its potential as a strategic tool for sustainable development. For instance, Sahoo and Dash (2009) developed an index of infrastructure stocks and growth-accounting models, demonstrating that infrastructure investment, labor force, and total capital play a pivotal role in India's economic expansion.

The complexity of managing construction projects has also increased substantially, primarily due to the interdependence among diverse stakeholders, including authorities, contractors, suppliers, architects, engineers, legal advisors, and tradespeople. This growing complexity has accelerated the adoption of information and communication technologies to streamline collaboration and decision-making processes (Bryde et al., 2013 and Gaur et al., 2024). However, traditional rule-based approaches are inadequate for analyzing large datasets and identifying actionable patterns. Consequently, the construction industry is increasingly leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI) to process large volumes of data, detect patterns, and develop predictive models. AI was broadly defined as the development of systems that could mimic human thinking and decision-making. It advanced quickly across many fields, including computer vision, robotics, self-driving vehicles, language translation, gaming, medical diagnostics, speech recognition, and generative design (Baduge et al., 2022). Within the context of Construction 4.0, AI and related technologies enable enhanced data-driven decision-making, resource optimization, and risk management, marking a paradigm shift in how infrastructure projects are planned and executed (Sawhney et al., 2020).

The rapid digitalization of construction, coupled with increasing project complexity and the rise of AI-driven solutions, underscores the need to understand how these technologies influence performance metrics and address barriers to their effective implementation in infrastructure development.

This research addresses critical gaps in understanding the impact of digital technology adoption on infrastructure development. Specifically, it examines how digital tools influence key performance metrics quality, timelines, and cost efficiency, while identifying barriers to effective implementation. By combining survey-based data with a targeted literature review, the study provides evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for improving technology integration in construction projects.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach to ensure methodological rigor. Quantitative data were collected through a structured survey targeting professionals involved in infrastructure projects, while qualitative insights were drawn from a systematic literature review. This dual approach allowed triangulation of findings, enhancing validity and providing a comprehensive understanding of adoption patterns and barriers. The primary focus was on understanding how these tools influence project performance and identifying barriers to their effective use. The research combined two components:

Survey-Based Data Collection

Quantitative data were gathered through an electronic survey designed to capture detailed information on the types of digital technologies used in construction projects, their integration into workflows, and user experiences. The survey also collected demographic details of participants, including professional role, years of experience, and geographic location, as well as project characteristics such as type (residential, commercial, infrastructure) and approximate scale. Respondents included professionals directly involved in infrastructure projects, such as project managers and team members. The survey explored key areas including cost management, resource allocation, and overall project performance.

Literature Review for Contextual Analysis

To complement the survey findings, a targeted review of scholarly literature was conducted. This review focused on studies discussing the implementation of digital tools in construction, providing a theoretical foundation and identifying knowledge gaps.

The combined analysis of survey responses and literature insights allowed for the identification of patterns, evaluation of current practices, and assessment of challenges in technology adoption. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of how digital technologies influence infrastructure development and informed recommendations for improving integration and project outcomes.

Results

The survey yielded 41 valid responses from professionals in the construction industry, including architects, contractors, project managers, site engineers, and others. Respondents represented a range of experience levels. Geographically, most participants were based in urban regions with active infrastructure development. Project characteristics varied, with residential projects accounting for 53%, commercial 24%, infrastructure 15%, and industrial 3%. While project size was not uniformly reported, most respondents indicated involvement in medium- to large-scale projects. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify adoption patterns, project types, and perceived challenges related to digital technology implementation. The distribution of respondents by role: Architects (27%), Contractors (20%), Project Managers (15%), Site Engineers (10%), and Others (12%). Architects and contractors represent the largest share, indicating that these roles are most actively engaged in technological adoption.

Identifying the location and project type of participants is essential for understanding the context behind their responses and the factors influencing technology adoption. Residential projects accounted for the largest share (53%), followed by commercial (24%), infrastructure (15%), and industrial (3%). This distribution suggests that digital technologies were more prevalent in residential construction, likely due to higher client expectations for efficiency and customization.

Figure 1 reveals that 78% of respondents report moderate to significant adoption, while only 9% have fully integrated digital technologies. This indicates a positive trend toward adoption, though full integration remains limited. This bar graph shows that according to the survey most of the people who are working on residential projects and by these it can be analyzed that maximum use of digital technologies is being used by the people who are doing residential projects.

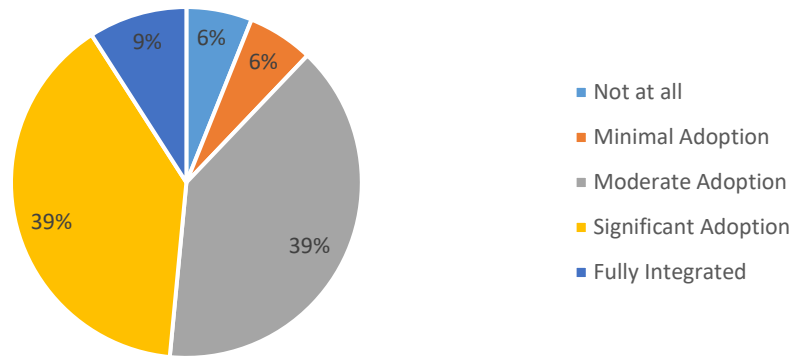


Figure 1. Adoption of Technologies

Figure 2 highlights the most used tools: 3D Printing (39%), BIM (36%), and AI/ML (36%). While BIM is widely recognized as a mature technology in construction, the reported adoption level of AI/ML is noteworthy. This finding suggests that respondents may be using AI/ML in limited but growing capacities, such as automated quantity take-offs, predictive scheduling, and risk analysis, rather than full-scale decision-making systems. These applications indicate an emerging trend toward data-driven project management, even if comprehensive AI integration remains in its early stages. As per the survey, this chart shows the percentage of how many people are adopting different technologies, so it has been analyzed that fully integrated people for using the technology are just 9% but there is also hope because people are accepting the technologies.

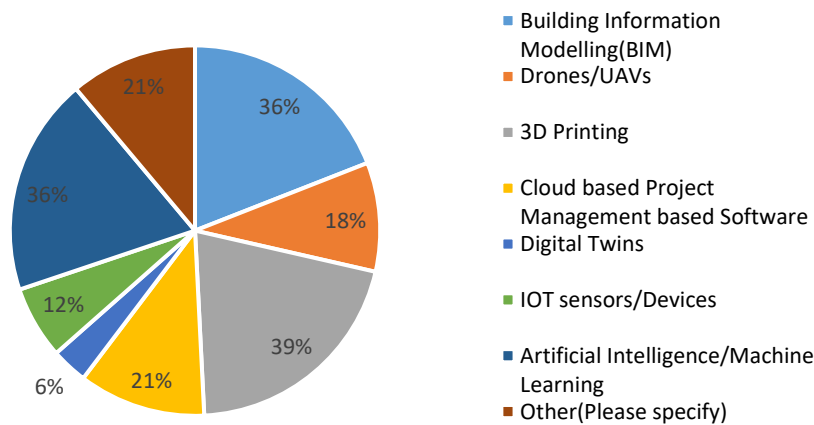


Figure 2. Types of Digital Tools

Responses indicated that 45% of participants were neutral about adoption of digital technology, while 27% considered it somewhat easy. Only 3% reported that adoption was very easy, highlighting persistent implementation challenges. Additionally, the data showed that construction professionals use a variety of digital tools, with 3D printing being the most common, followed by Building Information Modeling (BIM), artificial intelligence and machine learning, and drones. These trends suggest that technology used in industry is growing steadily.

Lack of expertise (63%) and high implementation costs (53%) emerged as the most significant barriers to digital technology adoption, followed by resistance to change (25%). These challenges highlight the need for targeted training and cost-effective solutions. While adoption rates are steadily increasing, full integration across the construction industry remains limited. Most organizations recognize the value of technology, with 78% of respondents viewing its impact as moderately to very significant in improving timeliness, cost control, and resource management. Key technologies such as BIM, AI, and 3D printing are gaining traction, particularly in residential projects, yet widespread adoption continues to be hindered by expertise gaps and financial constraints. These findings reinforce the premise that digital technologies enhance project performance but require strategic implementation to overcome persistent barriers.

Discussion

The findings confirm that digitalization in construction is progressing but remains uneven. The survey responses, structured around cost efficiency, schedule adherence, and quality, provide empirical evidence of technology's impact on these metrics. For instance, respondents reported moderate improvements in cost control and timelines, consistent with literature highlighting BIM and AI as drivers of efficiency. This alignment between survey results and prior research reinforces the validity of the study and demonstrates how the literature review informed both instrument design and interpretation of findings (Dauda et al., 2024; Ernstsens et al., 2024). While 78% of respondents reported moderate to significant adoption, only 9% achieved full integration, indicating that most organizations are still in transitional phases rather than operating at mature digital levels. Adoption is strongest in residential projects, where client-driven demands for efficiency and customization are likely to accelerate uptake. Technology use patterns align with industry trends: 3D printing (39%), BIM (36%), and AI/ML (36%) dominate, while Digital Twins and IoT remain emerging options. The similar adoption levels of BIM and AI/ML may reflect the inclusion of basic AI-driven tools such as automated clash detection, predictive cost estimation, and machine learning algorithms for resource optimization—rather than advanced AI systems. For example, some firms use AI-powered scheduling tools to forecast delays based on historical data, and machine learning models to predict equipment maintenance needs. These practical applications, though not yet widespread, demonstrate the industry's gradual shift toward leveraging AI for operational efficiency. This reflects a preference for tools that deliver immediate, tangible benefits, such as visualization and predictive analytics over platform-level solutions requiring higher investment and interoperability (Sawhney et al., 2020; Akdarneshad et al., 2025). Recent studies have emphasized AI's transformative potential in construction practices, particularly in enhancing decision-making and predictive modeling (Adhikari et al., 2025). Similarly, the adoption of emerging technologies such as BIM and AI has shown promising results in improving project outcomes, though full integration continues to be hindered by cost and capability barriers (Adhikari et al., 2025).

Respondents recognized technology's positive impact on timeliness, cost control, and resource management, confirming its role in improving project performance (Bryde et al., 2013). However, barriers remain significant. Lack of expertise (63%) and high implementation costs (53%) were the

most cited obstacles, followed by resistance to change (Chen et al., 2024). These constraints mirror systemic issues highlighted earlier, including skills gaps and capital intensity, which hinder full realization of digital technologies' benefits. The large proportion of respondents neutral on ease of adoption further suggests that integration complexity and organizational inertia persist.

Overall, the findings confirm that digital technologies can significantly enhance project performance when strategically implemented. However, persistent barriers such as skills gaps and high costs, limit full integration. Practical strategies include phased adoption to manage costs, targeted workforce training, and governance frameworks to improve collaboration. These recommendations provide actionable guidance for practitioners seeking to leverage digital tools effectively. Practical pathways include targeted training, phased integration to spread costs and demonstrate early value, and governance frameworks to streamline collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Addressing these factors is essential for converting partial adoption into consistent improvements in cost efficiency, resource allocation, and timely delivery of infrastructure projects.

Conclusions

Digital project management tools have fundamentally transformed infrastructure planning and delivery. By improving resource allocation, cost estimation, and stakeholder coordination, these technologies enable timely and cost-effective project completion. The study's insights emphasize the importance of strategic adoption to maximize these benefits. Moving from traditional methods to digital solutions reduces uncertainty and allows teams to make better decisions using real-time data. One major benefit of digital adoption is improved resource management. Tools like BIM and cloud-based platforms streamline workflows, reduce material waste, and optimize labor use. This efficiency leads to cost savings, which is critical for large infrastructure projects where budget overruns are common. Accurate forecasting of resource needs also helps prevent delays caused by shortages or misallocation.

Digital technologies boost productivity throughout the project life cycle. When integrated into daily operations, they improve coordination among stakeholders, enhance communication, and provide transparency in tracking progress. This enables teams to respond quickly to issues, maintain control over timelines, and ensure higher quality standards. In short, adopting digital tools is no longer optional, it is essential for companies that want to stay competitive in a fast-moving industry. By using data-driven insights and automation, firms can reduce risks, improve efficiency, and deliver projects that meet client expectations and regulatory requirements.

Future Trends

The construction industry is poised for accelerated digital transformation, driven by advancements in automation, data analytics, and connectivity. Several emerging trends are expected to shape the future of infrastructure development. One significant development is the integration of digital twins and IoT technologies. Digital twins, combined with IoT sensors, will enable real-time monitoring of construction sites and asset performance. This synergy will support predictive maintenance, reduce downtime, and enhance lifecycle management of infrastructure, ultimately improving efficiency and reliability.

Another transformative trend is the rise of AI-driven predictive analytics. Artificial intelligence and machine learning will move beyond basic automation to deliver advanced insights for cost estimation, risk management, and resource optimization. AI-powered platforms will allow project managers to anticipate delays and proactively mitigate risks, leading to more accurate planning and execution.

Blockchain technology is also emerging as a powerful tool for transparency and trust in construction projects. Through secure data sharing and smart contracts, blockchain can streamline payment processes, reduce disputes, and foster stronger collaboration among stakeholders.

Sustainability will remain a central focus, with green technologies playing a critical role in future construction practices. Digital tools will increasingly incorporate sustainability metrics, enabling carbon footprint tracking and energy optimization. Innovations such as 3D printing with eco-friendly materials will further support environmentally responsible construction. The growing adoption of cloud-based collaboration platforms will continue to reshape workflows, enabling global teams to work seamlessly across borders. These platforms will enhance remote project management and real-time communication, while robust cybersecurity measures will be essential to safeguard sensitive project data.

Finally, future research directions should explore interoperability among digital platforms, cost-benefit analysis of emerging technologies, and strategies for workforce upskilling. Ethical considerations related to AI and data governance in construction will also become increasingly important as digitalization advances. Collectively, these trends indicate that digitalization will not only improve efficiency but also redefine business models, stakeholder relationships, and sustainability practices in the construction industry.

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