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Examining the Influence of Digital Platforms on Purchase Decisions of University Students in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study analyses the influence of the dimensions of digital platforms on the purchase decisions of university students in Tanzania. The study was based on an explanatory research design governed by the Theory of Planned Behavior. Data was collected through closed-ended questionnaires administered to 354 university students and analysed using Structural Equation Modeling through SmartPLS 4 software. The results indicated that all three dimensions: Consumer Attitude, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Presence positively and significantly influenced students' purchase decisions on digital platforms. Managerial implications suggest that firms prioritise enhancing user trust, adopting a refined approach to engagement, improving user experience, and encouraging positive attitudes towards digital platforms to boost purchase decisions. The study expands the Theory of Planned Behavior by adding trust and consumer presence and replacing subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

Keywords: Trust, Presence, Attitude, Purchase decisions, Digital platforms.

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Introduction

Technological development and internet enhancement in today's world have put digital media at its peak. Many services are being promoted using digital technologies and applications (Hossain et al., 2020). Online activities, such as searching for information, reviewing products, and interacting with businesses, are becoming increasingly popular. In response to this shift in behaviour, organisations have incorporated digital media into their business marketing strategies. The shift has also helped to make digital media a vital component of an organisation's overall business strategy with significant advantages (Felix et al., 2017). Digital media offers numerous benefits, such as unparalleled convenience, unprecedented speed, enhanced value creation, and expanded consumer choices (Fu et al., 2021). Likewise, digital media allows businesses to interact with their customers, raise brand awareness, shape consumer attitudes, obtain customer feedback, help improve current products, and boost sales (Lal et al., 2020). These platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter (now X), Reddit, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. These digital platforms are reshaping the economy and redefining consumer bases, marketing tactics, corporate models, supply networks, and revenue streams (Kaur et al., 2018). Technological advancement transforms the way marketers and consumers engage with suppliers. With a mouse click, a customer can have products from any company in the world delivered to a doorstep within hours. Digital platforms have made companies scramble to listen, respond, and engage with customers promptly and address their concerns adequately (Bala & Verma, 2018). Customers inadvertently demand a seamless, integrated, and extensive customer experience regardless of the channel. The overall customer experience is improved by providing multichannel online and offline consumption experiences, where interactions with a variety of digital channels and with real people (via phone or in person) complement rather than compete with one another (Bolton et al., 2018). Technological advancements, such as voice assistants, search engines, and artificial intelligence, have helped customers gain more insight, make comparisons, and decide what they need and where they should buy it (Ponde et al., 2020).

Understanding how consumers make purchase decisions is essential for the survival and success of an organisation. Understanding why a consumer behaves in a particular manner is paramount for marketing activities to satisfy the dynamic needs of consumers, regardless of the medium they use to satisfy their needs (Kotni & Divya, 2019). The growth, profitability, and the key to the survival of any organisation are based on its ability to identify and meet unsatisfied consumers' needs and to develop measures for satisfying those needs more effectively and efficiently than its competitors. Identifying and developing brand experiences and digital footprint are also necessary. Organizations must be adaptable in adjusting their business models and tactics to be competitive in the future (Kotni & Divya, 2019). With this view of the importance of understanding purchase decisions made by consumers, it has been noted that there is a new trend to bring change to purchase decisions, owing to the development of new networking patterns of communication between customers and markets (Khan & Islam, 2017).

Concerning the purchasing decisions of students at the University of Dar es Salaam, Ponde et al. (2020) describe university students as one of the most important markets for many businesses based on the size and characteristics of the market. Because they frequently have to make important life decisions, including many first-time purchases without parental guidance,

the student market is crucial for marketers to connect with and obtain feedback. According to Bona (2018), young people's spending habits are generally changing, especially among university students, because they can access more money. They invested most of their income in lavish, branded clothing and accessories, gadgets, entertainment, and dining.

The Internet gives university students sufficient information to test brands and reach conclusions (Rwegoshora, 2018). The growing number of university students in Tanzania provides opportunities for businesses to enlarge their customer base by first understanding how they think and then being able to offer brands that suit them (Ponde et al., 2020). Moreover, as technology adoption among university students is constantly growing, Jones (2002) investigated the role of university students in the rapidly evolving digital world. Jones reports that university students were early Internet adopters in the early 2000s and they are active Internet users, with approximately 74% of the surveyed students spending significant time online. Jones emphasizes the need to fully understand university students' Internet usage trends, online purchase decisions, and potential usage consequences for more significant Internet user segments.

The argument is made against a background that describes how consumer purchase decisions have changed significantly because of advancements in technology and the widespread use of handheld devices. This has directly influenced how we interact and use digital commerce to make decisions and purchases. The growing number of digital channels has also affected consumer purchase decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2021), resulting in a more diverse consumer buying experience. Mobile channels have become mainstream and are increasingly integrated into customers' daily lives through mobile tools, shopping apps, geographic-based services, and mobile payments, all influencing the consumer experience (Shukla & Nigam, 2018). However, customers' opinions and feelings regarding a product do not always translate into purchases. Such a scenario compels researchers to explore digital platforms and their influence on university students' purchase decisions.

Several studies (e.g., Chille, 2018; Abraham, 2018; Omar et al., 2022) have discussed different facets of digital platforms and purchase decisions. For instance, Al-Azzam and Al-Mizeed (2021) discovered that digital platforms such as social media marketing and mobile marketing profoundly influence consumer purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, Gupta et al. (2020) demonstrated that digital platforms, such as websites and social networking sites, play a significant role in influencing the purchase decisions of youth in India. Maina (2021) found a positive correlation between digital platforms and students' purchasing decisions. Nyakale et al. (2020) and Wilson et al. (2017), on the other hand, have studied the acceptance of mobile money systems. These studies have largely focused on digital platforms to promote financial inclusivity and enhance financial literacy. So far, none of these studies have focused on university students. Besides, while it may seem it is well-established that digital platforms influence purchasing decisions, studies elsewhere reveal different findings. Muslim (2018) and Amrullah (2023), for instance, reveal that social media has no significant effect on purchase decisions in a different. Studies on the influence of digital platforms on university students' purchase decisions are limited, particularly in Tanzania. University students constitute part of the young generation who are shaping the revolution of the ubiquitous digital business world. Few of the studies conducted in Tanzania (e.g. Mbura & Kagoya, 2020; Kimambo, 2015; Kessy & Pessa, 2022) have concentrated on people's perceptions of general social media in

Tanzania. The studies include those which specifically dealt with social media and tourism (e.g. Elly et al, 2024) and digital transformations during pandemics (e.g. Shao et al, 2023). The findings from these studies are general and do not take into account the generational differences across age groups. While most university students are active digital users, they are also considered pioneers (Jones, 2002). However, it is worth noting that despite the acknowledged benefits of digital platforms, Manyerere (2021) notes that, some youths misuse social media platforms due to negative perceptions. Understanding the digital habits of university students can provide insight into future online trends. In short, the trend of digital advancements emerging on or first adopted on university campuses continues, making university students a significant player in the digital world. Therefore, this study fills this knowledge gap by examining the influence of digital platforms and the purchase decisions of university students in Tanzania.

Literature

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen (1985) proposed the theory of planned behaviour to explain and predict human behaviour. According to Ajzen (1991), this theory builds on the earlier Theory of Reasoned Action and identifies three key factors determining an individual's intention to engage in a particular behaviour. These factors are attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. A consumer's attitude towards digital platforms aligns with the core construct of TPB, which is an attitude toward behaviour. The attitude construct in TPB can be expanded to incorporate consumers' attitudes towards digital platforms. Including attitudes towards digital platforms as a determinant of purchasing behaviour would help to recognise the role of consumer attitudes specific to the digital environment.

Although the TPB is widely used in various contexts (e.g., Cameron, Ginsburg, Westhoff, & Mendez, 2012; Carfora et al., 2019; Ulker-Demire & Ciftci, 2020), it has received criticisms from researchers and scholars. One criticism is that the theory emphasizes rational decision-making and assumes that people operate as rational actors who carefully consider the consequences of their actions (Novisma, 2023). In reality, individuals may not always make decisions based on rationality and may be influenced by emotions, habits, or external factors (George, 2004). Acknowledging these limitations, Ajzen (1991) suggested that the Theory of Planned Behavior is open to introducing more components if they contribute to understanding intentions and behaviours beyond the theory's current variables. In light of the criticism, as mentioned earlier, this study broadens the TPB framework by including a consumer's trust and presence. Integrating trust and presence into the theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how the added variables influence purchase decisions.

The second criticism is that TPB does not account for situational factors that may influence behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Situational factors refer to the external circumstances or contexts in which a behaviour occurs. These factors include time constraints, environmental cues, social norms, and other contextual variables (George, 2004). For example, the amount of time consumers spend online on digital platforms can be assessed through the use frequency and interaction level. These factors can influence purchase behaviour by shaping the decision to purchase and become repeat customers (Corrada et al., 2020). The exclusion of these situational factors limits its ability to fully explain and predict behaviour in complex and

dynamic environments. While the TPB acknowledges that situational factors can influence perceived behavioural control, it does not provide a comprehensive framework for incorporating them into the model (George, 2004). Researchers have proposed extensions and modifications to TPB that incorporate situational factors to address this limitation. Therefore, this theory, which is valuable for understanding and predicting human behaviour, can be enhanced by incorporating additional factors such as trust and presence. By expanding the TPB framework to include these factors, researchers can enhance the theory's explanatory power and predictive accuracy. The extended TPB accounts for the emotional, situational, and contextual aspects relevant to digital platforms and consumer purchase decisions by integrating trust, presence, and attitude on digital platforms.

Hypotheses Development

Consumer's level of trust in digital platforms and purchase decisions

Trust, in Kini et al (1998)'s view, involves the belief that the system will function as expected in terms of competence, reliability, and security, particularly in situations where risk is involved. De Silva (2015) studied the impact of trust on online purchase decisions and found that trust moderates the relationship between purchase decisions and purchase intention. By contrast, Karunasingha et al. (2021) investigate the mediating effect of trust on the relationship between online purchase intentions and consumers' social motivation in the context of social media marketing in the fashion industry in Sri Lanka. These findings indicate that social motivation positively influences trust and online purchase intentions. Moreover, consumers' trust levels positively influence their online purchase intentions (Wijaya, 2023; Suleman *et al.*, 2022).

According to Nguyen and Hoang (2020), trust should have two essential components: trust intention and trust belief, of which the latter has three components: integrity, competence, and benevolence. The findings revealed that trust is a high-order construct. Abdullahi et al. (2022) investigated the impact of customer trust and digital platforms as predictors of consumer purchase decisions at selected banks in Nigeria. The findings reveal that customer trust positively affects consumer purchase decisions. Based on these previous studies' findings, this study anticipates that consumers' level of trust in digital platforms has a significant influence on purchase decisions; it thus hypothesized that:

H1: Level of trust on digital platforms has a positive influence on purchase decisions

Consumer's presence in digital platforms and purchase decisions

In the context of this study, presence refers to the sense of being in a distant or virtual environment (physical presence) and the experience of being with other people in that space (social presence) (Ming, *et al.*, 2021; IJsselsteijn, 2000). Gunawardena and Zittle (1997) describe social presence as the degree to which an individual is perceived as authentic in mediated communication. McLellan (1999) defines more succinctly that social presence is the feeling of being present with others in a social context. Yin et al. (2023) study how the presence affects consumers' buying intentions through perceived control and concentration. The study results indicate that social and physical presence is positively related to consumers' buying intentions but on different paths. Reitz (2012), on his side, focuses on how consumer engagement with marketers on Facebook about loyalty and repurchase intent. The findings reveal that online

consumer engagement is a multidimensional construct comprising both affective/cognitive and participative dimensions. Moreover, Ye et al. (2020) focus on whether telepresence and social presence can shape P2P (peer-to-peer) accommodation customers' buying intentions. A study by Chen et al (2023) reveals that increased social presence strengthens consumer identification and subsequent purchase intention. These aforementioned findings suggest a new marketing strategy that involves enhancing elements of presence to encourage greater consumer participation (Ye et al., 2020). Based on these findings, this study proposes that consumer presence on digital platforms has a significant influence on purchase decisions, thus forming the following hypothesis:

H2: A consumer's presence on digital platforms positively influences their purchase decisions.

Consumer's attitude toward digital platforms and purchase decisions

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p.6) define attitude as a “learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner concerning a given object.” Consumers attitude, on the other hand, refers to an individual's internal assessment of an object (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). According to Lutz (1991), attitudes serve as a filter through which consumers perceive an object before making a purchase decision. Khilji (2016) researches the influence of attitude on online purchase decisions and the moderator effect of culture. Results indicate that attitude facilitates online purchase decisions by building trust and strong employee relationships. Memon et al. (2021) examine the impact of consumer attitudes and purchase decisions on online stores after Covid-19. It was revealed that most consumers shifted to online purchasing during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, a positive relationship has invariably been observed between consumers' attitudes towards purchase decisions (Sam, et al, 2024). Likewise, Carvallo (2018) studies the impact of consumer attitudes on purchase decisions. The study results indicate that consumers consider three (3) out of the (12) attributes studied to evaluate the products: food price, on-time delivery, and an assortment of restaurants and that there is no significant correlation between positive attitude and purchase decisions. Also, Park (2003) investigates how privacy, security concerns, and previous experiences with purchase decisions influence consumer attitudes and intentions to buy using personalization features. The findings reveal that (1) attitudes toward personalization features are the crucial determinants of consumers' intention to make an online purchase, (2) consumer concerns about security and privacy have a positive influence on consumer attitudes toward personalization features, and (3) previous experiences with online purchases have no positive influence on consumer attitudes towards personalization features. Although some researchers, such as Carvallo (2018), do not see any significant correlation between positive attitudes and purchase decisions, the majority do. This study anticipates a positive influence of consumers' attitudes toward digital platforms on their purchase decisions, which leads us to the following hypothesis:

H3: Consumer's attitude toward digital platforms has a positive influence on their purchase decisions

Methodology

Data Collection

The primary focus of this study was to examine the impact of digital platforms on the purchasing decisions of university students in Tanzania, specifically those enrolled at the

University of Dar es Salaam. Data collection occurred between July and September 2023 at the University of Dar es Salaam's Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Mlimani campus, the oldest university in Tanzania. To gather information, an online questionnaire was administered to undergraduate students through WhatsApp groups. Respondents were requested to complete the survey using Google Forms. The choice of the University of Dar es Salaam was strategic, considering its prominence and the advanced state of digital usage in Dar es Salaam compared to other regions of mainland Tanzania. The researcher's familiarity with the institution facilitated a smoother data collection process. Research assistants introduced themselves, outlined the research's purpose to potential respondents, and only included participants actively engaged with digital platforms in the last three months. Respondents were provided with a link to the online questionnaire upon agreeing to participate. Of the 378 respondents who completed and submitted the questionnaires, 354 were accurately completed and deemed valid for analysis after a thorough examination.

Operationalisation of Variables

The data collection instrument for this study comprised two sections. The initial section was designed to capture demographic variables, while the second section included inquiries related to consumers' levels of trust, presence, attitude, and purchase decisions. To ensure reliability and validity, the questions were adapted from previous studies (Lobb, 2004; McKnight et al., 2002; Ellison et al., 2014; Orosz et al., 2016; Hoque et al., 2015; Sama, 2019; Jarvenpaa et al., 2000) (See table 1). The questions addressing the variables under focus were structured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 for "Strongly Disagree" to 5 for "Strongly Agree." The operationalization of variables involved quantitative and empirical definitions of variables into measurable factors, as Saunders et al. (2012) advocated. This approach was employed to minimize bias and subjectivity in the research, thereby enhancing the overall reliability of the study (Tsung, 2016).

Table 1: Operationalisation of Variables

Variable	Measurements	References
Consumer-level of trust	Past experiences, feedback, and reviews, credibility of information sources, and security.	Lobb (2004), McKnight et al. (2002a)
Consumer presence	Level of engagement and interaction, frequency of visits, time spent on the platform.	Ellison et al., (2014), Orosz et al., (2016).
Consumer's attitude	Online experience, perceived product quality, perceived benefit, product variety.	(Jarvenpaa, & Todd, 1997), (Hoque, Ali, & Mahfuz, 2015).
Purchase decisions	Willingness to buy, actual purchases, and post-purchase behaviour (repurchase, loyalty).	Sama (2019). Jarvenpaa et al., (2000)

Analysis and Results

Respondents' profile

The descriptive statistics reveal that 167 (47%) of respondents fell within the 21–23 age group. Regarding gender distribution, the majority, 61%, were male, while females accounted for 139 (39%). Regarding education, the most common category was 3rd year, comprising 123 (35%)

students. Conversely, only a tiny percentage of respondents were in their 5th year of study, accounting for 6 (2%) students. Daily Internet usage varied, with 116 (33%) reporting 6-10 hours of usage daily, while 70 (20%) used it for less than an hour. Regarding product preferences within the digital market channel, 108 respondents (31%) favoured clothes and accessories, while electronics garnered interest from 50 (14%).

Table 2: Measurement Model Assessment

Latent Variable	Indicator	Mean	t-value	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Consumer Attitudes	MMP	0.818	40.057	0.818	0.836	0.89	0.67
	EME	0.818	39.159	0.819			
	BEPP	0.823	31.989	0.824			
	BEPGQ	0.812	32.206	0.813			
Consumer presence	DEV	0.726	13.088	0.733	0.767	0.8	0.502
	PDE	0.711	12.347	0.718			
	SIDE	0.605	8.307	0.606			
	PEP	0.764	20.697	0.766			
Consumer trust	RSF	0.621	10.748	0.627	0.738	0.784	0.576
	PPE	0.674	13.081	0.676			
	OOST	0.711	13.719	0.715			
	RUFFT	0.735	16.278	0.737			
Purchase decisions	CBB14	0.644	13.251	0.648	0.803	0.873	0.635
	CBB15	0.81	28.911	0.810			
	CBB16	0.856	35.295	0.856			
	CBB17	0.855	48.057	0.855			

Analysis

The data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The adoption of PLS-SEM for analysis is informed by its ability to simultaneously estimate the relationships between observed variables and their constructs in the measurement model, as well as between constructs in the structural model (Ali *et al.*, 2023). The study adopted a methodological approach in line with the recommendations of Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Following their guidance, a two-stage process was implemented. Initially, the focus was on scrutinizing the reliability and validity of the measurement model employed in the study. This involved thoroughly assessing the instruments and variables to ensure they accurately and consistently measured the intended constructs. Subsequently, attention was directed towards evaluating the structural model, which served as the framework for testing the hypothesized relationships. This sequential approach, as Anderson and Gerbing advocated, enhances the research's rigour by systematically addressing measurement concerns before delving into the examination of structural relationships, thereby contributing to the overall robustness of the study's findings.

Measurement Model

Results concerning the measurement model are shown in Table 2. All factor loadings for the reflective items exceeded the cut-off point of 0.60(Chin et al., 1997; Hair et al., 2006), proving sufficient indicator reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used for convergent validity, with results showing above the 0.50 cut-off point. Cronbach’s Alpha values were greater than .70, reflecting excellent internal consistency (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011).

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was used to check the discriminant validity, which measures the extent to which the indicators capture the intended construct. Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the AVE of each construct with squared correlation with other constructs. To meet the discriminant validity, the AVE square root should be greater than the correlation between the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This criterion was met, and thus, adequate discriminant validity was confirmed by the results shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion: Discriminant Validity of Constructs

Variables	Consumer Attitude	Purchase Decisions	Presence	Consumer Trust
CA	0.818			
CBB	0.557	0.797		
CPP	0.501	0.402	0.708	
CT	0.372	0.481	0.323	0.69

Structural Model

After confirming the validity of the measurement model, the next step was to assess the structural model. The PLS bootstrapping method was used to test the significance of the Path Coefficient. The path coefficients in the PLS structural model are standardized beta coefficients (β) derived from the least squares method. According to Hair et al. (2011), the non-parametric resampling technique of "bootstrapping" entails repeated random sampling with the replacement of the original sample using the suggested 5,000 bootstrap subsamples. All hypothesized relationships were found to be statistically significant (Table 5). The findings of this study provide important insights into the multifaceted relationship between university students' purchase decisions and digital platforms. The study investigated three hypotheses, revealing a positive significant relationship between Consumer Trust and Purchase decisions ($\beta=0.294$, $t = 6.027$, and $p = 0.00$); thus, Hypothesis 1 was accepted. The study also found a positive significant relationship between Consumer Presence and Purchase decisions ($\beta=0.294$, $t = 6.027$, and $p = 0.00$); thus, Hypothesis 2 was accepted. Lastly, the study found a positive significant relationship between Consumer Attitude and Purchase decisions ($\beta=0.397$, $t = 6.748$, and $p = 0.00$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Table 5: Summary of the structural model statistics

Hypotheses paths	Path coefficients(β)	t-values	p-values	F ²	Hypothesis status
CA -> CBB	0.397	6.748	0.000	0.18	Supported

CPP -> CBB	0.1	2.031	0.042	0.014	Supported
CT -> CBB	0.294	6.027	0.000	0.127	Supported

Discussion and Implications

Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the findings of this study indicate a positive relationship between the level of trust and purchase decisions. These findings can be attributed to several factors. First, past experiences play a crucial role in shaping trust; students who have positive experiences with digital platforms are more likely to trust them and make purchase decisions. Second, feedback and reviews from other users can significantly influence trust levels, as positive reviews and feedback can boost confidence in the platform. Third, the credibility of the information sources on these platforms, such as product descriptions and specifications, can enhance trust, leading to positive purchase decisions.

Additionally, security and privacy, especially on digital platforms, can positively influence trust and, in turn, influence purchase decisions. The findings of this study strongly support the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the context of purchase decisions on digital platforms. Specifically, the findings support the core variable of the TPB, which posits that attitudes influence an individual's intention to engage in a particular behaviour. This study reveals that consumers with higher trust in digital platforms are more likely to engage in buying behaviour, corresponding to the TPB's prediction that positive attitudes lead to the intention to perform a behaviour.

This study corroborates with De-Silva's (2015) findings, which examine the impact of trust on online purchasing behaviour. The findings of De-Silva's study show a positive relationship between the level of trust and purchase decisions. Likewise, this study's findings support Karunasingha et al. (2021), who investigated the mediating impact of trust on the relationship between online purchase decisions and consumers' social motivation in the context of social media marketing in Sri Lanka's fashion industry. These findings indicate that consumers' level of trust has a positive impact on their online purchase decisions.

The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between a consumer's presence and purchase decisions. This relationship can be attributed to several factors. First, the level of engagement and interaction with digital platforms may translate into a higher willingness to buy or actual purchases. Second, the frequency of visits and time spent on digital platforms may correlate with purchase decisions, as students might engage in prolonged platform usage for commercial activities.

These findings support the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the context of purchase decisions. On the one hand, they suggest that consumers' presence on digital platforms significantly influences purchase decisions. This significant relationship could be explained by the fact that digital platform usage among university students may serve purposes other than socialization or information gathering. The study highlights the importance of external factors like time constraints, environmental cues, social norms, and other contextual variables that may influence purchase decisions (George, 2004), which aligns with Ajzen's (1991) recognition that external variables can also impact purchase decisions. These findings fully

support the extension of the TPB. Yin et al. (2023) study how physical presence affects consumers' buying intentions through perceived control and concentration. They also include how social presence influences the buying intentions of a consumer through enjoyment and concentration and how these are essential elements in livestream shopping. The study results indicate that social and physical presence positively affect consumers' purchase decisions. Likewise, Reitz (2012) focuses on how consumer engagement with marketers on Facebook relates to loyalty and repurchase intention. Therefore, this study agrees with previous findings, which show that consumers' presence influences their purchase decisions.

The findings reveal a positive relationship between consumers' attitudes towards digital platforms and purchase decisions. The positive relationship between university students' attitudes towards digital platforms and their purchase decisions can be attributed to several factors. First, a positive online experience can enhance the convenience and accessibility of shopping, making students more inclined to purchase through digital platforms. Second, students perceive digital platform products as having high quality and offering tangible benefits. In that case, they may be more likely to sway their purchase decisions, as trust and confidence in the platform are crucial. In addition, the wide variety of products available on digital platforms can cater to diverse preferences and needs, further influencing buying decisions. As for the indicators of purchase decisions, a positive attitude towards digital platforms can drive purchase decisions, thus increasing willingness to buy, leading to more actual purchases. Moreover, a satisfying online shopping experience may promote post-purchase behaviours, such as repurchase, loyalty, and positive satisfaction, fostering a continuous cycle of positive buying behaviour.

The findings strongly support the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). According to the TPB, an individual's attitude toward a specific behaviour plays a crucial role in predicting their intention to engage in that behaviour, which, in turn, influences their actual behaviour. In this context, the positive relationship between university students' attitudes towards digital platforms and their purchase decisions leads to increased purchases aligned with the TPB's core principles. A positive attitude towards digital platforms likely translates into a solid intention to use them for purchasing, and this intention is reflected in actual buying behaviour. The convenience, quality perception, and product variety offered by digital platforms all shape a positive attitude, which, in turn, positively influences university students' buying decisions. Concerning other studies, the findings from this study support most referenced studies, contradicting the findings of Carvallo (2018). Similar to Khilji (2016), Memon et al. (2021), and Park (2003), this study demonstrates a positive relationship between consumers' attitudes towards digital platforms and their buying decisions. The results align with those of Khilji (2016) by emphasizing the importance of trust and relationships in influencing online purchase decisions through attitudes. Additionally, they concur with Memon et al. (2021) in highlighting the positive connection between attitudes and decisions, specifically in online purchasing. However, the findings contradict Carvallo (2018), who found no significant correlation between positive attitudes and positive purchase decisions. This study suggests that the relationship between attitude and purchase decisions may vary depending on specific factors or contexts.

Implications of the Study

There are three definite implications based on the findings, discussion and conclusion from this study. These have been classified as theoretical, managerial, and policy-oriented. The findings of this study provide significant theoretical implications for the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the context of digital platforms. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of digital platforms and their influence on university students' purchase decisions. Although the TPB has been widely applied to explain and predict human behaviour, integrating the two variables commonly discussed in the context of digital platforms has yet to be performed. By integrating trust and consumer presence, this study demonstrates satisfactory results for the extended model in the context of digital platforms in the context of university students in Tanzania. This finding implies that integrating these variables can serve as a theoretical model to better understand consumer's purchase intentions. Overall, the results of the current study reveal that the adaptability of the extended TPB model's explanatory power and predictive accuracy was enhanced.

The findings imply that businesses should prioritize establishing and maintaining trust in their digital channels for managers to facilitate purchase decisions. This can be accomplished by providing accurate and reliable product information and delivering positive user experiences. Positive reviews, recommendations, and security can also contribute to trust building. To extend the consumer presence, businesses should develop strategies to promote extended user involvement. This could include developing interesting content, personalized promotions, and rewards to encourage students to continue using the platform. Continuous engagement can result in increased purchasing behaviour. Acknowledging the significant positive relationship between consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions, businesses should foster a positive attitude on their digital channels. This can be accomplished by guaranteeing a smooth and user-friendly online experience, providing top-tier products, and presenting various offerings to cater to students' preferences and requirements.

To promote purchase decisions, policymakers and digital platform providers must focus on building and maintaining user trust. This can be achieved through transparent and reliable information sources and effective dispute-resolution mechanisms to address concerns during online transactions. Enhancing the user experience is critical to fostering positive attitudes towards digital platforms. Policymakers can encourage digital platform providers to invest in user-friendly interfaces, efficient customer service, and effective quality control to ensure that consumers have satisfactory online shopping experiences. To encourage more online presence through online engagement among university students, policymakers can promote educational programs on the benefits and risks associated with using digital platforms and campaigns to highlight the convenience and variety of products available on digital platforms.

Companies functioning in digital domains should emphasize the enhancement of trust-building strategies. This includes furnishing precise and dependable product details, delivering exceptional customer service, instituting transparent and equitable dispute resolution mechanisms, and promoting positive reviews, recommendations, and security measures. Businesses can cultivate and sustain robust connections with customers by concentrating on and ultimately fostering heightened purchase decisions. Businesses must prioritize augmenting user engagement to secure consumer participation on digital platforms. This involves crafting user-friendly interfaces, delivering personalized promotions, providing rewards, and sustaining involvement through dynamic content and interactive features. Elevating user experience and bolstering engagement enhance overall consumer satisfaction and streamline

purchase decisions on digital platforms. Transforming consumer attitudes toward digital platforms requires a comprehensive strategy, encompassing targeted messaging on benefits and convenience, personalized user experiences, and responsive customer support. Incentives like discounts and loyalty programs and transparent communication on security measures and privacy concerns contribute to building trust. Continuous innovation and collaboration with influencers influence consumer perceptions positively. This multifaceted approach, blending effective communication, positive user experiences, and strategic incentives, is critical to a fundamental shift in consumer attitudes toward embracing digital platforms.

However, it remains essential to recognize the limitations of this study. Doing so provides a more balanced understanding of the findings and highlights areas where further research or caution may be needed in interpreting the results. One of the notable limitations was associated with the timing of data collection. The research was conducted during a specific period coinciding with the end-of-semester break for university students at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). The timing posed challenges in reaching and interacting with the target undergraduate students due to their dispersal across different regions. This dispersion created difficulties in obtaining responses within the specified timeframe. Moreover, the respondents faced challenges completing the questionnaire, as some were unwilling or uninterested in participating. Technical issues with the online data collection method were also evident, with some students needing help understanding the Google Form format. Consequently, the researcher had to invest additional time in providing instructions on accessing the questionnaire link. Furthermore, the study's sample which was conveniently selected constituted university students who may not necessarily be representative of all the youth in the country. As a result, the generalizability of the findings beyond this specific sample is limited. Expanding the scope to incorporate different youth groups would broaden and deepen our understanding of the issue.

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