

Traveler's Social Media Use Continuous Intention During post Covid-19 Pandemic: The Extended Theory of Planned Behavior

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Abstract

This study provides a new perspective on the role of social media use in tourism marketing by introducing an extended model based on the theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The study provides information on the mediating role of the major constructs in the theory of Planned Behavior (i.e attitude, behavioral control, and subjective norms) on media dependence to predict traveler's social media use continuous intention in Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania. The survey data were gathered using simple random sampling to select 372 respondents from leaders of travel groups and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that the new model has a predictive power toward travelers' social media use continuous intention. Apart from the Theory of Planned Behavior constructs, media dependency significantly influences traveler's social media use continuous intention. Additionally, the mediating effect of subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behavior control has occurred. Theoretical and practical implications and directions of future studies are provided.

Keywords: Social media use, Continuous Intention, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Media Dependency, Structural Equation Modeling

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Introduction

The tourism sector is widely recognized for contributing to wealth, income, and livelihoods globally (Azhar, Ali, Hamid, Akhtar, & Rahman, 2022). It's considered a key driver of economic growth, supporting social-cultural aspects and the environment sustainability (Han, 2021). Such optimists have encouraged the initiatives from governments and regional cooperations tending to develop the industry for its continuous support in social-economic development (Azhar et al., 2022). Toward the end of the last decade, the industry was famous for its immense contribution to the growth, development, and sustenance of travel destinations in various parts of the world. Despite being one of the fastest-growing global sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted tourism and created uncertainty about its future (Barichello, 2020). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brutally affected the world economy and the tourism industry (Zambrano-Monserrate & Ruano, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered the growing pace of tourism activities turning it into an uncertain point (Zambrano-Monserrate & Ruano, 2020).

The tourism and hospitality sector was among the most affected sector worldwide due to travel and movement restrictions imposed (Kala, 2021). The COVID-19 restrictions which emphasize heavily on individuals staying at home, due to lockdowns and the closure of borders would not permit tourism activities to take place (El-Said & Aziz, 2022). A report by Amani et al., (2022), shows that the pandemic has destructively affected the livelihood of millions of individuals in Tanzania, thus increasing economic problems in tourism among other sectors. The crisis continues to slash down Tanzania's hospitality sector whereby the report shows that till April 2022 hotel occupancy rate was predicted at 23.5% (Amani et al., 2022). According to Henseler, Maisonnave, and Maskaeva (2022), the pandemic weakened Tanzanian's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate from 6.9 in 2019 to 4.8 in 2020 due to distractions in various economic sectors including tourism. The World Health Organization (WHO) intervene in the Covid situation by imposing important restrictions that helped in preventing the spread of the crisis (Donatus P Massawe, Mbura, & Thomas, 2023). Such restrictions which included the lockdown, social distancing, sanitation, and vaccinations developed an interest in the exploitation of social media as a prominent platform for information seeking and sharing in tourism, and hospitality in the recent past (Azhar et al., 2022).

Restoration of the tourism business is linked to the adopted measures and now the pandemic has slowed down and travel activities have acquired their pace again (Lu et al., 2022). In this regard, the current study is based on the extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine travelers' social media use continuous intention in arranging tourism activities during post Covid-19 pandemic. There is a growing interest from scholars in examining individuals continuous intention toward technological use (Chai, Wang, & Xu, 2020) that is mainly governed by gratifications available with those technologies. The sustainable growth and survival of tourism businesses depend heavily on firm communication channels that are easily accessible and provide accurate information (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020). Amidst Covid, people extensively used social media to seek information about the pandemic in their localities and beyond (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020).

Businesses, including those in tourism, found social media indispensable during Covid, serving not only to stay updated on the pandemic but also to engage with customers (Geldsetzer, 2020). Given that social media offers cost-effective communication channels for both businesses and customers, understanding travelers' continuous intention toward social media use post-Covid is vital. A positive customer's continuous intention is crucial for the growth and success of a business, particularly in destination marketing (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). Satisfied travelers appreciate effective marketing channels aligned with business

strategy. Their positive experiences, shared online, especially on social media, can positively influence new customers' purchasing decisions (Holmlund et al., 2020).

The easing of travel restrictions in certain regions post-COVID-19 has contributed to the revitalization of global tourism activities (Aggarwal, Singh, Chopra, & Kumar, 2022), allowing tourism practices to gain their pace again. Yet, the acquisition and sharing of information influencing travelers' decision-making have involve various factors (Toubes, Araújo Vila, & Fraiz Brea, 2021). Key elements such as attitude, subjective norms, and behavior control within the Theory of Planned Behavior carry substantial significance (Toubes et al., 2021). Psychological studies suggest that a traveler's choice of communication media is influenced by the gratification it provides, significantly impacting their behavior (Constantoglou & Trihas, 2020). The decision of the best communication tool is an unquestionably complicated, ambiguous, and muddled process (Azhar et al., 2022). Scholars have involved TPB as one of the best models in examing the traveler's behavioral intention during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (Aggarwal et al., 2022). This study utilized the TPB to predict travelers' social media use intention, incorporating subjective norm, attitude, perceived behavioral control, and an additional construct, social media dependency.

Recently, social media has become the primary channel for individuals to obtain and share travel-related information (Arasli, Abdullahi, & Gunay, 2021). Its increasing use in business operations has garnered attention from both marketers and consumers in the tourism and travel industry (Raji, Mohd Rashid, Mohd Ishak, & Mohamad, 2020). In post-COVID-19, many businesses view social media as a recovery tool from the crisis, given its role in sharing information about pandemic situations and travel experiences in specific locations (Gerwe, 2021). Popular platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp have proven effective for individuals to share travel experiences and pandemic-related information during and after the crisis. Social media's widespread interactivity, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility have positioned it as the predominant channel for communication in travel and tourism (Aggarwal et al., 2022).

Despite the widespread use of social media in daily activities, it is crucial to understand the factors driving social media use in the travel and tourism sector post-Covid-19. This paper, employed the TPB, investigates the influence of subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavior control on travelers' social media continuous use intention. Additionally, the study explores the impact of social media dependency on travelers' behavior towards social media use in post-Covid-19. While previous research has examined social media dependency as a driving force towards technology use, this study uniquely integrates it into the TPB model, contributing to the literature by assessing the model's strength and the effect of social media dependency on users behavior during post-Covid-19.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The Media Dependency Theory (MDT) was initiated by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) in the mid of 1970s to study mass media as an information system based on the multi-level model to enlighten the codependent between persons, media, and the community (Li, Yang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2019). Relying on traditional mass media studies, the theory has largely been applied, but recently scholars have shown interest in its application to studies relating to internet applications, particularly in the field of social media (Khalifa & Khalifa, 2020). The theory anticipates an individual's psychological state concerning media gratification, and an extensive reliance on social media is evident in social media dependency (Li et al., 2019). It is defined that dependence being the codependent between a person's expectations and the extent to which those

expectations are contingent upon the gratifies of the media (Carillo, Scornavacca, & Za, 2017). Hence, media dependency motivation is goal-oriented, with the strength of anticipated gratification influencing the individual's media dependency intensity (Khalifa & Khalifa, 2020).

The MDT assumes the media's ability to accomplish individual expectations will stimulate dependence upon such media (Carillo et al., 2017). This study assumes that a traveler's social media dependency is influenced by their awareness of social media's capacity to provide and share travel information (Carillo et al., 2017). Scholars have provided three factors that may be available with social media and attracts dependency on social media which are for information seeking and sharing, but also communication and solitary play (Li et al., 2019). This study defines social media dependency as the extent to which the ability to reach one's goal depends on social media use. Although numerous post-Covid-19 works that dealt with examining the influence of social media use in various aspects of people's life exists (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Singh, Dixit, & Joshi, 2020), less attention has been directed to the role of social media dependency on individuals behavioral intention. The pronounced reliance and anticipated gratifications make media dependency a driving force for three TPB concepts: attitude towards media use, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control.

The TPB was coined from the theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Ajzen (1991) to examine people's will to predict behavior and is one of the most used social-psychological models. TPB has been used in various fields such as psychology, marketing, education, technology, etc., to study individual behavior toward intention (Chai et al., 2020; Hasbullah, Mahajar, & Salleh, 2014; Pahrudin, Chen, & Liu, 2021). Hitherto, recent scholars have applied TPB in travel, and hospitality studies (Soliman, 2021; Wang & Wong, 2021). For instance, Erul, Woosnam, and McIntosh (2020) applied TPB to explain residents' behavioral intention to support tourism in their area, while Soliman (2021) focused on revisiting the intention of tourists in Egypt While TPB has faced criticism for its limited predictive ability (Zhou, Song, & Zhou, 2022), the theory's founder, has proposed incorporating an additional predictor to enhance its predictive power (Ajzen, 1991). Social media dependency, acknowledged as a driving force for media use, lacks integration with TPB in studying travelers' continuous intentions post-COVID-19 in existing literature. This study aims to add value by addressing this gap.

Hypotheses Development

The current study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Media Dependency Theory (MDT). MDT exhibits a positive association with the three TPB concepts: subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavior control. Additionally, it is assumed that gratifications derived from media dependency will impact the interaction between TPB concepts and travelers' continuous intention to use social media.

Social Media Dependency, Attitude, and Continuous Intention

Within TPB, "attitude" (AT) represents an individual's positive or negative perception of a specific behavior. Those with positive intentions exhibit optimism, while negativity diminishes hope. Attitude plays a significant role in describing, predicting, and influencing travelers' behavioral intentions, such as continuous social media use in the post-COVID-19 pandemic (Azhar et al., 2022). Equally, social media dependency influences travelers' decision marking and stimulates social media use continuous intention (Khalifa & Khalifa, 2020). The previous studies indicate a positive relationship between social media dependency and attitude, but also between attitude and social media use continuous intention. Hahn and Kim (2013) in their findings show that media dependency positively and significantly influences attitudes toward mobile shopping. Bilal, Akram, Rasool, Yang, and Tanveer (2022) share that customer attitude is positively and significantly influenced by electronic word-of-mouth available on social media.

Avraham (2015) study argues that tourists rely on shared information on social media to mitigate risk perception during pandemic times, such as natural calamities, terrorist attacks, and political conflicts, thereby influencing their behavioral intentions. According to Assaker and O'Connor (2021) the Social Media Dependency Theory suggests that positive customer attitudes are shaped by shared experiences on social media, including reviews, comments, and opinions. Additionally, media exposure is reported to positively and significantly impact attitudes towards the intention to choose green hotels (Hasan & Rahman, 2023). Tajudeen Shittu, Madarsha Basha, Suryani Nik AbdulRahman, and Badariah Tunku Ahmad (2011), Sukaatmadja, Yasa, Telagawathi, Witarsana, and Rahmayanti (2022) and Liu, Min, and Han (2020) findings agree with the fact that attitude positively and significantly influence behavior intention. Due to the significant shift in communication towards social media channels post-Covid-19, scholars need to explore travelers' continuous social media use intentions. Travelers' reliance on social media as a vital source of destination information, coupled with its proven utility during and after Covid-19, suggests a likely positive attitude towards continuous use. Building on previous studies, two hypotheses are proposed in this section:

H1: Social media dependency positively influences travelers' attitude

H2: Travelers' attitudes positively influence social media use continuous intention

Social Media Dependency, Subjective Norm, and Continuous Intention

Subjective norm (SN) within the TPB is a pivotal concept defining individual social influence, leading individuals to believe it plays a role in inspiring specific behaviors (Azhar et al., 2022). In the context of behavior performance, Subjective Norm (SN) is characterized as the perceived social-psychological pressure experienced (Chai et al., 2020). The emotional pressure resulting from social media dependency, influenced by information from previous travelers or tourism firms, could potentially guide travelers towards continuous social media use intentions. The social-psychological pressure during Covid-19, driven by factors like social isolation, lockdowns, and border closures, has increased the inclination for information-seeking and sharing (Azhar et al., 2022).

If travelers were motivated to embark on past journeys based on Covid-19 information sourced from social media platforms, they are likely to possess a positive inclination towards continuous social media use in the post-Covid-19 period. Azhar et al. (2022) findings indicate a positive correlation between information on social media and subjective norms. Based on social media, Pahrudin et al. (2021) report a significant relationship between tourists' intention to visit a destination and subjective norms during post-Covid-19. Another notable study is shared by Bae and Chang (2021) whose findings indicate a significant association between subjective norms and behavior intention based on the effect of Covid-19 perception on tourists' behavior intention. Thus, from the previous studies we are eager to hypothesize that:

H3: Social media dependency positively influences travelers' subjective norm

H4: Travelers' subjective norms positively influence social media use continuous intention

Social Media Dependency, Perceived Behavioral Control and Continuous Intention

Perceived Behavioral Control, the final concept in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), is viewed as an aspect influencing both intention and behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This concept pertains to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior, wherein travelers in our case assess the ease or difficulty of continuously using social media post-Covid-19 for obtaining tourism information. It centers on individuals' belief in control, influencing the degree to which they expect success or failure (Azhar et al., 2022), and this influence

individual behavior because is steemed within voluntary control (Pahrudin et al., 2021). Hitherto, findings natured from social-emotional created based on communication-related technologies inform that with enough time individuals might create a complete perception of others based on information shared via internet technologies (Pahrudin et al., 2021). Individuals with the capacity to share or acquire information on social media will continue utilizing such media to satisfy their desire. During post Covid-19, PBC backs up on the travelers self-assurance on the ability of social media channels to provide them with reliable and useful travel information. Since in the Covid time social media channels were an important source of information and travelers perceived them as helpful, behavioral intentions toward continuous use after Covid might be positive.

Some of the previous findings show that individuals' self-confidence in their capacity to conduct a certain behavior is positively influenced by their intention toward such behavior (Erul et al., 2020; Pahrudin et al., 2021). The choice and continuous use of communication channels are merely influenced by travelers' perception of their ability to exercise behavioral control for their travel purposes based on the kind of information available with social media (Zhou et al., 2022). Sembada and Koay (2021) found a strong positive influence of PBC on the continuous use of communication channels. Sun, Law, and Schuckert (2020) report the positive association between social media use and perceived behavioral control over the intention to use mobile money for hotel payments. Moreover, Zhang, Chen, and Fu (2023) added that application of social media has a positive influence on perceived behavior control. Thus, based on the conceptualized literature, the current study assumes that the use of social media influences travelers' perceived control, but also perceived behavioral control positively influences social media use continuous intention during post Covid-19 pandemic. Based on these arguments two hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H5: Social media dependency positively influences travelers' perceived behavioral control

H6: Travelers' perceived behavioral control positively influences social media use continuous intention

Media Dependency and Continuous Intention

Behavioral intention is a central concept in TPB since it discloses how a person's intentions toward engagement or not in certain activities are imitated by their behavior (Azhar et al., 2022). The concept of media dependency connotes the extent to which an individual relies on media to fulfill her/or his purpose (Handarkho, Widyastuti, & Harjoseputro, 2022). The more individual expectations given to the media influence their behavior and trust toward such media. Based on such assumption, it is believed that individuals who consider social media as their principal source of information believe that information shared in those media is valid and reliable. This assumption acquires support from Handarkho et al. (2022) whose work affirms that media dependency positively influences individuals' behavior, in our case "social media use continuous intention". Social media use has also been considered an important channel where individuals-based information related to Covid-19 was easily available (Aggarwal et al., 2022). Individuals are said to depend on shared content on social media either from customers or tourism destination management for travel decision marking (Islam, 2021; Donatus Peter Massawe, Mbura, & Elly, 2024). Based on the previous findings, individuals had several advantages as regards social media use during Covid-19 which might lead to continuous use in post covid era. Just to mention a few, individuals based on social media to acquire opinions, comments, and recommendations, and thus we are eager to hypothesize that:

H7: Media dependency positively influences social media use continuous intention

Methodology

The study is based on a quantitative method with deductive approach to test the hypothesized concepts. It assumes that there is a positive relationship between social media dependency and the three concepts in the TPB which lead to social media use continuous intention among those concepts. Data was collected from leaders of travel groups who pass through Marangu gate to climb the Kilimanjaro mountain during January and February 2023 which is a peak tourism season in Tanzania (Meela, 2019). Tour leaders from different groups climbing Kilimanjaro through Marangu gate were the unit of inquiry and analysis and they were supplied with self-administered questionnaires on their first day of climbing. They were requested to fill out the questionnaires on their time and submit them at the Marangu gate on their descending day. A total of 372 responses were collected from the gate for analysis on 5th March 2023, but 48 were not included in the analysis because some of them were not in social media during Covid-19 while others had missing values. Thus the response rate was 87% of the expected responses.

Table 1: Study Indicators and Questionnaires

Constructs	No. of Measurent Items	Source
Attitude (AT)	4	Azhar et al. (2022); Kervenoael et al., (2021)
Subjective norm (SN)	5	Ajzen (1991); Azhar et al. (2022); Kaushik and Rahman (2015)
Perceived behavioral control	5	Ajzen (1991); Taylor and Todd (1995); Kaushik and Rahman (2015)
Continuous intention	5	Azhar et al. (2022); Taylor and Todd (1995); Kaushik and Rahman (2015)
Media dependency	4	Li et al. (2019); Kaushik and Rahman (2015)

The survey instrument was designed with three sections. In the first section leader of the travel group was asked whether they had been using social media during the Covid-19 era, and if they were not using their responses were rejected. The second section involves demographic features of respondents such as gender, age, education level, and experience of social media use, and the last section was about measurement items (scale) for the constructs adopted from previous scholars. This last section contains questions measuring attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, continuous intention, and media dependency sourced as indicated in Table 1. The survey items were adopted and slightly modified following a comprehensive review of the previous literature based on a 7-point Likert scale (where “1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree”). Seven points Likert scale has been considered more suitable in studies patience to electronic and internet applications (Azhar et al., 2022). The data collection questionnaires were piloted, but before that, three academic staff who specialized in tourism were used to validate the instrument. Later a pilot study was conducted on 55 leaders of the travelers groups climbing Kilimanjaro at Marangu gate which was the gate with the highest number of travelers to the mountain (Donatus Peter Massawe et al., 2024), and the results obtained from the pilot stud was excluded from the final data analysis.

Results

The Measurement Model Analysis

In PLS-SEM studies the model quality is evaluated based on the Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CCA) which assesses the items and the underlying construct (measurement model), and also construct to construct

(structural model) as proposed by Hair, Howard, and Nitzl (2020). Based on the validity and reliability assessment of the measurement model the researcher evaluates whether the study data matches exactly with the theories applied (Chierici, Del Bosco, Mazzucchelli, & Chiacchierini, 2019).

Table 2: Summary of Measurement Models

Variables	Loadings	CR	α	Rho_A	AVE	HTMT
<i>Attitude</i>		0.886	0.814	0.863	0.723	
AT1	0.879					
AT2	0.847					
AT3	0.823					
<i>Subjective Norms</i>		0.834	0.73	0.786	0.628	
SN1	0.705					
SN3	0.798					
SN5	0.866					
<i>Perceived Behavioral Control</i>		0.838	0.765	0.788	0.511	
PBC1	0.653					
PBC2	0.813					
PBC3	0.666					
PBC4	0.651					< 0.85
PBC5	0.774					
<i>Media Dependency</i>		0.917	0.879	0.883	0.734	
MD1	0.899					
MD2	0.796					
MD3	0.854					
MD4	0.875					
<i>Continuous Intention</i>		0.820	0.709	0.717	0.534	
CI1	0.789					
CI2	0.701					
CI3	0.696					
CI4	0.732					

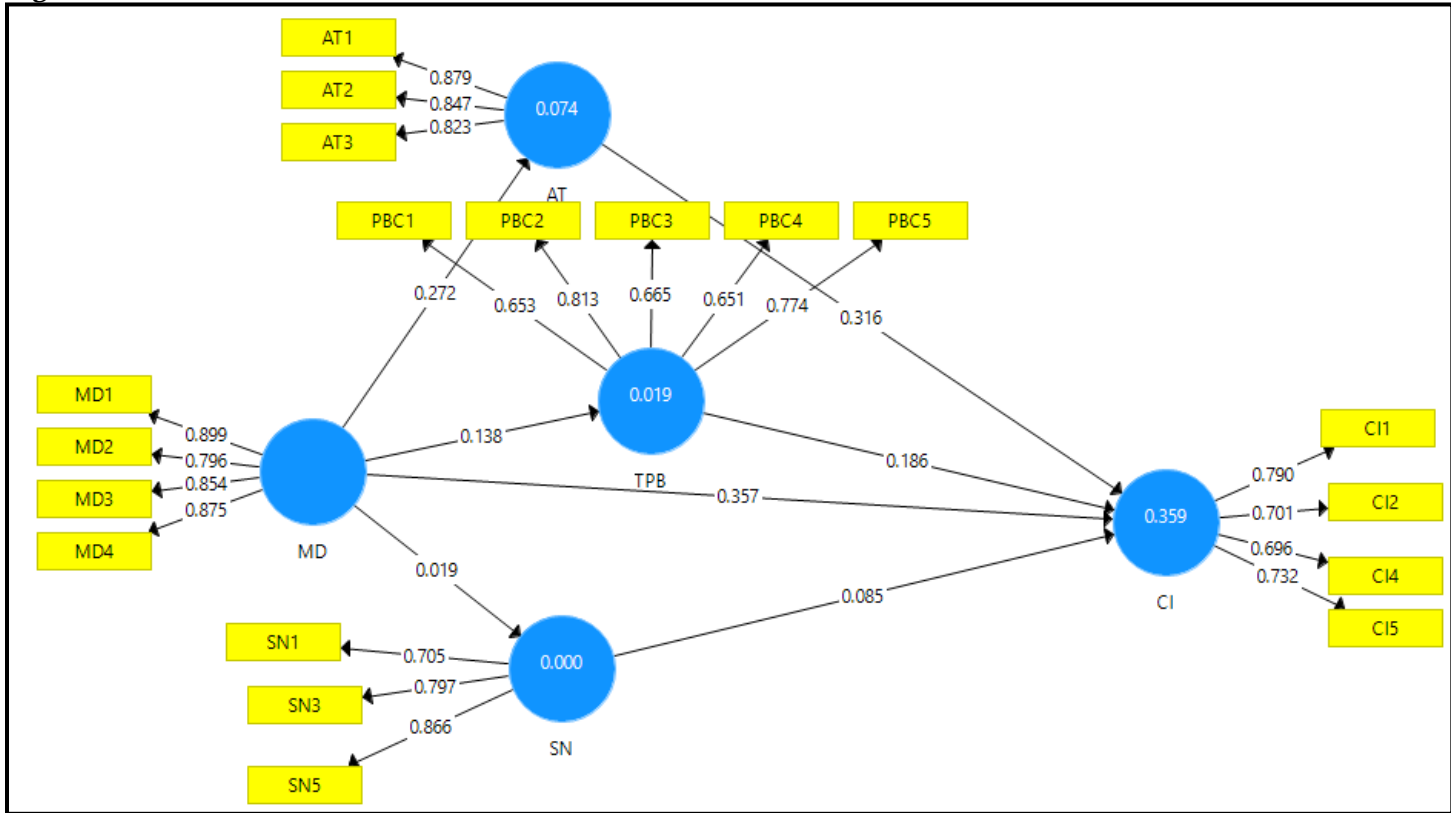
Notes: CR = Composite Reliability; α = Cronbach Alpha; HTMT = Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio of Correlations; AVE = Average of Variance Extracted.

For the reliability assessment, the study focused on indicator reliability (IR) and the construct level looking at internal consistency reliability (ICR). Findings for the reliability in Table 2 reveal that loadings of the retained items (IOL) are greater than 0.5 while composite reliability (CR), Cronbach alpha (α), and rho_A is greater than 0.7 indicating that reliability at the indicator level, but also construct level was ensured. However, the descriptive statistics show that average mean and median values for measurement models are above 4, which according to the 7-point Likert scale responses appears to accept with hypothesized relations in our study. The average standard deviation for the variables is 1.69 a value less than 3 which is an indication that variations among responses are very little (Chierici et al., 2019). With such variation, findings concur with the supposition of mean and median that respondents agree with our hypothesis.

According to Hair et al. (2020), convergent and discriminant were considered in assessing the validity of the instrument. With convergent validity, values of average variance extracted in Table 4.1 are greater than 0.5, indicating that constructs convergent validity was attained. The discriminant validity of the study constructs was attained as values for the Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) are all less than 0.85 (Donatus Peter Massawe et al., 2024; Webber, Critchfield, & Soble, 2020). Although recently scholars have

mainly concentrated on HTMT to assess discriminant validity, to avoid bias the study has utilized cross-loadings for discriminant validity and it was found that the retained items for each concept are higher than their cross-loadings which is an indication that the concepts are well measured by the chosen items.

Figure 1: Final Measurement Model in PLS Paths



Besides the assessment of the validity and reliability of the study instrument, variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis was performed for collinearity check because its presence would prejudice the findings of the path coefficient (Kock, 2015). The results indicate that values for constructs and items are less than 4. These values entail that there was no multicollinearity issue, then further analysis could be performed. Yet, since data were gathered using self-administered questionnaires could result in common method bias (CMB) (Kock, Berbekova, & Assaf, 2021; Donatus Peter Massawe et al., 2024) which was also assured by running the full collinearity test based on PLS-SEM and indices are greater than 4, which signifies that CMB was not a concern in our analysis (Kock et al., 2021).

Structural Models and Hypothesis Testing

In Figure 1 all predictive indices for model directional as hypothesized earlier were significant supporting the hypothesized relations. The seven paths specified in the model are found to be statistically significant. These paths reflect the impact of MD on attitude (0.272), MD on PBC (0.138), and MD on subjective norms (0.019). Moreover, MD toward IC (0.357), AT toward CI (0.316), PBC toward CI (0.186), and subjective norm (0.019) appear to have significant effect.. The direct relationship between MD to CI is significant (0.357), AT with CI (0.316), PBC with CI (0.186), and SN with CI (0.085). In short, the analysis indicates that MD has a direct influence on AT, SN, CI, and PBC, and finally, AT, SN, and PBC directly influence CI of SM use during post covid pandemic. These findings illustrate that all hypotheses are accepted. The

four concepts together explain more than 36% of the variance in continuous intention (R² 0.359). According to Cohen (1988), an R² of 0.359 is substantial enough to explain the relationship in a new concept.

Based on effect size guidelines by Sarstedt et al. (2020) magnitude of the effect size for media dependency was (f² = 0.177) as compared to attitude (f² = 0.143), perceived behavioral control (f² = 0.053) and subjective norms (f² = 0.021). These values are above the small effect size threshold by Hair et al., (2020), indicating that the study path models are significant and relevant. The study model's predictive relevance as suggested by Hair et al. (2020), the value of the Q² is 0.179 which is above zero indicating that the study path models are predictive relevance. PLS predict analysis was done to assess out-of-sample model predictive power through Q²_predict values, but also root-mean-squared error (RMSE) values where smaller than the error based on LM results. The values for Q²_predict are positive and RMSE for items are small than RMSE values in the LM section, indicating higher model predictive power (Donatus P Massawe et al., 2023; Shmueli et al., 2019). The study's final model with factor loadings, path coefficients, and the explained variance R² of the independent variables is illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 4: Direct and Indirect Paths Results.

Hypothesized Paths	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Values	P Values	Decision
AT → CI	0.320	0.322	0.050	6.370	0.000	Accepted
MD → AT	0.284	0.286	0.059	4.789	0.000	Accepted
MD → CI	0.349	0.350	0.053	6.595	0.000	Accepted
MD → PBC	0.138	0.143	0.062	2.239	0.013	Accepted
MD → SN	0.050	0.061	0.078	0.639	0.261	Rejected
PBC → CI	0.187	0.190	0.055	3.384	0.000	Accepted
SN → CI	0.070	0.081	0.052	1.354	0.088	Rejected

To understand the mediating role of the planned behavior attributes the indirect impact of media dependence on continuous intention were tested. Table 4 indicates that media dependence has a positive and significant indirect influence on travelers' continuous intention through attitudes and behavior control but does not mediate the indirect influence of subjective norms. This result proves that attitudes and behavior control have a significant moderating role in the relationship between media dependence and travelers' social media use continuous intention.

Discussion of the Findings

This paper attempted to shed light on the theory of planned behaviour to explain travellers' intention to continuously use social media in the context of mount Kilimanjaro climbing activities. A modified model was introduced to incorporate the attributes of individual's media dependence. The empirical results show a positive and significant influence of the two planned behavioural concepts (PBC and AT) on travellers' continuous intention to use social media. The results are consistent with those of Soliman (2021), whose findings show that individual AT and PBC promote an increase in CI social media usage. Moreover, among the attributes of the theory of planned behaviour, attitude has the strongest direct influence on continuous intention to use social media, followed by perceived behavioural control (PBC). This implies that the power of perceived travel experiences conveyed through social media content sustains user interest. This phenomenon emphasises the significant role of user-generated travel content in shaping users' ongoing

engagement on social media platforms. Ultimately, it highlights the relationship between travellers' attitudes, social media content and users' intention to continue participating in online travel communities.

On the other hand, the positive and significant relationship observed between travellers' perceived behavioural control and continued intention underscores that travellers' confidence in their ability to use social media platforms effectively plays a fundamental role in maintaining their engagement with online travel communities and travel companies. This finding highlights the importance of users' perceived ease and ability to navigate social media interfaces and functionalities, as it enables them to maintain their engagement when accessing and interacting with climbing-related content on social media. Ultimately, this highlights the interplay between travellers' confidence in their social media potential and their determined commitment to engage with specific niche content within the broader travel-related framework. This relationship highlights the importance of understanding users' perceptions and capabilities to shape their ongoing participation in social media travel communities centred on niche interests such as climbing.

The results also show that subjective norms do not mediate the relationship between media dependence and the intention to continuously use social media. This finding contrasts with previous literature (Soliman, 2021), which found that subjective norms mediate individual behaviour. Such non-mediating relationships may be caused by behaviour that is perceived as difficult by travellers, in our case continuous social media use in the post-Covid era (Azhar *et al.*, 2022; Massawe *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, media dependence has a positive and significant impact on intention to continuously use social media and has the highest direct effect on continuous intention of all constructs. This means traveler' behavioural performance was positively and significantly influenced when they were media dependent. The result is similar to Li *et al.* (2019), who report that media dependence positively and significantly influences the intention to continuously use social media. This can be understood as a context in which users see significant value in using social media for their tourism information needs. Therefore, they engage more in social media to fulfil their tourism communication and information needs and even share the experiences they have had during their tourism activities. In this way, they develop the intention to continue using social media over time. This could be favoured by the potential of social media to provide numerous and unique opportunities to communicate, share information and participate in climbing activities, creating a desire and intention to remain part of the social media community.

The results of the study also show that media dependence has a positive and significant impact on travellers' attitudes and perceived behavioural control and consequently influences their intention to continue engaging on social media platforms. Interestingly, while media dependence plays a crucial role in shaping travellers' decision-making processes in relation to continued social media use, it does not appear to have an impact on travellers' subjective norms in this context. This highlights the fundamental role of media dependence in influencing travellers' perceptions and behaviours, particularly in relation to their continuous use of social media platforms for climbing-related purposes. As there are few studies on media addiction in relation to travelling, but specifically to mountaineering, our findings are unique in this respect. Nonetheless, it could be argued that a traveller's perceived behavioural control and attitude towards continuous intention is related to their level of dependence on social media channels for travel-related information and experiences. However, such arguments are supported by Ho, Liao and Rosenthal (2015), whose findings show that media dependence has a significant and direct impact on perceived behavioural control and attitudes towards pro-environmental behavioural intentions.

Theoretically, the results emphasise the effectiveness of the extended TPB in predicting social media use for Kilimanjaro trekking, with the addition of media dependence proposed by Ajzen (1991) to address previous

criticisms of the limited predictive power of the TPB. The concept of media dependence is considered by scholars to be a driving force for media use (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2022). The concepts proposed in this study are behaviour specific and are conceptualised as causal factors that influence travellers' decisions, but these concepts are also the potential for a wide range of behaviours in different disciplines (Ajzen, 1991). The added concept of TPB reveals an acceptable motivation for social media use, whereby the simultaneous analysis of media dependence and that of TPB enhances the understanding of the process of social media use in the tourism industry in general, but specifically in mountaineering per se. The second theoretical implication lies in the conceptual stance, whereby our findings demonstrate the applicability of the extended TPB in a developing country, Tanzania, in contrast to most behavioural models of social media use in previous studies.

Empirically, the implications of the study provide an important idea for the planning and development of social media and tourism industry in Tanzania. The study suggests that understanding the key attributes that influence the use of social media by travellers will enhance the development of effective strategies to promote social media development. Apart from TPB concepts, the results show a remarkable positive and significant relationship between media dependence and both attitude and perceived behavioural control among travellers. However, the relationship between media dependence and subjective norms is not significant in our study. This shows how important it is for tourism marketers to place greater emphasis on these key concepts in their marketing strategies, especially those that show significant relationships with travellers' attitudes and perceived control over their behaviour. To effectively stimulate demand for tourism, particularly for mountaineering, marketers need to have a thorough understanding of traveller behaviour and the knowledge necessary to inspire travel motivation in the minds of tourists and thereby influence their decision-making processes. By focusing on these important concepts and leveraging insights into traveller motivations, marketers can tailor their strategies to effectively capture and engage destination travellers, ultimately driving demand and creating memorable travel experiences.

A comprehensive understanding of traveller behaviour is critical for tourism stakeholders as it enables them to develop and implement supportive strategies and interventions that facilitate the increased use of social media and contribute to the overall development of tourism in Tanzania. In particular, companies offering Kilimanjaro trekking packages should recognise the importance of social media as a powerful marketing channel and actively promote its use. Through the effective use of social media platforms, these companies can increase the perceived motivation of travellers and thus attract more tourists to explore the unique experiences that Kilimanjaro trekking packages offer. Through the strategic and targeted use of social media, tourism businesses can effectively promote Kilimanjaro climbing adventures, ultimately increasing interest and participation in this mountain tourism activity in Tanzania.

Conclusion

The findings of this study carry significant scientific and practical implications for the tourism industry in Tanzania. Notably, the extension of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to predict travelers' intentions regarding social media usage is highlighted, with the incorporation of media dependence aiming to address the predictive limitations previously observed within the TPB framework (TPB (Ajzen, 1991; Aggarwal *et al.*, 2022)). By integrating media dependence into the TPB framework, this study offers insights to the factors influencing travelers' decisions and behaviors in the context of social media usage, thus enhancing our understanding of tourist motivations and preferences. These proposed concepts are tailored to the specific context of traveler behavior and apply varied influences on travelers' decision-making processes (Ajzen, 1991). As such, they provide valuable guidance for tourism stakeholders seeking to develop targeted

strategies to effectively engage travelers through social media platforms, ultimately fostering enhanced visitor experiences and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

The integration of media dependence into the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework provides valuable insights in the underlying motivations driving social media usage within the context of tourism, offering an understanding of tourist behaviors, particularly in relation to activities such as Kilimanjaro climbing. By incorporating media dependence into the TPB framework, researchers and practitioners gain a deeper understanding of the complex factors influencing travelers' decisions to engage with social media platforms for climbing-related purposes. This not only enriches our understanding of tourism dynamics in general but also offers specific insights into the unique challenges and opportunities essential in Kilimanjaro climbing tourism. Moreover, this highlights the adaptability and relevance of the extended TPB model, particularly in the context of developing countries like Tanzania, where technological advancements intersect to shape tourism practices and consumer behaviors. Therefore, the inclusion of media dependence within the TPB framework represents a significant advancement in our understanding of the complexities of tourist motivations and behaviors, providing valuable guidance for tourism stakeholders in making effective strategies to enhance visitor experiences and promote sustainable tourism development in Tanzania.

The results of this study provide actionable insights that can inform the development of effective social media strategies in the tourism sector, particularly in the mountaineering sector. Identifying the determinants of intention to use social media is critical to developing strategies that meet the needs of travellers in the tourism industry. Our research highlights the importance of considering factors such as media dependence, attitude and perceived behavioural control and demonstrates a positive relationship between these variables. These findings are particularly valuable for marketers and other tourism stakeholders as they provide a basis for refining strategies to promote tourism activities such as climbing Kilimanjaro. By leveraging these insights, tourism businesses can better tailor their social media campaigns to travellers' motivations and preferences, ultimately increasing engagement and driving participation in Kilimanjaro climbs.

The paper acknowledges several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the fact that the data collection focused exclusively on visitors to Kilimanjaro Marangu Gate, could affect the generalisability of the results. Future research should aim to extend the model to a wider range of tourist locations and different respondent groups in order to more fully assess its impact on travellers' continuous intention to use social media. Furthermore, it is important to validate the proposed conceptual model at different tourist attractions in developing countries to ensure its applicability and relevance in different contexts. As suggested by the founder of the theory of planned behaviour, there is a need to investigate the inclusion of additional variables in the model to improve its predictive ability. This emphasises the need for further studies to integrate new concepts and refine the theoretical framework accordingly. Given that the study relies on self-administered questionnaires, future surveys should aim to reach a broader and more diverse audience to improve the generalisability and applicability of the research findings. Furthermore, future studies could explore the social media practises of tourism businesses in the post-COVID-19 era to gain valuable insights for informed management decisions in the tourism industry.

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