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Marketing Communication Channels and Consumer Purchase Intention: The Role of Brand Trust in Air Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The growing fragmentation of marketing communication channels has compelled firms in the airline industry to reassess how social and traditional media affect customer behavior. This study observes which role marketing communication media play in influencing consumer purchase intentions, with brand trust serving as a key explanatory mechanism. Data were acquired using quantitative approaches, using a structured questionnaire distributed to Tanzanian airline customers. The suggested research model was validated with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The data indicate that both media marketing channels have a significant impact on brand trust and customer purchase intentions. Also, brand trust was found to play a critical role in strengthening the relationship between marketing communication media and purchase intentions. These results suggest that coordinated use of traditional and digital marketing channels can enhance consumer confidence and purchasing decisions in the airline industry. The study contributes to the marketing and entrepreneurship literature by offering concrete proof from a developing market environment, as well as practical recommendations for airline executives looking to increase advertising efficiency and customer trust.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Aviation industry has undergone tremendous evolution, dating back to the 19th century, when the Wright brothers invented the first engine-powered flight. This was followed by subsequent incremental improvements in speed, efficiency, and comfort through the deployment of technological innovations (Taylor & Guilmarin, 2024). The aviation industry in Africa started at a snail's pace due to limited resources. However, its development can be traced back to the colonial era and has continued to develop and expand to this day. In 1977,

Tanzania established Air Tanzania, which has exponentially developed to become an aviation powerhouse in Africa, contributing immensely to the socio-economic development and regional connectivity (Airway, 2023; Daily News, 2024; Mbura, 2019; Ndanyungu, 2019). The aviation industry offers less differentiated services, hence it is exposed to excessive competitive pressure. The dividing line between failure and success resides in the ability to deploy a proper, effective, and efficient marketing strategy for attracting and retaining customers. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the uptake and usage of digital service channels, including social media in the aviation industry, have drastically increased (Noah, 2023).

Marketing communication plays a pivotal role in building brand trust. Customers' assurance about a brand's capacity to fulfill its commitments and lower the perceived risk involved in making purchases is reflected in brand trust. This trust and durability are high in traditional marketing channels such as television, radio, print, and billboards (Daou, 2020). Further, these channels have wide coverage, high perceived credibility, and the ability to reinforce brand messages (Eddine, 2016). Whereas for digital marketing, despite being cheaper, it also provides customers with opportunities to engage, and more importantly, it can be measured using tools and analytics. Digital marketing also allows co-creation of content where even customers give product or service endorsements, forming a bi-dimensional engagement. This has completely transformed the communication regime between the business and its customers. However, despite these advantages, digital marketing confronts obstacles. For example, copyright infringement and low customer trust are particularly problematic in markets where computer literacy is low (Martyna Targosz, 2024).

Digital marketing, such as social media, enables airlines to quickly disseminate information and receive immediate feedback from customers, thereby building a long-term relationship. Such relationships form the basis for enhancing brand loyalty and willingness to buy (Bruhn et al., 2012). However, there must be a mix between digital marketing and traditional marketing so as to complement each other.

Few studies directly compare the effects of both traditional and online media marketing specifically on brand trustworthiness and purchasing intent within the Tanzanian aviation context, even though prior research has looked at the effects of digital marketing on consumer behavior in various industries. Some have examined numerous aspects of marketing communication, with some focusing on consumer retention and loyalty (Kaur, 2024; Komalasari & Budiman, 2018; Kumar & Ayodeji, 2021; Larsson & Broström, 2020). Other have investigated the predictors of trust and loyalty in social media interaction (Ebrahim, 2020; Esenyele & Girgen, 2019; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Tümer et al., 2019). In the airline industry, only a few studies have tried to examine the combined and independent effects of both traditional and digital media on brand trust and purchase intention. To answer the research questions, the study will be anchored on the Signaling Theory and Commitment – Trust Theory as the theoretical foundations that will provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among marketing communication media, brand trust, and purchasing behavior.

1.1. Signaling Theory

Signaling Theory explains that consumers often face uncertainty regarding the quality of services, especially within the airline business, so they rely on “signals” such as social media messages and traditional media to evaluate brand credibility and reliability (Liu & Zheng, 2024). These marketing signals reduce information asymmetry and shape consumer perceptions (Osburg et al., 2022). According to Su et al. (2016), Brand equity is a widely recognised signal for service quality, which is not directly observable. Under this line of reasoning, a brand serves as a vehicle for communicating business information to the customers, hence it must be jealously protected. Various scholars have supported this idea when they averred that a brand

can effectively communicate essential business information with reliability and credibility (Klimchak et al., 2020; Ko et al., 2019; Li et al., 2017; Vismara, 2016).

1.2. Commitment Trust Theory

Propounded by Morgan and Hunt in 1994, Commitment Trust Theory is widely recognised as a theoretical foundation in relationship marketing. The theory argues that trust is the key driver of long-term customer relationships and purchase decisions. The theory is suitable for examining how brand reliability influences customer intention to fly with Air Tanzania. According to this theory, loyalty and dedication are critical elements for the achievement of lasting relationships between parties, particularly in business contexts (Abosag & Tynan, 2006).

It complements the Signaling Theory by emphasizing the role of loyalty and commitment in customer-brand relationships. Trust, well-defined as the customer's confidence in a brand's consistency and integrity, is a critical factor in fostering long-term relationships. Traditional marketing builds trust by delivering consistent and reliable messages, while social media marketing strengthens this trust through personalized engagement and two-way communication. This trust drives consumer commitment, influencing purchase intentions and loyalty. This theory was also used by a number of marketing scholars (Abid et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2019; MacMillan et al., 2005; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007). These theories are appropriate for this study because they directly address the core research problem, which is determining how different types of media communication influence brand loyalty and, ultimately, intention to purchase. When integrating these theories, the study develops a comprehensive explanation of how marketing signals shape trust and how trust, in turn, motivates consumer behavior.

The gap from previous studies is significant given the Tanzania's dual media consumption patterns, rapid digitalization, and the competitive nature of the airline field. Thus, the problem guiding this study includes: To what extent do traditional and social media communication influence perceived brand reliability and consumer intent to purchase for Air Tanzania, and which media channel is more effective in shaping consumer behavior? Addressing these gaps, this study investigates the effect of traditional and social media communication on customer purchase intention, with brand trust serving as a key explanatory variable, using Air Tanzania as an empirical case. By employing a quantitative research approach and structural equation modeling, the goal of the study is to offer empirical understandings into the mechanisms through which marketing communication media shape customer decision-making in the airline field. The results are expected to contribute to the entrepreneurship and marketing literature while offering practical implications for airline managers seeking to design effective communication strategies to improve customer loyalty and purchasing behavior. Thus, the goal of this research is to investigate how customer behavior in the airline business is affected by marketing communication media, including social and traditional channels, with an emphasis on Air Tanzania. More precisely, the study examines the effects of traditional media marketing and social media communication on perceived brand reliability and explores how brand reliability influences customer purchase intention. In addition, the study assesses the direct impact of social and traditional media marketing on consumer purchase intention to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among marketing communication media, brand trust, and purchasing behavior.

2. METHOD

2.1. Instrument(s)

A structured online questionnaire submitted via Google Forms was used for data collection. This strategy enabled efficient access to a geographically dispersed sample of Air Tanzania

customers while ensuring convenience, anonymity, and automatic data coding (Evans & Mathur, 2018). The survey comprised twenty-six measurement items assessing traditional media communication (6), social media communication (8), perceived brand reliability (8), and purchase intention (4) on a five-point Likert scale (Goswami et al., 2023). The questionnaire was distributed through multiple digital platforms to reach current, former, and potential airline customers. The study applied a cross-sectional survey technique with a quantitative research design. Because the study aims to statistically analyze correlations between perceived brand reliability, purchase intention, social media marketing, and traditional advertising, a quantitative approach was appropriate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach enables hypothesis testing, model validation, and generalization of findings to the population of airline consumers (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). However, the use of a cross-sectional design limited the breadth of the study in that it is not capable of measuring causality (Cooper et al., 2014).

2.1.1. Scale Development

The study adopted previously validated scales to answer the research questions. While some customization was necessary, the validated scales cemented the validity and reliability of the results. The Traditional Media Marketing (TMM) construct scale was adopted from (Abzari et al., 2014). For Social Media Marketing (SMM), measurement items were adopted from (Abzari et al., 2014; Dehghani & Tumer, 2015), focusing on interactivity, content quality, and consumer engagement on online platforms like X (Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram. For brand credibility and trust, the study utilized scales from (Kang et al., 2014), testing brand consistency, integrity, and ability to fulfill its commitments. The dependent variable, purchase intention scales, was adopted from (Abzari et al., 2014; Dehghani & Tumer, 2015; Hyun Baek & Whitehill King, 2011; Jeng, 2016). These items were used to test whether consumers are ready to continue purchasing, recommend the airline to others, or cease engaging with the brand.

2.2. Research Variables

The study includes four key constructs, operationalized as follows: Independent Variables that include (i) “Traditional Media Marketing (TMM)” Promotional influence perceived from newspaper ads, TV/radio commercials, billboards, and other conventional channels, and (ii) “Social Media Marketing (SMM).” Effectiveness of promotional communication through digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X. Mediating Variable, which includes “Perceived Brand Reliability (BR)”, Consumer belief that Air Tanzania is dependable, trustworthy, and capable of fulfilling service promises, and Dependent Variable, “Purchase Intention (PI)”, Likelihood or willingness to fly with Air Tanzania in the future or recommend it to others.

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators (Measurement Dimensions)	Source / Scale Adaptation
Traditional Media Marketing (TMM)	The extent to which consumers are exposed to and influenced by Air Tanzania’s promotional activities,	TMM1. I am satisfied with the advertising campaigns of this airline on traditional media, such as radio and television. TMM2. The intensity and volume of the advertising campaigns of this airline, using traditional media such as radio and television, have met my expectations. TMM3. The campaigns of this airline on traditional media such as radio and television are acceptable.	Adapted from media communication effectiveness measures (Abzari et al., 2014; P Kotler & K Keller,

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators (Measurement Dimensions)	Source / Scale Adaptation
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	disseminated through conventional media channels.	TMM4. I feel motivated by this airline's traditional media advertisements.	2011; Tümer et al., 2019)
		TMM5. Traditional media such as TV and Radio strongly affect my decision to buy from this brand	
		TMM6. I often come across advertisements for Air Tanzania on television, radio, or in newspapers	
	The perceived effectiveness of Air Tanzania's communication and promotional activities delivered through social media platforms.	SMM1. I am satisfied with receiving information from other customers about Air Tanzania on social media.	Adapted from digital marketing influence and engagement scales (Abzari et al., 2014; Dehghani & Tumer, 2015; Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Rossanty et al., 2024; Zhu et al., 2022)
		SMM2. I trust a brand more when it actively engages with its audience on social media.	
		SMM3. Compared to other received information from other sources, the received information on social media about Air Tanzania is acceptable.	
		SMM4. I feel motivated by Air Tanzania's posts, videos, or images.	
Brand Reliability (BR)	The extent to which consumers believe Air Tanzania is dependable, trustworthy, and capable of fulfilling its promises.	SMM5. I trust the brand more because of its social media activities (e.g., posts, ads, videos).	Adapted from brand trust and reliability scales (Kang et al., 2014; Delgado-Ballester, 2003.; Rather et al., 2019; (Morgan & Hunt, 1994)
		SMM6. The airlines' posted information improves my awareness of buying options and decisions.	
		SMM7. Reviews and comments of previous users on social media about Air Tanzania helped me make a better future decision.	
		BR1. Air Tanzania is a professional airline company.	
		BR2. Air Tanzania always fulfills its commitments.	
		BR3. I am more likely to buy from a brand I perceive as reliable.	
		BR4. I trust the employees of Air Tanzania for service provision.	
Purchase Intention (PI)	The consumer's likelihood and willingness to choose or recommend Air Tanzania's services.	BR5. Air Tanzania always tries to keep the information of their customers secure and anonymous.	Adapted from behavioral intention measures (Abzari et al., 2014; Dehghani & Tumer, 2015; Hyun Baek & Whitehill King, 2011; Jeng, 2016).
		BR6. I feel that I can rely on the Air Tanzania company completely.	
		BR7. I prefer to fly with Air Tanzania, even if they're not highly active or visible on social media.	
		PI1. I am more likely to purchase a product after seeing it promoted on social media platforms.	
		PI2. I am willing to recommend others to purchase tickets from Air Tanzania.	
		PI3. I intend to fly again with Air Tanzania in the future.	
		PI4. My interaction with the brand on social media affects my intention to purchase its products.	

2.3. Sample / Participants

The study targeted current, former, and potential customers of Air Tanzania who were aware of or had interacted with the airline through service use, ticket purchases, or exposure to its marketing communications. The study's sample size was established following the guidelines of Hair et al., (2014). This recommends a minimum of five and a maximum of ten participants for every measurement item. The scale used in this study had 26 items. For the purposes of determining the sample size, eight (8) participants per item were applied, giving a targeted

sample of two hundred and eight (208). This study focused on respondents aged between 18 and 55 years; the age screening question was set in the survey instrument. In Tanzania, the legal age of majority is 18 years, and the retirement age is 55 years. Therefore, this age range was selected to represent the economically active population. The sample comprised respondents who were employed, self-employed, and unemployed. Out of the 208 of the targeted sample, 135 responses were collected, giving a 65% response rate. However, during data cleaning, 5 were found to have some missing information and were removed, leaving us with 130 usable responses. Among the 130 respondents, 64.6% were male, while the remaining 35.4% were female.

2.4 Data collection and analysis

Given the survey instrument's 26 measurement items, a sample size of at least 130 respondents was obtained, and was enough to maintain sufficient statistical power (Hair et al., 2019). The data collection process utilized a non-probability sampling design, specifically blending convenience and purposive techniques. This allowed selection of participants with exposure to the airline's promotional landscape, ensuring that the resulting data reflected informed consumer perceptions rather than random noise. Digital platforms and aviation hubs served as the primary touchpoints for respondent recruitment.

Data analysis followed the two-stage PLS-SEM evaluation protocol. The first test was on establishing the reliability and validity of the construct. Of particular importance was indicator loading, which, according to Hair et al., (2019) must be above .5. However, loadings between .4 and .7 were scrutinized; these were only removed if their exclusion significantly boosted the average variance extracted (AVE) or composite reliability (CR) without compromising content validity (Hair et al., 2019). Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability were used to test internal consistency. To test whether each construct measures what it ought to measure, discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion; thus, the square root of the AVE for each construct remained higher in comparison to its correlation with any other latent variable (Agarwal, 2023).

The second stage included the assessment of the structural model (the inner model) focused on its predictive capacity and the significance of the hypothesized paths. Multicollinearity was monitored through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with a threshold of 5.0 used to address biased path estimates (Hair et al., 2014). The model's explanatory power was assessed through values, while effect sizes provided nuance regarding the relative impact of specific predictors (Agarwal, 2023). To evaluate the model's out-of-sample predictive relevance, values were calculated, where any result above zero indicates predictive significance (Maroufkhani et al., 2020). Finally, a bootstrapping procedure was applied to determine the t-statistics and p-values. A t-value exceeding 1.96 serves as the benchmark for statistical significance at the 5% level.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Pre-test and Demographic data

Before implementing the research instrument, a pre-test was carried out to assess its reliability and validity. Validity assessment involved confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in conjunction with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO-MSA) and the Anti-Image Matrix. Factor loadings of more than .5, referring to Hair et al., 2014, are indicative of item validity. Results indicated that the KMO-MSA Value is .850 and the anti-image fell within

the range of .500 to .889, which means the questionnaire is valid. Cronbach's alpha value, a widely known metric of internal consistency, was utilized to evaluate the questionnaire's dependability. For fundamental research, a score of Cronbach's alpha of .7 or higher is deemed appropriate, referring to (Hair et al., 2019). After data analysis, it was found that the questionnaire had a Cronbach alpha of .902, which means that it had good reliability and internal consistency as tested by SPSS 29.

3.1.2 Demographic Data

The demographic data collected in this study focused on four key attributes: gender, age, employment status, and the source of initial awareness about Air Tanzania, among the 130 respondents. The sample had more male participants than female, and the age range of 25-34 had the highest participants (52.3%). On employment status, the employed category dominated with 69.5%. Additionally, when asked how they first heard about Air Tanzania, 58.5% of respondents mentioned social media, while 41.5% indicated traditional advertising channels such as TV and radio.

Table 2. Demographic Data

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	84	64.6
	Female	46	35.4
Age	18–24	6	4.6
	25–34	68	52.3
	35–44	43	33.1
	45–54	12	9.2
	55 and above	1	.8
Employment Status	Employed	90	69.5
	Self-employed	26	19.8
	Unemployed	14	10.7
Source of Awareness	Social media	76	58.5
	Traditional Media (TV/Radio)	54	41.5

3.1.3 Outer model test and Inner model test

The verification analysis utilized Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through Smart PLS 4.0 software to examine multiple independent variables. SEM integrates factor analysis, structural modeling, and path analysis, allowing for construct measurement confirmation, relationship modeling, and prediction estimation. The outer model explores the correlation between indications and their related latent variables. To measure the validity of an indicator, its outer loading must exceed .7 (Hair et al., 2014). The outcomes of this study show that no outer loading values were below .746 in the final analysis. This study also evaluates the internal consistency of this study's instrument by employing two widely recognized reliability measures, which are Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Widarjono, 2015; Bagozzi, 1988). A generally accepted threshold for composite reliability is .6 (Henseler et al., 2015).

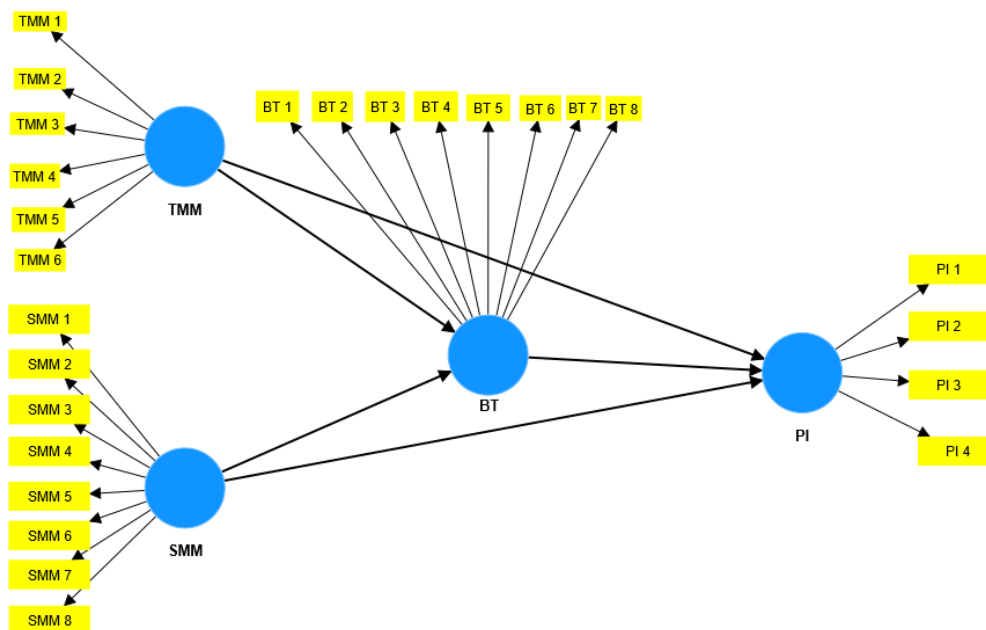


Figure 1. Study's Final Model Run

Table 3. Summary of outer loading results, Composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha

Indicators	Outer Loading	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's alpha
Traditional Media Marketing		.796	.841
I am satisfied with the advertising campaigns of this airline on traditional media: such as radio and television.	.746		
The intensity and volume of the advertising campaigns of this airline using traditional media such as radio and television have met my expectations.	.889		
The campaigns of this airline on traditional media such as radio and television are acceptable.	.896		
I feel motivated by this airline's traditional media advertisements.	.864		
Traditional media such as TV and Radio strongly affect my decision to buy from this brand.	.748		
I often come across advertisements for Air Tanzania on television, radio, or in newspapers	.835		
Social Media Marketing		.896	.871
I am satisfied with receiving information from other customers about Air Tanzania on social media.	.776		
I trust a brand more when it actively engages with its audience on social media.	.766		
Compared to other received information from other sources, the received information on social media about Air Tanzania is acceptable.	.788		
I feel motivated by Air Tanzania's posts, videos, or images.	.945		
I trust the brand more because of its social media activities (e.g., posts, ads, videos).	.968		
The airlines' posted information improves my awareness of buying options and decisions.	.854		
Reviews and comments of previous users on social media about Air Tanzania helped me make a better future decision.	.921		
Brand Reliability		.821	.791
Air Tanzania is a professional airline company.	.973		
Air Tanzania always fulfills its commitments.	.791		

Indicators	Outer Loading	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's alpha
I am more likely to buy from a brand I perceive as reliable	.789		
I trust the employees of Air Tanzania for service provision	.899		
Air Tanzania always tries to keep the information of their customers secure and anonymous.	.782		
I feel that I can rely on the Air Tanzania company completely	.730		
I prefer to fly with Air Tanzania, even if they're not highly active or visible on social media.	.842		
Purchase Intention		.779	.826
I am more likely to purchase a product after seeing it promoted on social media platforms.	.825		
I am willing to recommend others to purchase tickets from Air Tanzania.	.776		
I intend to fly again with Air Tanzania in the future.	.740		
My interaction with the brand on social media affects my intention to purchase its products.	.836		

Source: Research results, 2026

Some indicators with outer loadings exceeding .95 were removed, as such high values may indicate redundancy among items. Retaining overly similar indicators can inflate reliability estimates and compromise construct validity. Therefore, the most redundant items were eliminated to ensure that each indicator uniquely contributes to the measurement of the construct. This refinement improves the reliability and validity of the measurement model and enhances the overall robustness of the study.

3.1.4. Convergent Validity Test

This is a critical aspect of construct validity that evaluates the accuracy of indicators within a construct by examining their correlation with the latent variable (Hair et al., 2019). This assessment is typically conducted using the AVE criterion using a minimum acceptable threshold of .5, as recommended by (Widarjono, 2015; Hair et al., 2019). This measure demonstrates the degree to which items show a high correlation with the factor they represent, thus confirming their arrangement with the construct.

Table 4. Convergent Validity Test Results with AVE

Variable	AVE
BR	.831
PI	.786
TMM	.844
SMM	.872

Source: Research results, 2026

The results of convergent validity tests (see Table 4) reveal that all constructs fulfill the AVE requirement of $>.5$, thereby confirming good convergent validity. AVE values were within .786 (PI) and .872 (SMM), showing that the indicators explain a substantial amount of variance in their corresponding construct. These results demonstrate strong convergent validity and indicate that the measurement model is accurate

3.1.5. Discriminant validity test with Fornell-Larcker

The Fornell-Larcker criteria measure discriminant validity by comparing each construct's AVE to its correlations with various other variables. According to the study by Fornell & Larcker,

(1981). This metric confirms discriminant validity by requiring a construct's AVE to be greater than its shared variance across other constructs, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 5. Discriminant validity test with Fornell-Larcker

	BR	PI	SMM	TMM
BR	.975			
PI	.697	.897		
SMM	.562	.693	.966	
TMM	.637	.779	.723	.861

Source: *Research Results*, 2026

The Fornell-Larcker principle approves discriminant validity results, where diagonal values represent the AVE's square root for the respective construct, which should always be higher than off-diagonal relationship values between constructs. This shows that each construct is a bit more similar to the indicators of itself than to each of the other constructs, providing confidence that each construct is distinct from its respective counterparts and bolstering discriminant validity.

3.1.6. Inner Model Test

Evaluating the inner model is crucial for ensuring the validity and accuracy of a proposed framework, especially in examining relationships between constructs. The multicollinearity test assesses whether independent variables in the regression model are excessively connected, which can misrepresent the results (Hair et al., 2014). To avoid this, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) has to remain below 3 (Hair et al., 2019). F-Square value displays the strength of the correlation among variables, with values less than .02 indicating an insignificant value, .02 to .15 indicating a small value, .15 to .35 indicating a moderate value, and anything above .35 showing a strong influence (Goswami et al., 2023). Furthermore, the coefficient of determination indicates the fraction of variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables, with an R^2 of .75, signifying a strong model, .50 indicating a moderate model, and .25 representing a weak model (Hair et al., 2019). The path coefficient analysis further evaluates the strong point and path of variable relationships, where values approaching +1 strongly indicate positive relations, and those close to -1 strongly show negative correlation (Hair et al., 2013).

Table 6. Analysis of Multicollinearity Test and Path Coefficient, F-Square and Bootstrapping

Hypothesis	Path	VIF	f ²	Beta (β)	T-value	P-value	Decision
H1	TMM → BR	2.481	.180	.418	3.390	.003	Supported
H2	SMM → BR	2.098	.473	.632	8.754	.000	Supported
H3	BR → PI	2.098	.177	.838	6.421	.000	Supported
H4	TMM → PI	2.178	.201	.054	3.513	.002	Supported
H5	SMM → PI	3.094	.358	.703	9.027	.000	Supported

Source: *Research Results*, 2026

The results confirm that the VIF values are still within the acceptable limits. The VIF between SMM and PI (3.094) is the highest, which is slightly above 3, as the common threshold. Hair et al. (2019) suggest that values of 3.3 are still acceptable in some cases since minor deviations do not distort regression estimates, which maintains the integrity of the model. The analysis shows that SMM contains the positive influence on BR with .481, followed by its effect on PI with .177. TMM indicates a lower but correlating effect on both BR with .180 and PI with 2.098. Effect size analysis reveals that social media communication has the most significant influence on brand Reliability ($F^2 = .473$), followed by its effect on purchase intention ($F^2 =$

.358). BR has a notable effect on PI ($F^2 = .177$). TMM exhibits a smaller but relevant effect on both BR ($F^2 = .180$) and PI ($F^2 = .201$), indicating that while it plays a role, its influence is comparatively weaker. The path coefficient indicates that BR positively influences PI with .838, with its mediating role in consumer decision making. SMM has a positive effect on both BR with .632 and PI with .703, strengthening its role in shaping perceptions of the customers. TMM indicates a moderate effect on BR with .418, which is an almost insignificant impact on PI with .054. The study's results indicate that SMM has the most positive effect in building the reliability of the brand and stimulating customer purchase decisions compared to traditional media marketing.

The results show the positive correlation between traditional marketing and brand reliability with $T=3.390$, $P=.003$, indicating that in order to build consumer trust, a company needs efforts in traditional marketing. Social media marketing also plays a big role in brand reliability since it has $T=8.754$, $P=.000$, which is more reliable compared to traditional strategies. Brand reliability has a positive influence on Purchase intention with $T=6.421$, $P=.002$, although it can have less effect compared to other factors. Social media marketing influences Purchase intention positively with $T=9.027$, $P=.000$, which suggests that it is the most reliable strategy to be used by Air Tanzania due to its direct engagement and interactive nature.

Table 7. Analysis of R-squared

Variable	R-square
BR	.597
PI	.563

Source: Research Results, 2026

The analysis shows that brand reliability (BR) explains 59.7% of the variation in the dependent variable, while purchase intention (PI) accounts for 56.3%. This suggests that both BR and PI have a moderate influence, with BT having a slightly stronger explanatory power. However, other factors likely contribute to the outcome since neither variable explains 100% of the variance. This indicates that while Brand reliability and purchase intention are important, additional influences should be considered for a more comprehensive understanding of the dependent variable.

3.1.7. Hypothesis Summary

The hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS to evaluate the significance of the proposed relationships in the structural model. The decision to accept or reject each hypothesis was based on the significance of the path coefficients, as indicated by t-values greater than 1.96 and p-values less than .05. The detailed results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 6.

Table 8. Hypothesis Summary Table

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	TMM → BR	Supported
H2	SMM → BR	Supported
H3	BR → PI	Supported
H4	TMM → PI	Supported
H5	SMM → PI	Supported

As shown in Table 8, all five hypotheses (H1–H5) are supported. The results indicate that both Traditional Media Marketing (TMM) and Social Media Marketing (SMM) have

significant positive effects on Brand Reliability (BR), confirming H1 and H2. Additionally, Brand Reliability (BR) significantly influences Purchase Intention (PI), supporting H3. Also, both Traditional Media Marketing (TMM) and Social Media Marketing (SMM) are found to have significant positive effects on Purchase Intention (PI), supporting H4 and H5. These findings suggest that marketing activities across both traditional and digital platforms play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions of brand reliability and their intention to purchase. So, the results provide strong empirical support for the proposed model, highlighting the importance of marketing strategies and brand reliability in influencing consumer behavior.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. The Role of Traditional Marketing in Developing Brand Trust

Previous studies also support that traditional marketing strategies enhance brand reliability, particularly in the airline industry, which builds credibility among consumers (de Vries et al., 2017; Keller & Fay, 2012; Srinivasan et al., 2016; Tümer et al., 2019; Zubair et al., 2020). Air Tanzania's trust can be observed in the continued effectiveness of traditional marketing strategies, especially in rural areas, because of limited internet access. Despite the rapid growth of technology, Tanzania still has some areas that have weak internet connectivity. These areas depend on radio, television, and newspapers to get information, which makes these platforms crucial for brand communication. This strategy has helped maintain Air Tanzania's strong brand presence, especially among people who make their trips to rural areas. Another reason for this effectiveness is the cultural and linguistic accessibility it provides since Tanzania uses Swahili as the primary language spoken by the majority, and most traditional media outlets deliver content in Swahili, making information about Air Tanzania's services easily understandable to a broad audience. Unlike digital advertisement, which always targets urban and tech-savvy users, traditional media ensures that even those in remote locations, who may not be active online, can engage with the airline's messaging.

From the lens of Signaling Theory, traditional marketing channels such as television, radio, and billboards function as credibility signals that reduce information asymmetry between Air Tanzania and its consumers (Liu & Zheng, 2024; Osburg et al., 2022). In a context where service quality cannot be directly observed before purchase, consumers in Tanzania rely on these visible and consistent marketing signals to evaluate the airline's trustworthiness. The regularity and reach of traditional media act as strong brand equity signals, communicating reliability and institutional legitimacy to a broad audience (Klimchak et al., 2020; Su et al., 2016). Complementing this, Commitment-Trust Theory underscores that the consistent messaging delivered through traditional marketing is instrumental in cultivating the trust necessary for long-term customer-brand relationships. By repeatedly reinforcing Air Tanzania's brand values through familiar and culturally accessible media, traditional marketing lays the foundational trust that drives consumer commitment over time (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

The finding that traditional marketing strengthens brand trust is consistent with Tümer et al. (2019) and de Vries et al. (2017), who demonstrated that conventional advertising channels build consumer credibility across service industries. Similarly, Keller & Fay (2012) and Srinivasan et al. (2016) emphasized the enduring persuasive power of traditional media in shaping brand perceptions. Zubair et al. (2020) further confirmed this relationship in emerging market contexts. However, while these studies addressed traditional marketing broadly, the present study extends its contributions by specifically demonstrating how linguistic accessibility and infrastructure limitations in Tanzania make traditional marketing not merely supplementary but indispensable, a distinction that is underrepresented in the prior literature.

3.2.2. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Reliability

Social media marketing is now used as a powerful tool in influencing customer perceptions; this study confirms its significant positive impact on brand reliability. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (X), and TikTok are widely used by Tanzanian consumers, particularly younger travelers and business professionals. The results align with previous research on (Laroche et al., 2012; Hafez, 2021; Salhab et al., 2023; Kim & Ko, 2012), which suggests that social media marketing enhances consumer engagement, brand transparency, and trust. Air Tanzania's active presence on social media, including updates on flight schedules, promotions, and real-time customer support, contributes to increased trust. Compared to competitors such as Precision Air and Fly Dubai, Air Tanzania can further strengthen its social media strategy by leveraging influencer marketing, engaging storytelling, and customer testimonial campaigns. Studies by Habibi et al. (2014) also show similar results that social media marketing builds brand trust by fostering two-way communication and personalized engagement. To sustain this advantage, Air Tanzania should continue investing in digital campaigns that highlight customer satisfaction, behind-the-scenes airline operations, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Signaling Theory provides a strong explanatory framework for understanding how social media marketing enhances brand reliability. Air Tanzania's active presence on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (X) serves as a real-time signaling mechanism, communicating service quality, responsiveness, and transparency to consumers who cannot directly verify these attributes before booking a flight (Liu & Zheng, 2024; Osburg et al., 2022). Each post, promotion, and customer interaction on social media functions as a signal that reduces uncertainty and shapes brand perceptions (Ko et al., 2019; Li et al., 2017). Commitment-Trust Theory further deepens this understanding by highlighting that the two-way communication enabled by social media fosters personalized engagement, which is central to building the trust and commitment that underpin long-term customer relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). When consumers receive timely responses and consistent information through social media, their confidence in the airline's integrity grows, reinforcing brand reliability and strengthening their relational commitment to Air Tanzania.

The positive relationship identified between social media marketing and brand reliability aligns closely with Laroche et al. (2012) and Kim & Ko (2012), who found that brand communities on social media platforms foster stronger consumer trust and loyalty. Hafez (2021) and Salhab et al. (2023) similarly confirmed that consistent and interactive social media engagement enhances brand transparency and reliability. Habibi et al. (2014) specifically highlighted two-way communication as a key mechanism through which social media builds trust, a mechanism clearly observable in Air Tanzania's real-time customer support practices. The present study, however, extends these findings by applying them within a competitive East African aviation market, illustrating that social media reliability effects are shaped not only by platform activity but also by how airlines differentiate themselves from regional competitors.

3.2.3. The Influence of Brand Reliability on Purchase Intention

The study proves that brand reliability positively has an impact on the intention to purchase. This suggests that the higher the trust consumers have in Air Tanzania, the more likely they are to book flights with the airline. The study of Cuong (2020); Husain et al. (2022); Benhardy et al. (2020); Chae et al. (2020) also indicates that consumers' trust in the brand can enhance their possibility of buying and using the product, but it is also a strong determinant of customer loyalty and purchase intention in service industries. Many Tanzanians see Air Tanzania as a sign of national pride, which boosts their confidence in its services. The airline's contemporary

fleet, greater timeliness, and price have increased its dependability, giving it a better choice than competitors. Furthermore, favorable feedback from family, friends, and coworkers boosts trust in the airline's safety and service excellence (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). As a result, this trust improves customers' willingness to buy tickets, supporting the conclusion that brand reliability promotes consumer loyalty to a service provider.

Commitment-Trust Theory is most directly applicable to this subsection, as it explicitly positions trust as the primary driver of long-term purchase decisions and customer loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The finding that brand reliability positively influences purchase intention reflects the theory's central argument that consumers who trust a brand are more committed to it and more likely to engage in repeat purchase behavior. In the case of Air Tanzania, trust cultivated through consistent service delivery, fleet modernization, and competitive pricing translates into consumer commitment that ultimately manifests as booking intention. Signaling Theory complements this by explaining that brand reliability itself operates as a quality signal. When consumers perceive Air Tanzania as dependable, the brand effectively communicates service excellence, further reducing pre-purchase uncertainty and reinforcing the decision to fly with the airline.

These findings are in agreement with Cuong (2020) and Husain et al. (2022), who established that brand reliability is among the most significant predictors of purchase intention in service-based industries. Benhardy et al. (2020); Chae et al. (2020) Further, this relationship was reinforced, demonstrating that consumers with high brand reliability exhibit stronger repurchase intentions and long-term loyalty. While these prior studies provide robust theoretical grounding, the present study contributes an additional dimension by identifying national pride and cultural identity as contextual amplifiers of brand reliability, factors that are particularly pronounced in the case of a state-owned carrier like Air Tanzania and that have received limited attention in the referenced works.

3.2.4. The Influence of Traditional Marketing on Purchase Intention

The study finds that traditional marketing has an important positive impact on purchase intention, aligning with the study of Pascalau & Urziceanu (2021). This suggests that traditional advertising channels have a serious part in influencing customers' purchasing intentions, mostly in Tanzania, where television and radio remain primary sources of information. It highlights that traditional advertising provides a broad market reach and reinforces brand credibility. The result that traditional marketing directly influences purchase intention is consistent with Pascalau & Urziceanu (2021), who identified traditional advertising as a credible and effective driver of consumer decision-making, particularly in markets where digital adoption remains uneven. The present study builds upon this finding by providing empirical evidence from the Tanzanian aviation sector, where the dominance of television and radio as information sources makes traditional channels especially impactful. Furthermore, by drawing a competitive comparison with Kenya Airways and Ethiopian Airlines, this study goes beyond Pascalau & Urziceanu's (2021) scope to demonstrate how a balanced traditional-digital marketing mix can serve as a strategic differentiator for national carriers operating in developing economies.

Signaling Theory offers a clear theoretical basis for the direct effect of traditional marketing on purchase intention. Billboard placements, airport advertising, television commercials, and radio campaigns all function as high-visibility signals that communicate Air Tanzania's market presence, financial stability, and service quality to prospective passengers. These signals are particularly impactful in Tanzania's media environment, where traditional channels carry strong credibility among the general population. From the perspective of Commitment-Trust Theory, the consistent and repeated exposure to Air Tanzania's messaging through traditional media reinforces consumer trust in the brand, which in turn strengthens their

commitment and willingness to purchase. The transition from brand awareness generated by traditional advertising to actual purchase intention is therefore theoretically grounded in the sequential process of signaling, trust formation, and consumer commitment described by these two complementary theories.

3.2.5. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention

The findings confirm that social media advertisement has a significant influence on purchase intention, indicating that consumers who interact with Air Tanzania on social media are more likely to book flights. The study's result is reliable compared to other researchers' findings, including Salhab et al. (2023); Ellitan et al. (2022); Balakrishnan et al. (2014); Sabraz Nawaz & Kaldeen (2020), who suggests that social media interactions, customer reviews, and digital promotions directly impact consumers' purchasing decisions. With increasing internet penetration and mobile usage in Tanzania, digital marketing is a crucial driver of growth for airlines. Air Tanzania can leverage data-driven social media campaigns to target specific consumer segments, optimize promotional offers, and enhance customer loyalty programs. A comparison with Precision Air and Fastjet Tanzania reveals that airlines with strong digital engagement strategies often achieve higher booking rates and customer retention. To sustain its competitive edge, Air Tanzania should continuously monitor social media trends, engage with customers proactively, and offer personalized promotions based on traveler preferences. Additionally, integrating digital payment options and seamless booking experiences through social media channels can further enhance purchase intention.

The influence of social media marketing on purchase intention can be comprehensively explained through the integrated application of both Signaling Theory and Commitment-Trust Theory. From a signaling perspective, digital promotions, customer reviews, influencer endorsements, and interactive content on social media platforms serve as powerful quality signals that reduce pre-purchase uncertainty and shape consumers' evaluations of Air Tanzania's service. As internet penetration and mobile usage continue to rise in Tanzania, the volume and visibility of these digital signals are increasingly influential in shaping booking decisions. Commitment-Trust Theory further explains the pathway from social media engagement to purchase intention by establishing that personalized interactions, loyalty programs, and responsive customer communication foster the trust and relational commitment that motivate consumers to act on their intentions (Abid et al., 2023). Together, these theories explain why consumers who actively engage with Air Tanzania on social media are not only more informed but also more emotionally committed to choosing the airline, making social media marketing a theoretically grounded and practically effective driver of purchase intention.

The significant positive effect of social media marketing on purchase intention observed in this study corroborates the findings of Balakrishnan et al. (2014), who were among the early scholars to empirically link social media engagement with consumer buying behavior. Salhab et al. (2023); Ellitan et al. (2022) more recently confirmed this relationship, emphasizing the growing role of digital promotions and customer reviews in shaping purchase decisions. Sabraz Nawaz & Kaldeen (2020) further established this effect within a developing-country service context, which closely mirrors the Tanzanian setting examined here. Nonetheless, the present study advances these contributions by highlighting the specific convergence of rising mobile internet penetration and social media-driven booking behavior in Tanzania, offering fresh empirical evidence from a sub-Saharan African aviation market where such dynamics are still nascent and underexplored in the academic literature.

3.2.6. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the existing literature on marketing communication and consumer behavior by integrating both traditional and digital marketing channels within a single framework to examine their effects on purchase intention through brand reliability. While previous studies have often focused on either traditional or social media marketing independently, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding by comparing their relative impacts in a developing country context. It has extended prior work on brand reliability by demonstrating its mediating role between marketing communication channels and purchase intention. The findings confirm that brand reliability is a key mechanism through which both traditional and social media marketing influence consumer behavior. This contributes to the growing body of literature that emphasizes trust as a central construct in service marketing, particularly in the airline industry. It also offers contextual contributions by providing empirical evidence from Tanzania, a market that is underrepresented in marketing research. The findings highlight the continued relevance of traditional media in environments with limited digital infrastructure, thereby enriching theoretical discussions on marketing strategies in emerging economies.

3.2.7. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study provide several important implications for airline managers and marketing practitioners. First, the significant role of traditional marketing in building brand reliability suggests that companies like Air Tanzania should continue investing in traditional media channels such as television, radio, and print, particularly to reach rural and less digitally connected populations. Second, the strong impact of social media marketing on both brand reliability and purchase intention highlights the need for airlines to strengthen their digital presence. Managers should focus on interactive and engaging content, including customer testimonials, real-time communication, and personalized promotions, to enhance consumer trust and engagement. Third, since brand reliability significantly influences purchase intention, airlines should prioritize strategies that enhance transparency, service quality, and consistent communication. Building trust should be considered a central objective of all marketing efforts. And also integrating both traditional and digital marketing channels into a cohesive strategy will allow airlines to maximize their market reach and effectiveness across different customer segments.

3.2.8. Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. First, the study focuses on a single airline, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could examine multiple airlines or compare results across different countries to enhance external validity. Second, this study adopts a quantitative approach; future research could incorporate qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into consumer perceptions and experiences. Third, additional variables such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, or service quality could be included to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior. Also, future research can explore the role of emerging digital platforms and technologies, such as influencer marketing and artificial intelligence, in shaping brand trust and purchase intention.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines the effect of traditional and social media communication on perceived brand reliability and consumer purchase intention in the Tanzanian aviation sector. The results reveal that traditional media marketing significantly impacts perceived brand reliability,

especially in regions with limited internet access. Air Tanzania's strategic use of traditional channels like television, radio, and print media has reinforced its brand presence and trustworthiness among consumers. On the other hand, social media marketing developed as a powerful tool for enhancing brand reliability and purchase intention, particularly among younger, tech-savvy consumers. The airline's active engagement on channels like Instagram, X, and Facebook has empowered it to build transparency, foster two-way communication, and create personalized interactions with its audience. Social media marketing fosters emotional connections and trust, which are critical for driving consumer purchase decisions. Perceived brand reliability is pivotal in the relationship between marketing efforts and consumer purchase intentions. Consumers who perceive Air Tanzania as a trustworthy and reliable brand are more likely to book flights with the airline, highlighting the importance of building and maintaining brand credibility.

Air Tanzania's commitment to service excellence, modern fleet, and consistent delivery on promises has contributed to its strong brand reputation, further enhancing consumer confidence and purchase intentions. The study's results have practical implications for marketing executives within the aviation industry. Firstly, a balanced approach that integrates both traditional and social media marketing is essential for maximizing reach and engagement across diverse consumer segments. Also, airlines should prioritize building brand trust through consistent messaging, transparency, and customer-centric strategies. Moreover, leveraging data-driven social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and personalized promotions can enhance consumer engagement and drive purchase intentions. Considering its benefits, this study has some drawbacks, including the use of self-reported data, which may add bias, and the cross-sectional design, which restricts the capacity to demonstrate causal relationships. Future studies might use longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of marketing methods on brand trust and purchase intentions. Furthermore, increasing the sample to include additional Tanzanian and foreign airlines might give comparative insights and advance the results' generalization.

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