

## The Moderating Effect of Effort Expectancy and the Dependency Behaviour on Using Social Media: A Perspective of Business Survival in the Tellian District

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### Abstract

Business survival is one of the major challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the Tellian District of Mukah, Sarawak, following the COVID-19 pandemic. Early observations indicate that despite considerable efforts by entrepreneurs, they still exhibit lack dependency behaviour on social media for the sake of business survival. Hence, the study has two main objectives: 1) To examine the determinants of dependency on social media, and 2) To analyse the moderating effect of effort expectancy between determinants and dependency on social media among entrepreneurs in Tellian District. This study mainly applied the UTAUT theory as a foundation. The questionnaire was designed and collected from 51 entrepreneurs in the Tellian District. Partial Least Squares -Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is applied as the main analysis tool in this study. The findings of this study indicated that social influence, facilitating conditions, and price value have a significant impact on social media dependency behaviour. In addition, effort expectancy has significantly weakened the relationship between social influence and dependency behaviour, and effort expectancy significantly strengthens the relationship between price value and dependency behaviour. The findings of this study will serve as a guide for policymakers at the Municipal Council and State Government in addressing issues related to dependency behaviour and business survival. Furthermore, this study advances the theory by testing effort expectancy as a potential moderating variable in the UTAUT theory, adding to its novelty.

**Keywords:** Dependency Behaviour, Effort Expectancy, Business Survival, Utaut Theory, Pls-Sem, Moderating Effect

### **Introduction**

Dependency behaviour research in business survival explores the patterns and dynamics by which businesses depend on various internal and external determinants to survive and flourish (Weaven et al., 2021). This research discipline began to develop in the mid-20th century as it evolved in response to the complexities of global markets and organisational behaviour. It has gradually shifted their emphasis from fundamental dependency theories to more complex analyses considering the interplay between economic, social, and technological dependencies (Kvangraven, 2021). The practical implications for enhancing business survival and strategic planning have attracted diverse scholars drawn to the ability to predict and manage dependency behaviours in business disciplines (Alosani et al., 2020). It is essential to comprehend dependency behaviours in a global context to navigate the interconnected nature of contemporary economies, where cascading effects of dependency can have far-reaching impacts on market stability and competitive advantage (Grafius et al., 2020; Harré et al., 2021).

In general, the problems faced by Tellian entrepreneurs started when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and all sales could not be carried out because purchases could not be made face-to-face. Therefore, in collaboration with the university and rural entrepreneurs in the Tellian area, the team has come up with an idea where a mobile application called Gooino has been introduced to help Tellian entrepreneurs market their products. This application is divided into several sections: food, handicrafts, and homestays. The ease of language translation from Melanau to other languages has made it easier for Tellian entrepreneurs to communicate with buyers from within and outside the country. The Gooino application is widely accepted by Tellian entrepreneurs who use social media to sustain their businesses. Before the spread of COVID-19, they needed to actively engage in social media to sell their products because they were used to face-to-face business transactions with their customers (Chaker et al., 2022; Infante & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Despite accepting these applications, the entrepreneurs faced business survival issues due to a lack of dependency behaviour on social media (Mujahid & Mubarik, 2021). The earlier observation indicated that performance expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and price value were the direct factors leading to this issue. In addition, effort expectancy also moderates and weakens their dependency behaviour, as the substantial effort necessary to maintain an active and engaging social media presence frequently results in burnout and diminished productivity, making it challenging for them to maintain a resilient and adaptive business.

With the problems highlighted, the study has two main objectives. The first objective is to examine the determinants of dependency on social media. In addition, the second objective is to analyse the moderating effect of effort expectancy between determinants and dependency on social media among entrepreneurs in Tellian District. The expected findings contribute to the theory perspective, in which the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) can be applicable in a non-technology context, and the effort expectancy, initially as an independent variable, can be tested as a moderating effect in the future. From a practical contribution perspective, the findings will provide a roadmap of

policy for the Municipal Council and State Government as policymakers in solving dependency behaviour and business survival issues.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 reviews the theory and the literature of past studies. Then, Section 3 explains the underpinning theory and proposed conceptual framework. Section 4 outlines the methodology of the study. Section 5 presents and exhibits consistency, reliability, and hypothesis testing results. Section 6 discusses the main findings and the implications of the study. Section 7 discusses the practical implications. Finally, Section 8 concludes, highlighting the limitations and recommending future studies.

## **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### *Performance Expectancy*

There are mixed results from studies examining the link between performance expectancy (PE) and dependency behaviour (DB). On the one hand, the idea that PE has a significant effect on DB stems from the idea that people are more likely to become dependent on the tools or services they believe will help them do the job better (Umair & Dilanchiev, 2022). High PE makes the product or service seem more valuable and useful, making people want to use it more and more in their daily lives, which can lead to habits and dependencies (Purwanto & Loisa, 2020; Singh et al., 2021). The idea is often supported by studies examining any product or service. They show that people who expect a lot from these tools frequently rely on them to get things done quickly and well, which makes them dependent (Susanto et al., 2021). On the other hand, some studies claim that PE does not significantly influence DB. It indicates that even if users know how a product or service works, they might still not be as dependent on it because of how their peers use it or how much they enjoy it (Tunn et al., 2020). With the mixed claims highlighted, therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

*H1 = Performance expectancy has a significant influence on the dependency behaviour of social media.*

### *Social Influence*

The relationship between social influence (SI) and DB is intricate and multifaceted in the context of business survival. SI can significantly influence DB, as research indicates that individuals and organisations are inclined to adhere to the behaviours, norms, and expectations prevalent within social networks (Agneessens & Labianca, 2022). Conformity frequently relies on external validation and established practices, which can impede the ability to make independent or innovative decisions and reinforce behaviours consistent with group standards (Jiang et al., 2022). Conversely, some empirical studies contend that SI does not significantly influence DB, particularly when a business prioritises strategic autonomy and adaptability over conformity (Kir & Erdogan, 2021). In such situations, businesses may actively resist external pressures to preserve their competitive advantage, thereby mitigating the influence of SI on their dependency behaviours (Oliveira et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

*H2 = Social influence has a significant influence on the dependency behaviour of social media.*

### *Facilitating Conditions*

The literature exposes contrasting perspectives when examining the relationship between facilitating conditions (FC) and DB of entrepreneurs in the context of business

survival. FC which encompasses access to resources, infrastructure, and support systems, is frequently regarded as crucial in influencing DB among entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are more inclined to depend on those external supports when FC are robust, increasing DB as they utilise available resources to sustain and expand their enterprises (Mohamed Zabri et al., 2021). Entrepreneurs can demonstrate DB through the frequent utilisation of business support services, the pursuit of ongoing guidance from mentors, and the reliance on established networks for decision-making and operations (Karami et al., 2023). In contrast, some empirical studies found that FC does not significantly influence DB, particularly among highly resilient and self-reliant entrepreneurs. These individuals may regard FC as supplementary rather than essential, relying on their internal capabilities, adaptability, and innovative strategies to overcome obstacles (Heider et al., 2022). Independence is frequently motivated by a wish to preserve flexibility and control, thereby reducing the impact of external factors on their business operations (Matalamäki & Joensuu-Salo, 2022; Ni et al., 2020). Consequently, the influence of FC on DB is contingent upon the entrepreneurs' preference for inter-resourcefulness or external support. Hence, the third hypothesis is proposed as:

*H3 = Facilitating conditions have a significant influence on the dependency behaviour of social media.*

#### *Price Value*

Entrepreneurs' price value (PV) and DB exhibit a complex dynamic in the context of company survival. As entrepreneurs aim to maximise value while minimising costs, PV, which represents the balance between the cost of resources and the perceived benefits, can considerably impact DB (Ali et al., 2021; Samudro et al., 2020). Businesses survive when PV is high because it indicates a favourable cost-benefit ratio (Wicaksono et al., 2023). When this happens, entrepreneurs rely on cost-effective resources and use pricing tactics to keep their operations running. A pricing advantage can be crucial for survival and growth in competitive markets where this dependence is especially noticeable (Onileowo et al., 2021). On the other hand, certain evidence suggests that PV has no significant influence on DB. Instead of getting caught up in short-term price fluctuations, entrepreneurs should concentrate on developing distinctive value propositions and long-term strategies to withstand possible challenges (Leroi-Werelds et al., 2021). These business owners typically show resilience and flexibility, allowing them to lessen the impact of PV on their actions by capitalising on their unique skills and specialised markets (Hokmabadi et al., 2024). So, although PV has the potential to influence reliance behaviour, the extent to which it does so is contingent upon the entrepreneurial spirit and level of strategic planning. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

*H4 = Price value has a significant influence on the dependency behaviour of social media.*

#### *Moderating Effect of Effort Expectancy*

In the context of entrepreneurs' efforts to survive in business, there are conflicting opinions on how EE significantly moderates the relationship between PE and DB on social media. EE, which measures how easy people think social media technologies are to use, can act as a moderator between PE and DB (Shi et al., 2024). When EE is high, entrepreneurs have a better time navigating social media platforms, which means PE significantly benefits DB. Entrepreneurs are becoming more reliant on social media for commercial activities due to how easy it is to use and how little effort is necessary to obtain desired effects (Palalic et al.,

2021). On the other hand, EE may not moderate the relationship between PE and DB. EE may not change sufficiently to substantially impact dependence behaviours when entrepreneurs have high levels of digital literacy or when social media platforms are naturally easy to use (Momen et al., 2020). Furthermore, entrepreneurs who are highly motivated by performance expectations may continue to use social media despite the apparent effort, which could reduce the moderating effect of EE (McGee & Terry, 2024).

Conversely, the literature presents a complex picture of the relationship between SI and DB of social media among entrepreneurs, as well as the moderating effect of EE. The relationship between SI and DB can be moderated largely by EE, or how easy people think social media is to use (Wade et al., 2020). There is a strong correlation between entrepreneurs' EE and the influence of their social networks. Entrepreneurs are more inclined to rely on social media suggestions when EE is high, as using these platforms requires less effort (Bellaaj, 2023; Troise et al., 2022). Business operations and networking might become more reliant on social media platforms due to their improved ease of use, which can intensify the impact of social influence (Gupta et al., 2024). However, research contends that EE has no discernible moderating effect on this correlation. Entrepreneurs may succumb to the overwhelming pressure or persuasion from their social networks and embrace and rely on social media despite the apparent effort in situations where social influence is significant (Crossley et al., 2021). Furthermore, the moderating effect of EE may be diminished among entrepreneurs with a high level of digital literacy or who are highly motivated by SI since they may not see effort as a barrier (Ahmad et al., 2024; Suryani et al., 2022). As these opposing viewpoints show, how EE can affect the dynamic between SI and DB in entrepreneurial settings is complicated.

Regarding the entrepreneurs' PV and DB of social media in the context of company survival, research on the moderating effect of EE has shown conflicting results. The relationship between PV and DB can be moderated largely by EE, which measures people's perceived ease of use of various social media platforms (Eid et al., 2020). The perceived benefits of social media's cost-effectiveness are amplified by its simplicity of use when EE is high, leading entrepreneurs to become more reliant on these networks (Jayadatta & Majeed, 2024). Entrepreneurs are more prone to depend on social media platforms if they perceive them as user-friendly and cost-effective to meet their marketing and operational objectives (Hamid et al., 2024). Yet, other research suggests that EE has no significant moderating effect on this connection. Entrepreneurs focusing on cutting costs, rather than user experience, may persist in relying on social media platforms despite the effort they demand (Camacho & Barrios, 2022). Furthermore, tech-savvy entrepreneurs might not put much effort into social media marketing, making EE a non-moderating effect in the PV-DB relationship. These contradictory opinions highlight the complexity of EE's involvement in influencing how price value impacts dependence behaviours in the entrepreneurial landscape.

Therefore, the additional three hypotheses that involve moderating the effect of effort expectancy are proposed as follows:

*H5a: Effort expectancy has a significant moderating effect towards the relationship between performance expectancy and dependency behaviour*

*H5b: Effort expectancy has a significant moderating effect towards the relationship between social influence and dependency behaviour*

*H5c: Effort expectancy has a significant moderating effect towards the relationship between price value and dependency behaviour*

### **Theoretical Underpinning and Framework**

#### *Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)*

The UTAUT theory is a comprehensive framework developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), intended to explain users' intentions and subsequent behaviours when utilising information systems. Performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions are the four primary constructs this theory identifies as influencing the adoption and utilisation of technology. In addition, UTAUT posits that the intensity and direction of the constructs' effects on usage intentions and behaviours are influenced by gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use, which moderate these relationships. UTAUT was developed by combining components from eight pre-existing models of technology acceptance, such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). UTAUT provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending the multidimensional nature of technology adoption and use by incorporating these diverse perspectives.

One of the most notable characteristics of the UTAUT is its versatility, which allows it to be utilised in situations that are not specific to the technological context alone (Alyoussef, 2021). This study of dependency behaviour is considered in a non-technology context, and the research identifies the gap to test this theory. This theory can be extended to explain the acceptance and use of various non-technological improvements, in contrast to the other models geared explicitly towards adopting technology. Because of this versatility, researchers can use the theoretical framework provided by UTAUT to investigate the application and utilisation of new products, services, processes, or specific behaviours. As a result, UTAUT offers beneficial insights into the elements that influence dependency behaviour.

#### *Gaps and Conceptual Framework*

Despite the extensive application of UTAUT theory and recent literatures, there is a connection or linkage towards this study. Eventhough UTAUT has been widely used in studies related to technological adoption, effort expectancy has not been thoroughly examined, mostly as moderating variable as opposed to an independent one. With the UTAUT framework, effort expectancy is primarily treated as and independent variable in the literature that recently exists. Recent research has begun to look at UTAUT's adaptability in various context, emphasizing the necessity for more investigation into its concept outside of their conventional applications. Therefore, this study has a chance to bridge this gap.

The UTAUT theory serves as the foundation of this study, and the research objective is formulated based on the conceptual framework as per Figure 1. The authors modified the theory by moving effort expectancy from the original construct to the moderating variable. Hence, performance expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and price value are analysed to measure the determinants of dependency behaviour as per the first research objective. In addition, the inclusion of effort expectancy as a moderating variable is intended to examine the moderating effect of the relationship between performance expectancy,

social influence, and price value towards dependency behaviours on using social media, which relates to the second objective. Including dependency behaviour as a dependent variable is suitable for the study from the perspective of business survival in the Tullian District of Mukah, Sarawak.

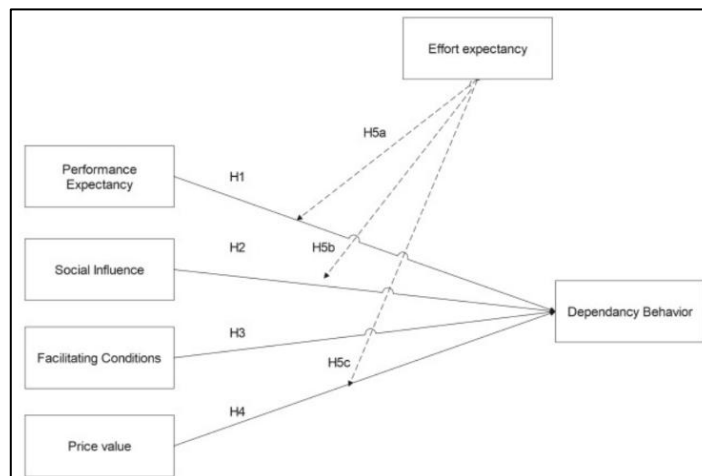


Figure No.1 Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

### *Measurement Development and Data Collection*

The questionnaire for the current study was initially designed in English and later translated into Malay to test the hypothesis. Most of the respondents were not proficient in English. Meanwhile, the measurement items were selected in alignment with operational definitions of variables from the perspective of entrepreneurs' business survival. Hence, changes were made to maintain the study's relevance. The authors developed this questionnaire, which was then evaluated by the District Council, which specialises in entrepreneurship. A preliminary pre-test assessed the questions' comprehensibility, clarity, lack of ambiguity, and relevance (de Jong et al., 2016). Thus, internal consistency, reliability, and discriminant validity play a part in this preliminary pre-test. The evaluation of all measurement items was conducted using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (indicating strongly disagree) to 5 (indicating strongly agree).

The study focused on entrepreneurs in the Tullian District of Mukah, Sarawak. The survey questionnaires, created explicitly for this purpose, were disseminated to 51 entrepreneurs in the Tullian District of Mukah, Sarawak. The number of samples was determined based on Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) recommendation, based on the total population of 60 entrepreneurs in that district. Even though the number of samples is deemed small, it is still appropriate to conduct Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) analysis. Hence, this study uses PLS-SEM analysis for hypothesis testing. PLS-SEM is a multivariate statistical methodology that allows for the simultaneous estimation of numerous relationships between multiple and single exogenous variables within the same model. Furthermore, this method is suitable for professional use and allows the analysis of intricate models that include mediating or moderating associations, even with limited sample sizes. It can be applied in specific scenarios where other techniques like Covariance-based – Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) are not applicable.

## Analysis

### *Internal Consistency and Reliability*

Hair et al. (2019) define internal consistency and reliability as the degree to which all subscale indicators are devoted to evaluating the same concept. Following this definition, the minimum value for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores is 0.70, and the minimum value for average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.50 (see Table 1). In this study, the recommended AVE and composite reliability values were satisfied and exceeded 0.50 and 0.70, respectively, indicating the measurement model possesses reliability. Cronbach's alpha values were computed to ascertain the data's internal consistency. As a general principle, Taber (2018) defines Cronbach's alpha values as follows: those exceeding 0.90 are deemed excellent, those exceeding 0.80 are decent, and those exceeding 0.70 are acceptable. The obtained Cronbach's alpha values, AVE, and composite reliability values all met the specific threshold, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

### *Internal Consistency and Reliability Results*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha (CA)</b>	<b>Composite Reliability (CR)</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
Dependency Behaviour (DB)	0.7209	0.7686	0.5607
Effort Expectancy (EE)	0.7120	0.7216	0.5144
Facilitating Conditions (FC)	0.7049	0.9029	0.6161
Performance Expectancy (PE)	0.7870	0.7412	0.5600
Price Value (PV)	0.7703	0.7193	0.5176
Social Influence (SI)	0.7363	0.7372	0.5306

Consistency was established for all variables based on Cronbach's alpha values in the above table, which all exceeded 0.70. Additionally, high AVE values and reliabilities contributed to the validation of measurement models' reliability.

### *Discriminant Validity*

As a pre-requisite for evaluation, this form of validity pertains to how much a variable is differentiated from the other variables (Nawanir et al., 2018). The discriminant validity level is defined by Cheah et al. (2018) as the extent to which a particular element differs from the other elements; the greater the level of discriminant validity, the greater the variable's ability to explain the phenomenon compared to its counterpart variables. Thus, discriminant validity was established for the study via the square roots of the AVEs, which Henseler et al. (2015) state must be greater than the correlation value of the latent constructs. As a result, discriminant validity was established for the model's external consistency in this study. A comparative analysis of latent constructs is presented in Table 2. It shows that all Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio values are below 0.90, which has passed the discriminant validity test.



Table 2

*Discriminant Validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)*

	DB	EE	FC	PE	PV	SI
<b>DB</b>						
<b>EE</b>	0.8267					
<b>FC</b>	0.8286	0.8800				
<b>PE</b>	0.8393	0.8438	0.8346			
<b>PV</b>	0.6835	0.8994	0.8788	0.8068		
<b>SI</b>	0.8449	0.8566	0.8005	0.8183	0.8905	

*Hypothesis Testing Results*

The findings presented in Table 3 provide additional support for the conclusion drawn in this study. In Table 3, certain hypothesised relationships were rejected due to p-values exceeding 0.05, whereas those with p-values below 0.05 were supported. Only H1 rejects the direct relationship, indicating that performance expectancy does not significantly influence dependency behavior (p-value of 0.9953 > 0.05). However, H2 social influence (p-value of 0.0021 < 0.05), H3 facilitating conditions (p-value of 0.0293 < 0.05), and H4 price value (p-value of 0.0332 < 0.05) do significantly influence dependency behaviour. Looking at the moderating effect perspective, only H5a is rejected, indicating that effort expectancy does not significantly moderate the relationship between performance expectancy and dependency behaviour (p-value of 0.1769 > 0.05). However, effort expectancy does significantly moderate the relationship between H5b social influence and dependency behaviour (p-value of 0.0202 < 0.05) and H5c price value and dependency behaviour (p-value of 0.0024 < 0.05).

Table 3

*Hypothesis Testing of the Study Model*

Hyp.	Relationship	Beta	t-values	p-values	Results
H1	PE → DB	0.0005	0.0058	0.9953	Not supported
H2	SI → DB	0.4625	3.0902*	0.0021*	Supported
H3	FC → DB	0.1707	2.0515*	0.0293*	Supported
H4	PV → DB	-0.0714	1.9685*	0.0332*	Supported
H5a	EE mod PE → DB	-0.1546	1.3504	0.1769	Not supported
H5b	EE mod SI → DB	-0.2703	2.3218*	0.0202*	Supported
H5c	EE mod PV → DB	0.3994	3.0405*	0.0024*	Supported

*Accept hypothesis when p-value < 0.05 or t-values > 1.6*

**Discussions and Theoretical Implications**

The current study examines the entrepreneurs' DB on social media in Tellian District, Mukah. One of the findings indicated that EE significantly moderates the relationship between SI and DB and the relationship between PV and DB. However, EE does not significantly influence the relationship between PE and DB. Therefore, it still shows that EE can become a moderating variable in this study. Earlier, the original theory of UTAUT posited that the behaviour was directly influenced by EE, which was regarded as an independent variable. Nevertheless, the study implies that EE can moderate the relationship between the determinants and behaviour.

One of the findings shows that the results of hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 are significant. Hence, it indicates that SI, FC, and PV significantly influence DB's use of social media among entrepreneurs in the Talian District of Mukah. It can be attributed to the region's distinctive socio-economic and infrastructural dynamics. Entrepreneurs are frequently influenced by the behaviour and recommendations of peers, mentors, and the broader business community. This result could lead them to use social media platforms for competitive advantage and connectivity. Consequently, SI is a critical factor. Entrepreneurs are provided with the requisite resources to engage with social media effectively, thereby fostering habitual dependency through implementing FC, which includes the availability of technical support, user-friendly infrastructure, and reliable internet access. Furthermore, PV is a critical factor, as entrepreneurs can optimise their utility without incurring excessive expenditures by utilising cost-effective social media platforms. Consequently, these platforms are essential for business operations and marketing. The interdependence of social validation, accessible resources, and economic considerations in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour in the Talian District is reflected in the conducive environment for heightened dependency on social media, resulting from the convergence of these factors.

Referring to hypothesis H5b, several contextual factors explain why EE significantly moderates the relationship between SI and DB on social media among entrepreneurs. Having a high EE primarily means that entrepreneurs find social media platforms easy to use and don't want to put in much effort to participate with them. An individual's reliance behaviour is less affected by external SI because of their inherent drive to use social media because of its simplicity. A business owner's first-hand experience with a platform may be more important than the advice of their colleagues. The connection between SI and DB is further weakened by the fact that people in the Talian District, where digital literacy is likely uneven, tend to form social media habits apart from SI if they find them intuitive. In this dynamic, the importance of perceived usability in determining the extent to which SI causes entrepreneurs to act dependently is underlined.

The result of hypothesis H5c suggests that the interaction between perceived cost-efficiency and usability can account for the substantial moderating effect of EE in strengthening the relationship between PV and DB on social media among entrepreneurs in Talian District, Mukah. The PV derived from the cost of using social media platforms becomes more pronounced when entrepreneurs find them easy to use (high EE). This improved usability guarantees that the advantages of low-cost or free features are completely realised, resulting in a greater reliance on these platforms as entrepreneurs utilise them extensively for business operations and networking. The combination of affordable access and convenience of use in regions such as the Talian District, where economic considerations are crucial, presents a compelling argument for social media's frequent and intensive use. In this entrepreneurial context, the critical synergy between effort expectancy and price value is underscored by the fact that perceived financial advantages substantially drive dependency behaviour when the effort to use social media is minimal.

The study's findings are based on Figure 2. It shows that the performance expectancy is removed due to the non-significant findings in this study. However, the main findings indicated that effort expectancy significantly moderates social influence and the price value

of dependency behaviour. It can be concluded from the theoretical implications that effort expectancy can also be applied as a moderating effect in UTAUT theory.

### Practical Implication

To increase the dependency behaviour among Tellian entrepreneurs to use social media to sustain their business survival, there is a need to conduct relevant workshops and training by related agencies such as higher educational institutions in Mukah or government agencies like Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), TEKUN and Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM). For instance, as reported by TVS on March 5, 2024, the training that has been conducted by Rural and Regional Development (KKDW) is the Rural Entrepreneurship Strengthening Support Program (SPKLB) and the loan facility of the Rural Economic Financing Scheme (SPED).

Furthermore, the Sarawak Government should actively ensure that internet connectivity in urban or rural areas is of good quality and accessible to entrepreneurs so that they can easily deal with customers from home in the Tellian area. The Director General of the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA), Abdul Rashid Bahri, emphasized the importance of internet connectivity. Sarawak has excellent marketing potential, and that opportunity needs to be unearthed. Entrepreneurs in Sarawak are encouraged to market their products to penetrate the market in Peninsular Malaysia, as part of an initiative taken by those who visit this state. According to Bahri, some food products in Sarawak are well received from the peninsula, such as crystal longan fruit, Dabai fruit, Sri Aman durian, layered cake, salted battered fish, and Kolok noodles. Mukah local products such as sago, tebaloi, and lemantak are some food products that have yet to be widely promoted to customers from Peninsular Malaysia.

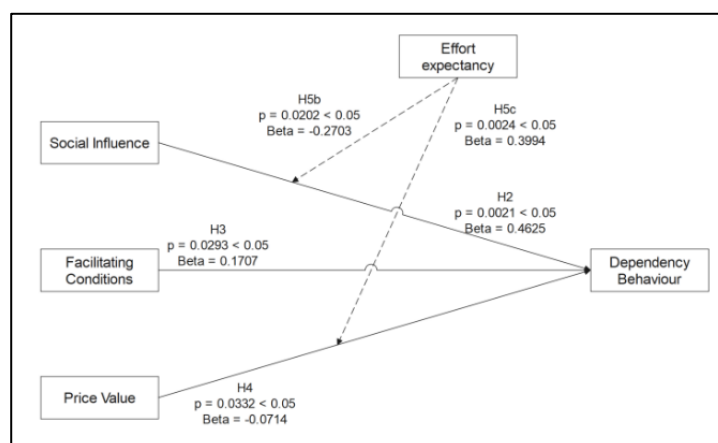


Figure No.3 Validated Framework of the Study

Dependency behaviour can also be increased when there is a special package for social media users among entrepreneurs by waiving the fee or excluding them from any registration fee, especially among young entrepreneurs who are about to start their businesses. The grant, such as the Bumiputera Business Empowerment Fund (Bumi Bizfund), which is an outcome of the collaboration of Sarawak's Minister of International Trade, Industry, and Investment (MINTRED) and the Dayak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), can provide entrepreneurs with financial assistance to pay for social media platforms with premium services. Bumi Bizfund aims to help Bumiputera business associations affected by

the COVID-19 pandemic through a business improvement programme, in addition to helping establish new start-ups (Ahmad, April 19, 2024).

Although effort expectancy weakens dependency behaviour due to social influence, higher educational institutions and government agencies still need to conduct a programme to ensure entrepreneurs are ready and aware of the importance of integrating social media into their businesses. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like the Sarawak Bumiputera Entrepreneurs' Chamber (DUBS) and Sarawak Bumiputera Entrepreneurs' Cooperative Innovative Cooperative Berhad (KIUB) are also encouraged to step up, provide assistance, update data, and boost the number of entrepreneurs in Sarawak, particularly in acquiring digital skills.

In addition, based on the positive impact of effort expectancy on dependency behaviour ascribed to price value, entrepreneurs still need to be guided through lifelong learning programmes provided by higher educational institutions and relevant government agencies (Abd. Samad et al., 2019; Ishak & Buang, 2021). As an entrepreneur or start-up founder in a rural area like Tellian Mukah, embracing lifelong learning can significantly impact their ability to adapt, innovate, and thrive in an ever-changing business landscape. Successful entrepreneurs can also provide a mentor-mentee programme because having this kind of programme is more efficient as businesses guide new entrepreneurs in the same field. For example, if the entrepreneurs are involved in the food and beverage business, they will be guided by those successful catering entrepreneurs. Indeed, lifelong learning programmes and mentorship provide a unique opportunity for the mentee to gain valuable insights and knowledge from someone who has already been through the ups and downs of starting and growing a business.

### **Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations for the Future Studies**

Dependency behaviour on social media is significant for long-term business survival. Despite Gooimo applications being developed, the Tellian entrepreneurs faced business survival issues due to a lack of dependency behaviour on social media. Additionally, the substantial effort necessary to maintain an active and engaged social media presence frequently results in burnout and diminished productivity, making it challenging for them to support resilient and adaptive businesses. Hence, this study proposes two main objectives: 1) to examine the determinants of dependency on social media, and 2) to analyse the moderating effect of effort expectancy between determinants and dependency on social media among entrepreneurs in the Tellian district.

The main findings indicated that social influence, facilitating conditions, and price value significantly influence social behaviour dependency. In addition, effort expectancy significantly weakens the relationship between social influence and dependency behaviour and significantly strengthens the relationship between price value and dependency behaviour. With the findings presented, this study contributes to the theoretical perspective that effort expectancy can be applied as a potential moderating effect in the UTAUT theory. In addition, the study contributes to the practical perspective that several policy improvements can be made to increase the dependency behaviour on social media among Tellian entrepreneurs, such as relevant workshops and training, improving network

connection facilities, proposing special entrepreneurs starting packs, collaborations with NGOs, and mentor-mentee programmes.

The study also provides two limitations. First, the study solely concentrates on the Tellian district rather than the entire Sarawakian sample since the problem exclusively affects Tellian entrepreneurs. The Mukah district is a rural area with poor network quality. Therefore, future research recommends expanding the focus area to the districts with poor network quality. Second, in the UTAUT theoretical perspective, the authors only applied original variables from the UTAUT theory. Therefore, it is recommended that the authors review the empirical studies that utilized the same theory to determine if any new or potential variables, such as trust and perceived risk, should be included and tested in this theory.

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