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SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION AMONG FOOD & BEVERAGE MICROENTERPRISES IN NORTHERN MALAYSIA: AN EXTENDED UTAUT FRAMEWORK WITH TECHNOLOGY TRUST & PRIOR DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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Abstract:

Social media has become an important entrepreneurial marketing resource, yet adoption remains uneven among food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises whose technology decisions are typically made by owner-managers operating under constraints of time, finance, skills, and support. This paper explains the factors influencing social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia by extending the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) with technology trust and prior digital experience. Although UTAUT captures performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, its original formulation does not fully account for two features of social media adoption in resource-constrained microenterprises: dependence on external platforms whose security, reliability, privacy, credibility, and policies are beyond the firm's control, and heterogeneity in owner-managers' accumulated digital familiarity. To address these limitations, we introduce technology trust as a direct determinant, while conceptualizing prior digital experience as a selective moderator of the relationships between effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and technology trust and adoption. The moderation logic is that accumulated experience can reduce dependence on ease of use, social cues, and external support while also changing how platform risks and trust are evaluated. The framework's principal novelty therefore lies in combining the four original UTAUT determinants with technology trust

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and an experience-based boundary condition in an owner-managed microenterprise setting. Northern Malaysia, comprising Perak, Penang, Kedah, and Perlis, provides a relevant context because it spans urban and tourism-oriented centers as well as semi-urban and rural markets, where digital resources and market pressures may differ. The framework offers testable propositions and a diagnostic basis for targeted digitalization support. Future research should empirically validate the model and distinguish initial adoption from sustained and strategic social media use, as these represent conceptually distinct stages of digital engagement.

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Keyword:

Digital Entrepreneurship, F&B Microenterprise, Prior Digital Experience, Social Media Adoption, Technology Trust, UTAUT

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Introduction

Social media has transformed drastically from a daily communication platform into an essential component of entrepreneurship, particularly through marketing elements for SMEs**.** Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp are believed to reduce marketing costs while allowing direct interaction with customers, ensuring that distance is no longer a barrier to business operations. Numerous studies have examined the role of social media in entrepreneurship. In fact, many studies have even expanded beyond business activities to explore operational efficiency, financial performance, and how to improve long-term customer relationships through online platforms (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Numerous studies also show that the combined use of social media networks can positively impact on commercialization and promotion, especially for microenterprises, while also focusing on sufficient business assets and a company environment that is conducive to technology adoption (Amegbe et al., 2023; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020).

This situation aligns closely with the circumstances of food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises. These businesses are often run by a small group of owners with a minimal number of staff, relying heavily on community visibility, loyal customers, word-of-mouth promotion, visual product presentation, and customer engagement. These characteristics closely match the nature of social media, which can have a significant impact even at minimal cost, particularly for promotion. Therefore, microenterprise owners can focus more deeply on other business operational matters, such as production, services, staff, and personnel. Resource scarcity through financial, temporal, infrastructural, and technical dimensions amplifies the strategic impact of technological adoption. Currently, most micro-enterprises focus more on risk aspects, including those related to security and operations, which reduces an organization's

reliance on digital technology and the ICT environment (Buvár & Gáti, 2023; Osman et al., 2026). The northern region of Malaysia, which includes Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Perak, shares similar characteristics and traits. Each state has its own urban center while simultaneously focusing on tourism sectors that involve both semi-urban and rural businesses. The diversity of business models operating across these distinct environments demands strategic business approaches. These strategies must address resource allocation, current market pressures, and the integration of digital technology. Ultimately, this can provide significant value-added benefits to operators who adopt social media as a core element within the F&B microenterprise sector.

The existing literature delivers a strong basis for understanding social media adoption, but an important theoretical gap remains. First, numerous researchers aggregate micro, small, and medium enterprises even though microenterprises face more severe resource limitations and stronger owner dependence. In an owner-managed F&B microenterprise, the same individual is often the strategic decision-maker, technology user, marketer, and resource allocator; consequently, individual perceptions of technology translate directly into organizational adoption outcomes. Second, the original UTAUT accounts for adoption through performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, but lacks a dedicated construct to explicitly measure trust or confidence in the external platform. For social media, owner-managers must rely on third-party infrastructures whose security, privacy practices, reliability, information credibility, algorithms, account rules, and service continuity are largely beyond their control. A platform may be perceived as functional, user-friendly, and well supported, yet users will still avoid it if they lack trust. Third, UTAUT includes experience as a moderating variable, but using a vague definition overlooks the unique context of microenterprises. Without clarifying the exact type of experience, it is difficult to see how growing digital familiarity changes how much these businesses rely on user-friendliness, social cues, support systems, and trust. These limitations make a direct, unmodified application of UTAUT theoretically incomplete for resource-constrained, owner-managed F&B microenterprises.

Recent studies demonstrate a rapidly developing research stream around digital marketing and social media in small businesses. Comparative evidence from Malaysia and Nigeria confirms the importance of technology perceptions and facilitating conditions in SME social media marketing adoption (Ramanchandram et al., 2026). A Malaysian systematic review further shows that capability, infrastructure, resources, trust, risk, and continuance challenges cut across MSME digital marketing adoption (Osman et al., 2026), while F&B research increasingly examines strategic social media utilization from the consumer side (Mahfob et al., 2026). These advances raise the novelty threshold for new conceptual work. The present paper therefore does not offer another generic application of UTAUT. Its novelty lies in jointly (i) retaining the four original UTAUT determinants as the adoption baseline, (ii) adding technology trust as a platform-specific direct determinant, and (iii) theorizing prior digital experience as a selective boundary condition that changes the strength of four adoption relationships. This combination offers a more context-sensitive explanation of why owner-managers facing similar platform features and resources may nevertheless differ in their adoption decisions.

Accordingly, this paper explains the factors influencing social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia by developing an extended UTAUT-based conceptual framework that integrates technology trust and prior digital experience. Specifically, it explains

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why trust in technology should complement the original UTAUT determinants and why prior digital experience should moderate the effects of effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and trust in technology. The paper is theoretical rather than empirical; it synthesizes the technology adoption, entrepreneurship, and social media literatures to derive testable propositions and a research agenda for subsequent quantitative validation.

Theoretical Basis

Social Media Adoption as an Entrepreneurial Management Capability

Social media adoption in a microenterprise should not be reduced to opening an account or occasionally posting promotional content. In this paper, adoption refers to the owner-manager's decision to adopt social media and integrate it into business activities such as product promotion, customer communication, market sensing, relationship building, content dissemination, and sales-supporting activities. This model focuses on the initial adoption phase and then examines how social media continues to be applied alongside creativity and strategy. The continued use of social media reflects the sophistication of digital technology and the crucial role of social media in business operations.

Social media adoption involves both technological and managerial aspects. A microenterprise may have access to a social media platform but may not fully commit to gaining a deeper technical understanding of its functions and roles. Several studies show that entrepreneurs use social media for marketing activities, searching for and gathering information and data, networking with business partners, finding new business opportunities, and improving their business operations (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). A study of SMEs shows that when social media meets business operational needs and organizations fully use its functions, they can sustain customer relationships and networks, bringing profit (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Chatterjee et al., 2021). Several studies in Malaysia show that when small businesses use Facebook, they can generate substantial profits and improve operations while also enabling more effective information and data sharing (Ainin et al., 2015). From another perspective, many small hospitality organizations in Malaysia use social media to build strong customer relationships, monitor competitors, and help determine product pricing and effective promotional methods (Siti-Nabiha et al., 2021). Therefore, this study examines whether microenterprise owners are interested in adopting social media seriously and strategically. Additionally, the study can explore long-term usage in line with the sophistication of social media technology.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

UTAUT provides the primary theoretical foundation for this framework. Venkatesh et al. (2003) introduced UTAUT by consolidating prominent technology acceptance perspectives and identifying performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions as the key indicators of behavioral intention and usage. The original model also demonstrated that individual differences, including experience, can moderate selected relationships. These characteristics show that UTAUT is a useful guide for food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises, since adoption depends on expected business value, perceived effort, social pressure, and enabling resources. However, UTAUT was originally created for individual technology acceptance within organizational settings. It does not explicitly theorize reliance on third-party social media platforms, nor does it address the central role of an owner-manager whose personal perceptions dictate organizational actions. In the current environment,

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even a significant and user-friendly platform is likely to be rejected if it is perceived as insecure, unreliable, invasive of privacy, or untrustworthy. Furthermore, the importance of ease of use, social cues, supporting resources, and trust can vary significantly based on accumulated digital familiarity. Consequently, this framework retains UTAUT's parsimonious core of four determinants but extends it by explicitly incorporating technology trust and the moderating effect of prior digital experience. Although UTAUT2 adds hedonic motivation, price value, and habit for consumer technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2012), applying these constructs would shift the model's focus toward consumer acceptance rather than the resource-constrained entrepreneurial acceptance problem investigated here.

Performance Expectancy

Performance expectancy is the extent to which an owner-manager believes that using social media will benefit their business. In food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises, expected outcomes include sales opportunities, customer reach, product visibility, repeat purchases, more effective and active communication with customers, feedback on market performance, and improved promotional methods. This construct is highly crucial for microenterprises, as time and financial resource constraints increase the need to see a clear return on technology investment. Previous studies have consistently shown that usefulness, or performance expectancy, is a primary driver of technology adoption. Chatterjee and Kar (2020) found that perceived usefulness contributes to the acceptance and impact of SME social media marketing, while Bonfanti et al. (2023) found that perceived usefulness is one of the strongest predictors of microentrepreneurs' intentions to use various types of social media for business operations. In food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises, performance expectancy represents the probability that social media can increase profits, customer engagement and acceptance, product visibility, and active, efficient marketing activities. This statement supports a direct, positive relationship between business value and adoption.

Effort Expectancy

Effort expectancy refers to the perceived ease of learning to explore and apply social media for business operations. Although social media platforms are easily accessible, effective business operations require repetitive, credible content creation; active customer feedback; platform navigation; regular campaign execution; adapting to interface changes; and occasional use of analytics or paid advertising tools. For microenterprise owner-managers who juggle multiple roles, perceived complexity can translate directly into time costs. Technology adoption research generally predicts greater acceptance when a system is easier to use. In a microenterprise environment, where formal IT support is often non-existent, this relationship can be highly significant. Recent SME evidence also confirms the relevance of perceived ease of use in social media marketing adoption (Ramanchandram et al., 2026). However, the importance of ease of use may diminish as users become more understanding and proficient. This makes effort expectancy both a direct determinant and a theoretically justified relationship, with prior digital experience as a potential moderator.

Social Influence

Social influence focuses on the extent to which owner-managers believe important others expect or encourage them to adopt social media. For food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises, this perception involves customers, competitors, suppliers, peers, family members, tourism partners, and local business networks. In today's market environment,

competitors' digital presence and customer expectations can create pressure to maintain an active online profile. Evidence from Malaysian SMEs also shows that competitive pressure can influence social media marketing adoption, with industry competitiveness amplifying pressure from competitors and customers (Ali Abbasi et al., 2022). UTAUT posits that social influence can affect technology adoption, especially when adoption decisions are deeply embedded in social and organizational contexts. In small businesses, owner-managers often conform to competitors' and customers' demands. However, experienced users tend to rely more on their personal knowledge, whereas less experienced users are more inclined to depend on others' advice and follow the latest, widely accepted market trends.

Facilitating Conditions

Facilitating conditions refer to the organizational resources and infrastructure that support the use of technology. In the context of food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises, this environment includes reliable internet access, appropriate devices, time, financial capacity, digital skills, access to training and technical assistance, and knowledge of each platform's functions. However, barriers to effective social media use include resource constraints, digital literacy gaps, infrastructure limitations, and limited access to customized support (Osman et al., 2026). Facilitating conditions are not merely background variables, especially for owner-managed microenterprises. A platform may be perceived as valuable and easy to use, but adoption can still fail if the business lacks time, connectivity, content production capabilities, or support. Experience can also moderate this relationship. Less experienced or inexperienced users may rely heavily on training and support, whereas experienced users may tolerate weaker external support through their existing skills and routines.

Technology Trust as a Contextual Extension

Technology trust is integrated into UTAUT to capture the owner-manager's confidence that social media platforms are reliable, secure, credible, and helpful elements within business operations. In this study, this construct will encompass beliefs regarding platform security, privacy protection, data and information quality, service reliability, content credibility, and confidence in digital interactions. Trust is especially salient on social media because microenterprises conduct customer communication, advertising, ordering, and sometimes payment-related activities on infrastructures they do not own or control. Their business visibility can become dependent on platform algorithms, account-access rules, data practices, and service continuity. For resource-constrained microenterprises, the consequences of fraud, account compromise, misinformation, service disruption, or ineffective advertising can also be difficult to absorb. Technology trust is therefore conceptually distinct from performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and facilitating conditions: a platform can appear useful, easy to use, and adequately supported yet still be rejected if the owner-manager doubts its security, reliability, privacy, or credibility. Prior research supports the importance of trust in social media and microenterprise digital marketing contexts (Ayaburi & Treku, 2020; Buvár & Gáti, 2023), and Amegbe et al. (2023) likewise identify trust as relevant to SME social media adoption. Treating trust as a direct determinant of adoption thus extends UTAUT to encompass the perceived dependability of the external technological environment on which the microenterprise must rely.

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Prior Digital Experience as a Boundary Condition

Prior digital experience refers to accumulated familiarity, confidence, skills, and exposure to social media platforms and related digital tools before or during the adoption decision. This construct is deliberately narrower than the broader human-computer-interaction concept of user experience, which can include affect, aesthetics, usability perceptions, and the totality of responses during system interaction. The narrower label is theoretically preferable because the proposed moderator concerns what the owner-manager has already learned through digital exposure, not whether a current interface is attractive or satisfying.

In the original UTAUT, experience is a moderator of selected relationships rather than a universal determinant (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The present framework follows that logic by specifying prior digital experience as a selective boundary condition for effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and technology trust, while performance expectancy remains a direct predictor. The moderation logic is relational: accumulated experience changes which information and resources an owner-manager needs to decide. Greater familiarity can reduce dependence on ease of use because operating routines become internalized, reduce reliance on social cues because users can evaluate platforms independently, and reduce dependence on external support because skills and workarounds accumulate. Experience can also change the meaning of trust by either building confidence through successful prior use or increasing awareness of privacy, security, algorithmic, and platform-dependency risks. By contrast, expected business value remains a fundamental economic judgment for resource-constrained firms regardless of experience level, so the framework does not specify experience as a moderator of performance expectancy.

Accordingly, the proposed moderation effects are not arbitrary additions to the model. For effort expectancy, prior experience should weaken the importance of ease of use because familiar users require less cognitive effort to operate platforms. For social influence, experience should reduce reliance on customers, competitors, peers, and other external referents because experienced users possess more internalized knowledge. For facilitating conditions, experience should reduce dependence on training, technical assistance, and other support resources because accumulated know-how enables users to solve routine problems independently. The technology trust relationship is more complex. Greater experience may strengthen the role of trust because experienced users are more aware of privacy, security, misinformation, account, and algorithmic risks; alternatively, a history of successful use may reduce uncertainty and make trust less decisive. For this reason, the technology-trust moderation proposition is specified without imposing a directional sign.

Research Gap and Conceptual Synthesis

This research gap shows that the adoption of social media elements among SMEs remains understudied. Previous studies have shown associations between usefulness, ease of use, facilitating conditions, trust, and challenges in digital marketing (Ramanchandram et al., 2026; Osman et al., 2026), while F&B studies increasingly show that social media serves as an effective business channel (Mahfob et al., 2026). However, in-depth research has yet to explain how these factors apply to owner-managed F&B microenterprises. Owners' decisions are heavily influenced by severe resource constraints and dependence on external platforms. A direct application of the original UTAUT model can explain expected performance, social pressure, and the use of relevant resources. However, it leaves platform reliability implicit and

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fails to explain how differences in accumulated digital familiarity alter selected adoption mechanisms. The proposed framework can address this gap through three interconnected steps. First, it recontextualizes the UTAUT determinants around the owner-manager as the locus of both individual perception and organizational decision-making. Second, it adds trust in digital technology as a distinct direct determinant to address concerns regarding security, privacy, reliability, credibility, and platform dependency. Third, it positions prior digital experience as a selected moderator for effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and technology trust. The theoretical novelty lies in this integrated configuration, which not only explains the factors associated with adoption but also why the influence of several of these factors differs among owner-managers with varying levels of digital technology experience.

Proposed Conceptual Framework and Propositions

As a conceptual paper, the research findings will consist of the proposed conceptual model and the propositions derived from the preceding synthesis. This framework establishes five direct determinants of social media adoption, with four relationships moderated by prior digital experience. These nine propositions are formulated as theoretically testable expectations intended for further validation among food and beverage (F&B) microenterprise owner-managers and key decision-makers in Northern Malaysia.

Direct Propositions

When food and beverage (F&B) microenterprise owners are confident that social media use can generate profits and operational benefits, they are more likely to integrate the technology into routine business operations. These expected benefits are especially important when resources are limited, as owner-managers must justify the opportunity cost of time and marketing expenditures.

Proposition 1 (P1): Performance expectancy is positively associated with social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia.

Ease of use is also expected to support adoption. Platforms perceived as easy to manage require less time to learn and use, reducing barriers for owner-managers who must allocate their attention and time to other activities such as production, service, finance, staffing, and marketing.

Proposition 2 (P2): Effort expectancy is positively associated with social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia.

Microenterprise adoption decisions are socially embedded. Customer expectations, competitor activities, peer practices, and business networks can validate social media as an essential business tool, increasing the perceived pressure to participate.

Proposition 3 (P3): Social influence is positively associated with social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia.

The availability of enabling resources is believed to increase the likelihood that positive intentions are translated into actual business practices. Reliable connectivity, appropriate

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devices, time, training, and technical support reduce implementation friction and render sustainable integration highly feasible and effective.

Proposition 4 (P4): Facilitating conditions are positively associated with social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia.

Adoption also requires confidence that the platform is reliable for business operations. Perceptions of security, reliability, information quality, and credibility reduce uncertainty, making it more acceptable for micro-enterprises to commit customer relationships and marketing activities to a digital platform.

Proposition 5 (P5): Technology trust is positively associated with social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia.

Moderating Propositions

Prior digital experience is expected to reduce the dependence of adoption on ease of use. Experienced owner-managers are more knowledgeable and proficient with platform interfaces, content practices, and troubleshooting, so perceived effort influences them less.

> *Proposition 6 (P6): Prior digital experience moderates the relationship between effort expectancy and social media adoption, such that the positive effect of effort expectancy is stronger among less experienced owner-managers.*

Experience is also expected to reduce the reliance on external social cues. Less experienced owner-managers may focus on customers, competitors, and peers for reassurance that social media is appropriate, whereas experienced users will rely more on their own evaluation.

> *Proposition 7 (P7): Prior digital experience moderates the relationship between social influence and social media adoption, such that the positive effect of social influence is stronger among less experienced owner-managers.*

Similarly, external support and infrastructure may benefit users with less digital experience. Experienced users can devise workarounds, self-learn, and leverage existing routines, though severe infrastructure constraints can still limit adoption.

> *Proposition 8 (P8): Prior digital experience moderates the relationship between facilitating conditions and social media adoption, such that the positive effect of facilitating conditions is stronger among less experienced owner-managers.*

The interaction between experience and trust in technology is conceptually more complicated. Greater experience can build confidence through prior success, but it can also make owners more aware of platform risks, data practices, account security, unreliable content, and algorithmic dependence. In doing so, the framework stipulates a moderation proposition for technology trust without imposing a predetermined direction of interaction.

> *Proposition 9 (P9): Prior digital experience moderates the relationship between technology trust and social media adoption among F&B microenterprises in Northern Malaysia.*

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Figure 1 shows that prior digital experience moderates the relationships among effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and technology trust, while performance expectancy is specified as a direct predictor only.

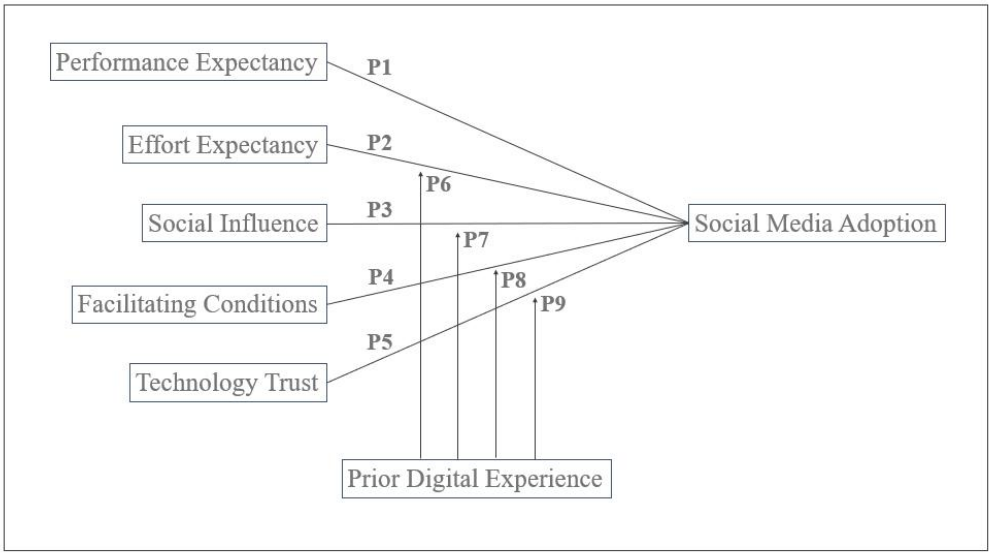


Figure 1: Proposed Extended UTAUT Framework for Social Media Adoption Among F&B Microenterprises

Discussion

Theoretical Contribution

The proposed framework makes three principal theoretical contributions, with its central novelty arising from the configuration of the three elements rather than from any one construct in isolation. First, it recontextualizes the four original UTAUT determinants for owner-managed microenterprises. UTAUT was developed to explain individual technology acceptance in organizational environments, whereas microenterprise adoption blurs the boundary between individual and organizational decision-making: the owner-manager is often simultaneously the strategic decision-maker, technology user, marketer, and resource allocator. Consequently, owner-level beliefs about performance, effort, social pressure, and support serve as mechanisms for organizational adoption. This reframing responds to calls in social media entrepreneurship research for closer attention to the mechanisms linking technology use and entrepreneurial activity (Olanrewaju et al., 2020).

Second, the framework introduces technology trust as a substantive determinant of adoption rather than treating it as a background attitude or assuming it is already captured by usefulness and facilitating conditions. Social media platforms are external infrastructures over which microenterprises have limited control, yet the business may depend on them for customer communication, content distribution, ordering, advertising, and reputation. An owner-manager may therefore see a platform as beneficial and easy to use but still resist adopting it if they perceive it as insecure, unreliable, privacy-invasive, or lacking credible information.

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Technology trust extends UTAUT from judgments about performance, effort, social pressure, and resources to a distinct judgment about whether the technological environment itself is dependable enough to support business activity. This extension is consistent with evidence that trust matters in microenterprise digital marketing and SME social media adoption (Amegbe et al., 2023; Buvár & Gáti, 2023).

Third, the framework conceptualizes prior digital experience as a selective boundary condition rather than a general direct predictor or universal moderator. This contribution clarifies the mechanism by which experience matters: accumulated familiarity shifts reliance on ease of use, external social validation, facilitating support, and trust assessments. Less experienced owner-managers should be more sensitive to perceived effort, social cues, and external support, whereas more experienced users can draw on established routines and self-generated evaluations. For technology trust, experience may either increase risk awareness or reduce uncertainty through successful prior use, which justifies an explicitly non-directional moderation proposition. Defining the construct as prior digital experience also prevents conflation with broader user experience concepts, such as aesthetics, emotion, and interface satisfaction.

Consequently, these extensions serve to distinguish the framework from a standard reapplication of UTAUT. Ramanchandram et al. (2026) examine perceived usefulness, ease of use, and facilitating conditions in social media marketing adoption by SMEs; Osman et al. (2026) synthesize adoption and continuance challenges among Malaysian MSMEs; and Mahfob et al. (2026) focus on strategic social media utilization and consumer purchase intention in the F&B sector. The present framework shifts the unit of explanation to the owner-manager adoption decision in F&B microenterprises, adds technology trust as a platform-specific determinant, and theorizes prior digital experience as a relationship-specific moderator. Its added theoretical insight is therefore conditional rather than merely additive: it proposes that the same UTAUT and trust factors need not exert equal influence on owner-managers with different levels of digital experience.

Managerial and Entrepreneurial Implications

The framework indicates that F&B microenterprise owners must diagnose their adoption strategies rather than treat them as one-size-fits-all solutions. When performance expectancy is weak, interventions must use simple metrics, such as customer inquiries, conversions, repeat orders, reach, and campaign return, to clearly demonstrate business value. Training should focus on platform routines, content templates, scheduling, and simplified analytics, rather than on broad digital literacy, if effort expectancy is the main obstacle. If social influence is essential, peer demonstrations and local entrepreneur networks can give credible adoption cues. In other situations, facilitating conditions require a different response. Owner-managers require reliable connectivity, basic content-production equipment, access to practical training, and economical technical support. However, when trust in technology is low, support programs should address privacy settings, account protection, content credibility, advertising transparency, and safe digital payment and ordering practices. Given that prior digital experience acts as a key moderator, support programs should abandon uniform assistance models and segment microentrepreneurs by their technical proficiency.

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Policy and Entrepreneurial Implications

This framework supports digital inclusion and microenterprise development agencies. Although entrepreneurship-support interventions traditionally focus on delivering technology, providing access alone is often insufficient to ensure adoption. Consequently, effective programs must combine technical infrastructure with practical skills, proven business value, trust, and customized training pathways. While novice users need basic security training, mentoring, and guided onboarding, experienced users require advanced support in analytics, content strategy, social commerce, and platform diversification. The Northern Malaysia context also leads to region-sensitive support. Differences between tourism-intensive urban areas and smaller rural or semi-urban markets may affect customer pressure, connectivity, content requirements, and the perceived return from using the platform. Empirical validation should therefore test not only the structural model but also whether adoption mechanisms differ across states, business location, owner experience, and type of F&B activity.

Research Agenda and Empirical Validation

The next stage will quantitatively test the model with owners, managers, or key decision-makers of F&B microenterprises in Perak, Penang, Kedah, and Perlis. A diverse analytical context will be shaped by varying levels of urbanization, tourism, market access, infrastructure, and institutional support. The empirical variation across regional diversity needs to be evaluated to determine whether the proposed adoption mechanisms remain valid across different local environments. Even though the empirical design should first ensure construct clarity and measurement validity, partial least squares structural equation modeling will be appropriate. Prominent indicators, including social media exposure, the frequency and duration of professional tool use, and user confidence, will measure prior digital experience. Rather than treating them as interchangeable variables, future studies should separate the concepts of social media adoption, continuance, and strategic use. Adoption contributes to the initial integration into business activities; continuance represents sustained implementation; and strategic use reflects the depth and sophistication of application. Longitudinal designs are crucial for understanding post-adoption experiences and trust and will influence the capability of UTAUT relationships. Finally, technology trust should be examined to determine whether it is best represented as a unidimensional construct or as a higher-order construct encompassing security, privacy, reliability, information credibility, and platform dependability. Lastly, testing alternative models would help determine whether trust explains incremental variance in adoption beyond the four original UTAUT predictors.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper aims to improve and extend the existing UTAUT framework by incorporating technology trust and prior digital experience. This combination is believed to further explain and explore the factors influencing social media adoption among food and beverage (F&B) microenterprises in northern Malaysia. Current determinants such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions are highly significant and productive when integrated with technology trust to build confidence in the safety, privacy, reliability, credibility, and dependability of external social media platforms. This framework explains that prior digital experience moderates the effects of effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and technology trust. Fundamentally, this framework provides a theoretically grounded basis for empirical testing and a practical

diagnostic structure for entrepreneurial support initiatives across Perak, Penang, Kedah, and Perlis. It also suggests opportunities and characteristics for future research, for instance, on initial adoption, continued use, and sustainable strategic utilization. All of these research propositions are related but conceptually distinct outcomes and should be tested separately. Future studies can strengthen these proposed relationships by collecting data directly from owner-managers, comparing findings across regions, and examining the development of microenterprises' trust and experience throughout their transition, from initial social media use to long-term strategy.

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