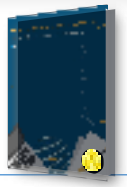

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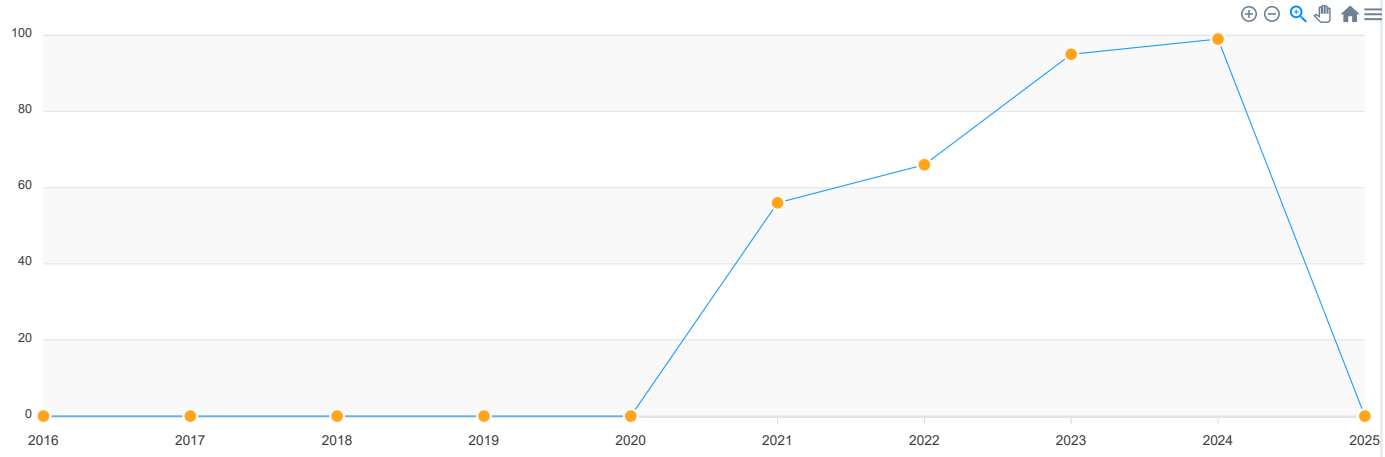

Factors Influencing Behavioral Intention to Purchase Smartphones among Rajabhat University Students in Thailand: An Extension of The theory of Planned Behavior through the Mediating Roles of Brand Trust and Attitude

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Abstract

This article aims to study the factors influencing brand trust, attitude, and behavioral intention among undergraduate students of Rajabhat University in Thailand. Specifically, it investigates 1) the impact of social influence, fear of missing out (FOMO), perceived usefulness, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on brand trust, 2) the effect of these factors, along with brand trust, on attitude, and 3) the influence of brand trust and attitude on behavioral intention. A quantitative approach was employed using quota sampling, with questionnaires distributed electronically to 547 undergraduate students. Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings indicate that social influence, FOMO, perceived usefulness, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control positively influence brand trust. Additionally, these factors, along with brand trust, significantly affect attitude. Finally, both brand trust and attitude positively impact behavioral intention.

The study provides practical insights: students should make informed purchasing decisions rather than succumb to social pressure, while parents can support financial responsibility by guiding students in distinguishing between wants and necessities. Universities may develop programs promoting

responsible technology use and financial literacy, while marketers can strategically leverage FOMO through targeted campaigns emphasizing exclusivity and practical benefits. Future research should explore additional psychological factors and the role of social media in influencing purchasing behavior.

Keywords: Theory of Plan Behavior; Social Influences; Fear of Missing Out (FOMO); Brand Trust; Behavioral Intention

Introduction

Rajabhat University elevated from Teacher College to University status in 2004, operating under the philosophy of "Higher education institutions for local development." They focus on producing graduates with knowledge and moral values to develop their communities (Phetchabun Rajabhat University, 2025). While instrumental in driving the grassroots economy and reducing inequality, these institutions face challenges regarding social status and graduate acceptance in the labor market compared to leading universities (Rajabhat University Group, 2025). Simultaneously, smartphone purchases that often exceed their financial capabilities significantly impact undergraduate students' financial well–being, resulting in long–term debt that undermines their future financial stability (Azizah et al., 2024).

This study explores factors influencing behavioral intention among Rajabhat University students in Thailand by analyzing social influence, FOMO, perceived usefulness, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control within the theory of planned behavior framework, with brand trust and attitude as mediating variables (Oludoye & Supakata, 2024). The research addresses how social influence and psychological factors affect Thai students' decision–making amid online societal pressures (Azliyanti & Jadmiko, 2024). A significant research gap exists regarding psychological factors and behavioral intention in Rajabhat Universities' distinct social and cultural contexts, as previous studies primarily focused on major universities or urban settings (Adulyarat et al., 2024). This study aims to fill this gap and develop comprehensive strategies for enhancing student engagement.

Research Objectives

1. To study the influence of social influence, fear of missing out (FOMO), perceived usefulness, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on brand trust among undergraduate students at Rajabhat Universities in Thailand.
2. To analyze how these factors, along with brand trust, affect students' attitudes.
3. To investigate the impact of brand trust and attitude on behavioral intention.

Research Hypothesis

H1: Social influence will have a direct positive influence on brand trust.

H2: Fear of missing out (FOMO) will have a direct positive influence on brand trust.

H3: Perceived usefulness will have a direct positive influence on brand trust.

H4: Subjective norms will have a direct positive influence on brand trust.

H5: Perceived behavioral control will have a direct positive influence on brand trust.

H6: Social influence will have a direct positive influence on attitude.

H7: Fear of missing out (FOMO) will have a direct positive influence on attitude.

H8: Perceived usefulness will have a direct positive influence on attitude.

H9: Subjective norms will have a direct positive influence on attitude.

H10: Perceived behavioral control will have a direct positive influence on attitude

H11: Brand trust will have a direct positive influence on attitude.

H12: Brand trust will have a direct positive influence on behavioral intention.

H13: Attitude will have a direct positive influence on behavioral intention.

Literature Review

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) encompasses attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. When applied to smartphone purchasing among Thai Rajabhat University undergraduates, the framework expanded to include social influence, FOMO, and perceived usefulness, with brand trust and attitude toward brands mediating behavioral intention to purchase. Nguyen et al. (2024) found that students experience psychological pressure when peers use advanced

technology, aligning with Wu et al. (2025) findings on the relationship between perceived benefits and brand confidence. Oliveira et al. (2024) demonstrated that consumers develop positive brand attitudes when products meet functional needs and enhance social status. Marketers should therefore develop strategies integrating quality innovation and social dimensions to attract student consumers amid rapid technological change.

The knowledge gap in smartphone purchasing behavior studies among Thai undergraduates arises from a lack of in–depth analysis of key factors such as social influence, FOMO, and their impact on purchase intention. Mahadika and Indrawati (2024) demonstrated the relationship between social influence and behavioral intention to purchase among students, while Naim et al. (2024) identified brand trust and attitude as crucial determinants, especially when influenced by marketing variables. This research aims to address this gap by examining psychological and social factors influencing students' smartphone purchasing behavior, using the TPB to evaluate perception, attitudes, and buying motivation, and providing deeper insights into consumer behavior in Thailand's competitive smartphone market.

Behavioral intention represents students' rational decision–making and systematic planning when purchasing smartphones, measurable through their inclination to buy specific models within defined timeframes and their recommendation behaviors to social circles (Khayer et al., 2023). Within the TPB framework, these intentions are influenced by personal attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control (Abhimantra & Suasana, 2024). When organizations align offerings with consumer needs in competitive markets like smartphones, they enhance customer trust and loyalty, increasing profits and market share (Naim et al., 2024). Understanding psychological factors such as trust and perceived benefits enables businesses to create marketing strategies that effectively address consumer expectations (Chand et al., 2024).

Mediating factors, including brand trust and attitudes, are crucial elements influencing undergraduate students' behavioral intentions to purchase new smartphone models. Ali Abumalloh et al. (2025) found that brand trust directly impacts purchase behavioral intentions. Similarly, Zhu and Wei (2025)'s study demonstrated that attitudes affect purchase behavioral intentions. Research findings by Wang et al. (2024) revealed that brand trust positively influences consumer attitudes. Based on this

evidence, it can be concluded that brand trust and attitudes toward brands significantly drive undergraduate students' behavioral intentions to purchase new smartphone models.

Driving factors such as social influence, fear of missing out (FOMO), perceived usefulness, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly affect brand trust and attitude. Research indicates that social influence positively affects both brand trust (Sobaih et al., 2025) and attitude (Anubhav et al., 2025). FOMO also positively impacts brand trust (Lim et al., 2023) and attitude (Li, 2024). Similarly, perceived usefulness positively influences brand trust (Lestari et al., 2024) and attitude (Lee et al., 2025). Subjective norms positively affect both brand trust (Kuswati & Sholahuddin, 2025) and attitude (Wang et al., 2024), Perceived behavioral control positively influences brand trust (Kuswati & Sholahuddin, 2025) and attitude (Fawehinmi et al., 2024). These findings suggest that these five factors significantly drive undergraduate students' brand trust and attitudes when purchasing new smartphone models.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and research hypotheses, a conceptual framework has been developed, as illustrated in Figure 1.

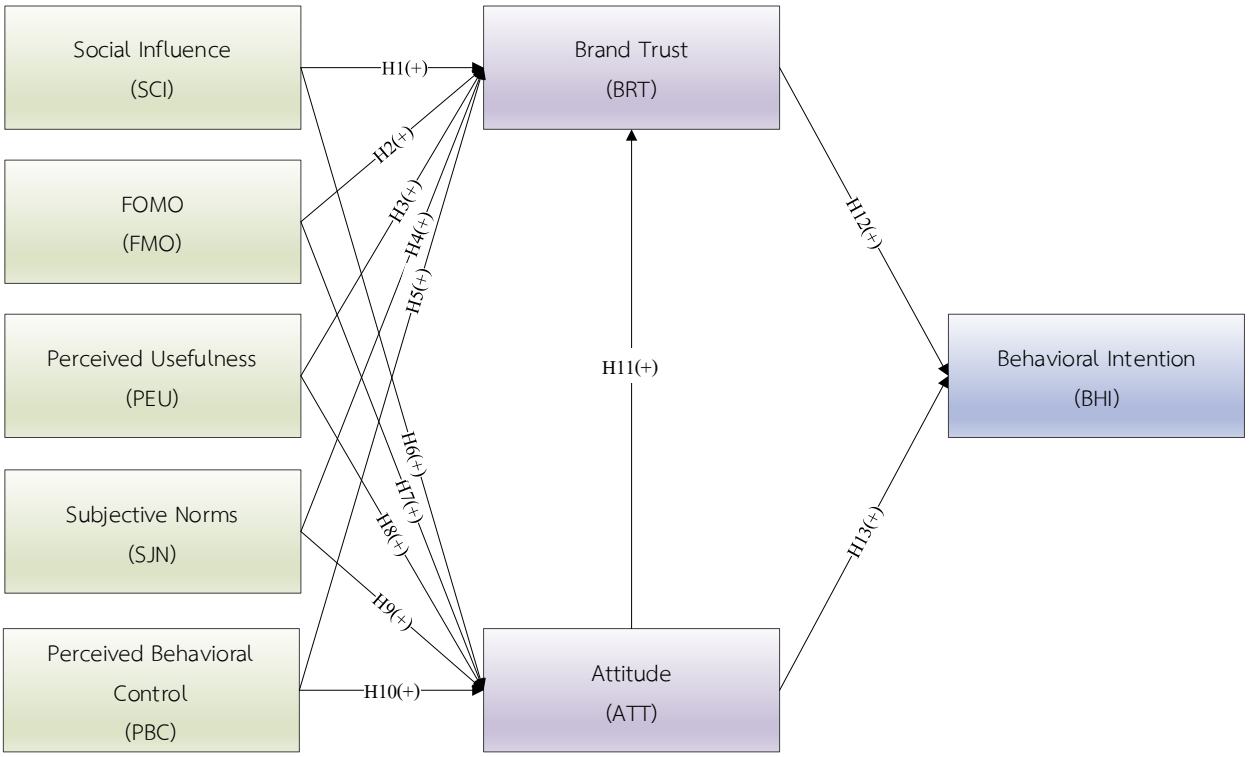

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Research Methodology

Population, Samples and Sampling

This quantitative research study encompasses Rajabhat University throughout Thailand. The population consists of undergraduate students from 38 Rajabhat Universities nationwide, categorized into five regional groups: Southern region (5 universities), Central region (9 universities), Rattanakosin region (5 universities), Northern region (8 universities), and Northeastern region (11 universities) (Suratthani Rajabhat University, 2024). The total population comprises 324,289 students (Office of the Ministry of Higher Education, 2024). The sample size was determined according to the criterion of 5 times the number of parameters (Hair et al., 2019). With 96 parameters, the minimum required sample size was calculated as 96×5 = 480 students. Due to practical limitations preventing access to all population units, non-probability sampling was employed. Quota sampling was utilized to ensure optimal distribution of respondents across all five regional groups of Rajabhat University undergraduate students, with proportional representation reflecting the actual distribution where the Northeastern group has the largest enrollment, followed by the Central group, the Northern group, while the Rattanakosin and Southern groups have approximately equal and smaller enrollments.

Variables in this research

The research instrument comprised 9 sections: 1) demographic questionnaire with closed-ended items collecting data on gender, age, education duration, income, smartphone model, and frequency of device replacement; 2) Social influence; 3) FOMO; 4) Perceived usefulness; 5) Subjective norms; 6) Perceived behavioral control; 7) Brand trust scale; 8) Attitude; and 9) Behavioral intention. Sections 2–9 each contained 5 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Back Translation

Since the original research was in English while the respondents were Thai students, the questionnaire underwent a back-translation process following these steps: 1) The first expert in Thai and English languages with expertise in business administration translated the questionnaire from English to Thai; 2) The second expert translated the Thai version back to English; and 3) Three experts in English

language with expertise in business administration evaluated the consistency between the original English questionnaire and the back–translated version on an item–by–item basis. They assigned a score of 1 when content meanings matched and 0 when they did not. The average score was calculated for each item, with all items required to achieve an average score of 1. If any item failed to meet this criterion, the back–translation process would be repeated for that item until an average score of 1 was achieved. The evaluation results indicated that all items met the specified criteria.

Validity and Reliability

The research instrument's quality was examined through two procedures: 1) Content validity assessment by five experts, which yielded an Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) ranging from 0.80 to 1.00, exceeding the threshold criterion (≥0.5); and 2) Reliability testing through piloting with 40 sets of data and actual field data collection of 547 sets. The analysis revealed Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0.7 and item discrimination values exceeding 0.3, meeting the criteria established by Hair et al. (2019).

Data Collection

Data were collected via an online questionnaire from undergraduate students at Rajabhat Universities across Thailand's five geographical regions during December 2024–January 2025. Of 653 distributed questionnaires, 558 were returned (85.45% response rate), with 547 deemed valid after screening for completeness, quality criteria adherence, and multivariate outlier tests, yielding an effective response rate of 83.77%.

Data Analysis and Statistics Used

Data analysis and statistical methods involved a rigorous multivariate approach. Initially, multivariate outlier detection using Mahalanobis distance identified 11 outlier cases, which were subsequently removed from the analysis. A reliability assessment of the empirical data was conducted, with results meeting predetermined criteria. Preliminary assumption testing confirmed the normality of distribution, homoscedasticity, and linearity between variables, all of which conformed to established standards. Multicollinearity diagnostics revealed no significant concerns. Construct validity was examined through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), followed by an assessment of convergent validity, with results satisfying standard threshold criteria. Discriminant validity was confirmed as the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded squared inter–construct correlations. Subsequently, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed for hypothesis testing. The statistical analyses

encompassed descriptive statistics (including frequency, percentage, and standard deviation) and SEM to examine the hypothesized relationships among latent constructs.

Research Results

Table 1 Presents the results of reliability analysis and convergent validity (n=547)

Latent Variables	α	AVE	CR
Social Influence (SCI)	0.910	0.668	0.909
Fear of Missing Out (FMO)	0.932	0.779	0.946
Perceived Usefulness (PCU)	0.939	0.764	0.942
Subjective Norms (SJN)	0.928	0.714	0.926
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	0.884	0.549	0.855
Brand Trust (BRT)	0.953	0.797	0.952
Attitude (ATT)	0.927	0.731	0.932
Behavioral Intention (BHI)	0.904	0.637	0.896

The reliability analysis revealed that the research instrument met the established criteria, with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient values of 0.7 or higher. Furthermore, the convergent validity assessment demonstrated that the instrument fulfilled the standard requirements, with average variance extracted (AVE) values of 0.5 or higher and construct reliability (CR) values of 0.7 or higher, as recommended by Hair, Babin, Anderson, and Black (2019). All analytical results are presented in Table 1.

The sample primarily consisted of undergraduate students, with the largest group (n=123, 22.5%) enrolled at institutions within the Rajabhat University Northeastern Group. Females were the majority of respondents (n=402, 73.49%), and first-year students represented the predominant academic cohort (n=367, 67.09%). Most participants reported receiving parental/guardian financial support below 10,000 Baht (n=418, 76.42%). iPhone was the most common smartphone brand among participants (n=316, 57.77%), with a majority reporting smartphone replacement cycles exceeding three years (n=299, 54.66%). The mean age of participants was 19.71 years.

Research findings indicate that undergraduate students from Rajabhat Universities in Thailand reported moderate levels of social influence ($\bar{X}$=3.498), fear of missing out ($\bar{X}$=3.190), subjective norms ($\bar{X}$=3.157), brand trust ($\bar{X}$=3.437), attitude ($\bar{X}$=3.383), and behavioral intention ($\bar{X}$=3.166) in their

new smartphone purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, perceived usefulness ($\bar{x}$=3.539) and perceived behavioral control ($\bar{x}$=3.839) were reported at high levels.

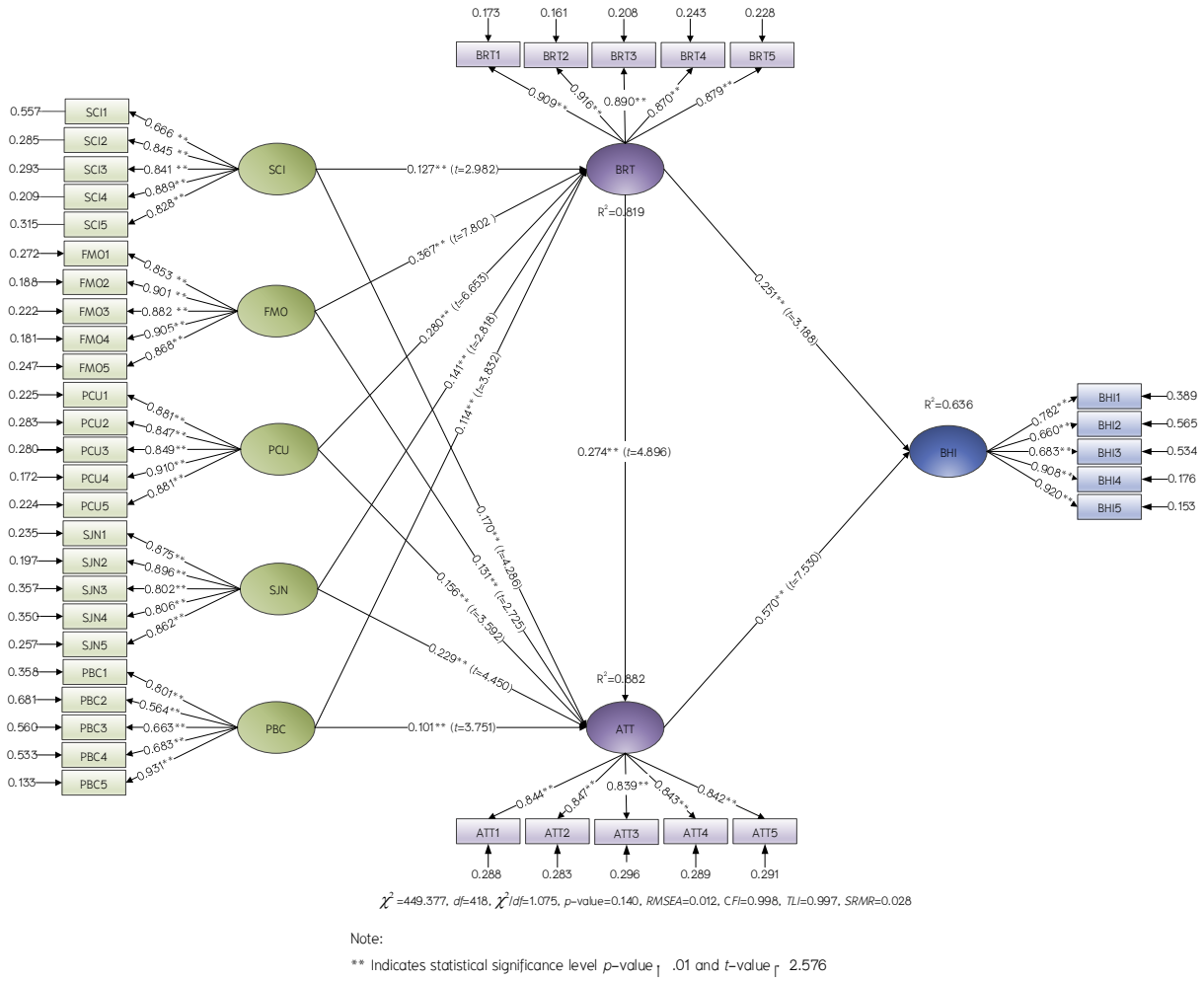

Figure 2 illustrates the results of hypothesis testing through structural equation modeling analysis

Objective 1: The findings indicate that FOMO (γ=0.367), perceived usefulness (γ=0.280), subjective norms (γ=0.141), social influence (γ=0.127), and perceived behavioral control (γ=0.114) have statistically significant positive direct effects (p<.01) on brand trust, ordered by path coefficient values.

Objective 2: Brand trust (β=0.274), subjective norms (γ=0.229), social influence (γ=0.170), perceived usefulness (γ=0.156), FOMO (γ=0.131), and perceived behavioral control (γ=0.101) exhibit statistically significant positive direct effects (p<.01) on attitude, ordered by path coefficient values.

Objective 3: Attitude (β=0.570) and brand trust (β=0.251) show statistically significant positive direct effects (p<.01) on behavioral intention, ordered by path coefficient values.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis revealed that the combined factors of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), perceived usefulness, subjective norms, social influence, and perceived behavioral control collectively accounted for 81.90% of the variance in brand trust. Furthermore, FOMO, perceived usefulness, subjective norms, social influence, perceived behavioral control, and brand trust jointly explained 88.20% of the variance in attitude. Additionally, brand trust and attitude together explained 63.60% of the variance in behavioral intention.

Discussion

The results from the first objective revealed that FOMO (γ=0.367) had the highest positive effect on brand trust, consistent with the research of Lim et al. (2023), followed by perceived usefulness (γ=0.280), aligning with Lestari et al. (2024), subjective norms (γ=0.141), consistent with Kuswati and Sholahuddin (2025), social influence (γ=0.127), following Sobaih et al. (2025), and perceived behavioral control (γ=0.114), consistent with Kuswati and Sholahuddin (2025), respectively. These findings reflect that, in the context of undergraduate students at Rajabhat Universities in Thailand, FOMO has the strongest influence on brand trust for new smartphones, as students are concerned about missing out on the latest technology. Meanwhile, the perceived usefulness of smartphones for education and daily life is also significant. Factors such as influences from friends, family, and society (subjective norms and social influence), along with self–confidence in one's technological abilities, impact brand trust. This aligns with TPB, which explains that purchasing decisions are influenced by attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control.

The results from the second objective revealed that brand trust had the strongest positive effect on attitudes (β=0.274), consistent with Wang et al. (2024), followed by subjective norms (γ=0.229), aligning with Wang et al. (2024), social influence (γ=0.170), in line with Anubhav et al. (2025), perceived usefulness (γ=0.156), consistent with Lee et al. (2025), FOMO (γ=0.131), congruent with Li (2024), and perceived behavioral control (γ=0.101), corresponding to Fawehinmi et al. (2024), respectively. These relationships indicate that undergraduate students at Rajabhat Universities in

Thailand prioritize brand credibility as the primary factor in developing positive attitudes, with reference groups and social environment also playing significant roles. This aligns with the TPB, which emphasizes that attitudes stem from personal beliefs, social influences, and behavioral control. Students in Rajabhat University contexts often come from local communities where social relationships are valued and are notably influenced by normative factors and social influences when forming attitudes toward purchasing new smartphones.

Research findings for the third objective indicate that attitude had a statistically significant positive direct effect on behavioral intention (β=0.570), consistent with Zhu and Wei (2025), while brand trust also had a statistically significant positive direct effect on behavioral intention (β=0.251), consistent with Ali Abumalloh et al. (2025). The findings reflect that in the context of undergraduate students at Rajabhat Universities, positive feelings toward and evaluation of products strongly influence the behavioral intention to purchase new smartphones, which aligns with the TPB that identifies attitude as a key factor affecting behavioral intention. Meanwhile, trust in brand reliability also stimulates purchase intention but has less influence.

New Knowledge and Contribution

The conceptual framework and research findings present new knowledge that expands the explanatory scope of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) regarding social dynamics in the digital age and consumer behavior.

This research expands TPB by integrating modern social factors (social influence and FOMO) into its traditional structure, providing more comprehensive explanations of consumer behavior in the digital age. The distinction between subjective norms and social influence, along with FOMO as an emotional variable, extends the theory beyond rational decision–making to include complex social and emotional dimensions. Brand trust as a mediating variable clarifies relationships between independent variables and behavioral intention to purchase.

The research introduces important theoretical propositions: A digitally–driven social factors model, a trust–integrated TPB framework, and connections between TPB and technology acceptance concepts. These innovations enhance the theory's ability to explain smartphone purchasing behavior among Gen Z consumers and the complex psychology of technology upgrading beyond first–time

purchases. These developments reflect TPB's adaptation to modern digital social contexts and sophisticated consumer behaviors.

In summary, this research extends TPB by incorporating digital social factors, trust dimensions, and technological elements, enhancing its relevance and explanatory power for consumer behavior in the digital era.

Conclusion

Research findings indicate that the majority of undergraduate students at Rajabhat Universities are female, predominantly first–year students with an average age of 19.71 years, receiving financial support from guardians below 10,000 baht, and primarily using iPhone smartphones. The research results demonstrate a causal relationship where Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) exerts the strongest direct influence on brand trust, followed by perceived usefulness, subjective norms, social influence, and perceived behavioral control. Subsequently, brand trust has the most significant influence on attitude, and ultimately, attitude has the strongest direct impact on behavioral intention, followed by brand trust.

Suggestions and Recommendations

From the research findings, the researchers propose the following recommendations:

Practical Implications

For Students: Students should recognize the impact of FOMO and social pressure on their smartphone purchasing decisions. They should develop the habit of critically assessing the true necessity and benefits of a new smartphone rather than acting impulsively. Financial planning is essential, taking into account their budget and the long–term value of the purchase. Comparing different models, avoiding being swayed by trends or peer influence, and selecting smartphones with features that align with their academic and daily needs will be beneficial. The latest or most expensive model is not always required for effective functionality.

For Parents: Parents should actively guide and support students in making informed smartphone purchasing decisions by helping them recognize the influence of FOMO and social pressure. Engaging in open conversations about financial management, prioritizing expenses, and distinguishing between wants and needs is essential. Parents may consider helping students create savings plans for

purchasing a suitable smartphone or offering partial financial support with reasonable conditions, such as maintaining good grades or contributing a portion of the cost. This approach promotes long–term financial responsibility and decision–making skills in students.

For Universities: Rajabhat Universities should recognize how FOMO and perceived usefulness influence students' smartphone purchasing decisions. They should create educational programs on smart technology use and value assessment, including workshops on using smartphones for educational efficiency, evaluating purchase necessity, and student financial management. Universities could also partner with smartphone manufacturers for educational discount programs, making appropriate technology more accessible at reasonable prices.

For Marketers: Research shows that FOMO is a key driver of students' intentions to purchase new smartphones. Marketers should capitalize on this by designing campaigns that emphasize exclusive experiences offered by newer models. Effective strategies include highlighting unique features of new releases, organizing limited–edition launch events, and creating time–limited promotions for students. These efforts should be paired with clear messaging about the practical benefits (perceived usefulness) of smartphones, addressing students' academic needs and lifestyle preferences. Marketing content should be delivered through social media platforms that students frequently use.

Recommendation for Future Research

1. Variables and theory: Investigate additional variables such as "social identity expression" and "value congruence" by integrating TAM with consumer Culture theory to understand the cultural dimensions influencing smartphone purchasing decisions.

2. Context: Compare Rajabhat University students with those from other institutions (public/private universities) to analyze how socioeconomic factors affect the relative importance of predictor variables.

3. Social media platforms: Examine the influence of specific platforms (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) on FOMO and social influence using social media engagement theory to understand the mechanisms making FOMO the most influential factor.

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