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Determinants of Consumers' Behavioral Intention to Purchase Seafood Online: A UTAUT-Based Analysis in Surigao Del Sur, **Philippines**

Marinel E. Josol¹, Jeonel S. Lumbab²

¹North Eastern Mindanao State University

²Cebu Technological University

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) constructs—Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions—on consumers' behavioral intention to purchase seafood products through digital platforms in Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Employing a descriptive-correlational quantitative design, data were collected from 100 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. A validated questionnaire measured perceptions of each UTAUT construct and behavioral intention using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression were utilized for data analysis. Results revealed that all UTAUT constructs were positively perceived by respondents, indicating favorable attitudes toward digital seafood marketing. Correlation analysis showed strong interrelationships among constructs, with Performance Expectancy exhibiting the highest and most significant association with Behavioral Intention (r = 0.7169, p < 0.01). Regression analysis further identified Performance Expectancy ($\beta = 0.4013$, p = 0.002) and Facilitating Conditions ($\beta = 0.4559$, p = 0.003) as significant predictors of Behavioral Intention, whereas Effort Expectancy and Social Influence showed moderate yet non-significant effects. These findings suggest that consumers' online seafood purchasing intentions are primarily driven by perceived usefulness and enabling infrastructure rather than ease of use or social persuasion. The study affirms the applicability of the UTAUT model in the digital seafood market context and underscores the importance of improving technological support, platform performance, and consumer trust to enhance adoption in emerging rural economies.

Keywords: UTAUT, behavioral intention, digital seafood marketing, technology adoption, Surigao del Sur

INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of commerce has significantly transformed consumer purchasing patterns, particularly within the food and fisheries sectors where efficiency, traceability, and accessibility are increasingly valued (Kaur & Bhatt, 2022). In the Philippines, digital platforms have emerged as key enablers for connecting seafood producers with consumers, yet their adoption remains uneven across coastal communities such as Surigao del Sur. Despite being a resource-rich province with vibrant aquaculture activities, the region exhibits limited engagement in digital seafood marketing due to infrastructural, social, and behavioral constraints. Understanding these behavioral determinants is essential for supporting inclusive economic participation in local seafood trade. Guided by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), this study explores how perceived usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and facilitating conditions shape consumers' behavioral intention to purchase seafood online—a context where empirical insights remain scarce (Abdullah et al., 2023).

Recent studies applying the UTAUT framework to digital commerce highlight that Performance Expectancy consistently emerges as the strongest predictor of consumer technology adoption, followed by Facilitating Conditions that ensure resource availability and accessibility (Sharma et al., 2022; Rahim et al., 2022). However, the predictive roles of Effort Expectancy and Social Influence vary depending on technological familiarity and cultural context (Hong et al., 2021; Nair & Das, 2023). In online food retail, factors such as product freshness,



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perceived risk, and delivery reliability further complicate adoption behaviors, particularly in perishable goods markets like seafood (Pham et al., 2023; Dissanayake et al., 2024). While these studies confirm UTAUT's relevance in e-commerce, there remains limited evidence on its applicability to semi-rural and coastal markets where digital readiness and consumer trust are still developing—creating a critical gap in understanding the drivers of online seafood purchasing behavior.

Although UTAUT has been extensively validated in general e-commerce contexts, few studies have tested its explanatory power in the digital seafood sector, especially within developing economies. The behavioral mechanisms driving online seafood purchasing remain poorly understood, with limited consideration for localized challenges such as digital literacy, infrastructural barriers, and perceptions of product authenticity. This lack of empirical evidence constrains both theoretical refinement and strategic policy development aimed at enhancing digital inclusion in seafood trade. Therefore, a focused analysis of UTAUT constructs in this setting is necessary to illuminate the key factors shaping consumer intention and to inform sustainable digital market integration in coastal regions like Surigao del Sur.

This study aims to examine the influence of UTAUT constructs—Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions—on consumers' behavioral intention to purchase seafood products through digital platforms in Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to describe consumers' perceptions of each construct, determine the relationships among them, and identify which constructs significantly predict behavioral intention. By integrating statistical analysis within a descriptive-correlational design, the study endeavors to deepen theoretical understanding of digital consumer behavior and provide practical insights for strengthening online seafood marketing systems in emerging market contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance Expectancy (PE)

Performance Expectancy (PE), defined as the degree to which individuals perceive that using a system enhances their performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003), consistently emerges as the strongest determinant of behavioral intention in e-commerce adoption. Numerous studies confirm that consumers' belief in the usefulness and efficiency of digital platforms drives online purchasing intention across industries (Al-Qudah et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2022; Nair & Das, 2023). Within the food and grocery sector, PE significantly predicts online buying behavior by reducing perceived transaction risk and enhancing convenience, information accessibility, and satisfaction (Lee et al., 2022; Pham et al., 2023). Abdullah et al. (2023) further highlight that technological infrastructure moderates this effect in developing markets, suggesting that when digital tools demonstrate tangible value—such as faster service or better product traceability—consumers' adoption likelihood increases. Consequently, in the context of online seafood marketing, where freshness and delivery reliability are crucial, the perceived performance benefits of digital systems may serve as the primary driver of behavioral intention.

Effort Expectancy (EE)

Effort Expectancy (EE), or perceived ease of use, reflects consumers' assessment of how effortless and intuitive a technology is to navigate (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Empirical evidence reveals that EE initially exerts a strong influence on behavioral intention, particularly among first-time or low-literacy users, but its importance diminishes as consumers gain familiarity with digital interfaces (Hong et al., 2021; Nair & Das, 2023). Studies in e-commerce and mobile payment adoption demonstrate that simplicity of design, clear navigation, and accessible user interfaces enhance trust and willingness to transact online (Rahim et al., 2022; Al-Qudah et al., 2021). However, in mature digital environments, perceived usefulness often overrides ease of use, indicating a shift from usability-driven to performance-driven motivation (Sharma et al., 2022). In developing economies or rural contexts—such as the Philippine seafood sector—where technological exposure varies, EE remains pivotal in shaping users' confidence and engagement, particularly when consumers transition from traditional to digital purchasing channels.





Social Influence (SI)

Social Influence (SI), conceptualized as the perceived pressure from significant others to adopt a technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003), plays a dynamic role in shaping online consumer behavior. Earlier studies emphasize its significance in initial adoption phases, where peer norms and family encouragement strongly affect technology acceptance (Hong et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2023). However, recent findings indicate a declining influence of SI as consumers internalize digital norms and shift toward self-directed, utilitarian motivations (Nair & Das, 2023; Abdullah et al., 2023). In collectivist cultures, including the Philippines, social endorsement and community-based influence can still facilitate digital adoption through social media interactions and online reviews (Lee et al., 2022; Rahim et al., 2022). Yet, as e-commerce matures, digital trust and perceived platform reliability increasingly mediate the relationship between SI and behavioral intention. Hence, in online seafood purchasing—where quality assurance and product authenticity are paramount—social persuasion may support awareness but not necessarily translate into sustained behavioral intention without functional value reinforcement.

Facilitating Conditions (FC)

Facilitating Conditions (FC) denote the extent to which individuals perceive the existence of supportive infrastructure and technical resources enabling technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Studies across digital commerce consistently demonstrate that adequate access to internet connectivity, secure payment systems, and responsive customer support significantly enhance adoption and usage intentions (Rahim et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2023). Particularly in developing contexts, FC serve as critical enablers bridging the gap between intention and actual use (Nair & Das, 2023). Lee et al. (2022) further argue that perceived infrastructural stability moderates consumers' trust and perceived risk, underscoring that even high perceived usefulness cannot drive adoption without supportive conditions. For online seafood marketing, where logistical reliability and digital payment assurance are key, FC influence consumers' confidence in the transaction process, thereby strengthening behavioral intention and sustaining long-term platform engagement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to examine the influence of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) constructs—Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions—on consumers' behavioral intention to purchase seafood products through digital platforms. The design was deemed appropriate because it allowed the systematic description of consumer perceptions and the statistical assessment of relationships among the constructs without experimental manipulation. This approach is widely recognized in technology adoption research for establishing empirical relationships among latent behavioral variables.

Research Locale

The research was conducted in Surigao del Sur, a coastal province in the Caraga Region, Mindanao, Philippines. The province encompasses both urban and rural communities that actively engage in aquaculture, fish drying, and small-scale seafood value-adding. Despite this rich resource base, the penetration of digital marketing in seafood trade remains limited, making the province a suitable context for assessing the behavioral drivers and constraints of consumers' online seafood purchasing decisions.

Participants and Samplin

A total of 100 respondents participated in the study, representing consumers residing in various municipalities of Surigao del Sur. The participants were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportionate representation of different demographic groups such as age, gender, and location. Inclusion criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old, have experience purchasing seafood products, and possess awareness or access to digital marketing platforms. Those who did not meet these criteria or who declined to



participate were excluded. All respondents were informed about the study's purpose and confidentiality measures, and their participation was voluntary.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the theoretical framework of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). The instrument consisted of four major components corresponding to the key constructs: (1) Performance Expectancy, which assessed the perceived usefulness and efficiency of digital seafood marketing tools; (2) Effort Expectancy, which evaluated the perceived ease of use of online purchasing platforms; (3) Social Influence and Facilitating Conditions, which measured the impact of social pressure, peer recommendations, resource availability, and technological access; and (4) Behavioral Intention, which captured the likelihood of consumers to purchase seafood products online. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The questionnaire underwent expert validation by specialists in marketing, technology management, and statistics to ensure construct validity and content clarity. A pilot test was conducted among a sample of 20 consumers not included in the main study, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.94, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period using both online surveys and face-to-face interviews to accommodate respondents with varying levels of internet access. Ethical clearance was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of data collection. Participants were provided with an informed consent form detailing the study's objectives, confidentiality safeguards, and voluntary nature of participation. Online questionnaires were distributed through social media platforms and email, while field data were gathered in local markets and community centers. Completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and accuracy before being encoded for analysis. All responses were anonymized, securely stored, and used solely for research purposes.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive measures such as the mean and standard deviation were computed to summarize respondents' perceptions of each UTAUT construct. Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables, while multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to identify which UTAUT constructs significantly predicted Behavioral Intention. A 0.05 level of significance was used to determine statistical validity. All computations were carried out using SPSS statistical software, ensuring precision, reproducibility, and methodological rigor.

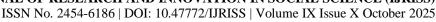
Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Approval was secured from the university's Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Participants were fully informed about the study's nature, objectives, and their rights as respondents, including the freedom to withdraw at any time. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were treated as confidential. The researcher ensured that all ethical protocols were strictly followed to maintain the integrity and ethical soundness of the study.

RESULTS

Influence of UTAUT Constructs on Digital Seafood Marketing

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the UTAUT constructs influencing buyers' perceptions of purchasing seafood online. All constructs yielded mean scores ranging from 3.63 to 3.66, corresponding to the





qualitative interpretation of Agree. This indicates that respondents generally hold positive perceptions toward digital seafood marketing platforms.

Among the constructs, Performance Expectancy registered the highest average weighted mean (3.66), suggesting that consumers perceive digital platforms as effective tools for improving purchasing convenience, efficiency, and product comparison. Effort Expectancy (3.64) and Social Influence (3.65) followed closely, signifying that consumers find digital seafood applications user-friendly and that social networks moderately shape their online purchasing behavior. Facilitating Conditions (3.63) also showed an affirmative rating, implying that most consumers possess the necessary resources (e.g., internet access, devices, and secure payment options) to engage in online seafood transactions.

Table 1The Influence of UTAUT Constructs on Digital Seafood Marketing

Performance Expectancy	Mean	SD (o)	Interpretation
Using digital platforms makes it easier for me to buy seafood products online.	3.74	1.0738	Agree
Digital marketing helps me find better seafood options than traditional markets.	3.59	0.9185	Agree
I believe that digital seafood platforms save me time and effort.	3.77	0.8931	Agree
Online seafood platforms improve my overall shopping efficiency.	3.68	0.8358	Agree
Digital seafood marketing enhances my ability to compare and select products.	3.5	0.9233	Agree
Avarage weighed Mean	3.66		Agree
Effort Expectancy			
Learning how to buy seafood online is easy for me.	3.65	0.8881	Agree
The process of purchasing seafood on digital platforms is clear and understandable.	3.65	0.8881	Agree
I find digital seafood platforms user-friendly.	3.69	0.9565	Agree
I feel comfortable using digital apps or websites for seafood purchases.	3.48	0.8899	Agree
I do not need assistance when shopping for seafood online.	3.72	0.8616	Agree
Avarage weighed Mean	3.64		Agree
Social Influence			
People close to me think I should try buying seafood online.	3.54	0.9437	Agree
I feel influenced by social media content related to seafood products.	3.68	1.0191	Agree
Recommendations from friends or influencers affect my seafood purchase decisions.	3.63	0.9871	Agree
I often buy seafood based on online reviews or ratings.	3.82	0.9633	Agree



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I believe that many people around me are already buying seafood online.	3.54	0.9542	Agree
Avarage weighed Mean	3.65		Agree
Facilitating Conditions			
I have the necessary internet access to shop for seafood online.	3.62	0.9365	Agree
I own a device (smartphone, computer) suitable for online seafood shopping.	3.89	0.8591	Agree
There are enough secure payment options for buying seafood online.	3.63	0.8213	Agree
I feel supported when I encounter issues with seafood e-commerce platforms.		0.8778	Agree
I am confident that local online seafood sellers provide reliable service.	3.56	0.9101	Agree
Avarage weighed Mean	3.63		Agree

Level of Behavioral Intention to Purchase Seafood Online

Table 2 shows the mean scores for behavioral intention indicators. The overall weighted mean of 3.27 indicates a general tendency toward agreement, suggesting a moderate inclination among respondents to engage in or continue purchasing seafood online. While most respondents expressed neutrality toward future engagement ("I intend to continue buying seafood products..." M = 3.19, SD = 0.98), some displayed stronger behavioral intentions, particularly in prioritizing online options when available ("I will likely prioritize buying seafood online..." M = 3.46, SD = 0.97).

Table 2 Mean ratings for Behavioral Intention

Indicators	Mean	SD (\sigma)	Interpretation
I intend to continue buying seafood products through digital platforms in the future.	3.19	0.9769	Neutral
I am likely to recommend buying seafood online to others.	3.29	0.9522	Neutral
I prefer online seafood shopping over traditional methods.	3.10	0.9540	Neutral
I will likely prioritize buying seafood online when the option is available.	3.46	0.9749	Agree
I plan to increase my use of digital platforms for seafood purchases in the near future.	3.31	1.0074	Neutral
Overall weighed Mean Interpretation	3.27	Agree	

Correlations among UTAUT Constructs and Behavioral Intention

Table 3 summarizes the Pearson correlation results between UTAUT constructs and behavioral intention. Performance Expectancy exhibited a strong positive and significant correlation with Behavioral Intention (r = 0.7169, p < 0.01), indicating that perceived usefulness is closely linked to consumers' intention to purchase seafood online. Conversely, Effort Expectancy (r = 0.6901, p = 0.133), Social Influence (r = 0.579, p = 0.226), and Facilitating Conditions (r = 0.6852, p = 0.267) showed moderate but statistically non-significant correlations with Behavioral Intention.





Strong interrelationships were also observed among the constructs themselves—for instance, between Social Influence and Facilitating Conditions (r = 0.8398, p < 0.01)—indicating conceptual interdependence within the UTAUT framework.

Table 3 Correlation between each UTAUT construct and Behavioral Intention

Relationship		Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation			
Performance Expectancy vs	Effort Expectancy	0.8043	0	Significant strong positive correlation			
Expectancy vs	Social Influence	0.6046	0.002	Significant moderate positive correlation			
	Facilitating Conditions	0.6822	0.004	Significant moderate positive correlation			
	Behavioral Intention	0.7169	0	Significant strong positive correlation			
Effort Expectancy vs	Social Influence	0.7688	0	Significant strong positive correlation			
	Facilitating Conditions	0.7434	0	Significant strong positive correlation			
	Behavioral Intention	0.6901	0.133	Not significant despite moderate correlation			
Social Influence vs	Facilitating Conditions	0.8398	0	Significant very strong positive correlation			
	Behavioral Intention	0.579	0.226	Not significant despite moderate correlation			
Facilitating Conditions vs	Behavioral Intention	0.6852	0.267	Not significant despite moderate correlation			

Predictive Influence of UTAUT Constructs on Behavioral Intention

Regression analysis results (Table 4) reveal that only Performance Expectancy (β = 0.4013, p = 0.002) and Facilitating Conditions (β = 0.4559, p = 0.003) significantly predict Behavioral Intention. These findings suggest that consumers' perceptions of usefulness and the presence of enabling infrastructure (e.g., reliable internet, secure transactions) are primary drivers of intention to buy seafood through digital platforms. Effort Expectancy (β = 0.2329, p = 0.132) and Social Influence (β = -0.1304, p = 0.341) were not significant predictors.

Table 4 Predictive influence of UTAUT constructs on Behavioral Intention)

Construct	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Value	p-Value	Interpretation
Intercept	-0.2305	0.3007	-0.767	0.445	Not significant
Performance Expectancy	0.4013	0.1280	3.136	0.002	Significant positive effect
Effort Expectancy	0.2329	0.1535	1.518	0.132	Not significant
Social Influence	-0.1304	0.1363	-0.957	0.341	Not significant
Facilitating Conditions	0.4559	0.1512	3.016	0.003	Significant positive effect

DISCUSSION

The study findings reveal that Performance Expectancy and Facilitating Conditions play pivotal roles in shaping consumers' behavioral intentions to purchase seafood online. These results align with recent research emphasizing that perceived usefulness remains the most influential determinant of technology adoption. For



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instance, Al-Qudah et al. (2021) and Sharma et al. (2022) found that consumers' belief in the efficiency and performance benefits of online platforms directly impacts purchase intentions across various e-commerce sectors.

Similarly, Facilitating Conditions emerged as a strong determinant, underscoring the need for adequate infrastructure, such as reliable internet connectivity, secure payment systems, and technical support. Abdullah et al. (2023) and Rahim et al. (2022) confirmed that access to stable technological resources significantly enhances user adoption and continued engagement with digital platforms, particularly in emerging markets.

Conversely, Effort Expectancy and Social Influence did not significantly predict behavioral intention in this study, despite showing moderate correlations. This is consistent with findings by Nair and Das (2023) and Hong et al. (2021), who observed that as digital literacy improves, the influence of perceived effort diminishes, and social factors become less critical once digital adoption becomes normative.

The moderate mean behavioral intention (3.27) suggests cautious optimism toward digital seafood purchasing, potentially constrained by perceived product freshness, trust in online sellers, and delivery logistics. Pham et al. (2023) and Lee et al. (2022) similarly highlighted that product tangibility and quality assurance remain barriers in online food commerce, despite consumers recognizing the efficiency of digital transactions.

From a managerial standpoint, enhancing platform performance (e.g., faster transactions, transparent product sourcing, freshness guarantees) and strengthening facilitating conditions (e.g., payment security, after-sales support) could elevate consumer confidence and conversion rates.

In summary, the results support the UTAUT framework's applicability to digital seafood marketing. Performance Expectancy and Facilitating Conditions emerge as crucial drivers of behavioral intention, while Effort Expectancy and Social Influence show limited influence. The findings emphasize the need for practical improvements in digital infrastructure and platform performance to foster stronger consumer engagement and behavioral intention toward online seafood purchasing.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's primary limitation lies in its cross-sectional design, which restricts causal inference. Additionally, the data were collected from a specific market context, potentially limiting generalizability. Future research may employ longitudinal or experimental designs to validate causality and expand the analysis to cross-cultural settings. Incorporating additional variables such as trust, perceived risk, or hedonic motivation could also refine the UTAUT model's predictive power in food-related e-commerce.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model provides a robust framework for understanding the behavioral intentions of consumers toward purchasing seafood products through digital platforms. Among the UTAUT constructs examined, Performance Expectancy and Facilitating Conditions were found to exert statistically significant positive influences on behavioral intention, underscoring the importance of perceived usefulness and adequate technological support in shaping consumers' online purchasing decisions. While Effort Expectancy and Social Influence demonstrated moderate correlations with behavioral intention, their effects were not statistically significant in the regression model, suggesting that consumers may prioritize the functional advantages of digital platforms over social persuasion or ease of use in this context. Overall, the findings highlight that consumers' intention to engage in online seafood shopping is moderately positive, driven primarily by efficiency, convenience, and access to reliable technological infrastructure. These results align with recent empirical evidence emphasizing the evolving digital readiness of food consumers and contribute to the theoretical advancement of technology acceptance research within niche e-commerce sectors such as online seafood marketing.





RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, it is recommended that seafood marketers and digital platform developers focus on enhancing the performance value of online seafood systems by improving product search efficiency, delivery reliability, and user confidence in product quality. Strengthening facilitating conditions—such as providing secure payment systems, responsive customer support, and accessible digital literacy programs—may further encourage adoption. Policymakers should consider supporting digital infrastructure initiatives that empower local seafood producers to integrate into online markets, thereby expanding economic participation. From an educational standpoint, awareness campaigns could promote consumer trust and highlight the benefits of digital seafood commerce. For future research, it is advisable to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to assess causal relationships and explore additional moderating factors such as trust, price sensitivity, and perceived risk. Extending the model to cross-cultural or regional comparative contexts may also provide valuable insights. In sum, this study contributes to the growing discourse on digital consumer behavior by elucidating the mechanisms driving technology adoption in the seafood industry, offering both theoretical enrichment and actionable guidance for sustainable digital market development.

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