

The Role of Trust and Credibility in the Performance of Bancassurance Products in Commercial Banks: Evidence from Makueni County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Trust and credibility are important considerations in financial services where customers must rely on institutions to fulfil contractual obligations whose benefits may only be realized in the future. This study examined the relationship between trust and credibility and the performance of bancassurance products among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study adopted a descriptive-explanatory research design. Primary data were collected from 424 respondents comprising commercial bank customers and employees using structured questionnaires. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between trust and credibility and bancassurance performance ($r = .780$, $p < .01$). Multiple regression analysis further showed that trust and credibility had a positive and statistically significant association with bancassurance performance ($\beta = .312$, $p = .047$), indicating that trust remained an important predictor after accounting for other antecedents included in the broader analytical model. The findings suggest that customers' confidence in the reliability, integrity, transparency, and professionalism of institutions involved in bancassurance is closely associated with favourable bancassurance outcomes. The study concludes that institutional trust and credibility constitute important dimensions of bancassurance performance in rural financial markets. Commercial banks and their insurance partners should therefore strengthen transparent communication, employee professionalism, customer support, and coordination in claims-related processes to enhance institutional credibility and customer confidence. The study contributes empirical evidence from a rural Kenyan setting and extends understanding of the role of institutional trust in bancassurance performance.

Keywords: Trust; Credibility; Bancassurance; Bancassurance Performance; Commercial Banks.

INTRODUCTION

Bancassurance has emerged as an important channel for distributing insurance products by integrating insurance services with the established customer networks, infrastructure, and financial relationships of commercial banks [14]. The model involves collaboration between banks and insurance companies to market and distribute insurance products, allowing customers to access insurance through institutions with which they already maintain financial relationships [5] [10]. In Kenya, bancassurance operates within a regulated framework intended to facilitate the distribution and wider penetration of insurance services through banks and other financial institutions. The model therefore offers commercial banks opportunities for revenue diversification while enabling insurers to extend their market reach beyond conventional agency and brokerage channels [7]. Despite these advantages, the performance of insurance products distributed through banking channels depends not only on product availability and distribution infrastructure but also on customers' confidence in the institutions involved [7]. Insurance is characterized by uncertainty, information asymmetry, and delayed realization of benefits because customers pay premiums in exchange for protection against uncertain future

events. Unlike tangible financial transactions in which customers can immediately observe the outcome, the value of insurance is often realized only when a covered event occurs and a claim is submitted. Consequently, customers must have confidence that the institution distributing the product is competent, transparent, reliable, and committed to honouring its obligations. Trust is therefore particularly important in shaping customers' willingness to engage with insurance providers and sustain insurance relationships [4] [8].

Empirical evidence supports the importance of trust in insurance decisions. Evidence from Kenya indicates that limited trust can significantly constrain insurance demand, with individuals exhibiting lower levels of trust showing lower willingness to purchase indemnity insurance. The same evidence suggests that perceptions regarding the credibility of insurance payouts are important in explaining customers' decisions to obtain coverage. Trust is consequently not merely an interpersonal characteristic but an important institutional mechanism through which customers evaluate uncertainty and perceived risk in financial services [9].

The relevance of trust is particularly pronounced in bancassurance because customers may transfer perceptions of their banking institution to insurance products offered through the same channel. Commercial banks typically maintain more frequent and longer-term interactions with customers through savings, payments, credit, and other financial services. Existing Kenyan evidence has suggested that customers' trust in banks can facilitate the uptake of insurance products when insurance is offered through banking channels. However, such institutional trust cannot be assumed to automatically extend to insurance. Customers may question the credibility of insurance partners, the transparency of policy conditions, the professionalism of bank employees, or the extent to which the bank will support them when claims arise [18].

These concerns are important within the Kenyan insurance market, where insurance penetration has historically remained relatively low despite the expansion of financial services and alternative insurance distribution channels. Recent reporting based on Insurance Regulatory Authority data placed Kenya's insurance penetration at 2.4% in financial year 2024, illustrating the continuing challenge of expanding insurance participation [12]. Bancassurance provides an important mechanism for addressing this challenge because it allows insurers to leverage established banking relationships and branch and digital networks. However, the effectiveness of this channel depends partly on whether customers perceive the institutions involved as credible and trustworthy [17]. The issue becomes particularly relevant in rural markets such as Makueni County. The expansion of commercial banking services provides customers with increasing access to financial products, but the effectiveness of bancassurance depends on more than physical or digital access. Customers making insurance decisions must assess whether the bank and its insurance partner will provide accurate information, administer policies fairly, respond effectively to complaints, and honour legitimate claims. Where confidence in these processes is weak, customers may remain reluctant to purchase or renew insurance even when products are accessible. Conversely, confidence in the integrity and competence of the institutions involved can reduce perceived uncertainty and strengthen customers' willingness to engage with bancassurance services [9] [10].

Although previous studies have examined various determinants of insurance and bancassurance uptake, relatively limited empirical attention has been given to trust and credibility as a distinct determinant of bancassurance product performance in rural Kenyan banking markets. Existing Kenyan studies have examined bancassurance primarily in relation to distribution, adoption, financial determinants, and market penetration, while broader insurance research demonstrates that trust can influence insurance demand [7]. However, less is known about how customers' perceptions of institutional reliability, transparency, professional competence, and credibility relate specifically to the performance of bancassurance products within rural counties. This represents an important contextual issue because institutional relationships and perceptions of service providers may be particularly influential where customers have fewer opportunities to compare alternative financial service providers.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the role of trust and credibility in the performance of bancassurance products among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya. Trust and credibility are conceptualized in terms of customers' confidence in the authenticity of insurance products offered through banks, the credibility of insurance partners, fairness in claims handling, and the knowledge and transparency of bank employees. Bancassurance performance is considered in terms of customers' experiences and perceptions

of product uptake, satisfaction, renewal intentions, and service effectiveness. The study is guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior [1], which provides a useful framework for explaining how perceptions and evaluations of financial service providers can shape behavioural intentions and subsequent engagement with financial products. The study therefore sought to determine whether trust and credibility have a significant relationship with the performance of bancassurance products among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya. By focusing specifically on trust and credibility, the study contributes empirical evidence from a rural Kenyan context and provides practical insights for commercial banks, insurance companies, and regulators seeking to strengthen confidence in bancassurance as an insurance distribution channel.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical Foundation

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen [1], provides the principal theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between trust and bancassurance performance. The theory proposes that human behaviour is primarily preceded by behavioural intention, which is influenced by attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In financial-service contexts, these components are particularly relevant because customers often make decisions under conditions of uncertainty and incomplete information.

Applied to bancassurance, TPB suggests that customers' evaluations of insurance products and the institutions distributing them can shape their attitudes and behavioural intentions. Trust and credibility are particularly relevant because they influence how customers evaluate the risks associated with committing financial resources to a product whose benefits may only materialize in the future. When customers perceive a bank and its insurance partners as competent, honest and dependable, they may develop more favourable attitudes toward purchasing insurance through the banking channel. These favourable evaluations can strengthen intentions to purchase, renew, or recommend bancassurance products [20].

Trust may also influence the subjective and perceived-control components of behavioural decision-making. Customers are more likely to feel comfortable engaging with bancassurance when they believe that other people within their social environment regard the institution as reliable and when they believe that the institution will provide adequate support throughout the insurance relationship. Thus, institutional credibility can reduce perceived uncertainty and make the decision to engage with bancassurance more psychologically acceptable.

Recent empirical research provides support for the relevance of TPB to bancassurance. Weedige's study of 345 bank customers in Sri Lanka integrated TPB with the Technology Acceptance Model and found that trust in banks was a significant predictor within the bancassurance adoption model, while attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were also important determinants of adoption intentions. More recent evidence from Vietnam similarly demonstrates that trust has a stronger effect on bancassurance adoption intentions among customers than among organizational respondents, highlighting the importance of distinguishing customer perceptions from institutional assessments [20].

Nevertheless, TPB does not imply that financial decisions are determined exclusively by rational evaluation. Trust may incorporate customers' previous experiences, perceptions of institutional reputation, interpersonal interactions with bank employees, and expectations concerning claims settlement. Consequently, TPB is used in this study not as a complete explanation of every aspect of bancassurance behaviour, but as a framework for explaining how institutional evaluations can contribute to customers' behavioural responses toward bancassurance products.

Trust and Credibility in Bancassurance

Trust refers broadly to an individual's willingness to rely on another party based on expectations of competence, integrity, reliability and benevolent conduct. Credibility is closely related but emphasizes the perceived truthfulness, expertise and dependability of the institution or individual providing a service. In financial services,

these attributes are particularly important because customers often cannot fully evaluate service quality before entering into a contractual relationship [3] [11].

The relevance of trust is amplified in insurance because the customer purchases protection against an uncertain future event. The economic value of the product therefore depends partly on the customer's expectation that the insurer will honour the terms of the contract when the insured event occurs. Delays, unclear policy conditions, poor communication or previous negative claims experiences can consequently weaken confidence in the provider and discourage future participation [6].

Within bancassurance, trust has a multidimensional character because customers interact with two institutional actors: the bank and the insurance company. Customers may trust their bank because of an established relationship developed through savings, credit, payments and other financial services, but that trust may not automatically extend to the insurance company. The bank's reputation therefore creates an initial basis for confidence, while subsequent service experiences determine whether that confidence is sustained [3].

Kenyan evidence supports this institutional-transfer argument. Kiarie [13] study on bancassurance as an insurance penetration strategy found that bancassurance could attract new customers and retain existing ones partly because customers trusted banks and interacted with them more frequently than with traditional insurance intermediaries. Similarly, research on bancassurance performance in Kenya found that customer trust and convenience enhanced insurance-company performance, reinforcing the importance of trust within the banking-based distribution channel.

Trust is also closely connected to the quality of interactions between customers and bancassurance employees. Bank employees frequently serve as the immediate point of contact through which customers receive explanations concerning premiums, benefits, exclusions, claims procedures and policy conditions. Their competence and transparency can therefore strengthen credibility, whereas inaccurate information or aggressive selling can undermine confidence in both the bank and its insurance partner [11].

Recent empirical evidence from India supports this relationship. Amrutha and Santhi [2], examining customer experience with bancassurance among Indian commercial-bank customers, found that customer trust, reliability of the distribution channel, after-sales service and accuracy of the channel positively influenced customer experience.

Similarly, research among Indian bank customers has examined trust alongside customer satisfaction, perceived value, corporate reputation and service innovation as determinants of cross-buying intentions in bancassurance. These findings suggest that trust operates within a broader relational environment in which customers assess not only the insurance product itself but also the reputation and service capabilities of the institutions involved. Evidence from Indonesia further demonstrates the importance of trust in the bancassurance relationship. Bagasworo and Simatupang [6] examined factors influencing increased purchases of bancassurance products in Greater Jakarta and specifically considered trust in the insurance company and trust in the selling bank. This distinction is particularly relevant because bancassurance requires customers to navigate a relationship involving both a banking institution and an insurance provider.

The emerging literature therefore suggests that trust can influence bancassurance through several interconnected mechanisms: reducing perceived uncertainty, strengthening confidence in product providers, improving customers' evaluations of service interactions, and encouraging continued engagement with insurance products. However, much of the available evidence comes from urban or national-level studies in countries such as India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. There remains comparatively limited empirical evidence concerning how these trust mechanisms operate within rural Kenyan banking environments.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies increasingly demonstrate a positive relationship between customer trust and outcomes associated with bancassurance. In Kenya, research on bancassurance as a penetration strategy found that

customers' trust in banks was an important advantage of the banking distribution channel. The study reported that bancassurance helped insurance companies attract new customers, retain existing customers and strengthen customer trust because banks were institutions that customers interacted with frequently. This finding is relevant to the present study because it demonstrates the potential for existing banking relationships to facilitate acceptance of insurance products.

A study [15] of bancassurance in Kenya similarly examined how selected bancassurance aspects affect insurance-company performance. The study found that bancassurance offered considerable potential for expansion and identified customer trust and convenience among factors that enhanced performance. Although the study provides useful Kenyan evidence, its focus on managers' perceptions means that it does not directly establish how customers' own perceptions of trust relate to bancassurance performance.

International evidence provides additional support. Amrutha and Santhi (2024) found that customer trust positively influenced customer experience with bancassurance in India, alongside distribution-channel reliability, after-sales service and channel accuracy. Since positive customer experience can contribute to continued engagement with financial products, the finding provides evidence for the broader relational role of trust.

A study [6] of bancassurance customers in Greater Jakarta by Bagasworo and Simatupang examined the influence of trust in the insurance company and trust in the selling bank on increased purchases of bancassurance products. The study is particularly relevant because it treats trust in the bank and trust in the insurer as distinct dimensions, reflecting the dual institutional structure of bancassurance.

More recent research further strengthens the evidence. Weedige's [20] study of Sri Lankan bank customers found that trust in banks was a significant predictor of bancassurance adoption, with the model integrating trust, perceived value and behavioural factors within a TPB-based framework. A 2026 study similarly found that trust had a stronger effect on adoption intention among customers than among organizational respondents. This latter finding is particularly relevant to the methodological issue identified in the present study: customer perceptions and staff perceptions should not automatically be treated as equivalent [18].

Despite these findings, three limitations remain in the existing literature. First, much of the evidence focuses on adoption or purchase intention rather than broader bancassurance product performance. Second, much of the empirical evidence originates from Asian markets, with relatively limited evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. Third, Kenyan evidence has often focused on insurance-company performance, distribution strategies or managerial perceptions rather than directly examining the relationship between customers' trust and the performance of bancassurance products in rural counties.

The present study addresses these limitations by examining trust and credibility in relation to bancassurance performance among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya. The study therefore extends existing evidence by examining the relationship in a rural Kenyan context and by operationalizing trust and credibility through customers' perceptions of product authenticity, credibility of insurance partners, fairness of claims handling, and employee knowledge and transparency.

Hypothesis Development

The theoretical and empirical evidence indicates that trust and credibility can reduce uncertainty associated with insurance transactions and strengthen customers' confidence in institutions distributing financial protection products. In bancassurance, this confidence is particularly important because customers must rely on both the bank and its insurance partner to provide accurate information, administer policies appropriately and honour legitimate claims.

The Theory of Planned Behavior provides a theoretical explanation for this relationship by suggesting that favourable evaluations of a behavioural object can contribute to favourable behavioural intentions. When

customers perceive the bank and its insurance partners as credible and trustworthy, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward bancassurance and greater confidence in engaging with the products.

Empirical studies from Kenya, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and other emerging markets provide further evidence that trust is associated with bancassurance adoption, customer experience, purchasing behaviour and performance-related outcomes.

However, evidence specifically linking trust and credibility to bancassurance product performance in rural Kenya remains limited. The present study therefore tests the following hypothesis:

H₁: Trust and credibility have a positive and statistically significant effect on the performance of bancassurance products among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive-explanatory research design to examine the relationship between trust and credibility and the performance of bancassurance products among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya. The descriptive component enabled the study to capture respondents' perceptions of trust, credibility, and bancassurance performance, while the explanatory component facilitated statistical examination of the relationship between the study variables. The design was appropriate because the study sought to examine naturally occurring relationships without manipulating the study variables.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Makueni County, Kenya, a predominantly rural county in the eastern region of the country. The county has experienced expansion in commercial banking services and increasing access to diverse financial products, including insurance products distributed through bancassurance arrangements.

Makueni provided an appropriate setting for the study because it represents a rural financial-services environment in which customers' relationships with established financial institutions can influence their evaluation of relatively complex financial products. The study therefore sought to establish whether trust and credibility were associated with the performance of bancassurance products.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised commercial-bank customers and bank employees involved in or interacting with bancassurance services in Makueni County. The sampling framework distinguished between the customer and bank-staff populations. The customer population was estimated at approximately 10,000, while the bank employee's population was estimated to be approximately 200.

The customer sample size was determined using Yamane's formula at a 5% level of precision:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n represents the required sample size, N is the estimated customer population, and e is the level of precision.

Using a customer population of 10,000, the calculated sample was approximately 385 respondents. A 10% allowance for potential non-response increased the planned customer sample to 424 respondents. Customers were selected using stratified random sampling, with stratification based on geographical location and selected demographic characteristics.

Bank employees directly involved in bancassurance operations were selected purposively because of their knowledge of bancassurance products and customer interactions. The methodology originally planned for approximately 30 staff participants.

Measurement of Variables

Trust and Credibility

Trust and credibility were operationalised as a composite construct reflecting respondents' confidence in the reliability, integrity, competence, and dependability of the institutions and insurance partners involved in bancassurance. The decision to treat trust and credibility as a single analytical construct was guided by their close conceptual relationship within the bancassurance context. Trust reflects the confidence that customers place in the bank and its insurance partner to act reliably and in their interests, while credibility reflects the perceived believability, competence, transparency, and integrity of those providers. In bancassurance, these dimensions are closely connected because perceptions of provider credibility contribute to the development of customer trust, particularly where customers rely on the reputation and institutional standing of the bank when evaluating insurance products.

The construct was measured using multiple Likert-scale items designed to capture respondents' perceptions of the credibility and trustworthiness of bancassurance providers. The items addressed dimensions including the credibility of insurance partners, confidence in the information provided, perceived transparency and competence of service providers, fairness in claims-related processes, and willingness to recommend bancassurance products. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A composite Trust and Credibility score was subsequently computed from the relevant items, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived trust and credibility.

The measurement approach was supported by the study's instrument-development and validation procedures. The questionnaire items were reviewed for their relevance to the constructs under investigation before the main data collection, while a pilot study was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. The pilot results showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81 for the Trust and Credibility scale, exceeding the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.70. This indicates satisfactory internal consistency among the items used to measure the composite construct.

The use of a composite measure should nevertheless be distinguished from formal factor-analytic validation. The original study did not report exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis, factor loadings, average variance extracted, or other factor-based statistics. Consequently, the present manuscript does not claim that the unidimensionality of trust and credibility was statistically established through factor analysis. Rather, the combination of the two dimensions is presented as a theoretically informed operationalisation supported by the content of the measurement items and satisfactory internal consistency.

Bancassurance Performance

Bancassurance performance was measured using customer-oriented indicators reflecting customers' engagement and experience with bancassurance products. The questionnaire included items relating to insurance purchase through the bank, satisfaction with bancassurance services, intention to renew or upgrade policies, whether products met customer expectations and needs, and convenience of accessing insurance through the bank.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was enhanced through review of the questionnaire against the study objectives and relevant literature. The instrument was also subjected to expert review and pilot testing before the main survey to identify ambiguous items and improve the clarity and relevance of the measures.

A pilot study involving 42 respondents was conducted before the main data collection. The reliability assessment produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81 for Trust and Credibility and 0.82 for Bancassurance Performance, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 and indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Accordingly, the measurement scales were considered sufficiently reliable for subsequent analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to respondents associated with commercial banks offering bancassurance services in Makueni County. Separate instruments were used to capture customer and bank-staff perspectives.

The questionnaire employed predominantly closed-ended Likert-scale items, enabling quantitative measurement of perceptions concerning trust, credibility and bancassurance performance.

Secondary information from relevant financial-sector institutions was used to provide contextual information concerning the development of bancassurance and insurance services in Kenya.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondent characteristics and the study variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the bivariate association between trust and credibility and the performance of bancassurance products. Multiple linear regression was subsequently employed to determine the contribution of trust and credibility to bancassurance performance while controlling for the other explanatory variables included in the original study model.

The study collected data from two respondent categories; bank customers and bank employees. Although the two groups were sampled using different procedures, their responses were combined for the quantitative analysis because both groups provided complementary information relevant to bancassurance performance: customers provided perceptions of the products and service experience, while employees provided perspectives based on their involvement in bancassurance delivery. The combined analysis was therefore intended to capture both demand-side and institutional perspectives within the study setting. The respondent category was not modelled as a separate explanatory variable, and no separate customer-versus-employee regression estimates were reported in the original analysis.

Before inferential analysis, the data were screened for completeness, consistency, missing values, outliers, and data-entry errors. The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Regression assumptions were assessed through tests of linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, and multicollinearity. Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerance statistics. The study specified VIF values below 10 and tolerance values above 0.10 as acceptable indicators of the absence of serious multicollinearity.

Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% level. The regression model was specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon$$

Where: Y represents the performance of bancassurance products, X_1 is customer awareness, X_2 is trust and credibility, X_3 is product pricing, X_4 is product coverage, X_5 is bank policies, β_0 is the regression intercept, $\beta_1 \dots \beta_5$ are regression coefficients and ϵ is the error term.

For purposes of the present manuscript, the analysis focuses specifically on trust and credibility and its relationship with bancassurance performance. Customer awareness and the other explanatory variables are

retained in the regression model as control predictors because they formed part of the original multivariable specification, but they are not developed as separate substantive objectives in this manuscript.

Regression Assumption Testing

Prior to estimating the multiple regression model, the data were examined for the assumptions underlying linear regression. Normality was assessed using histograms, Q-Q plots, and skewness and kurtosis statistics, while linearity was examined using scatter plots. Homoscedasticity was assessed using standardized residual plots, and independence of errors was assessed using the Durbin-Watson statistic. Multicollinearity was evaluated using variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics, with VIF values below 10 and tolerance values above 0.10 treated as indicating no serious multicollinearity. The diagnostic procedures documented in the original study indicated that the assumptions required for multiple regression analysis were adequately met.

Because the original statistical output does not document the individual numerical VIF, tolerance, and Durbin-Watson values, these statistics are not reproduced in the present manuscript. This avoids introducing numerical diagnostic values that cannot be independently verified from the archived analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved human participants and therefore required appropriate ethical safeguards. Participation was voluntary, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality of the information provided was maintained.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available because they were collected from human participants under conditions of confidentiality. Reasonable requests for access to the underlying data may be considered by the corresponding author subject to applicable ethical and confidentiality requirements.

RESULTS

Descriptive Findings on Trust and Credibility

Trust and credibility were assessed using respondents' perceptions regarding confidence in insurance services offered through banks, effectiveness in addressing customer queries, the general credibility of bancassurance services, and the extent to which trust in the bank enhances uptake of bancassurance products. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Trust and Credibility

Trust and credibility indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customers trust the insurance services offered through the bank	4.00	0.87
Customer queries about bancassurance are addressed effectively	4.24	0.79
Bancassurance is perceived positively by most customers	3.97	0.92
Trust in the bank enhances uptake of bancassurance products	4.27	0.76

Source: Study data

The results indicate generally favourable perceptions of trust and credibility in bancassurance services. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement that trust in the bank enhances uptake of bancassurance products ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.76$). This suggests that respondents strongly perceived institutional trust as an important factor in customers' willingness to take up bancassurance products.

The effectiveness of addressing customer queries also received a high rating ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.79$), indicating that responsive customer service was perceived as an important component of confidence in bancassurance. Similarly, respondents agreed that customers trusted insurance services offered through their banks ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.87$).

The lowest, although still positive, mean was recorded for the perception that bancassurance is viewed positively by most customers ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.92$). This relatively lower score suggests that while institutional trust was generally favourable, positive perceptions of bancassurance were not universal. The comparatively larger standard deviation also indicates greater variation in respondents' perceptions on this item.

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate that trust in the banking institution, effective customer support, and positive perceptions of bancassurance were important features of the customer trust environment. The findings are consistent with the qualitative evidence from the study, which identified delays in claims settlement, concerns about hidden policy terms, and complexity of claims procedures as factors that could undermine customer confidence.

The findings further show that trust was not merely associated with the reputation of the bank but also with the quality and responsiveness of service delivered throughout the bancassurance relationship. The original study reports that customers who trusted their banks were more likely to perceive bank-distributed insurance products as credible, with a customer mean of 3.77 for confidence in the bank offering authentic insurance products.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the bivariate relationship between trust and credibility and the performance of bancassurance products. The analysis showed a strong positive association between trust and credibility and bancassurance performance ($r = 0.780$). This finding indicates that respondents reporting higher levels of perceived trust and credibility also tended to report higher levels of bancassurance performance. The strength and direction of the correlation provide preliminary evidence of a substantial positive relationship between the two constructs.

The correlation result should, however, be distinguished from the subsequent regression analysis. Pearson's correlation describes the bivariate association between the two variables without controlling for other predictors, whereas the multiple regression coefficient estimates the unique contribution of trust and credibility after accounting for customer awareness, product pricing, product coverage, and bank policies. In the regression model, trust and credibility remained positively associated with bancassurance performance ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.047$), indicating that the relationship remained statistically significant after the other predictors were taken into account.

These findings provide support for the study hypothesis that trust and credibility are positively associated with the performance of bancassurance products. However, given the cross-sectional design of the study, the findings are interpreted as evidence of association rather than proof of a causal effect. The results therefore suggest that strengthening factors associated with customer trust and institutional credibility may be relevant to improving bancassurance performance, but causal conclusions would require a longitudinal or experimental research design.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which trust and credibility predicted the performance of bancassurance products while controlling for customer awareness, product pricing, product coverage, and bank policies. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Results for Predictors of Bancassurance Performance

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	p-value
Constant	0.527	0.448	—	1.177	0.249
Customer awareness	0.426	0.150	0.394	2.847	0.008
Trust and credibility	0.361	0.174	0.312	2.078	0.047
Product pricing	0.129	0.175	0.115	0.736	0.468
Product coverage	-0.155	0.178	-0.128	-0.873	0.391
Bank policies	0.131	0.225	0.102	0.579	0.567

Model summary: $R = 0.872$; $R^2 = 0.760$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.716$; Standard Error of the Estimate = 0.331.

Source: Study data.

The regression model produced a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.872$ and an R^2 of 0.760, indicating that the predictors included in the model jointly accounted for approximately 76.0% of the observed variation in bancassurance performance. The adjusted R^2 of 0.716 indicates that the model retained substantial explanatory power after adjustment for the number of predictors included.

Of particular relevance to this study, trust and credibility had a positive and statistically significant association with bancassurance performance ($\beta = 0.312$, $t = 2.078$, $p = 0.047$). Holding the other predictors constant, the positive coefficient indicates that higher levels of perceived trust and credibility were associated with higher levels of bancassurance performance. The standardized coefficient further indicates that trust and credibility made a positive contribution to the prediction of bancassurance performance within the multivariable model.

The other predictors produced varying results. Customer awareness had a positive and statistically significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.394$, $p = 0.008$), whereas product pricing ($\beta = 0.115$, $p = 0.468$), product coverage ($\beta = -0.128$, $p = 0.391$), and bank policies ($\beta = 0.102$, $p = 0.567$) did not reach statistical significance at the 5% level. These variables are reported to provide the complete multivariable specification, although the present manuscript focuses substantively on trust and credibility.

The unstandardized coefficient for trust and credibility ($B = 0.361$) should be interpreted as the expected change in the bancassurance performance score associated with a one-unit increase in the trust and credibility composite score, holding the other predictors constant. It should not be interpreted as a 36.1% increase in performance.

The regression model was specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon$$

Where: Y represents the performance of bancassurance products, X_1 is customer awareness, X_2 is trust and credibility, X_3 is product pricing, X_4 is product coverage, X_5 is bank policies, β_0 is the regression intercept, $\beta_1 \dots \beta_5$ are regression coefficients and ϵ is the error term.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Taken together, the results provide consistent evidence across the descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses. First, respondents reported generally favourable perceptions of institutional trust and credibility. In particular, trust in the bank was strongly associated with perceived uptake of bancassurance products, while effective handling of customer queries received a high rating. Second, trust and credibility demonstrated a strong positive bivariate relationship with bancassurance performance ($r = .780$, $p < .01$). Third, trust and credibility retained a positive and statistically significant association with bancassurance performance within the

multivariable regression model ($\beta = .312$, $p = .047$). These findings provide empirical support for the study's hypothesis that trust and credibility are significantly related to the performance of bancassurance products.

DISCUSSION

The study established a strong positive association between trust and credibility and the performance of bancassurance products in commercial banks operating in Makueni County. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.780$) indicates that respondents who reported stronger confidence in the credibility, reliability, transparency, and competence of bancassurance providers also tended to report better bancassurance performance. This relationship remained statistically significant in the multiple regression model after controlling for customer awareness, product pricing, product coverage, and bank policies ($B = 0.361$, $\beta = 0.312$, $t = 2.078$, $p = 0.047$). The result therefore suggests that trust and credibility make an independent contribution to explaining variation in bancassurance performance within the study setting.

The finding is consistent with the theoretical proposition that trust reduces perceived uncertainty in service relationships. Insurance is an intangible financial service in which customers often have limited ability to evaluate the quality of the promised service before purchase. Confidence in the institution delivering the product can consequently become an important consideration when customers decide whether to purchase or continue using insurance through a bank. In the present study, trust was reflected not only in the reputation of the bank but also in perceptions concerning transparency, reliability, professional service delivery, and the credibility of insurance partners.

The qualitative evidence provides additional explanation for the quantitative relationship. Respondents identified delays in claims settlement, inadequate information about policy terms, and concerns regarding the transparency of relationships between banks and insurance companies as factors that can weaken customer confidence. Conversely, prompt claims handling, honest communication, consistent service delivery, and competent frontline staff were perceived as mechanisms through which trust could be strengthened. These findings indicate that trust in bancassurance is not based solely on the reputation of the bank; it is also shaped by customers' experiences across the broader insurance service process.

The findings are broadly consistent with previous studies that have linked trust, institutional credibility, and customer confidence with insurance and bancassurance adoption. The present study extends this literature by examining trust and credibility within a predominantly rural county context where banking institutions may serve as important points of access to insurance services. Rather than assuming that the established reputation of commercial banks automatically transfers to insurance products, the findings suggest that institutional reputation must be reinforced through transparent communication, credible insurance partnerships, and reliable claims and service processes.

The Makueni context is particularly relevant because customers may face economic and informational constraints that increase the importance of confidence in the institution providing financial services. The qualitative findings indicate that concerns about complex policy terms and claims procedures can undermine confidence, while the established reputation of commercial banks provides an opportunity for strengthening bancassurance when that institutional trust is supported by consistent service delivery. Thus, the contribution of the study is not simply that trust matters for bancassurance; rather, it demonstrates how trust and credibility operate within a rural Kenyan setting where customers' experiences of information clarity, claims handling, and institutional reliability are closely connected to perceptions of bancassurance performance.

The result also has implications for the relationship between banks and their insurance partners. Banks may possess substantial customer trust as financial institutions, but this trust can be weakened if customers experience poor claims administration or inconsistent information from the insurance provider. Consequently, effective bancassurance requires alignment between the bank's reputation and the actual quality and transparency of the insurance service delivered. Training frontline employees, simplifying policy communication, clearly defining the roles of banks and insurers, and improving claims communication may therefore help sustain customer confidence.

Overall, the evidence supports the proposition that trust and credibility constitute an important dimension of bancassurance performance in rural Kenya. However, because the study employed a cross-sectional design, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of association rather than definitive proof that increases in trust cause increases in performance. Future studies using longitudinal designs could provide stronger evidence regarding the direction and persistence of this relationship.

Trust, Behavioural Intentions and the Theory of Planned Behaviour

The findings are consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) developed by Ajzen [1]. TPB proposes that behavioural intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Within bancassurance, trust and credibility can contribute to favourable attitudes by reducing uncertainty and perceived risk associated with purchasing an insurance product.

Customers who believe that their bank is honest, reliable, competent, and committed to protecting their interests are more likely to develop favourable attitudes towards insurance products distributed through that institution. Such favourable attitudes can strengthen intentions to purchase, renew, or recommend bancassurance products. The present findings therefore extend the application of TPB to a financial-service context in which the credibility of the service provider is particularly important because the benefits of the product may only become evident in the future.

The findings also suggest that trust can operate as a mechanism through which customers interpret the uncertainty inherent in insurance transactions. Rather than evaluating only the technical characteristics of an insurance policy, customers may use the reputation and reliability of the bank as a heuristic for assessing whether the product and its provider can be trusted. This may be particularly relevant in rural financial markets where customers have fewer opportunities to independently compare complex financial products.

Trust as an Institutional Resource

The findings further support the view that trust constitutes an important intangible organisational resource. Commercial banks typically maintain repeated interactions with their customers through deposits, loans, payments, savings, and other financial services. These repeated interactions create an institutional relationship that can influence customers' perceptions of additional services offered through the same institution.

The finding that trust in the bank enhances bancassurance uptake is therefore significant. Existing confidence in the banking relationship can extend to insurance products where customers perceive the bank as a credible intermediary. However, such trust cannot be assumed to transfer automatically. It must be reinforced through accurate information, professional service, responsiveness to customer concerns, and effective support throughout the insurance relationship.

The relatively high rating associated with the effectiveness of addressing customer queries further reinforces this interpretation. Trust is therefore not simply an attribute of institutional reputation; it is continually shaped by customers' interactions with employees and the quality of service they receive.

Comparison with Previous Empirical Evidence

The finding that trust and credibility are significantly associated with bancassurance performance is consistent with previous empirical evidence. In the Kenyan context, Otieno [17] found that customer trust positively influenced insurance uptake among commercial bank customers. This finding is consistent with the present study, which established a strong positive association between trust and credibility and bancassurance performance ($r = .780$, $p < .01$). The convergence of the findings suggests that confidence in the financial institution through which insurance products are distributed is an important consideration in customers' decisions to engage with insurance services.

The findings also agree with Okeke and Adeola [16] in Nigeria, who reported that institutional credibility significantly influenced customers' willingness to purchase insurance products through banks. The present study similarly established that trust and credibility made a statistically significant unique contribution to bancassurance performance in the multivariable regression model ($\beta = .312$, $p = .047$). The consistency between the Nigerian and Kenyan findings suggests that institutional credibility may be important across different African bancassurance environments, where customers often rely on the reputation and reliability of established financial institutions when evaluating insurance products.

Similarly, the findings are consistent with Rahman and Jahan [19], who found that trust in financial institutions improves customers' intentions to adopt bancassurance products by reducing uncertainty associated with insurance services. The present study provides further empirical support for this proposition by demonstrating that trust and credibility were not only positively correlated with bancassurance performance but also remained statistically significant within the multiple regression model. This suggests that trust may help customers overcome uncertainty associated with an intangible financial product whose benefits are realized primarily in the future.

The consistency of these findings across Kenya, Nigeria, and Bangladesh strengthens the argument that institutional trust is an important component of bancassurance performance across different developing-market contexts. Nevertheless, the present study adds a distinct contribution by examining this relationship within Makueni County, a rural Kenyan setting. The finding that trust and credibility remain statistically significant in this context suggests that established relationships between customers and commercial banks may provide an important foundation for the distribution and performance of insurance products in rural markets.

The present findings also extend the existing evidence by considering bancassurance performance rather than focusing exclusively on customers' initial intention to purchase insurance. The significant regression coefficient indicates that trust and credibility are associated with broader performance outcomes captured in the study, including customers' engagement with and evaluation of bancassurance services. Trust therefore appears to have relevance beyond the initial purchase decision and may contribute to the development of sustained customer relationships with bancassurance providers.

Trust in the Rural Kenyan Context

An important contribution of this study is its focus on Makueni County, a predominantly rural setting. The findings suggest that institutional trust is particularly relevant where customers may rely on established relationships with local financial institutions when making decisions concerning complex financial products.

In such environments, the bank may function not merely as a distribution channel but also as a source of assurance regarding the credibility of the insurance product. Customers who already have an established relationship with a bank may perceive insurance products distributed through that institution as less uncertain than products encountered through unfamiliar channels.

However, this relationship also creates a potential reputational risk for banks. Customers may hold the bank responsible for negative experiences associated with an insurance product even where the underlying contractual obligation rests with the insurance company. Consequently, weaknesses in claims handling, unclear communication, or poor customer service by either partner can undermine confidence in the broader bancassurance arrangement.

This finding highlights the importance of close coordination between banks and insurance companies. Trust should therefore be managed as a shared institutional asset rather than as the sole responsibility of either the bank or the insurer.

Managerial Implications of the Findings

The findings have several implications for bancassurance providers. First, commercial banks should treat trust-building as an integral component of bancassurance strategy rather than as a general customer-service function.

Product information should be communicated accurately and in language that customers can understand, particularly regarding premiums, exclusions, benefits, waiting periods, and claims procedures.

Second, banks should continuously strengthen the competence of employees involved in bancassurance. Employees represent the institution during customer interactions and therefore play an important role in translating institutional credibility into customer confidence. Regular training in insurance products, ethical selling, customer communication, and complaint handling can help strengthen this relationship.

Third, banks and insurance partners should establish responsive mechanisms for handling customer complaints and claims-related inquiries. Even when the bank is not responsible for settling a particular claim, effective communication and follow-up can help protect the bank's relationship with its customer.

Finally, trust should be monitored over the entire customer relationship rather than only at the point of product acquisition. Periodic customer feedback, policy reviews, proactive communication, and responsive after-sales support can help sustain confidence and encourage policy renewal.

Overall Interpretation

Overall, the findings demonstrate that trust and credibility are significant dimensions of bancassurance performance in Makueni County. The strong bivariate association and statistically significant regression coefficient indicate that customers' confidence in the institutions involved in bancassurance is closely related to their evaluation and use of these products.

The findings therefore support the study hypothesis that trust and credibility are significantly associated with bancassurance performance. More broadly, they demonstrate that successful bancassurance requires more than establishing distribution partnerships between banks and insurers. It also requires the development and maintenance of institutional confidence through transparency, professional service, effective communication, and reliable customer support.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the role of trust and credibility in the performance of bancassurance products among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya. The findings demonstrate that trust and credibility constitute an important dimension of bancassurance performance within the study context.

The descriptive findings showed generally favourable perceptions of trust and credibility among respondents. In particular, respondents indicated that trust in the bank enhances customers' willingness to take up bancassurance products, while effective responses to customer queries contribute to confidence in bancassurance services. These findings suggest that institutional credibility is shaped not only by the reputation of the bank but also by customers' direct experiences with the institution and its employees.

The inferential findings provide stronger evidence of this relationship. Trust and credibility demonstrated a strong positive association with bancassurance performance ($r = .780$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, trust and credibility remained a statistically significant positive predictor in the multiple regression model ($\beta = .312$, $p = .047$). The findings therefore provide empirical support for the hypothesis that trust and credibility are significantly associated with the performance of bancassurance products.

The findings are consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which suggests that favourable perceptions and attitudes contribute to behavioural intentions. In the context of bancassurance, confidence in the institution may reduce uncertainty surrounding insurance products and strengthen customers' willingness to engage with services offered through their banks. The findings also complement previous empirical evidence from Kenya, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, which identifies institutional trust and credibility as important factors in insurance and bancassurance adoption.

The study concludes that trust should be regarded as a strategic component of bancassurance rather than merely a desirable customer-service attribute. For commercial banks operating in rural markets such as Makueni County, maintaining institutional credibility through transparent communication, professional service delivery, effective customer support, and reliable coordination with insurance partners is important for strengthening customer confidence and improving bancassurance performance.

Practical Implications

The findings have important implications for commercial banks, insurance companies, bancassurance employees, and financial-sector regulators.

Implications for Commercial Banks

Commercial banks should strengthen transparent communication throughout the bancassurance customer journey. Customers should receive clear and understandable information concerning policy benefits, premiums, exclusions, waiting periods, claims procedures, and the respective responsibilities of the bank and insurance company. Greater transparency can reduce uncertainty and strengthen confidence in bancassurance products. Banks should also invest in continuous training of employees involved in bancassurance. Staff should possess adequate knowledge of the insurance products they sell and should be able to explain policy conditions accurately without creating unrealistic customer expectations. Professional and ethical interactions can strengthen the credibility of both the employee and the institution.

In addition, banks should establish effective mechanisms for responding to customer queries and complaints. The descriptive findings showed that effective handling of customer queries was highly rated by respondents. Maintaining responsive communication can therefore help sustain trust beyond the initial purchase of an insurance product.

Implications for Insurance Companies

Insurance companies partnering with commercial banks should recognize that the customer's perception of the insurance product is partly shaped by the credibility of the distributing bank. Consequently, insurers should work closely with banks to ensure consistent product information, coordinated customer support, and timely communication during claims processing.

Particular attention should be given to claims management, since customers' confidence in an insurance product may be severely affected by delays or inadequate communication during claims settlement. Insurance companies and banks should establish clearly defined channels for communicating claims progress to customers and resolving claims-related concerns.

Implications for Bancassurance Staff

Bancassurance employees are an important interface between customers, banks, and insurance companies. Staff should therefore demonstrate professionalism, integrity, responsiveness, and consistency when interacting with customers. They should avoid misleading or incomplete explanations of insurance products and should ensure that customers understand the conditions attached to policies before purchase.

The findings imply that trust is developed through repeated interactions. Consequently, employees should maintain customer engagement after product acquisition rather than treating the completion of the sale as the end of the customer relationship.

Implications for Regulators and Policymakers

The findings also have implications for financial-sector regulators, particularly the Insurance Regulatory Authority and other institutions responsible for consumer protection in financial services. Regulators should

continue strengthening requirements relating to product disclosure, ethical marketing, claims handling, and customer complaint resolution within bancassurance arrangements.

Clear regulatory standards can reduce information asymmetry between financial institutions and customers and strengthen public confidence in bancassurance. This is particularly important in rural markets, where customers may have fewer opportunities to independently evaluate alternative insurance products.

Implications for Bancassurance Strategy in Rural Markets

Finally, commercial banks and insurance companies should recognize that institutional trust can provide a competitive advantage in rural bancassurance markets. Existing banking relationships can provide a foundation upon which insurance services are introduced. However, this advantage can only be sustained when customers' experiences consistently reinforce the credibility of the institution.

Accordingly, bancassurance strategies in rural counties should emphasize relationship building, transparent communication, professional service, responsive customer support, and reliable claims coordination, rather than focusing exclusively on short-term insurance sales. Such an approach can strengthen customer confidence and contribute to more sustainable bancassurance performance.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the study was conducted among commercial banks operating in Makueni County, Kenya. The findings therefore reflect the institutional and socio-economic characteristics of the study area and may not be directly generalizable to other counties, particularly urban settings where customers may have different levels of financial access, insurance experience, and interaction with bancassurance services.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, whereby data were collected at a single point in time. Although the analysis established a statistically significant relationship between trust and credibility and bancassurance performance, the design does not permit definitive conclusions about changes in trust over time or establish causal relationships. Customer trust may evolve as customers interact with banks and insurance providers, particularly following policy acquisition, claims experiences, or renewal decisions.

Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported questionnaire responses. Respondents' perceptions of trust, credibility, and bancassurance performance may therefore have been influenced by individual experiences, recall limitations, or social desirability. Although appropriate procedures were applied to enhance the reliability and validity of the research instrument, subjective responses remain a potential source of measurement bias.

Fourth, the study examined trust and credibility as one of several antecedents of bancassurance performance. Other factors that may influence performance, including customer satisfaction, perceived service quality, digital banking experiences, organizational reputation, technological adoption, and customer characteristics, were outside the specific focus of this manuscript. Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as suggesting that trust and credibility are the sole determinants of bancassurance performance.

Finally, the analysis was based on the original study's quantitative data and multivariable regression model. Because the underlying dataset is not currently available for reanalysis, the present manuscript relies on the statistical results documented in the original research project. Accordingly, no additional statistical tests or alternative model specifications have been introduced beyond what can be supported by the original analysis.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes several contributions to the literature on bancassurance and financial services in developing economies. First, the study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between trust and credibility and bancassurance performance within a rural Kenyan context. Previous research has established the importance of trust in financial-service adoption, but evidence focusing specifically on bancassurance performance in rural

counties remains limited. By examining commercial banks operating in Makueni County, the study extends understanding of how institutional confidence operates in a relatively underserved financial market.

Second, the study contributes to the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in the context of bancassurance. The findings demonstrate that customers' confidence in the institutions providing financial services is associated with more favourable bancassurance outcomes. This supports the theoretical argument that perceptions and attitudes toward a service provider can shape behavioural intentions in contexts characterized by uncertainty and delayed benefits, such as insurance.

Third, the study contributes quantitative evidence on the strength of the relationship between trust and bancassurance performance. The strong positive correlation ($r = .780$, $p < .01$) demonstrates a substantial association between the two constructs, while the significant standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .312$, $p = .047$) indicates that trust and credibility retain a positive and statistically significant contribution when considered alongside other antecedents of bancassurance performance. These findings provide empirical support for treating trust as an important component of bancassurance performance rather than merely a general customer-service consideration.

Fourth, the study provides a contextual contribution to the African bancassurance literature by complementing evidence from other developing-market settings. The findings are broadly consistent with studies conducted in Kenya, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, while demonstrating that the importance of institutional trust also applies within a rural county-level banking environment.

Finally, the study provides a practical contribution by demonstrating specific dimensions through which trust can be strengthened. The findings point to transparent communication, effective responses to customer queries, professional employee conduct, and reliable coordination between banks and insurance companies as important areas for strengthening institutional credibility. These insights provide commercial banks and their insurance partners with practical areas for intervention when seeking to improve bancassurance performance.

Overall, the study contributes to knowledge by demonstrating that trust and credibility represent an important institutional dimension of bancassurance performance in rural Kenya. The evidence from Makueni County provides a basis for further research examining how institutional trust interacts with customer experience, digital financial services, financial literacy, and other behavioural factors in shaping bancassurance outcomes.

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