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“Influence of Digital Ecosystems on Value Creation and Competitive Positioning in the E-Commerce Industry”

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A hand in a blue suit sleeve points upwards towards a glowing white circle. Inside the circle, the word 'Strategy' is written in a large, dark, sans-serif font. The background is a dark blue gradient with abstract white and red curved lines and concentric circles, suggesting a digital or technological theme.

Strategy

**Influence of Digital Ecosystems on Value Creation
and Competitive Positioning in the E-Commerce
Industry**



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Abstract

Purpose: This study sought to investigate the influence of digital ecosystems on value creation and competitive positioning in the e-commerce industry.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The findings revealed that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to influence of digital ecosystems. Preliminary empirical review revealed that digital ecosystems significantly shaped value creation and competitive positioning in the e-commerce industry by enabling integration, innovation, and collaboration across platforms. Firms embedded in robust ecosystems adapted faster, leveraged technology more effectively, and gained sustainable competitive advantages across diverse global regions.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and

Policy: The study recommended that businesses enhance digital ecosystem engagement through partnerships, modular strategies, and talent development, while policymakers were urged to create inclusive and supportive digital infrastructure and governance frameworks to foster competitiveness and innovation in e-commerce.

Keywords: *Digital Ecosystem, Value Creation, Competitive Positioning, E-commerce, Platform Strategy*

JEL codes: *L86, D46, L10, L81, M21*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Value creation in the e-commerce industry has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade, primarily driven by rapid technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors. In the United States, e-commerce sales reached \$1.16 trillion in 2023, marking a substantial increase from previous years (Mobiloud, 2025). This growth can be attributed to several factors, including the widespread adoption of mobile devices, improved internet infrastructure, and the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning into e-commerce platforms. Companies like Amazon have leveraged these technologies to offer personalized shopping experiences, efficient supply chain management, and rapid delivery services, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. The emphasis on customer-centric approaches and technological integration underscores the dynamic nature of value creation in the e-commerce landscape.

The United Kingdom's e-commerce market, valued at \$195.97 billion in 2023, is characterized by intense competition and innovative positioning strategies (Mobiloud, 2025). Retailers such as Tesco and Sainsbury's have adopted omnichannel approaches, integrating online and offline experiences to meet diverse consumer needs. These strategies include click-and-collect services, personalized marketing, and loyalty programs, which enhance customer retention and differentiate brands in a crowded marketplace. The UK's high internet penetration and consumer willingness to adopt new shopping technologies have further facilitated these competitive positioning efforts. Moreover, the implementation of advanced data analytics allows retailers to gain insights into consumer behavior, enabling them to tailor their offerings and marketing strategies effectively.

Japan's e-commerce industry, with sales totaling \$193.42 billion in 2023, places a strong emphasis on customer service and quality assurance (Mobiloud, 2025). Companies like Rakuten and Yodobashi have built their competitive positioning around the concept of "Omotenashi," reflecting a deep-rooted culture of hospitality and meticulous attention to customer needs. This approach includes prompt delivery, easy return policies, and responsive customer support, which collectively enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Such culturally ingrained practices have enabled Japanese e-commerce firms to create significant value and maintain a competitive edge in the market. Furthermore, the integration of advanced technologies, such as AI-driven recommendation systems and efficient logistics networks, has streamlined operations and improved the overall customer experience.

Brazil's e-commerce market has experienced substantial growth, with sales reaching \$84.75 billion by 2019 and projected to continue rising (LSEEMF, 2025). Leading platforms like MercadoLibre and B2W have capitalized on increasing internet penetration and mobile device usage to expand their customer base. These companies have invested in logistics infrastructure and localized payment solutions to address the unique challenges of the Brazilian market, such as geographic diversity and varying consumer preferences. By tailoring their strategies to local conditions, Brazilian e-commerce firms have enhanced value creation and solidified their competitive positioning. Additionally, the adoption of innovative technologies, such as AI and machine learning, has enabled these companies to offer personalized shopping experiences and improve operational efficiency.

Sub-Saharan Africa's e-commerce sector is poised for significant expansion, with projections indicating a market value of \$75 billion by 2025 (nBorder, 2025). Platforms like Jumia and Takealot have emerged as key players by addressing infrastructural challenges and leveraging mobile technology to reach underserved populations. Innovations such as mobile payment systems and localized delivery networks have facilitated access to e-commerce services in remote areas, thereby creating value and enhancing competitive positioning. These developments underscore the region's potential as a burgeoning e-commerce market. Moreover, partnerships with local businesses and investments in logistics infrastructure have further strengthened the e-commerce ecosystem in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mobile technology has been instrumental in driving e-commerce growth in Africa, with mobile devices accounting for 69% of web traffic in 2021 (TechInAfrica, 2025). This mobile-first approach has enabled e-commerce platforms to reach a wider audience, particularly in regions with limited access to traditional internet infrastructure. Companies have developed mobile-optimized websites and applications, as well as mobile payment solutions, to cater to the needs of the African consumer base. These strategies have not only enhanced value creation but also strengthened the competitive positioning of e-commerce firms in the region. Furthermore, the integration of mobile technology has facilitated real-time communication with customers, improved order tracking, and streamlined the overall shopping experience.

Cross-border e-commerce has become increasingly significant in Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for more than half of all e-commerce transaction volumes in the region (Visa Navigate, 2025). Initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aim to simplify customs procedures and reduce tariffs, thereby facilitating cross-border trade. Such regional integration efforts are expected to enhance value creation by expanding market access and enabling economies of scale. E-commerce firms that effectively navigate these developments can achieve a competitive advantage in the evolving African market. Additionally, collaborations between governments and private sector stakeholders are crucial in addressing regulatory challenges and fostering a conducive environment for cross-border e-commerce growth.

Despite the promising growth of e-commerce in Africa, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, high delivery costs, and regulatory complexities persist (TechInsightsAfrica, 2024). However, these obstacles also present opportunities for innovation and differentiation. Companies that invest in logistics solutions, such as localized delivery networks and partnerships with local businesses, can enhance their value proposition. By addressing these challenges proactively, e-commerce firms can improve their competitive positioning and contribute to the sector's sustainable growth. Moreover, leveraging emerging technologies and fostering collaborations with stakeholders can help overcome infrastructural and regulatory barriers, paving the way for a more robust e-commerce ecosystem in Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of e-commerce globally, including in Sub-Saharan Africa. Platforms like Jumia reported a 50% rise in transactions during the first six months of 2020, highlighting the shift towards online shopping amid mobility restrictions (Oxford Business Group, 2020). This surge has prompted e-commerce firms to enhance their digital infrastructure and expand their service offerings to meet increased demand. The pandemic-induced

changes in consumer behavior have thus created new avenues for value creation and competitive differentiation in the e-commerce sector. Furthermore, the increased reliance on digital platforms has underscored the importance of building resilient and adaptable e-commerce strategies to navigate future disruptions.

Digital ecosystems have emerged as transformative forces in the global e-commerce landscape, fundamentally altering how value is created and competitive positioning is achieved. These ecosystems, characterized by interconnected digital platforms, technologies, and stakeholders, facilitate seamless interactions and collaborations that transcend traditional industry boundaries. In the United States, companies like Amazon have exemplified the power of digital ecosystems by integrating various services—ranging from cloud computing to personalized recommendations—into a cohesive platform that enhances customer experiences and operational efficiency (Subramaniam, 2020). This integration not only streamlines processes but also fosters innovation by enabling the rapid deployment of new services and features, thereby solidifying Amazon's competitive advantage in the e-commerce sector.

In the United Kingdom, digital ecosystems have enabled retailers to adopt omnichannel strategies, integrating online and offline experiences to meet diverse consumer needs. Tesco, for instance, has implemented digital platforms that connect suppliers, logistics, and customers, ensuring real-time inventory management and personalized marketing. This approach not only enhances operational efficiency but also strengthens customer loyalty by providing consistent and tailored experiences across channels (Subramaniam, 2020). The UK's high internet penetration and consumer willingness to adopt new shopping technologies have further facilitated these competitive positioning efforts.

Japan's e-commerce industry, characterized by a strong emphasis on customer service and quality assurance, has embraced digital ecosystems to enhance value creation. Companies like Rakuten have developed integrated platforms that offer a wide range of services, from e-commerce to fintech solutions. By creating a comprehensive digital ecosystem, Rakuten provides customers with a seamless experience, fostering loyalty and differentiating itself in a competitive market (Liu & Pan, 2024). The integration of advanced technologies, such as AI-driven recommendation systems and efficient logistics networks, has further streamlined operations and improved the overall customer experience.

In Brazil, digital ecosystems have played a crucial role in expanding e-commerce, particularly in overcoming logistical challenges posed by the country's vast geography. Platforms like MercadoLibre have built extensive networks that connect buyers, sellers, and logistics providers, facilitating efficient transactions across the country. By leveraging digital ecosystems, these companies have improved accessibility and convenience for consumers, driving growth in the e-commerce sector (Silva & Costa, 2025). Additionally, the adoption of innovative technologies, such as AI and machine learning, has enabled these companies to offer personalized shopping experiences and improve operational efficiency.

Sub-Saharan Africa presents unique opportunities and challenges in the development of digital ecosystems for e-commerce. Companies like Jumia have established digital platforms that connect consumers with a variety of products and services, addressing issues related to limited

infrastructure and fragmented markets. By integrating mobile payment systems and localized delivery networks, Jumia's digital ecosystem enhances accessibility and convenience for consumers, contributing to value creation and competitive positioning in the region (Mafimisebi & Ogunsade, 2021). These developments underscore the region's potential as a burgeoning e-commerce market.

The role of digital ecosystems in facilitating innovation and adaptability is evident across these diverse markets. By fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, including suppliers, logistics providers, and technology partners, digital ecosystems enable e-commerce companies to respond swiftly to changing consumer demands and market dynamics. This agility is critical for maintaining a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving digital landscape (Subramaniam, 2020). Moreover, the integration of advanced analytics and real-time data sharing within digital ecosystems allows for more informed decision-making and strategic planning.

Furthermore, digital ecosystems support scalability and expansion into new markets. E-commerce companies can leverage existing digital infrastructure and partnerships to enter new regions with reduced risk and investment. For instance, Amazon's expansion into international markets has been facilitated by its robust digital ecosystem, which provides the necessary tools and networks to establish operations efficiently (Subramaniam, 2020). This strategic use of digital ecosystems enables companies to capitalize on global opportunities and diversify their revenue streams.

The integration of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the Internet of Things, within digital ecosystems further enhances value creation. These technologies enable personalized customer experiences, predictive analytics, and automation of various processes, contributing to increased efficiency and customer satisfaction. E-commerce companies that effectively incorporate these technologies into their digital ecosystems are better positioned to meet evolving consumer expectations and maintain a competitive advantage (Subramaniam, 2020).

However, the development and management of digital ecosystems also present challenges, including data privacy concerns, cybersecurity risks, and the need for regulatory compliance. E-commerce companies must navigate these issues carefully to maintain trust and ensure the sustainability of their digital ecosystems. Implementing robust data governance frameworks and engaging in transparent practices are essential for addressing these challenges and fostering long-term success (Subramaniam, 2020).

In conclusion, digital ecosystems have become integral to value creation and competitive positioning in the e-commerce industry across various global markets. By enabling seamless integration of services, fostering innovation, and facilitating scalability, digital ecosystems empower e-commerce companies to meet the demands of an increasingly digital and interconnected world. As the industry continues to evolve, the strategic development and management of digital ecosystems will remain a critical factor in achieving sustained growth and competitiveness (Subramaniam, 2020).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the rapid expansion of e-commerce globally, there remains a limited understanding of how digital ecosystems directly influence value creation and competitive positioning across diverse economic regions. While companies like Amazon, Alibaba, and MercadoLibre have demonstrated the ability to create vast digital ecosystems that interconnect customers, suppliers, logistics, and financial services, existing research often overlooks the underlying structures and dynamics that foster sustained competitive advantage within these systems. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2023), global e-commerce sales reached an estimated \$5.7 trillion in 2022, with over 70% of these transactions concentrated in developed markets, underscoring a disproportionate distribution of digital ecosystem maturity. Yet, literature predominantly addresses these developments through fragmented perspectives—either focusing on technology, market strategy, or organizational capabilities—without holistically analyzing the strategic interplay between ecosystem orchestration and value outcomes. As such, there is a pressing need to empirically assess how digital ecosystems enhance or hinder firms' capabilities to innovate, personalize consumer engagement, and optimize operational scalability in varying regional contexts (Subramaniam, 2020).

A significant research gap exists in the comparative analysis of digital ecosystem effects across distinct geopolitical and economic environments, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Brazil, and Sub-Saharan African countries. Current studies often centralize on either highly developed markets or single-country case studies, lacking a comprehensive, comparative framework that accounts for differences in digital infrastructure, consumer behavior, and policy environments. This absence of cross-regional insights hampers our ability to generalize findings or formulate globally relevant strategies. For instance, while Japan's Rakuten ecosystem thrives on loyalty integration, Brazil's MercadoLibre faces different scalability constraints due to logistical challenges and digital inclusion disparities (Silva & Costa, 2025). Furthermore, limited empirical studies have examined the causal link between digital ecosystem maturity and tangible metrics of value creation—such as revenue growth, customer lifetime value, or market share acquisition—especially in emerging e-commerce markets like Sub-Saharan Africa, where digital adoption is still evolving (Mafimisebi & Ogunsade, 2021). This study, therefore, addresses these gaps by investigating how variations in digital ecosystem structures influence the strategic positioning of e-commerce firms across these key markets.

The findings of this research will provide valuable insights to several stakeholder groups, including digital strategists, e-commerce entrepreneurs, technology policy makers, and academic researchers. For e-commerce firms, particularly those operating in developing economies, the study will illuminate how to build or integrate into digital ecosystems that drive innovation, customer retention, and competitive differentiation. Policymakers will benefit from understanding which ecosystem-enabling infrastructures—such as data governance, payment systems, or broadband access—most effectively support domestic e-commerce development. Furthermore, academic researchers will gain a nuanced framework for theorizing digital ecosystem impact across diverse socio-economic conditions. As Liu and Pan (2024) emphasize, the advancement of knowledge in digital business ecosystems requires a more granular exploration of ecosystem orchestration strategies and their real-world economic outcomes. Ultimately, this study contributes

to filling the theoretical and empirical voids surrounding digital ecosystems and offers a pragmatic roadmap for leveraging their potential across the global e-commerce industry.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Resource-Based View (RBV) of the Firm

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a foundational theory in strategic management that emphasizes the importance of a firm's internal resources in achieving and sustaining a competitive advantage. Originally articulated by Edith Penrose in 1959 and later refined by Jay Barney in 1991, the RBV argues that firms can attain superior performance by acquiring, developing, and leveraging resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (commonly known as the VRIN criteria). In the context of digital ecosystems, RBV becomes particularly relevant as firms operating in the e-commerce industry increasingly rely on intangible assets—such as data analytics capabilities, digital platforms, customer engagement algorithms, and technological partnerships—to differentiate themselves in highly competitive markets. The integration of digital tools, application programming interfaces (APIs), and third-party developers within a firm's ecosystem acts as a resource pool that enables unique value creation mechanisms. For instance, Amazon's use of its AI-driven recommendation engine or Alibaba's seamless integration of logistics and payment systems are resource-based capabilities that are difficult for competitors to replicate, thus securing a sustained competitive advantage. Applying RBV to this study helps in understanding how internal and externally acquired digital assets within a digital ecosystem serve as strategic levers that foster both customer value and market dominance. As such, the RBV provides a robust theoretical foundation for dissecting the micro-foundations of value creation and firm performance within digitally connected business environments (Barney, 1991).

2.1.2 Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory, introduced by David Teece, Gary Pisano, and Amy Shuen in 1997, extends the Resource-Based View by focusing on the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments. The central theme of this theory lies in the notion that strategic advantage in dynamic markets—like e-commerce—requires not just the possession of valuable resources, but also the capacity to continuously adapt, learn, and innovate. In digital ecosystems, where technological advancements, customer preferences, and regulatory frameworks evolve at a fast pace, dynamic capabilities are critical for firms to remain competitive. For instance, e-commerce firms must consistently upgrade their platform functionalities, redesign supply chain logistics, and co-create services with ecosystem partners such as fintech firms or digital content providers. The theory becomes particularly pertinent when assessing the strategic agility of firms in leveraging digital ecosystems to enter new markets, develop data-driven offerings, or optimize customer experience. By anchoring this study in the Dynamic Capabilities framework, researchers can evaluate how firms' ability to sense opportunities, seize them, and transform their operations through digital partnerships and innovations leads to sustained value creation and superior competitive positioning in local and global markets (Teece, 2007).

2.1.3 Platform Ecosystem Theory

Platform Ecosystem Theory offers a modern and highly relevant framework for understanding how digital ecosystems operate in the context of value co-creation and competitive dynamics, particularly within platform-centric industries like e-commerce. Rooted in the work of Annabelle Gawer and Michael Cusumano in the early 2000s, this theory conceptualizes platforms as core technological architectures that enable third-party developers, users, and complementors to interact, innovate, and contribute value within a shared ecosystem. The fundamental proposition is that platform leaders—such as Amazon, eBay, Rakuten, or Jumia—do not merely create standalone products or services but orchestrate a complex ecosystem of complementary offerings and services that enhance the overall value proposition. Through mechanisms such as open APIs, modularity, and two-sided market facilitation, platform ecosystems allow for scalable innovation and competitive differentiation. This theory is particularly suited to examining how e-commerce platforms create network effects, reduce transaction costs, and expand market reach, thereby reinforcing their strategic positioning. In the context of this study, the Platform Ecosystem Theory helps explain the structural and strategic design choices that firms make to attract partners, retain users, and build sustainable ecosystems capable of continuously generating new forms of value in dynamic markets (Gawer & Cusumano, 2014).

2.2 Empirical Review

Peng, Wu, Chen, Cheng & Li (2019) aimed to understand the integration efforts and synergy within e-commerce ecosystems, particularly in rural China. By using systems theory, it explored the interdependencies between different e-commerce participants (such as buyers, sellers, and platform operators) and how their collaboration leads to performance improvement and value creation. The authors employed a large-scale survey conducted among rural users of Taobao (an online shopping platform), collecting data from over 500 respondents. The study utilized the Partial Least Squares (PLS) structural equation modeling (SEM) technique to validate the relationship between integration efforts, compatibility, synergy, and value creation. The study found that integration efforts (e.g., technology adoption, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnerships) directly contribute to synergy, which ultimately boosts value creation in rural e-commerce ecosystems. Furthermore, compatibility between different e-commerce stakeholders was found to be a critical enabler of realized synergy, which translated into performance improvements. The study recommended that e-commerce platforms targeting rural markets should focus on enhancing system integration and compatibility to achieve greater synergy. Platforms must also ensure that rural stakeholders (including sellers and logistics providers) are aligned with digital strategies to maximize performance and value creation.

Hu, Zhao & Jiang (2020) examined the role of digital resources in value creation within the competitive dynamics of e-commerce platform firms. It focused on how e-commerce companies orchestrate resources to enhance their competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving digital marketplace. The researchers conducted a qualitative study using a resource orchestration framework, based on data collected from China's online tourism industry. They used fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to explore different configurations of resource orchestration and how these configurations relate to competitive positioning and value creation.

The study revealed that e-commerce firms that successfully integrate digital technologies (such as cloud computing and big data analytics) with external partnerships (e.g., suppliers, logistics companies) can create unique competitive advantages. These advantages, in turn, lead to superior value creation by providing customers with enhanced experiences, personalized services, and timely deliveries. The study recommended that e-commerce firms adopt a more flexible approach to resource orchestration, focusing on leveraging both internal resources (technology, data) and external resources (partnerships, supplier networks). Platforms should focus on creating symbiotic relationships with partners to better serve customers and improve market positioning.

Rakhimova & Ramdhany (2023) investigated the relationship between digital technology adoption, business process management, organizational agility, and economic value creation in an e-commerce company in Uzbekistan. The authors aimed to highlight how the digitalization of operations influences organizational performance. The researchers used a quantitative approach, distributing surveys to 42 employees across an e-commerce company in Uzbekistan. They applied Partial Least Squares (PLS) modeling to analyze the relationships between digital adoption, process management, organizational agility, and value creation. The study found that the adoption of digital technologies significantly enhances business process management, which in turn improves organizational agility. These improvements were found to directly contribute to economic value creation, with companies seeing better cost efficiency, enhanced customer service, and faster time-to-market for products. The authors suggested that e-commerce companies should invest heavily in digital tools and platforms to streamline business processes and improve organizational agility. They emphasized that companies need to continuously adapt to emerging technologies to stay competitive and sustain growth.

Du, Li, Cui, Jia & Wu (2024) sought to understand the role of value-added services (VAS) in enhancing the competitiveness of e-commerce platforms. By adopting a game-theoretic approach, the authors aimed to model the strategic interactions between sellers, buyers, and platform providers. The authors applied game theory models to explore competitive dynamics within a bilateral e-commerce platform environment. They analyzed how value-added services, such as premium delivery options and customer support services, impact platform competitiveness. The study found that while basic services are necessary to attract users to the platform, value-added services determine the platform's ability to retain customers and generate sustainable revenue streams. The effectiveness of these services is also dependent on the platform's reputation and product offerings. The study recommended that e-commerce platforms diversify their service offerings by introducing high-quality value-added services that address customer needs, such as personalized shopping experiences and extended warranties. Platforms should also leverage user data to tailor services to individual preferences.

Ogbo, Ugwu, Enemuo & Ukpere (2019) assessed the potential of e-commerce in enhancing sustainable value creation for traditional open market retailers in Enugu State, Nigeria. It focused on identifying how e-commerce strategies could help these retailers overcome challenges such as market limitations and poor infrastructure. The authors employed a mixed-method approach, combining surveys with 234 traditional retailers and interviews to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to test relationships between e-commerce adoption and value creation. The study found that traditional

open market retailers who adopted e-commerce experienced increased sales, broader customer reach, and reduced operational costs. The transition to e-commerce was also linked to improvements in customer service and increased competition among retailers, contributing to overall market sustainability. The study recommended that local market retailers should embrace e-commerce platforms to expand their customer base, improve service delivery, and ensure business sustainability in the face of growing digital competition. Government and private sectors should also provide digital literacy training and infrastructure support to help small retailers adopt these digital tools.

Zhao (2024) explored how e-commerce strategies and technological advancements influence product competitive positioning in the retail industry in Beijing. The study aimed to provide a strategic plan for improving the market position of e-commerce firms. The author employed a descriptive study methodology, using data collected from managers and professionals in the e-commerce retail industry. The research focused on analyzing the impact of various e-commerce strategies, such as omnichannel integration, mobile commerce, and personalized recommendation systems. The study found that omnichannel strategies and personalized marketing campaigns were particularly effective in enhancing product visibility, increasing customer engagement, and improving product competitive positioning in digital markets. Technological innovations such as AI-driven recommendations and AR (augmented reality) features contributed significantly to customer loyalty and sales growth. The study emphasized the importance of adopting omnichannel retailing strategies and integrating AI technologies to create a seamless customer experience. Retailers should also focus on data analytics to personalize offerings and strengthen their competitive positioning.

Chirwa (2022) sought to understand the dynamics of value co-creation in the digital ecosystem, with a focus on mobile money services in Malawi. The study aimed to explore how digital platforms can foster collaboration among stakeholders and contribute to economic development. The study adopted a qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews with mobile money users, service providers, and regulators in Malawi. The analysis focused on the interactions and collaborations among these stakeholders to understand the co-creation of value. The study found that mobile money platforms facilitate value co-creation by connecting users, service providers, and regulators in a way that enhances financial inclusion. It also highlighted the role of partnerships and collaboration in creating shared value, which benefited both customers and providers. The study recommended that mobile money platforms should foster stronger partnerships with local businesses and regulators to enhance the reach and impact of digital financial services. Governments should also support digital literacy programs to increase adoption rates among underserved populations.

4.0 FINDINGS

This study presented both a contextual and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Chirwa (2022) sought to understand the dynamics of value co-creation in the digital ecosystem, with a focus on mobile money services in Malawi. The study adopted a qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews with mobile money users, service providers, and regulators in

Malawi. The analysis focused on the interactions and collaborations among these stakeholders to understand the co-creation of value. The study found that mobile money platforms facilitate value co-creation by connecting users, service providers, and regulators in a way that enhances financial inclusion. The study recommended that mobile money platforms should foster stronger partnerships with local businesses and regulators to enhance the reach and impact of digital financial services. On the other hand, the current study focused on investigating the influence of digital ecosystems on value creation and competitive positioning in the e-commerce industry.

Secondly, a methodological gap also presents itself, for example, in seeking to understand the dynamics of value co-creation in the digital ecosystem, Chriwa (2022) adopted a qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews with mobile money users, service providers and regulators in Malawi. Whereas, the current study adopted a desktop research method.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that digital ecosystems significantly influenced value creation mechanisms in the e-commerce industry by enabling seamless integration of technology, stakeholders, and processes across platforms. It was established that the digital ecosystem served as an enabling infrastructure that facilitated innovation, real-time collaboration, and scalability among e-commerce firms. The presence of interconnected platforms allowed for improved data utilization, customer personalization, and efficient resource allocation, all of which contributed to the creation of distinctive value for consumers. Through the digital ecosystem, e-commerce businesses were able to capitalize on customer feedback loops, cloud-based services, and AI-driven analytics to deliver hyper-personalized experiences that reinforced consumer loyalty and brand equity.

Additionally, it was found that digital ecosystems played a transformative role in shaping competitive positioning within the e-commerce landscape. Firms embedded within well-developed ecosystems were shown to enjoy competitive advantages in terms of agility, speed-to-market, operational resilience, and access to innovation. E-commerce companies that strategically aligned themselves with influential digital ecosystem orchestrators, such as cloud providers, fintech enablers, and social media giants, were better positioned to capture emerging market trends and shift consumer behaviors in their favor. As digital ecosystems matured, they redefined traditional market boundaries, encouraging new forms of strategic alliances, platform-based competition, and multi-sided business models.

Furthermore, the study concluded that the geographical context influenced how digital ecosystems impacted value creation and competitiveness. In mature economies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, e-commerce companies leveraged advanced digital infrastructure and consumer digital literacy to scale faster and innovate deeper. Conversely, in emerging economies like Brazil and Sub-Saharan African countries, digital ecosystems were found to be more fragmented but still impactful in reducing market frictions, enabling financial inclusion, and improving last-mile delivery. These regional dynamics suggested that while the structural components of digital ecosystems remained consistent, the contextual variables shaped their functionality and economic impact.

Ultimately, the study affirmed that the interplay between digital ecosystems and e-commerce operations led to a reconfiguration of firm capabilities, industry dynamics, and customer experiences. The evolving nature of ecosystem participation necessitated that firms continuously adapt, integrate, and co-innovate with various stakeholders to maintain relevance in hyper-competitive markets. It was also concluded that firms which invested in ecosystem orchestration, platform openness, and digital agility were more likely to secure sustainable growth and outperform their isolated competitors. The findings underscored the strategic imperative for e-commerce firms to treat digital ecosystem engagement not as a peripheral tactic, but as a central pillar of long-term value creation and competitive strategy.

5.2 Recommendations

From a theoretical standpoint, the study recommended the integration of ecosystem theory with value co-creation frameworks and dynamic capabilities theory to form a comprehensive analytical lens for examining digital commerce. It suggested that existing models of competitive advantage should be expanded to incorporate the modular and interdependent nature of digital ecosystems, where value is not solely derived from firm-level assets but from the synergistic interaction of multiple actors. The study contributed to theoretical development by proposing that digital ecosystems be treated as meta-organizations that transcend traditional firm boundaries, thereby reshaping strategic management paradigms. It advocated for more longitudinal and interdisciplinary research to further develop ecosystem-based theories of firm competitiveness in the digital era.

Practically, the study recommended that e-commerce firms prioritize their positioning within digital ecosystems through deliberate ecosystem orchestration strategies. Firms were encouraged to form symbiotic partnerships with key ecosystem actors such as payment gateways, logistics providers, AI-driven marketing platforms, and data aggregators. This would allow businesses to leverage complementary capabilities, reduce operational silos, and accelerate service innovation. The study urged practitioners to adopt modular business architectures and API-based integrations to facilitate smoother participation within dynamic digital environments. Businesses were also advised to invest in talent and digital upskilling programs to enhance their internal ecosystem-readiness and responsiveness to emerging trends.

The study also made specific recommendations for firms operating in developing economies. These firms were advised to embrace platform inclusivity by onboarding informal retailers, community influencers, and local service providers into their ecosystems. This inclusive approach was projected to increase market penetration, stimulate local economic activity, and improve cultural adaptability of digital services. The study stressed the importance of designing context-sensitive digital solutions that addressed infrastructural limitations, literacy gaps, and regulatory constraints. E-commerce firms were further advised to actively participate in public-private digital initiatives aimed at expanding broadband access, mobile penetration, and e-payment infrastructures in underdeveloped regions.

In terms of policy, the study recommended that governments and regulatory bodies design frameworks that support open and competitive digital ecosystems. This included enforcing interoperability standards, ensuring data privacy, and preventing monopolistic behaviors by

dominant platforms. Policymakers were encouraged to invest in national digital transformation strategies that support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in integrating with regional and global e-commerce ecosystems. Tax incentives, digital literacy campaigns, and infrastructure subsidies were proposed as ways to stimulate ecosystem participation and foster digital entrepreneurship.

Additionally, the study recommended the formulation of policies that promote cross-border e-commerce and digital trade within and across regions. Governments were urged to harmonize data governance standards and customs procedures to enable frictionless digital transactions. For Sub-Saharan African nations in particular, the establishment of regional e-commerce corridors and digital infrastructure investments was highlighted as a critical enabler of ecosystem growth. Regulatory sandboxes were suggested as innovative tools to test ecosystem innovations without stifling creativity or market entry. It was concluded that proactive, adaptive, and inclusive policy frameworks were vital to realizing the full potential of digital ecosystems in e-commerce.

Finally, the study made broader contributions to digital transformation agendas by highlighting the importance of stakeholder collaboration. It emphasized that value creation in digital ecosystems required coordinated efforts from firms, governments, academia, and civil society. Multistakeholder governance models were proposed to ensure that ecosystem benefits were distributed equitably and that vulnerable groups were not excluded. The study argued that digital ecosystems should be treated as public-interest infrastructures where innovation, competitiveness, and inclusivity could co-exist. This holistic perspective was expected to inform future strategies for sustainable digital development, particularly in the fast-evolving global e-commerce sector.

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