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Canva As A Digital Tool For Effective University Student Presentation Experience

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ABSTRACT

This study examined university students' perceptions of Canva as a digital tool for academic presentations, focusing on usability, functionality, and its impact on presentation experience. A total of 110 students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang participated, responding to a Likert-scale questionnaire and open-ended questions. The findings revealed strong agreement on Canva's ease of use (M = 4.53), visual appeal (M = 4.45), and confidence enhancement (M = 4.38). The instrument showed high internal reliability (α = 0.964 for usability, α = 0.930 for presentation experience). Qualitative feedback reinforced these results, highlighting Canva's drag-and-drop interface, templates, and multimedia features as key strengths, while also noting limitations such as Pro content restrictions and internet reliance. These results align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), particularly students' high Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness, which influence their continued intention to use Canva. The platform also reflects principles from Multimodal Learning Theory, enabling students to combine visual, textual, and audio elements for more engaging, meaningful presentations.The study

concludes that Canva supports creativity, reduces anxiety, and enhances message clarity, making it a relevant and learner-centered tool in higher education. It recommends institutional adoption of Canva, subscription to Canva for Education, and structured training for both students and educators. Overall, Canva demonstrates strong potential to foster digital literacy and improve communication skills across academic contexts.

Keywords: Canva, presentation tools, technology acceptance model, visual communication, tertiary education

INTRODUCTION

Presentations have become an essential component of academic success across a wide range of university programmes. Whether in engineering, hotel and tourism management, business, or language studies, students are frequently required to present their ideas, research findings, or project outcomes to both peers and instructors. These presentations are not merely for evaluative purposes; they also develop critical communication, organisation, and design skills. As the expectations for clear and impactful delivery continue to rise, the ability to create effective and engaging presentations has become increasingly significant in tertiary education.

The shift toward learner-centred, technology-enhanced pedagogies has further foregrounded the importance of visually compelling student presentations. Today's undergraduates are not only expected to excel in knowledge acquisition but also to visualise and communicate ideas effectively in ways that engage digitally literate audiences. While PowerPoint has been the primary tool in educational settings and has been proven to add significant value to teaching and learning (see, for instance, Savoy et al., 2009), more recent tools such as Canva have gained popularity, especially in presentations. Canva has an intuitive interface with drag-and-drop features, professionally designed templates, and collaborative functions, thus making it an accessible platform for high-quality design (Pedroso et al., 2023). Studies in online and blended learning contexts suggest that Canva promotes student engagement and supports creative expression (Christiana & Anwar, 2021), enhances creativity and presentation skills in the modern workforce (Mutmainnah et al., 2024) and shows positive learning outcomes, particularly in communication-based subjects (Astaño, 2025). This demonstrates the importance of digital presentation tools in fostering inclusive and sustainable learning as well as accommodating diverse learning preferences (Anandha et al., 2025). This application is highly employed among Generation Z due to its creative features, aesthetic appeal, and enjoyable user experience, thus making it widely accepted as a preferred platform for producing engaging and visually impactful presentations (Maulana et al., 2024).

Despite these developments, research on Canva's effectiveness at the tertiary level remains limited, particularly from the perspective of presentation experience. This study therefore, aims to explore how Canva shapes students' presentation experiences in university settings, focusing on usability, design quality, collaboration, and confidence. The research addresses two key objectives:

1. To evaluate students' perceptions of Canva's usability for academic presentations.
2. To examine the impact of Canva-based slide design on students' self-reported presentation confidence compared with conventional slideware.

The findings aim to support educators in integrating digital presentation platforms into assessment tasks and contribute to the growing conversation on student-created multimedia in higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Presentation Tools in Education

Over the past two decades, a wide range of digital presentation tools has been introduced and adopted in educational settings, each aiming to enhance how information is communicated and how students engage with learning materials. Among the earliest and most widely used is Microsoft PowerPoint, which has long served as the default medium for classroom and academic presentations due to its accessibility, linear structure, and ease of use. However, as educational technology evolved, so did expectations from both educators and learners to be visually engaging during presentations. This led to the emergence of tools like Prezi, which offered a non-linear, zoomable canvas that allowed presenters to display the whole picture and connect between ideas more creatively (Akgün et al., 2016). Studies have compared the advantages between PowerPoint and Prezi, and Chou et al. (2015) reveal that while Prezi supports immediate knowledge acquisition, PowerPoint continues to offer advantages in long-term retention. This is influenced by the different presentation styles between PowerPoint and Prezi.

The evolution of digital tools has not stopped there. In recent years, platforms like Canva have gained popularity, particularly among Generation Z students, for their design-friendly interfaces, customisable templates, and collaborative features. Originally developed by Melanie Perkins in 2012, Canva is a web-based graphic design platform that employs a drag-and-drop interface, offering a wide array of templates, fonts, vectors, and high-quality stock images integrated from Pixabay and Pexels. It supports a wide range of formats, including JPEG, PNG, and PDF, and is accessible in over 100 languages across 190 countries (Gehred, 2020). Canva's flexibility makes it suitable not only for marketing and social media design but also for educational purposes (Hinchcliff & Mehmet, 2023), particularly in creating visually appealing learning materials and multimedia content. In relation to learning materials, Jamaludin and Sedek (2023) explored the role of Canva as a digital note-taking and teaching tool. They found that the majority of students familiarised themselves with Canva and preferred it over Microsoft PowerPoint for creating comprehensive and visually engaging notes.

Further affirming Canva's pedagogical relevance, Zainal Abidin et al. (2025) investigated its use in multimedia and interactive subjects. Their findings revealed high levels of engagement, improved comprehension, and effective collaboration when students used Canva to develop educational content. This further indicates that Canva's design and multimedia are fully feasible to be used in learning, especially in note-taking and content development.

Collectively, these studies reinforce the view that Canva is not merely a design tool but a transformative educational platform that supports multimodal engagement, skill development, and meaningful learning experiences.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two theoretical foundations which are the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Multimodal Learning Theory. This is mainly to explore students' perceptions of Canva as a digital presentation tool. These frameworks jointly inform the analysis of both the adoption of Canva and its educational impact on learner engagement, confidence, and content delivery.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by Davis (1989) highlights that two key factors influence individuals' intention to use a particular technology: Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU).

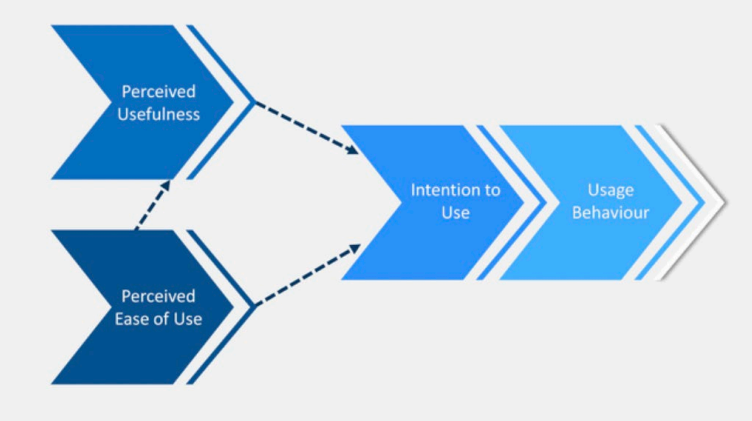

Figure 1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

PEOU refers to the extent to which a person believes that using the system would be free of effort, while PU is defined as the degree to which the technology enhances task performance. When users perceive a tool to be easy and beneficial, their attitude and behavioural intention toward it improve, leading to actual use (Unal & Uzun, 2021). In their study, Unal and Uzun (2021) extended TAM to investigate students' behavioural intentions toward using Edmodo, an educational social networking site. Their findings emphasise the importance of attitude as the strongest predictor of intention, followed by perceived usefulness. Importantly, perceived ease of use was found to directly influence both perceived usefulness and attitude, thereby indirectly shaping behavioural intention. This pathway demonstrates the model's predictive strength and relevance in technology-enhanced learning environments.

In the present study, TAM is employed to explain how students' perceptions of Canva's user-friendly interface, drag-and-drop functionality, and visually engaging templates contribute to their willingness to adopt it for academic purposes. Students' high ratings for ease of use and usefulness

are interpreted through this model, reinforcing TAM's core proposition that perceived benefits and usability are key drivers of technology acceptance.

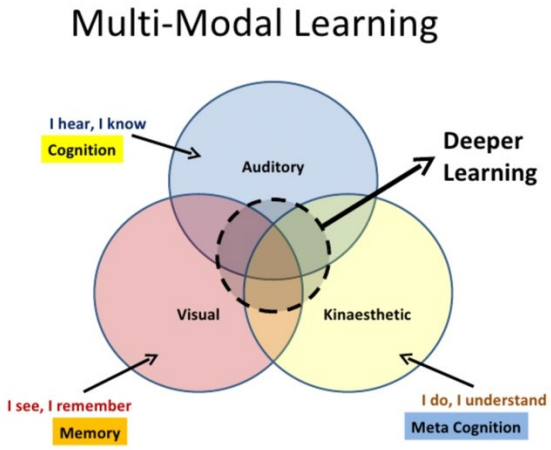

Figure 2. Multimodal Learning Theory

Complementing TAM is the Multimodal Learning Theory, which provides a pedagogical lens to understand how Canva's design features support student learning. Grounded in Mayer's (2002) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, the multimodal approach emphasises the integration of different sensory modes, such as visual, auditory and textual to facilitate knowledge acquisition. This theory suggests that learning is more effective when information is delivered using multiple channels, which reduces cognitive overload and strengthens retention (Haule et al., 2024; Gatchalian & Leon, 2023). Canva's features, such as drag-and-drop visual elements, audio features, animations, and self-recording tools, are consistent with these principles and provide cognitive scaffolding, especially for learners and those experiencing anxiety during public speaking.

Taken together, TAM and Multimodal Learning Theory offer a comprehensive framework that addresses both the technological adoption and pedagogical effectiveness of Canva. The integration of these models allows the study to examine not only students' attitudes and behavioural intention to use Canva, but also the extent to which its multimodal features enhance learning outcomes, such as confidence, engagement, and message clarity.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to examine students' perceptions of Canva as a digital presentation tool, focusing on its usability, functionality, and influence on presentation experience. The study also aimed to understand how Canva supports confidence, engagement, and creativity in academic communication. The data were collected using purposive sampling involving students from various programmes at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang**.** The participants comprised male and female learners from different faculties, including the Faculty of Engineering (encompassing various disciplines such as Civil, Mechanical, Chemical and Electrical Engineering), the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, and the Faculty of Health Sciences.

A total of 110 participants completed the survey, which was administered through an online questionnaire**.** All participants had prior exposure to Canva in their academic coursework. The instrument used was a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire designed to capture both functional and experiential aspects of Canva use. The survey was divided into four sections. Section A collected demographic data such as age, gender, semester, and faculty. Section B included 10 items related to the ease of use and features of Canva. Section C contained 8 items focusing on students' experiences using Canva during presentations. Section D comprised 4 open-ended questions which aimed to gain further insights into students' opinions, challenges, and comparisons with other tools. To measure the internal consistency of the survey constructs, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.964 for Section B and 0.930 for Section C, indicating a high level of internal reliability. These results suggest that the items within each section consistently measure the intended underlying constructs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study, beginning with participants' perceptions of Canva's ease of use. As one of the core constructs in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), *ease of use* is critical in determining users' intention to adopt a digital tool. The data collected through the survey reveals how participants evaluate Canva's usability in terms of its features, accessibility, and functionality. The following table summarises the participants' agreement levels on several items related to Canva's ease of use.

Ease of Use

To address the first research objective, participants were asked to evaluate the ease of use and functional features of Canva as a presentation tool. Ten Likert-scale items were used to measure their responses. Descriptive analysis revealed that participants generally perceived Canva as an intuitive and accessible platform for creating presentations.

Table 1. Mean for Ease of Use of Canva

NO	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
OBJ 1A.	Canva is easy to learn and use for slide creation.	4.53	0.700
OBJ 1B.	The drag-and-drop interface in Canva is user-friendly.	4.32	0.741
OBJ 1C.	Canva offers a wide range of useful templates for academic presentations.	4.42	0.682
OBJ 1D.	Canva helps me produce more visually appealing slides than other tools.	4.46	0.699
OBJ 1E.	Canva allows me to present my ideas more clearly through visuals.	4.41	0.695
OBJ 1F.	The design features in Canva improve the quality of my presentation slides.	4.45	0.672
OBJ 1G.	Canva helps me organise my presentation content more effectively.	4.40	0.706

OBJ 1H.	Canva supports easy collaboration with group members.	4.51	0.701
OBJ 1I.	I prefer using Canva over other presentation tools.	4.50	0.701
OBJ 1J.	I will likely continue using Canva for future academic presentations.	4.53	0.700

As shown in Table 1, participants rated the statement *"Canva is easy to learn and use for slide creation"* the highest, with a mean score of 4.53 (SD = 0.700)**.** This was followed closely by items such as *"I will likely continue using Canva for future academic presentations"* **(**M = 4.53, SD = 0.700**)** and *"Canva supports easy collaboration with group members"* **(**M = 4.51, SD = 0.701**),** suggesting that participants not only appreciated the tool's ease of use but were also inclined to continue using it beyond the scope of the course.

Participants also strongly agreed that Canva offered user-friendly features such as its drag-and-drop interface **(**M = 4.32, SD = 0.741**)** and a wide selection of academic templates **(**M = 4.42, SD = 0.682**).** The design aspects were particularly valued, with statements such as *"Canva helps me produce more visually appealing slides than other tools"* **(**M = 4.46, SD = 0.699**)** and *"The design features in Canva improve the quality of my presentation slides"* **(**M = 4.45, SD = 0.672**)** receiving favorable responses.

Moreover, Canva was seen as a helpful tool in enhancing message clarity and content organisation. Students agreed that *"Canva allows me to present my ideas more clearly through visuals"* **(**M = 4.41, SD = 0.695**)** and *"Canva helps me organise my presentation content more effectively"* **(**M = 4.40, SD = 0.706**).** These responses support the notion that Canva not only aids in aesthetics but also contributes to the cognitive structuring of content.

Lastly, the item *"I prefer using Canva over other presentation tools"* received a mean of 4.50 (SD = 0.701)**,** reinforcing the idea that Canva is emerging as the preferred choice among digital natives for academic presentations. These findings collectively suggest that Canva excels in both functional usability and user satisfaction, making it a valuable tool in the higher education learning environment.

Canva's Impact on Students' Presentation Experience

The second objective explored participants' perceptions of how Canva influenced their actual presentation experience, including engagement, confidence, anxiety reduction, and message delivery. Eight Likert-scale items were used for this purpose.

Table 2. Mean for Students' Presentation Experience

NO	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
PE 2A.	Using Canva increased my confidence in presenting my topic.	4.25	0.880
PE 2B.	I felt more prepared because my slides looked more professional.	4.36	0.710

PE 2C.	The visual design of my slides helped me convey my message more effectively.	4.36	0.751
PE 2D.	My audience appeared more engaged during my Canva-based presentation.	4.32	0.729
PE 2E.	I received positive feedback from peers/lecturers about my Canva slides.	4.25	0.771
PE 2F.	I experienced less anxiety when presenting with Canva slides.	4.07	0.875
PE 2G.	Canva's layout and visuals helped me remember my key points during the presentation.	4.27	0.765
PE 2H.	I believe Canva made my presentation more interesting for the audience.	4.45	0.685

Based on Table 2, the highest-rated item was "*I believe Canva made my presentation more interesting for the audience*," with a mean score of 4.45 (SD = 0.685). This suggests that the participants found Canva's visual features effective in capturing audience attention and boosting engagement. Similarly, participants agreed that "*I felt more prepared because my slides looked more professional*" and "*The visual design of my slides helped me convey my message more effectively,*" both with mean scores of 4.36. These results imply that the substantial improvement by Canva's design tools gave the participants greater confidence in the content and delivery of their presentations. Participants also acknowledged Canva's role in improving audience engagement, with "*My audience appeared more engaged during my Canva-based presentation*" receiving a mean score of 4.32. This indicates that Canva's layout and visuals likely contributed to better message delivery and visual appeal. Confidence and reduced anxiety were also noted in the item "*Using Canva increased my confidence in presenting my topic*" which scored a mean of 4.25, while "*I experienced less anxiety when presenting with Canva slides*" scored the lowest among the items at 4.07 (SD = 0.875), though still indicating general agreement.

In terms of cognitive support, the participants responded positively to the item "*Canva's layout and visuals helped me remember my key points during the presentation*" (M = 4.27, SD = 0.765). This suggests that visual elements aided memory recall, reducing the cognitive burden often experienced during live presentations. Additionally, "*I received positive feedback from peers/lecturers about my Canva slides*" also recorded a mean of 4.25, reflecting external affirmation of the tool's effectiveness. Collectively, these results indicate that Canva not only improved the visual quality of the participants' presentations but also positively influenced their psychological readiness, audience interaction, and content clarity. The data underscores Canva's potential as a pedagogical tool that supports both the cognitive and affective dimensions of participant learning in academic communication tasks.

The open-ended responses further reinforced the trends observed in the quantitative data. Specifically, 68.2% of participants mentioned Canva's templates and layout features as the most useful, while 57.3% highlighted its overall ease of use. The platform's multimedia and animation tools were noted by 26.4% of participants, who appreciated features such as background removal, visual elements, and audio integration. These preferences align with the high mean scores in the Likert-scale items related to Canva's design quality and its ability to help participants organise

presentation content effectively. Although no participant explicitly used the terms "confidence" or "anxiety," the Likert data indicated moderate agreement that Canva reduced presentation anxiety (M = 4.07) and increased confidence (M = 4.25), suggesting indirect support for these affective benefits.

Despite these advantages, 38.2% of participants expressed frustration with Canva's Pro-only content, citing that premium templates and media were inaccessible without a subscription. Additionally, 19.1% raised concerns about internet connectivity, which affected Canva's performance during preparation or live presentations. When asked to compare Canva with other presentation tools, 41.8% of participants described it as more creative, engaging, and modern than alternatives such as Microsoft PowerPoint. This preference appears to stem from several key factors. First, participants praised Canva's aesthetic design templates, which allowed them to produce visually polished slides with ease. Unlike PowerPoint, which often requires manual layout adjustments, Canva's drag-and-drop feature and curated designs help reduce preparation time while maintaining professional quality. Second, participants emphasised Canva's integration of multimedia elements such as animations, self-recording features, image filters, and background removal as a major strength. These tools enabled the creation of more interactive and dynamic content, contributing to better audience engagement. The simplicity with which participants could apply these features, often without prior technical experience, was frequently cited as a reason for preferring Canva.

Third, Canva's accessibility emerged as a significant factor in facilitating group work and real-time collaboration. The ability to co-edit slides from different devices and locations proved especially useful for team assignments. In contrast, PowerPoint was viewed as more desktop-reliant and less efficient for collaborative editing. Finally, the participants noted that Canva aligns better with modern digital communication trends, especially in terms of visual storytelling and content sharing. Its user interface and design experience reflect tools commonly used in social media and digital content platforms. As one of the participants remarked that *Canva feels more modern and visually interesting, it's not just slides, it's storytelling*.

These findings echo and extend those reported in earlier studies. Prior research has consistently recognised Canva's pedagogical potential in fostering engagement, creativity, and multimodal learning (Jamaludin & Sedek, 2023; Zainal Abidin et al., 2025; Anggraeni & Pentury, 2022). In this study, students' appreciation of Canva's templates, intuitive layout, and multimedia integration aligns with previous literature highlighting Canva's strength as a learner-centred and flexible design tool. The emphasis on usability also supports Gehred's (2020) description of Canva's drag-and-drop format and versatile features. These patterns reflect key constructs in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), particularly perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, which were shown by Unal and Uzun (2021) to significantly influence students' behavioural intentions toward digital learning platforms. Additionally, the positive reception of Canva's visual and multimedia features aligns with Multimodal Learning Theory, suggesting that learners benefit from combining text, images, animations, and audio to enhance comprehension and retention.

These factors collectively suggest that Canva's dominance in participant preference is driven not only by its technical capabilities but also by its alignment with students' digital habits, aesthetic

expectations, and desire for intuitive, creative tools. While PowerPoint remains valuable in offline contexts or for traditional formatting needs, Canva's perceived superiority is strongly linked to its flexibility, functionality, and collaborative design features. In summary, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that Canva enhances both the design and delivery aspects of academic presentations. Participants valued its visual appeal, usability, and impact on presentation confidence and clarity. However, challenges related to premium access and internet reliability highlight the need for institutional support, such as providing Canva for Education licenses or ensuring adequate digital infrastructure. Thus, when interpreted through the lenses of TAM and Multimodal Learning Theory, the results confirm that Canva meets both the technological acceptance criteria and the pedagogical demands of visually driven, learner-centred education. These insights affirm the growing role of digital tools in education and position Canva as a relevant, accessible, and engaging platform for contemporary learners.

Given the clear preference for Canva among the participants, driven by its ease of use, visually engaging templates, multimedia integration, and collaborative capabilities, it is essential that educators acknowledge and respond to these evolving learner expectations. As digital natives, today's learners gravitate toward platforms that support intuitive navigation, visual storytelling, and interactive design. Integrating such tools into classroom instruction not only enhances engagement but also aligns with their preferred modes of content creation and communication. Therefore, educators are encouraged to incorporate Canva and similar platforms into their pedagogical approaches, especially for presentation tasks, language learning, and project-based activities. Doing so not only meets learners where they are but also fosters the development of digital literacy, creativity, and confidence, skills that are increasingly essential in both academic and professional environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explored the perceptions of 110 students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang regarding the use of Canva as a digital presentation tool. The findings indicate that students hold a positive view of Canva, particularly in terms of its usability, creative flexibility, and overall contribution to effective presentations. Quantitative data revealed high mean scores for ease of use (M = 4.53), visual design support, and confidence enhancement. These results suggest that Canva not only facilitates user-friendly interaction but also enhances both the cognitive and affective dimensions of student presentations, improving the clarity of the message, audience engagement, and reducing presentation anxiety.

These outcomes are well-aligned with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), where students' positive evaluations of Canva's ease of use and perceived usefulness significantly contribute to their intention to adopt and continue using the tool for academic purposes. The high ratings and favourable qualitative feedback reflect strong Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness, which are central constructs in TAM (Davis, 1989). In addition, Canva's features like multimedia integration, drag-and-drop functions, and ready-made design templates reflect what Multimodal Learning Theory suggests: that students learn better when information is presented through a mix of visuals, text, and interactive elements. Canva's layout made it easier for students to combine these modes, which helped improve their understanding, recall, and creativity during presentation tasks.

Qualitative responses further reinforced these findings, as students praised Canva's templates, multimedia functions, and customisable design features as key advantages. However, some limitations were noted, including restricted access to Pro features and dependency on stable internet connectivity. These concerns echo issues raised in previous studies (e.g., Syahdan et al., 2023; Hidayati, 2023) which emphasise the need to address digital inequality and infrastructure gaps in higher education contexts.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions formally integrate Canva into language, communication, and presentations to maximise its pedagogical benefits. A structured training session should be provided for both students and educators, ensuring the use of the platform's tools. Institutions are also encouraged to subscribe to Canva for Education, offering students full access to premium features and mitigating financial barriers. While Canva has proven to be a valuable educational resource, a blended approach is advisable. Allowing students to choose between Canva and more traditional tools like PowerPoint ensures inclusivity and adaptability according to task requirements, digital literacy levels, and internet access. Future research should explore the long-term effects of Canva on presentation performance and engagement across disciplines and among learners of different proficiencies.

In conclusion, this study affirms Canva's relevance and value as a digital tool that enhances student presentations by supporting TAM-based technology acceptance and multimodal learning engagement**.** Canva fosters creativity, reduces anxiety, and promotes 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, collaboration, and visual communication, making it a timely and impactful resource in modern higher education settings.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Authors' Contributions

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: Study conception and design: Syahirah Ramli (quantitative component), Dr. Nur Husna Serip Mohamad (qualitative component); Data collection: SR collected quantitative data, while NHSM conducted qualitative data collection; Analysis and interpretation of results: SR conducted statistical analysis of the quantitative data, and NHSM carried out thematic analysis of the qualitative data; Draft manuscript preparation: SR and NHSM. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.