



Leveraging Economic Diplomacy and Digital Strategies for Sub-Saharan Sustainable Economic Development Growth: A Case of Zanzibar, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study analyses the influence of economic diplomacy and digitalization on enhancing diplomatic relations for Sub-Saharan economic development growth, with a focus on Tanzania's interactions with other countries in the region. A descriptive research design was utilized, involving the development of a questionnaire that addressed specific issues, with responses measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The data was collected through its administration to 288 employees of the protocol department at the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation with 276 responses being utilized. The Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha method was employed to assess the internal consistency of the research instruments, revealing that all variables achieved a reliability scale exceeding 0.7, which is deemed acceptable. Following the successful analysis of the data collected through regression, the study's objectives were achieved. The findings of this study indicate that the digital transformation of diplomacy have facilitated interaction and collaboration between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan countries. This study concludes that digital diplomacy are essential for advancing bilateral relations, as diplomatic transformation has evolved alongside technological advancements. The study recommends that governments should leverage the internet and technology to enhance their responses and develop increasingly secure systems, implementing the appropriate technological tools for stronger protection.

Keywords: *Economic Diplomacy; Digital Diplomacy; Sustainable Development; Sub-Saharan Economy; SPSS.*

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1. Introduction

The evolution of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has had a significant impact on diplomacy in the modern era. ICTs have transformed communication and information sharing, altering social, political, and economic environments worldwide [1]. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) provide less developed countries with opportunities to bypass traditional industrialization and transition to high value-added information economies capable of competing with advanced economies in the global market [2]. The integration and utilization of information and communication technologies for development are occurring at different paces and to differing extents throughout the African continent. For Tanzania to effectively collaborate and realize a vision for a digital and interconnected market, it is imperative that governments acknowledge their 14 distinct roles in nurturing and overseeing the progression of the digital economy. Governments might emphasize a transformative shift in the relationship between businesses and citizens within the local economy by leveraging digital tools and services to enhance current infrastructure and institutions, while also drawing insights from neighboring regions and counterparts. They might also

harmonies their economies with those of Africa and the global community, consequently enhancing citizen participation and overall well-being. The realm of diplomacy has certainly been influenced by these diverse transformations and contemporary global trends advocating for digitization and data-driven solutions to humanity's challenges. The notion of digital diplomacy often referred to as e-diplomacy or virtual diplomacy has evolved into a widely accepted concept across various regions of the globe, especially in the western world, since its emergence in 2001. The notion represents a postmodern tradition that is currently reshaping the practice of diplomacy and is in urgent need of greater academic scrutiny. This recent development has significantly influenced the fundamental aspects of diplomacy, encompassing negotiation, representation and communication. Diplomats and diplomatic missions are thus necessitated to modify their traditional practices to remain attuned to the ongoing transformations driven by the Internet and to maintain their relevance within the contemporary information landscape [3].

As nations in Sub-Saharan Africa advance towards a cohesive digital marketplace and a shared agenda for digital transformation, the alignment of national ICT strategies and regulatory frameworks

assumes greater significance. In this context, governments play a pivotal role in guiding the digital evolution of their economies. Irrespective of the prevailing religious or political frameworks, the practice of engaging with ancestors was a highly esteemed tradition throughout Sub-Saharan regions during that period. Most communication during that period was of an analogue nature. The advancements in technology have undeniably transformed numerous communities, particularly within Tanzanian societies. Tanzania has made significant strides and accomplished much in the realm of the digital economy in recent times. The pervasive nature of the internet and social media has fostered a diverse array of digital and postmodern cultures globally, with a notable emphasis on the Sub-Saharan region. Within these diverse cultures, spanning from e-commerce to e-government, the digital economy presents a multitude of implications for enhancing diplomatic relations in Tanzania. The realm of digital diplomacy in Sub-Saharan has been insufficiently explored by scholars with an Afro-centric perspective [4]. This study represents a significant advancement in the exploration of digital transformation and diplomacy in Tanzania, serving as a prime example among Sub-Saharan countries.

2. Literature Reviews

Diplomacy is a word that roughly defines the rationale behind interstate conduct in the management of relations between nation-states [5]. The established process by which states coordinate their efforts to influence the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiations, and other such measures, short of war and violence, is known as the "engine room" of international relations [6]. It refers to the centuries-old methods used by states to protect specific or broader interests, such as lowering tensions within or among themselves. It is the main tool used to carry out foreign policy's objectives, plans, and general strategies. It works to maintain peace and cultivate goodwill towards other nations and peoples in order to secure their collaboration or, in the absence of that, their neutrality [7].

Currently, digital diplomacy is a fundamental component of foreign policy. State and non-state entities battle for influence and power inside the same online environment. That region today accommodates over 3 billion individuals, the majority of whom use the internet exclusively via their mobile phones. When utilized effectively, digital diplomacy serves as a compelling and prompt adjunct to conventional diplomacy, enabling a nation to further its foreign policy objectives, broaden its global presence and sway individuals who may never visit any of the world's embassies [8].

A 2019 survey conducted by Twiplomacy highlights the initiatives of certain African leaders, including Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta, Ghana's Nana Akufo-Ado, and Rwanda's Paul Kagame, in leveraging social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for diplomatic purposes. The study indicates that although the Kenyan president boasts a substantial following on Twitter, totaling 7 million followers, Rwanda's Paul Kagame stands out as one of the most engaging figures on the platform. Kagame boasts a total of 2.5 million followers across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The same study indicates that Ghana's Akufo-Ado has 421,000 followers on Instagram. While the three leaders highlighted serve as prime examples of African leaders embracing digital diplomacy, numerous others still fall short in adopting even the most fundamental aspects of this practice.

According to Twiplomacy, the leaders of Eritrea, Mauritania and Swaziland do not have a presence on Facebook. A concerning observation is that the other African nations utilize social media in a rather ordinary manner, not solely for foreign policy and diplomatic communications. Often, communications that were originally designed for domestic audiences are repurposed for diplomatic use when necessary [9].

The researcher aimed to empirically demonstrate that despite the low Internet and social media penetration in African countries (from 1.9% in Rwanda to 47.3% in Kenya), their Ministries of Foreign Affairs maintain websites, Facebook accounts, and Twitter channels to further their foreign policy objectives. African MFAs engage audiences on social media similarly to their Western counterparts, and in certain instances, they exhibit higher levels of online activity than these counterparts. The investigation indicated that, at the time of the study, Ethiopia's MFA had 34.6k Twitter followers, Kenya's MFA had 52.8k followers, and Rwanda's MFA had 16k followers. The findings from Manor's 45 investigations corroborated an earlier study he conducted in the same year with two colleagues. This study aimed to compare the MFAs of three African countries with those of Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and France, among other nations, specifically regarding the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) for diplomatic purposes. The study indicated that African MFAs are among the most active on social networking sites, implying a reduction in certain dimensions of the digital divide. Although African countries may exhibit lower levels of internet penetration, computer infrastructure, and internet accessibility compared to Western nations, African governments appear to demonstrate a comparable, if not greater, commitment to engagement than their Western counterparts [10].

3. Objectives

This study will examine the following objectives:

1. To investigate the impact of digital transformation on Tanzania's diplomatic relations with other Sub-Saharan nations.
2. To explore and list the factors those make digital transformation essential as a means of enhancing diplomacy in Sub-Saharan nations.
3. To delineate the impact of digital change on enhanced diplomatic relations between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations.

4. Methodology

The nature of the study was both descriptive and empirical. Data were gathered from personnel within the protocol department of the protocol department at the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The researcher employed convenience sampling in this study. A meticulously crafted questionnaire was devised and disseminated among employees. The survey was segmented into two distinct sections: A and B. Section A comprised personal data, whereas Section B consisted of questions and statements formatted on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, designed to capture the respondents' perspectives on the investigated subject. A total of 288 questionnaires were disseminated among the employees, resulting in 278 responses being returned from the

participants, of which 276 were deemed suitable for analysis. The analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS software, employing descriptive data analysis techniques such as percentage, mean and standard deviation to elucidate the distribution of the samples.

TABLE 1: Summary of Responses

Items	Number of Copies	Percentage
No. of Questionnaire Distributed	288	100
No. of Questionnaire Returned	278	96.5
No. of Questionnaire Useful	276	95.8

5. Data Analysis and Results

The subsequent section elucidates the descriptive statistics pertaining to the demographic characteristics. The demographic characteristics encompass gender, age, qualifications and management level.

TABLE 2: Gender of Respondents

	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	194	69.9	69.9
Female	82	30.1	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 illustrates the gender breakdown among the responses. The table indicates that a substantial majority of respondents at the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation were male (69.9%), whereas females comprised 30.1%. This indicates a predominance of males in the protocol department at the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; nonetheless, the responses were unaffected by gender.

TABLE 3: Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Below 25	50	19.2	19.2
25 to Below 35	102	36.5	55.7
35 to Below 45	68	24.6	80.5
45 years and above	54	19.5	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 presents the ages of the respondents within the protocol department at the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and

International Cooperation. 19.2% fall under the age of 25, 36.5% are aged between 25 and 34, 24.6% are within the range of 35 to 44, and 19.5% exceed the age of 45. This suggests that a significant portion of the employees are young who are in the process of developing their careers. They are likely to be open to acquiring new knowledge pertinent to their professional growth and enhancing their understanding of the subject matter.

TABLE 4: Educational Qualification

	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
National Diplomas	40	14.8	14.8
Graduate	188	67.6	82.4
Post-Graduate	46	17.6	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 presents the educational qualifications of the respondents. According to the data, 14.8% of respondents possess National Diplomas, 67.6% hold graduate degrees and 17.6% have obtained postgraduate degrees. Most respondents possess graduate degrees as their minimum qualification and it is anticipated that they have encountered the concept of digital transformation during their studies. This indicates that the majority of respondents possess the qualifications necessary to provide credible information on the topic.

TABLE 5: Years of Experience

	Frequency	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Below 5	28	9.7	9.7
5 to Below 10	44	16.3	26.0
10 to Below 15	100	36.2	62.2
15 years and above	104	37.8	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

Table 5 delineates the classifications of personnel within the protocol department at the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. It was noted that 9.7 percent of employees possessed less than 5 years of experience, 16.3 percent had 5 to less than 10 years of experience, 36.2 percent had 10 to less than 15 years of experience, and 37.8 percent had 15 years or more of experience. The majority of staff has been employed in the protocol department at the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for over 10 years. This indicates that the majority of these employees have participated in the official communications between Tanzania and the diplomatic/international community, therefore enabling them to answer correctly.

TABLE 6: Digital transformation improved diplomacy for Tanzania with other Sub-Saharan countries

No.	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The digital transformation of communication has significantly enhanced the operational efficacy of the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, enabling the establishment of more robust and effective channels of interaction with Sub-Saharan nations.	276	4.13	0.728
2	The Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is equipped with contemporary conference rooms that facilitate electronic negotiations with other Sub-Saharan nations.	276	3.67	0.911
3	The Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation actively interacts with diplomats stationed overseas through online chat forums and consultation meetings.	276	4.23	0.706
4	We employ ICT in our ministry to enhance our relationship with other Sub-Saharan countries regarding international trade issues, thereby eliminating distance barriers.	276	1.89	0.684
5	The advent of digital diplomacy has significantly augmented the bilateral and multilateral relationships between Tanzania and various Sub-Saharan nations.	276	1.63	0.843
6	The advancement of digital diplomacy has significantly enhanced the political relations between Tanzania and its counterparts in Sub-Saharan Africa.	276	4.07	0.718
Valid N		276	3.27	

Source: Primary Data and Author Calculation

Table 6 indicates that the mean response to statement 1 regarding digital transformation exceeds the average (3.50 – 5.00), recorded at 4.13. This suggests that advancements in communication have enhanced the performance of the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, facilitating the establishment of more robust and effective communication channels with Sub-Saharan countries. The average response to statement 2 exceeds the midpoint (3.50 – 5.00), recorded at 3.67. This suggests that the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is equipped with contemporary conference rooms that facilitate e-negotiations with other Sub-Saharan nations. The average response to statement 3 exceeds the midpoint (3.50 – 5.00), recorded at 4.23, suggesting that the ministry actively interacts with diplomats located overseas through online chat forums or virtual consultation meetings. The

average response to statement 4 is notably below the midpoint (3.50 – 5.00), recorded at 1.89. This suggests that the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation employs minimal ICT in enhancing relationships with other Sub-Saharan nations concerning international trade matters, particularly in overcoming distance barriers. The average response to statement 5 is notably below the midpoint (3.50 – 5.00), recorded at 1.63. This suggests that digital diplomacy has not effectively enhanced the quantity of bilateral and multilateral relationships between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations. The average response to statement 6 exceeds the midpoint (3.50 – 5.00), registering at 4.04. This suggests that digital diplomacy has positively influenced the political relations between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations.

TABLE 7: Digital transformation a necessary tool in improving diplomacy among Sub-Saharan countries

No.	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The operation is encountering a novel set of challenges that necessitates an alternative approach.	276	3.86	0.769
2	People change how they act all the time, so we need to make changes.	276	3.89	0.763
3	It's getting harder to understand how different cultures work.	276	3.91	0.737
4	People like to solve problems without having to leave where they are.	276	3.75	0.984
5	Government strategies in Sub-Saharan nations are orientated towards information and communication technology (ICT).	276	2.67	1.019
6	Currently, organizations without ICT compliance cannot operate at peak efficiency.	276	3.94	0.702
7	Digital Diplomacy has emerged as a prominent term in recent years.	276	3.58	1.110
Valid N		276	3.66	

Source: Primary Data and Author Calculation

There is a new trend of challenges requiring a new approach to the operations involved in digital transformation, as shown in Table 7, which focusses on digital transformation as a tool for improving diplomacy among Sub-Saharan countries. The mean response to statement 1 is 3.86, which is above average (3.50 - 5.00). Given that people's behavior is not static and that adjustments are necessary, the mean response to statement 2 is 3.89, which is above normal (3.50 - 5.00). A new strategy to diplomacy is necessary since the mean response to statement 3 is 3.91, which is above normal (3.50 - 5.00). This suggests that cultural differences are becoming more complicated. Statement 4 has an above-average mean response (3.75, range: 3.50–5.00),

suggesting that people would rather not leave their current area to solve difficulties. Government policies in Sub-Saharan African countries are, on average, centered upon information and communication technology (ICT), as shown by the mean response to statement 5, which is 2.67 and falls within the average range of 2.50 to 3.49. In light of the fact that non-ICT compliant organizations have been unable to achieve optimal performance in recent years, the mean response to statement 6 is 3.94, which is above average (3.50 - 5.00). Last but not least, with a mean response of 3.58 on the scale from 3.00 to 5, the demand for digital diplomacy has been at an all-time high in recent years.

TABLE 8: The implications of digital transformation on improved diplomacy between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan countries

No.	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The advancement of digital transformation has significantly enhanced the economic development of Tanzania, alongside other nations in Sub-Saharan Africa.	276	3.51	0.708
2	Digital transformation has prompted the media to dedicate time to reporting on technological advancements, ICT educational initiatives and ICT developments in Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations.	276	4.07	0.864
3	Tanzania's and other Sub-Saharan nations' political achievements have been impacted by digital change.	276	4.13	0.779
4	The social connections between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations are strengthening due to digital revolution.	276	3.88	0.953
Valid N		276	3.89	

Source: Primary Data and Author Calculation

Table 8 examines the effects of digital transformation on enhanced diplomatic relations between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations. The mean response to statement 1 is above average (3.50 – 5.00), recorded at 3.51. This suggests that digital transformation has positively influenced the economic development of Tanzania and its Sub-Saharan counterparts, potentially through inter-trade that may have established a comparative advantage for the involved countries. Digital transformation enables Sub-Saharan countries to enhance their business relationships, leading to improved economic development. The mean response to statement 2 is 4.07, which is above the average range of 3.50 to 5.00. This suggests that digital transformation has prompted the media to dedicate time to news regarding general technological development, ICT educational programs, and ICT advancements in Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations. This has positively affected all sectors requiring new and improved technology and skills. The mean response to statement 3 is 4.13, which is above the average range of 3.50 to 5.00. This suggests that digital transformation has influenced the political achievements of Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan countries. The political systems and policies in Tanzania have been enhanced through dialogue, compensation, dispute resolution and reconciliation. The mean response to statement 4 is 3.88, which exceeds the average range of 3.50 to 5.00. This suggests that the social relationship between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan countries is strengthening due to digital transformation. This relationship has enabled Tanzanians to gain additional knowledge and skills through the free movement to other Sub-Saharan countries.

6. Research Findings

- ❖ *Digital transformation and improved diplomacy for Tanzania with other Sub-Saharan countries:* Results showed that, on average, digital transformation and better diplomacy for Tanzania with other Sub-Saharan countries has a mean score of 3.27 on the items. In an effort to improve diplomatic ties with other Sub-Saharan African nations, the Tanzanian government is open to meeting with diplomats via online chat rooms or consultation meetings. The era of globalization is defined by the growth and strengthening of international political, economic and cultural ties [11]. This encourages the interaction and collaboration of international actors, including nations, ethno-nationalist elements, multinational businesses, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, numerous transnational movements and networks and even individuals [12]. When properly adopted and employed, digital diplomacy serves as a compelling and timely enhancement to traditional diplomacy, enabling countries, particularly Tanzania, to further their foreign policy objectives, expand their international presence and sway individuals who may never visit any of the world's embassies [13].
- ❖ *Digital transformation is a process that is heavily influenced by external drivers, such as the use of new technologies:* The results indicated that technology utilization has impacted the digital transformation process.

This aligns with Nalwanga's assertion that ICTs have enhanced the efficacy of diplomatic missions in promoting the interests of the sending country [14]. In contemporary society, discussions and subsequent evaluations regarding meetings and issues addressed are increasingly facilitated through mobile communication devices. The implication here is that the incorporation of information and communication technology into the diplomatic process has merely enhanced diplomatic negotiations. The websites of diplomatic missions have evolved to serve as platforms for disseminating online content pertinent to essential foreign policy goals, achievable through cooperation with the host nation. This establishes the groundwork for cultivating bilateral relationships with the host country across various domains, including trade, tourism, education, environmental concerns, cultural exchange and political engagement. The advancement of bilateral relations in these domains is facilitated in the digital era, as the websites of Sub-Saharan nations and diplomatic missions provide accessible online resources regarding them. The accessibility of a nation's foreign policy online provides prospective investors with a foundational comprehension of the country's business landscape. Nevertheless, the findings also suggest a diminished utilization of information and communication technology to enhance relations with other Sub-Saharan nations concerning matters of international trade devoid of geographical constraints. The observed phenomenon may stem from insufficient ICT literacy among diplomats, which significantly impacts their effectiveness during diplomatic meetings and conferences. The scarcity of adequate ICT training facilities and the constraints posed by inadequate funding further impede the optimal utilization of ICT resources. The aforementioned findings were corroborated by Ekpenyong et al., highlighting the deficiency of skilled individuals in the realms of software application, operating systems, network administration and the maintenance and repair of computer facilities in Tanzania [15].

- ❖ *The implications of digital transformation on improved diplomacy between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan countries:* The results presented in Table 8 demonstrate that the social relationship between Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan countries is strengthening due to digital transformation. Digital diplomacy is an essential element in the execution of foreign policy. Digital transformation in diplomacy has enhanced international alignment and influenced individuals who have not visited any of the world's embassies [16]. The direct public connection and the involvement of non-state actors compel nations to utilize social media and digital diplomacy to maintain legitimacy and cultivate new or enhanced partnerships in an evolving global context. The integration of ICT enhances communication, resulting in increased efficiency and speed in international interactions. In this context, digital transformation prompts the media to dedicate time to reporting on general technological advancements, ICT educational initiatives and ICT developments in Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan nations.

7. Recommendations

- Notwithstanding the prospects offered by digitization, further efforts are required to facilitate the primary catalysts of digitization in Tanzania. Governments should leverage the internet and technology to enhance the security of their systems by implementing appropriate technological solutions.
- The government ought to enhance the utilization of ICTs in its foreign policy processes, as technology is crucial for improved information gathering, effective knowledge management, facilitation of policy planning and coordination, and the enriched implementation of foreign policy goals and objectives.
- It is imperative that the government provides the Ministry of East African Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation with the necessary high-tech digital equipment. Additionally, the toolkits of digital resources should be aligned with the requirements of digital diplomacy.

8. Future Research Area

Further research is required to differentiate practical digital transformation strategies in relation to their digital agendas. This framework elucidates the variations in digital transformation contingent upon a country's size, historical background and current context, as well as the potential influence of these factors on their digital transformation initiatives.

9. Conclusion

The internet revolution's impact on diplomacy has enhanced worldwide alignment and motivated those who have never visited any global embassies to do so. In a dynamic global environment, direct public engagement and the presence of non-state actors compel nations like Tanzania to employ social media and digital diplomacy to maintain their legitimacy and forge new or strengthened partnerships. The objective of the study was to evaluate the influence of digital transformation on enhanced diplomacy in Tanzania with other Sub-Saharan nations. Digital diplomacy is therefore essential for the advancement of bilateral relations, as diplomatic transformation has progressed alongside technology.

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