



Mobile short-video characteristics and continuous use intention among Chinese young adults

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The rapid growth and popularity of mobile short-video platforms among Chinese young adults has made it crucial to understand the factors associated with their continued use. This study integrated the stimulus–organism–response framework and the extended technology acceptance model to investigate how the external characteristics of short videos affect users' perceived usefulness and continued use intention, incorporating user habit as a moderator. We used an online survey to collect data from 405 Chinese young adults. The results showed that recommendations and entertainment were positively associated with continuous use intention, while interactivity was not. Perceived usefulness predicted continuous use intention, as well as mediating the relationships of recommendations, interactivity, and entertainment with continuous use intention. Furthermore, user habit strengthened the link between perceived usefulness and continuous use intention. These findings can guide developers in enhancing short-video characteristics to boost young adults' sustained usage, while helping social and educational professionals develop interventions for healthy and reasonable use.

Keywords

mobile short videos, continuous use intention, perceived usefulness, young adults, user habit, video characteristics

Article Highlights

- Recommendations and entertainment were found to be directly related to Chinese young adults' intention to continue using mobile short videos.
- Interactivity was indirectly linked to continuous use intention through perceived usefulness.
- Perceived usefulness played a crucial mediating role in the relationships of recommendations, interactivity, and entertainment with continuous use intention.
- User habit significantly strengthened the link between perceived usefulness and continuous use intention.

Mobile short videos, which use smartphones as a medium and can be quickly edited and shared, have become increasingly prevalent since their emergence in the last decade. The ability of recommendation algorithms of mobile short video platforms to precisely deliver content that matches users' interests has contributed to their widespread popularity, particularly among young people in China (Mou et al., 2021). According to the report released by the China Internet Network Information Center (2023), by June 2023 the number of mobile short videos users in China was projected to reach 1.026 billion, accounting for 95.2% of the total number of internet users in the country. In

addition, the rich interactive experiences and entertaining content are significant factors that jointly stimulate young users' sustained engagement and retention, making these platforms an indispensable part of their daily lives (Y. Choi et al., 2021).

However, this continuous usage also has negative consequences. For example, frequent engagement with mobile short video platforms can lead to poor time management, decreased learning efficiency, and reduced academic performance (Xu et al., 2023). In addition, excessive reliance on mobile short videos may diminish real-life social skills, making face-to-face interactions challenging for young people (Liu et al., 2022). Furthermore, constant online interaction and information overload can negatively impact mental health, increasing anxiety and stress levels (S. B. Choi & Lim, 2016). Therefore, exploring the intentions behind the continuous usage of mobile short video platforms and the underlying influencing mechanisms is critical for protecting young users' mental health and well-being.

Despite the rising popularity of mobile short video platforms among young users, there is little research on their continuous use intention. Instead, the literature has primarily focused on general users' privacy and security concerns (Mou et al., 2021), user satisfaction, and fatigue (Huang et al., 2023). Although a limited number of studies have examined specific groups such as university students (Mou et al., 2021), these have mainly addressed similar areas such as privacy protection and recommendation algorithms. To our knowledge, no study to date has provided a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the specific characteristics of mobile short video platforms and continuous usage among young people. In addition, the moderating role of user habits also remains poorly understood.

External characteristics affect both young users' perceived usefulness and continuous use intention, making both the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) framework and extended technology acceptance mode (TAM2) applicable theoretical frameworks (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). The SOR framework emphasizes that external stimuli (S) affect the internal states (O) of individuals, which in turn lead to specific responses (R) in terms of behaviors and attitudes. This framework provides the basis for various applications in understanding human reactions and behaviors in different contexts, such as retail environments and mobile application usage (Chopdar & Balakrishnan, 2020). Meanwhile, the TAM2 model has been widely applied to understand and predict the technology acceptance behaviors of social media users by focusing on how external variables affect a technology's perceived usefulness (De Angelis et al., 2018). In this study, we combined the SOR framework and TAM2 to analyze the correlation between external mobile short video characteristics, such as entertainment, recommendations, and interactivity, and the continuous use intention of young users, focusing on the mediating role of perceived usefulness and the moderating role of user habit. This exploration will enable platforms and businesses to optimize user experience and enhance user retention. By outlining both the benefits of platform usage and its negative impacts, it will also assist social and educational professionals in developing effective interventions to help young people use social media and mobile short video platforms in particular in a healthy and reasonable manner, promoting their life satisfaction and well-being.

Recommendations and Continuous Use Intention

Recommendations refers to the algorithmically personalized content or information that a system offers to provide continuous recommendations that meet the specific needs of an individual user without them needing to actively search for content (Liang et al., 2006). Researchers have found that the accuracy and engagement of recommendation systems can significantly enhance user loyalty and retention while also positively impacting users' subjective well-being and consumption behaviors (Wang et al., 2019), including the user's intention to continuously use a recommendation system over a long period (Shi & Lee, 2021). *Continuous use intention* is directly related to the platform's user retention rate and competitiveness (Huang et al., 2023). Its significant characteristics include the user's long-term trust in the system, perceived usefulness, and high satisfaction (Mou et al., 2021). However, although young adults are the primary users of mobile short video platforms, and the subject has received extensive attention in information systems and social media research, no studies have examined the specific factors influencing young users' continuous use intention, especially regarding the unique characteristics of mobile short videos. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Recommendations will be positively associated with young mobile short video users' continuous use intention.

Interactivity

Interactivity refers to the capacity of users to engage with platform content and other users (Arghashi & Yuksel, 2022). Young users exhibit a stronger demand for interactivity, as they are more inclined to express themselves and communicate with others through interactive features (Kirk et al., 2012). According to social interaction theory, such interactive behaviors fulfill individuals' social and psychological needs (Turner, 1988). A mobile short video platform that satisfies these needs makes users perceive it as more valuable, further enhancing their continuous usage intentions (Turner, 1988). Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Interactivity will be positively associated with young mobile short video users' continuous use intention.

Entertainment

Entertainment is typically defined as the pleasure and relaxation elicited by various media and activities. Young users particularly value entertainment, as they tend to seek entertainment content during their leisure time through mobile short video platforms. When mobile short video platforms provide more engaging and enjoyable content, they are likely to significantly enhance users' continued usage intentions (Y. Choi et al., 2021). Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Entertainment will be positively associated with young mobile short video users' continuous use intention.

Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness refers to users' belief that using the platform can effectively provide relevant information, enhance social interactions, and offer convenience and entertainment experiences (Liu et al., 2022). Perceived usefulness plays a pivotal role in users' adoption and continued usage intentions of technology in the TAM2 (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000), which has been widely validated across various information systems, including e-commerce, educational technology, and mobile applications (Harrigan et al., 2021). On mobile short video platforms, when young users perceive the platform's features as useful, it may significantly enhance their intention to continue using it. Hence, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Perceived usefulness will be positively related to the continuous use intention of young mobile short video users.

Prior studies have shown that the characteristics of digital media systems are important antecedents of perceived usefulness. For example, recommendations help users discover content of interest, enhancing their perceived usefulness (Mican et al., 2020). Interactivity and entertainment enhance users' perception of the platform's value by providing real-time social interaction and experiences that are enjoyable and engaging, respectively (Arghashi & Yuksel, 2022; Y. Choi et al., 2021). Therefore, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5: Recommendations will be positively associated with the perceived usefulness of young mobile short video users.

Hypothesis 6: Interactivity will be positively associated with the perceived usefulness of young mobile short video users.

Hypothesis 7: Entertainment will be positively associated with the perceived usefulness of young mobile short video users.

The influence of these external features on continuous use intention may be indirectly realized through perceived usefulness as well. Perceived usefulness is widely recognized as an essential mediating variable that affects users' acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). However, research on the mediating role of perceived usefulness between the external features of a system and young users' continuous use intention in the context of mobile short video platforms is limited. It is reasonable to infer that personalized recommendations can make young users feel that the mobile short video platform understands their needs, enhancing their perceived usefulness and ultimately increasing their continuous use intention. Similarly, interactivity and entertainment could also affect their continuous

use intention through similar mechanisms. Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 8: Perceived usefulness will positively mediate the relationship between recommendations and continuous use intention.

Hypothesis 9: Perceived usefulness will positively mediate the relationship between interactivity and continuous use intention.

Hypothesis 10: Perceived usefulness will positively mediate the relationship between entertainment and continuous use intention.

User Habit

User habit is the automatic behavioral pattern, comprising repetition and context dependency, that emerges after the prolonged use of a technology or platform (Kim & Kim, 2019). User habit plays a crucial role in behavioral prediction models, particularly in the context of technology use. Previous studies have indicated that young users exhibit highly habitual social media use (Meier et al., 2023), while habits strengthen the relationship between satisfaction and the intention to continue using social network services (Chiu & Huang, 2015). Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that young users' habitual use of mobile short video platforms may intensify the association between perceived usefulness and continuous use intention. Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 11: User habit will strengthen the positive relationship between young users' perceived usefulness and continuous use intention.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We used convenience sampling to administer an online survey to Douyin users through SoJump, which is the largest professional online survey platform in China. Douyin has a very high penetration rate among individuals aged 18–35 years, who are the primary users of mobile short video platforms, making it an appropriate platform for studying user behavior (Ocean Engine Urban Research Institute, 2023). Participants were informed about the survey through Douyin itself as well as through other social media platforms such as WeChat and Weibo. Links to the online questionnaire, accompanied by a brief explanation of the survey's purpose and assurances regarding data privacy, were distributed to encourage voluntary participation. To enhance the representativeness of the sample and address potential biases, we incorporated filter questions in the questionnaire regarding the age and length of use of mobile short videos to ensure that respondents fit the characteristics of the target population. Participants in this study gave their informed consent, and we assured them that their data would be used only for academic research. The participants in this study joined on a voluntary basis, and no compensation was provided. Out of the 520 surveys we initially distributed, we excluded 115 invalid responses, including those with repetitive answers, logical inconsistencies, and incomplete responses, and recovered 405 valid responses, yielding a 77.9% recovery rate. The details are shown in Table 1.



Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Categories		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Men	190	46.8
	Women	215	53.2
Age (years)	18–21	83	20.5
	22–25	155	38.2
	26–30	99	24.4
	31–35	68	16.9
Level of education	High school or below	50	12.3
	Junior college	110	27.2
	Undergraduate	195	45.1
	Graduate or above	50	15.4
Work status	Student	214	53.0
	Enterprise employee	100	24.6
	Government or institution employee	60	14.8
	Individual business owner	21	5.2
	Other	10	2.4
Average daily usage duration (hours)	< 0.5	33	8.1
	0.5–1	64	15.9
	1–2	102	25.1
	2–4	154	38.0
	> 4	52	12.9
Duration of use of mobile short videos (months)	≤ 6	10	2.5
	7–12	28	6.8
	13–24	116	28.7
	25–48	149	36.8
	> 48	102	25.2

Measures

To ensure the validity of the measurements, we utilized existing, well-established scales to design the items (see Table 2). Since the original scales were in English, we translated all items into Chinese and then back into English for use in this study. In addition, before beginning the formal survey we invited experts from communication and management fields to evaluate the questionnaire, which we then revised based on their feedback. We then conducted a pilot study to test the efficacy and clarity of the revised questionnaire, which produced satisfactory results. All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Table 2. Measurement of the Variables

Construct	Item number	Item	Source
Recommendations (RE)	RE1	The recommended videos on the Douyin app help me find content that interests me.	Adnan et al. (2020)
	RE2	The recommended videos on the Douyin app increase the frequency of my usage.	
	RE3	The recommended videos on the Douyin app influence my decision on whether to continue watching more videos.	
	RE4	The last time I used the Douyin app, I watched recommended videos.	
	RE5	The recommended videos on the Douyin app enhance my understanding and interest in the platform.	
Interactivity (IN)	IN1	Using the Douyin app enables me to make friends.	Lee (2009)
	IN2	I enjoy meeting friends I made through watching Douyin short videos.	
	IN3	Communicating with others while using the Douyin app is convenient.	
	IN4	Collaborating with others while using the Douyin app is enjoyable.	
Entertainment (EN)	EN1	Using the Douyin app is fun.	Campón-Cerro et al. (2020)
	EN2	Using the Douyin app is enjoyable.	
	EN3	Using the Douyin app is entertaining.	
	EN4	Using the Douyin app is interesting.	
Perceived usefulness (PU)	PU1	I think the Douyin app is an effective channel for acquiring information and content.	Geng (2021)
	PU2	I think using the Douyin app enhances my communication and engagement with others.	
	PU3	I think using the Douyin app can relieve my stress at work and study.	
	PU4	I think that using the Douyin app can enrich my life.	
	PU5	I think the Douyin app is useful.	
User habit (HB)	HB1	I use Douyin app automatically.	Chiu and Huang (2015)
	HB2	I start using the Douyin app before I realize I'm using it.	
	HB3	I have no need to think about using the Douyin app.	
	HB4	I would find it hard not to use the Douyin app.	
Continuous use intention (CUI)	CUI1	I am willing to continue using the Douyin app.	Huang et al. (2023)
	CUI2	I will frequently use the Douyin app.	
	CUI3	If given a choice, I would still choose to use the Douyin app.	
	CUI4	I am willing to recommend the Douyin app to others.	

Data Analysis

We utilized Smart PLS 4.0 to analyze the data.

Results

Assessment of Measurement Model

As shown in Table 3, the factor loading values exceeded .70 and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values ranged between .85 and .93, indicating good internal consistency reliability. Average variance extracted values were all greater than .50, showing that each construct had good convergent validity as well.



Table 3. Measurement Model Evaluation

Construct	Item	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
Recommendations (RE)	RE1	.839	.924	.926	.766
	RE2	.876			
	RE3	.886			
	RE4	.862			
	RE5	.912			
Interactivity (IN)	IN1	.835	.867	.869	.714
	IN2	.830			
	IN3	.845			
	IN4	.871			
Entertainment (EN)	EN1	.862	.885	.890	.744
	EN2	.841			
	EN3	.883			
	EN4	.863			
Perceived usefulness (PU)	PU1	.835	.893	.895	.701
	PU2	.850			
	PU3	.859			
	PU4	.852			
	PU5	.786			
User habit (HB)	HB1	.815	.848	.851	.686
	HB2	.833			
	HB3	.816			
	HB4	.849			
Continuous use intention (CUI)	CUI1	.879	.898	.898	.765
	CUI2	.862			
	CUI3	.890			
	CUI4	.868			

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

Next, we assessed discriminant validity by utilizing the heterotrait–monotrait method. As presented in Table 4, all values were lower than .85, indicating that the six constructs were distinct.

Table 4. Heterotrait–Monotrait Validity Test

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Continuous use intention	—					
2. Entertainment	.543	—				
3. User habit	.764	.379	—			
4. Interactivity	.145	.118	.161	—		
5. Perceived usefulness	.696	.438	.836	.292	—	
6. Recommendations	.397	.195	.297	.041	.287	—

Assessment of Structural Model

To avoid bias in path coefficients, we assessed whether there were multicollinearity issues in the structural model prior to conducting a path coefficient analysis. Table 5 illustrates that the variation inflation factor values for all constructs were less than 3.3, indicating that there were no issues regarding multicollinearity in our data.

Table 5. Full Collinearity Testing

Recommendations	Interactivity	Entertainment	Perceived usefulness	User habit	Continuous use intention
1.162	1.085	1.341	2.488	2.548	2.335

Table 6 illustrates the direct relationships between the latent variables, and Figure 1 shows the partial least squares modeling results. Recommendations and entertainment were positively associated with continuous use intention, supporting Hypotheses 1 and 3. However, interactivity had no significant association with continuous use intention; thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Perceived usefulness was positively related to continuous use intention, supporting Hypothesis 4. Recommendations, interactivity, and entertainment all showed significant correlations with perceived usefulness; thus, Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 were supported.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	SD	t	p	90% CI		f ²	Result
						LL	UL		
H1	RE → CUI	.147	0.042	3.525	< .001	0.082	0.219	0.046	Supported
H2	IN → CUI	-.010	0.032	0.304	.381	-0.065	0.039	0.000	Not supported
H3	EN → CUI	.248	0.050	4.928	< .001	0.168	0.333	0.122	Supported
H4	PU → CUI	.203	0.080	2.543	.006	0.077	0.337	0.041	Supported
H5	RE → PU	.206	0.051	4.019	< .001	0.116	0.285	0.054	Supported
H6	IN → PU	.226	0.047	4.780	< .001	0.146	0.301	0.067	Supported
H7	EN → PU	.334	0.056	5.976	< .001	0.237	0.421	0.141	Supported

Note. Standardized beta values are reported. Number of bootstrapped resamples = 10,000. RE = recommendations; IN = interactivity, EN = entertainment; PU = perceived usefulness; HB = user habit; CUI = continuous use intention; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

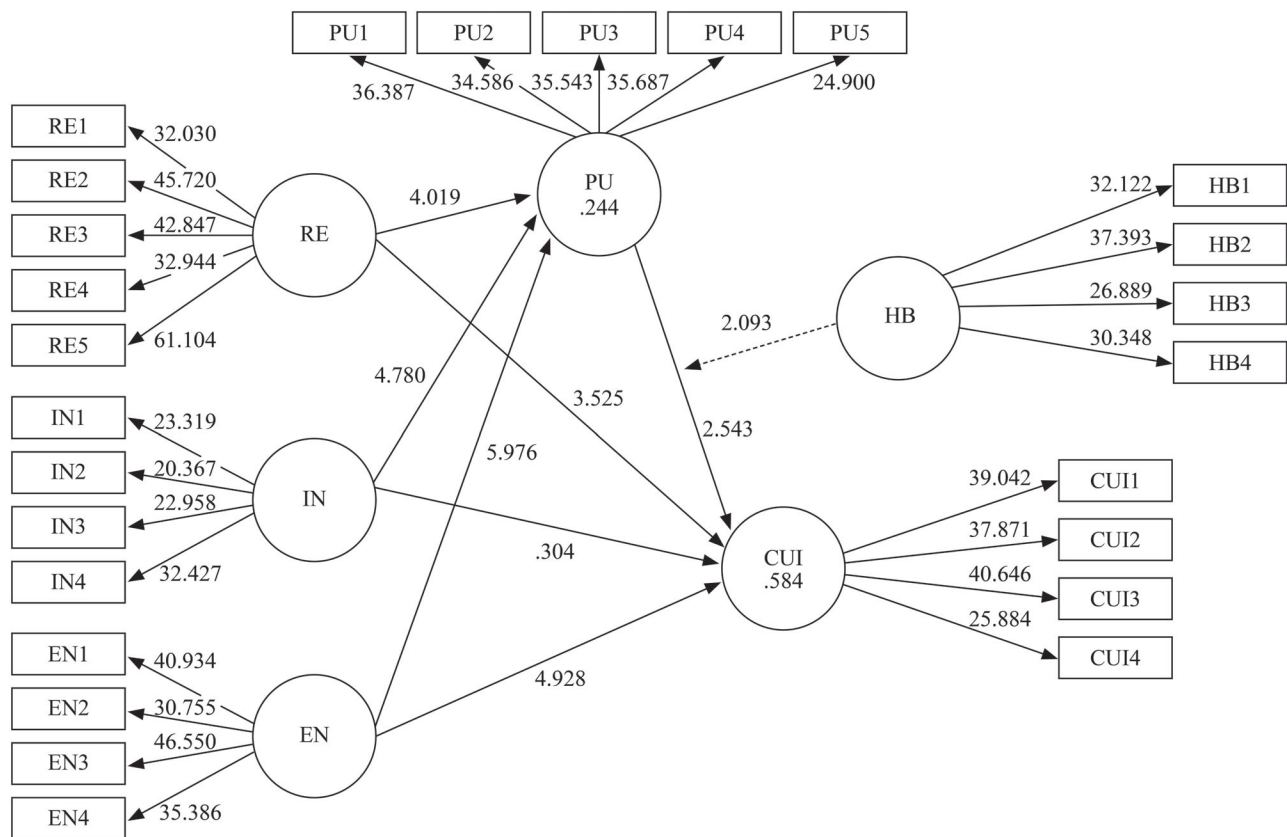


Figure 1. *Structural Model*

Note. Solid lines represent direct effects, while the dashed line indicates the moderating effect. RE = recommendations; IN = interactivity, EN = entertainment; PU = perceived usefulness; HB = user habit; CUI = continuous use intention.

According to Figure 1, the R^2 values for the dependent variables met the required standards for explanatory power. Moreover, the Q^2 values for perceived usefulness and continuous use intention were .164 and .434, demonstrating substantial predictive relevance in accordance with the research objectives.

Testing the Mediating and Moderating Effects

The path analysis results in Table 7 showed there were indirect effects of recommendations, interactivity, and entertainment on continuous use intention through perceived usefulness, supporting Hypotheses 8, 9, and 10. Moreover, a significant positive relationship was observed between perceived usefulness and continuous use intention, which was moderated by user habit, supporting Hypothesis 11. A slope analysis, as depicted in Figure 2, revealed a steep gradient. The interaction plots indicated that with stronger user habit, the correlation between perceived usefulness and continuous use intention intensified. This finding underscores the pivotal role of perceived usefulness in influencing continuous use intention in contexts characterized by high habitual influences.

Table 7. Mediation and Moderation Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	SD	t	p	90% CI		Result
						LL	UL	
H8	RE → PU → CUI	.042	0.020	2.045	.020	0.015	0.081	Supported
H9	IN → PU → CUI	.046	0.019	2.449	.007	0.019	0.081	Supported
H10	EN → PU → CUI	.068	0.032	2.143	.016	0.024	0.126	Supported
H11	HB × PU → CUI	.064	0.031	2.093	.018	0.020	0.122	Supported

Note. Standardized beta values are presented. Number of bootstrapped resamples = 10,000. RE = recommendations; PU = perceived usefulness; CUI = continuous use intention; IN = interactivity; EN = entertainment; HB = user habit. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower level; UL = upper limit.

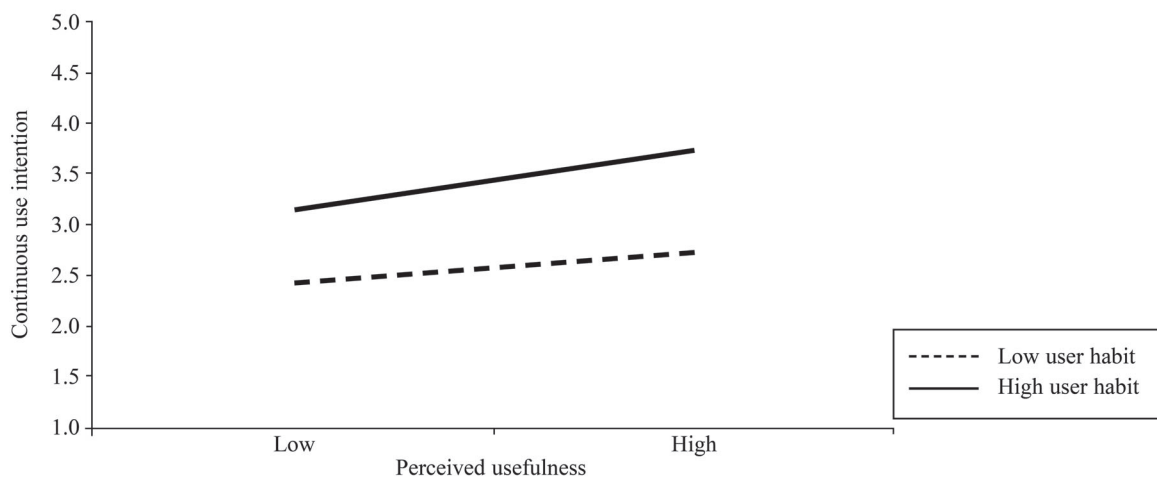


Figure 2. Interaction Effect of Perceived Usefulness and User Habit on Continuous Use Intention

Discussion

This study integrated the SOR framework and the TAM2 to investigate how the external characteristics of short videos (i.e., recommendations, interactivity, and entertainment) affect users’ perceived usefulness and continuous use intention. Our results highlight the behavioral characteristics of young users, emphasizing the role of habit in enhancing the relationship between perceived usefulness and continuous use intention.

First, we found that both recommendations and entertainment were positively associated with the continuous usage intention of young adults. Therefore, when mobile short-video platforms provide personalized recommendations and rich entertainment content, young users are more likely to continue using the platform. However, in line with the research of Peters et al. (2023), we also found that interactivity was not directly related to the continuous use intention of young adults, indicating that they may prioritize instant gratification and entertainment over deep interaction. Second, we found that perceived usefulness was significantly related to continuous use intention, as well as acting as an important mediator between mobile short-video characteristics and continuous use intention. These outcomes align with the TAM2, indicating that personalized recommendations, interactivity, and entertainment features enhance young users’ continuous use intention by increasing their perceived usefulness. Third, consistent with the finding of Chiu and Huang (2015), we found that habit strengthened the relationship between perceived usefulness and continuous use intention, acting as an amplifier of user behavior on mobile short-video platforms. Therefore, young users with strong usage habits are more likely to rely on their perception of the platform’s usefulness when deciding whether to continue using it.



Theoretical Contributions

This study introduced a novel research framework by integrating the SOR model and the TAM2 in a synergistic manner to examine how the external characteristics of mobile short-video platforms promote young adults' internal useful perceptions and subsequently contribute to their continuous use intention. This contribution fills a gap in the research regarding how the unique characteristics of mobile short-video platforms, such as their recommendations, interactivity, and entertainment features, influence the continuous use intention of young users. Last, even though user habit has been widely acknowledged as a critical factor influencing user behavior on social media platforms, few scholars have considered its role as a moderator. Therefore, we investigated how user habit moderates the relationship between perceived usefulness and the continuous use intention among young mobile short-video users, and our results demonstrated that it enhances users' perceived value and commitment to the platform.

Practical Implications

This study has practical implications. First, we recommend that mobile short-video platform designers focus on optimizing personalized recommendation algorithms and utilizing data analysis to ensure that the content accurately matches users' interests and meets their needs. We also recommend that they continuously develop enriching and innovative content to enhance the platforms' attractiveness and novelty, as well as aiming to meet young users' demand for instant and enjoyable entertainment. Third, we recommend that mobile short-video designers prioritize enhancing the perceived usefulness and value of the platform to young users to by optimizing the interactive features and providing enriching entertainment content, which can increase their intention to continue using the platform. Fourth, we recommend that mobile short-video platform designers focus on cultivating the usage habits of young users. For instance, recommending high-quality and diverse content based on young users' interests and viewing history, and setting personalized reminders sustain continuous engagement. Moreover, interactive mechanisms such as check-ins and task rewards increase user engagement. However, it is crucial to be mindful of the potential negative impacts of continuous mobile short-video use on young users. Implementing watch time reminders and providing mental health support resources could help young adults use the platform more responsibly, improving their overall life satisfaction and well-being.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has some limitations. First, the data were self-reported by the participants. This method may introduce a degree of subjectivity and self-report bias. Future research could incorporate objective measures, such as system log data, to enhance the credibility of the findings. In addition, our participants were limited to young adults in China, which may not fully capture the diversity and behavioral patterns of young adults from different regions or cultural backgrounds. Future research could expand the demographic scope to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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