



Social Media Usage as a Moderator between User Satisfaction and Continuance Intention: Evidence from Generation Z on the Bilibili Platform

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Abstract

As the digital economy continues to flourish, video platforms have become central to Generation Z's information acquisition, social connection, and entertainment experiences. Consequently, retaining users has become increasingly important. Drawing on Expectation Confirmation Theory and Community Participation Theory, this study develops a dual-core model that positions social media usage as a moderator between user satisfaction and continuance intention. Focusing on Bilibili users in Guangdong Province, the study collected 510 valid online survey responses through random sampling and employed structural equation modeling to examine the proposed hypotheses. The results indicate that user satisfaction significantly predicts continuance intention, and that social media usage strengthens this relationship ($R^2 = 67.2\%$). The findings further reveal a danmu-driven “satisfaction–usage–continuance” mechanism. This research contributes to the literature on digital behavior and offers practical implications for platform management—including optimizing danmu features and incentivizing user participation—as well as guidance for enhancing Generation Z's digital literacy.

Keywords: Social media usage, user satisfaction, continuance intention, Generation Z, video platform

1. Introduction

With the rapid expansion of the global digital economy, online video platforms have increasingly become the primary digital medium through which Generation Z (born 1995–2009) obtains information, engages in social interaction, and seeks entertainment. Generation Z's digital habits are promoted by technology, such as 5G and AI, and the habits of digital content. Compared with traditional video platforms, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram Reels are more popular with Generation Z. The video content is interactive, diverse, and the recommended articles are smart (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Turner, 2023). Statista (2024) reveals that Generation Z around the world spend more than 3 hours a day watching videos. On average, the online time is 6 hours and 40 minutes, 81% use social media, and 50% of them use social media for more than 3 hours a day. This indicates that the video platform is the most important way to get information and interact socially that they depend on. Generation Z likes fast-paced, short-form entertainment such as comedy and memes, and about 67% of them like such videos. It is noteworthy that 36.79% of YouTube users and 39% of TikTok users aged 18–28 come from Generation Z, indicating that they like visual and interactive media.

Certainly, this is more evident in China. Due to the efforts of digital transaction videos growth 29% in 2024 and reach RMB 6 billion; according to forecast, the media market revenue will reach \$303.88 billion in 2025 with gaming and video as the major sources (Yang, 2023). Under such circumstances, Bilibili (hereafter referred to as Bilibili) has become the first choice of Generation Z by leveraging the unique subculture characteristics and community interaction methods. According to recent reports, Bilibili recorded over 341 million monthly active users (MAUs) and approximately 104 million daily active users (DAUs) in 2024. The number of

monthly paying users grew by 9%, with an average daily usage time of 105 minutes. Notably, more than 80% of its users belong to the post-1990 and post-2000 generations. The average age is 26 and the female ratio is 50% (Tencent, 2024). Originating from ACG (Anime, Comic, and Game) content, Bilibili has gradually expanded into diverse areas such as knowledge sharing, technology, lifestyle, cuisine, and film and television. It creates a community culture of co-creation and diversified interests with participation from broadcasters and audiences (Knowledgeable, intelligent, open, and innovative, 2024). The unique danmu (bullet comment) system makes viewers watch in resonance and make social connections. In addition, creator incentives, graded systems and badge mechanism can also motivate users to participate and enhance their loyalty (Liu, 2021; Zhang & Cassany, 2023; Chen et al., 2023).

As one of the pioneers in China's digital economy, Guangdong has high density of universities and youth population. Bilibili users account for a large proportion of Generation Z, making it an ideal sample to explore video platform usage behaviors. Specifically, the GDP of Guangdong will exceed RMB 14 trillion in 2024. There are more than 392,000 5G base stations in Guangdong and it leads China in user numbers and virtual private networks. In terms of policy, the 14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Digital Economy also emphasizes the advancement of online audiovisual industries and introduces stricter regulations concerning youth protection, algorithm transparency, and content quality (State Council, 2023). The community culture of Bilibili meets the digital economy environment of Guangdong. This study provides an interesting regional context to explore Generation Z's continuance intention.

Amid the fierce competition across digital platforms, the interplay among video platform ecosystems, algorithmic mechanisms, and user psychology provides a multidimensional perspective for academic inquiry. The global short-video market is projected to expand from USD 53.48 billion in 2025 to USD 106.22 billion by 2032, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.3%. As a platform characterized by Chinese cultural features and strong community attributes, Bilibili's danmu and user-generated content (UGC) systems offer a distinctive context for investigating Generation Z's continuance intention. Moreover, Guangdong's policy support, high user density and mature digital infrastructure further amplify the multidimensional research views of this study.

Despite the abundance of prior studies on Generation Z's video platform usage and Bilibili ecosystem (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Liu, 2021; Vaterlaus et al., 2023), there are still research gaps in exploring the drivers of continuance intention. First, most of the existing studies focus on macro-level user behaviour, such as platform content transition and demographic characteristics, and pay less attention to psychological mechanisms (e.g. satisfaction) and the dynamic effect of community interaction on continuance intention (Li et al., 2023). Second, there is a lack of exploration on region-specific factors. It is possible that Guangdong's policy and cultural context may have a significant impact on Generation Z behaviours; however, relevant empirical analyses are still lacking. Third, although danmu culture can improve user stickiness, the moderating effect of social media usage in the satisfaction–continuance intention pathway has not been verified (Zhao et al., 2024).

Based on Expectation Confirmation Theory and Community Participation Theory, this study takes Bilibili users in Guangdong Province as the research objects. This study examines the moderating role of social media usage in the relationship between user satisfaction and continuance intention. The research questions are as follows:

- (1) Does satisfaction directly promote continuance intention?
- (2) Does social media usage (in terms of intensity and patterns) enhance or weaken this relationship?

By combining Expectation Confirmation Model and Community Participation Theory, this study establishes a novel moderated model and extends the theoretical framework for video platform continuance behaviour. In China, this research investigates the impact of regional factors on Generation Z's psychological processes and empirically validates the moderating role of social media usage. It also explores the impact of interactive features such as danmu on user stickiness and enriches the theoretical studies on multidimensional research views of video platform. Furthermore, it provides practical implications for platform algorithms and community mechanism optimization targeting Generation Z, improving user stickiness. Moreover, it provides

insights for policies on youth protection and digital economy development, contributing to the healthy growth of China's video sector and fostering Generation Z's digital literacy.

2. Literature Review

This study adopts Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) and Community Participation Theory (CPT) as its theoretical foundation. Focusing on Generation Z Bilibili users in Guangdong Province, it examines the relationships among user satisfaction, social media usage, and continuance intention. ECT explains how satisfaction drives continuance intention through the expectation–confirmation mechanism, whereas CPT clarifies how community participation—especially social media engagement—strengthens continuance via belonging and emotional attachment. Integrating both classical and contemporary empirical studies, this chapter also considers the regional characteristics of Bilibili's danmu culture, thereby establishing the basis for the conceptual model.

2.1 Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT)

ECT, developed by Oliver (1980), is a foundational framework in consumer satisfaction research. It argues that satisfaction arises from comparing pre-use expectations with actual performance via a confirmation or disconfirmation process. Positive confirmation enhances satisfaction, while negative disconfirmation reduces it. The theory outlines a clear causal chain—"expectation → performance → confirmation → satisfaction → intention"—and has been widely adopted across marketing and service management.

Bhattacharjee (2001) extended ECT to the information systems domain by proposing the Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM), refining the pathway to "confirmation → satisfaction → perceived usefulness → continuance intention." ECM demonstrated that confirmation shapes satisfaction and post-adoption behavior, and it has since become a central model for understanding user continuance in digital environments such as e-commerce, online services, and software systems.

With rapid technological advancement, ECT/ECM has increasingly been integrated with other models to capture digital complexity. Venkatesh et al. (2012) incorporated confirmation into UTAUT2, while DeLone and McLean's (2003) IS Success Model introduced system, information, and service quality as antecedents. More recent efforts have further contextualized ECM: Kim et al. (2023) showed that confirmation explains 65% of satisfaction in digital learning; Li et al. (2024) found that trust, hedonic value, social interaction, and AI personalization significantly predict continuance intention; and Ambalov (2022) confirmed through meta-analysis the robustness of ECT across social media and cultural settings.

ECT has also proven highly relevant to short-video and AI-driven platforms. For instance, Wang et al. (2024) demonstrated that social interaction and danmu mechanisms significantly strengthen the satisfaction–continuance pathway, while Chen et al. (2023) showed that social media usage intensity moderates user retention in online healthcare platforms. Collectively, these studies confirm that ECT/ECM remains a flexible and powerful framework for explaining user behavior in social video contexts, providing the theoretical grounding for this study.

2.2 Community Participation Theory (CPT)

CPT, rooted in social psychology, explains how participation fosters belonging, identification, and sustained engagement (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Blanchard & Markus, 2004). Originally applied to physical communities, CPT has since been extended to online environments. Wiertz and de Ruyter (2007) demonstrated that deeper participation increases belonging and loyalty in digital knowledge-sharing communities.

As digital platforms evolved, CPT became widely used in social media, virtual communities, and UGC ecosystems. Koh and Kim (2003) found that participation enhances continuance through increased belonging, while Ellison et al. (2007) reported that likes, comments, and other interactive behaviors reinforce social capital and retention. Within Bilibili, Zhao et al. (2024) showed that synchronous danmu interactions heighten belonging and stickiness, confirming CPT's applicability to real-time video platforms.

Recent research integrates CPT with complementary frameworks to better explain digital engagement. Lin (2008) combined CPT with social capital theory and highlighted the roles of trust and reciprocity; Chen et al. (2023) incorporated CPT into the IS Success Model and showed that high-quality interactions explain more than 60% of satisfaction variance; and Wang et al. (2024) and Kaur et al. (2023) extended CPT alongside ECM, demonstrating that participation and interaction intensity moderate the satisfaction – continuance relationship.

In platforms like Bilibili, social media usage (SMES-A) operationalizes CPT across emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions—such as danmu participation, commenting, liking, sharing, and content investment (Li et al., 2024). These multidimensional interactions enhance belonging and emotional connection, thereby strengthening the satisfaction – continuance pathway (Zhang & Cassany, 2023). Empirical evidence consistently shows that higher danmu intensity increases belonging and satisfaction, supporting its use as the moderator in this study.

Despite its wide application, research gaps remain in video-based contexts. Prior studies often emphasize direct effects rather than moderation, overlook regional factors such as Guangdong’ s digital ecosystem, and insufficiently examine real-time interaction mechanisms like danmu. Accordingly, this study integrates CPT with ECM to examine how social media usage moderates the satisfaction – continuance pathway among Guangdong’ s Generation Z Bilibili users.

2.3 Relationships Among Variables and Research Hypotheses

The Relationship Between User Satisfaction and Continuance Intention

User satisfaction is a central predictor of continuance intention. Bhattacharjee (2001) established its direct role within ECM. Subsequent research consistently shows that satisfaction drives retention in diverse digital environments: Venkatesh et al. (2012) confirmed its importance in UTAUT2; Alalwan et al. (2023) identified strong effects among Generation Z across social and video platforms; and Kaur et al. (2023) found that satisfaction enhances stickiness and loyalty through emotional connection. Within the Bilibili context, Chen et al. (2023) reported that satisfaction increases daily usage and referral willingness, while Xu and Li (2022) showed that emotional resonance—such as subcultural identification—strengthens retention.

H1: User satisfaction positively affects continuance intention among Guangdong Generation Z users on Bilibili.

Relationship Among User Satisfaction, Social Media Usage, and Continuance Intention

From the CPT perspective, social media usage enhances belonging and emotional engagement, thereby strengthening the conversion of satisfaction into continuance. Empirical studies support this moderating effect: Wang et al. (2024) showed that frequent interactions reinforce the satisfaction–intention linkage; Kaur et al. (2023) found that usage amplifies the effect of satisfaction through emotional bonding. In Bilibili, danmu participation serves as a key interaction mechanism—Zhao et al. (2024) demonstrated that high-intensity danmu enhances belonging and satisfaction’s predictive power, and Xu and Li (2022) noted that regional cultural factors such as Cantonese danmu further strengthen this effect.

H2: Social media usage significantly moderates the relationship between user satisfaction and continuance intention.

2.4 Conceptual Model

Following the literature review and the discussion of variable relationships, Figure 1 presents the conceptual model for this study.

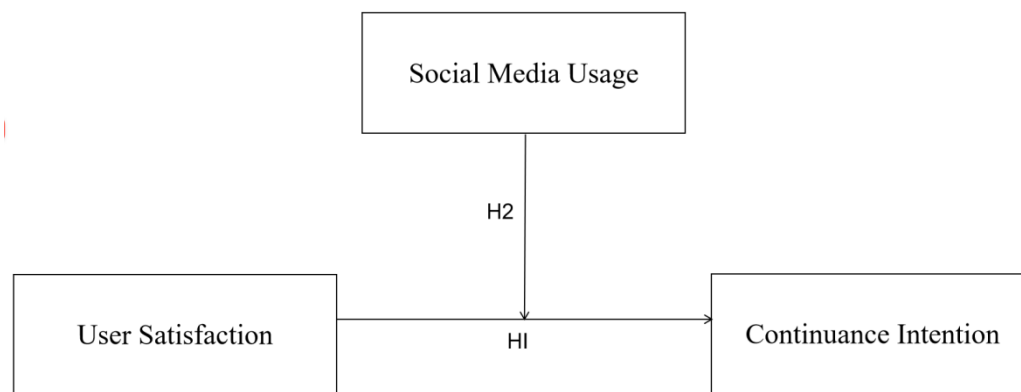


Figure 1 Research Framework

3. Research Methodology

A quantitative methodology was adopted in this study, focusing on Guangdong Generation Z users of Bilibili. The survey included three expert-validated 5-point Likert scales assessing User Satisfaction, Social Media Usage, and Continuance Intention. Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS.

3.1 Sample Characteristics and Data Collection

This study targets Generation Z Bilibili users in Guangdong Province as the research subjects, employing a quantitative analysis approach. According to the joint report by the Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Statistics and QuestMobile (2024), the province has approximately 25 million Generation Z internet users, of whom 65% are registered or active Bilibili users. Inclusion criteria were: age 18–30 years, permanent residence in Guangdong, and Bilibili usage at least 3 times per week in the past 3 months.

Sampling adopted a stratified convenience sampling method. First, strata were delineated by region and school type, selecting five representative institutions as sample sources: Jinan University, Guangdong University of Science and Technology, Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology, Guangdong Polytechnic College, and Huizhou No. 1 High School (senior high school section). Based on Cochran's (1977) formula, the minimum required sample size was determined considering a 95% confidence level ($Z=1.96$), an expected proportion of 0.5 ($p=0.5$), a margin of error of 4.3% ($E=0.043$), and a population of 25 million ($N=25,000,000$), yielding an estimated sample size of about 520. Therefore, the total sample size of the study was planned to be 520.

The questionnaire was collected online through WeChat. In total, 520 questionnaires were collected. After strict screening, 10 invalid questionnaires were removed (such as incomplete answers, strange questions and answers), and the final valid questionnaires were 510, which laid a solid data basis for the subsequent empirical analysis.

3.2 Measurements

This study's questionnaire is composed of three main scales: User Satisfaction Scale (4 items), Social Media Usage Scale (11 items) and Continuance Intention Scale (4 items). All measures employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The content of the questionnaire was reviewed by three content validity experts, so that the content of the questionnaire items was clear and reasonable. The specific dimensions and references are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement Instruments

Variable	Definition	Dimensions	Reference Scale
User Satisfaction	Generation Z users' subjective evaluation of their overall usage experience with Bilibili's video content, danmu interactions, UPcontent, and community participation, as well as the pleasurable emotional response to whether the platform meets their expectations and needs.	User Satisfaction	Kim et al. (2011) Social Media Satisfaction Scale

Social Media Usage	Users' dynamic, bidirectional participation in digital platforms, encompassing behavioral (e.g., commenting, sharing), emotional connection (e.g., sense of belonging), and cognitive engagement (e.g., attention to others' feedback).	Emotional Engagement Behavioral Engagement Cognitive Engagement	Ni et al. (2020) Adolescent Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES-A)
Continuance Intention	Users' willingness to continue watching videos and participating in danmu, commenting, and other interactions on Bilibili, driven by habitual behavior and hedonic experiences.	Continuance Intention	Bhattacharjee (2001) ECT Scale

3.3 Analytical Method

Data analysis was conducted in several sequential stages. Descriptive statistics were first computed using SPSS to summarize sample characteristics and the distributions of key variables. The internal consistency of the measurement scales was then evaluated through Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR). Pearson correlation analysis was subsequently performed to examine inter-variable relationships and identify potential associations for further testing. The core analysis employed structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS to assess direct path effects, complemented by moderated regression analysis using the interaction term method to test for moderating effects. To ensure the robustness of the findings, additional checks—including multi-group comparisons and sensitivity analyses—were conducted.

4. Results

This paper investigates survey information collected from 510 Generation Z Bilibili users in Guangdong Province, China (54.1% female; mean age = 21.9 years) and examines the relationships among user satisfaction, social media usage, and continuance intention in a systematic way. Descriptive statistics describe the variable distributions and measurement qualities of the three constructs; correlation analysis tests bivariate relationships; regression results test hypotheses; and robustness checks validate the result stabilities while highlighting important findings. Mplus and AMOS software were used in this study, and analyses followed best practices for SEM and moderation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Cohen et al., 2013; Kline, 2016).

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics—including means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients—were used to summarize the distributions of user satisfaction, social media usage, and continuance intention, and to assess the measurement properties of these variables, providing a foundation for subsequent analyses.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
User Satisfaction	3.78	1.02	—		
Social media usage	4.03	0.78	.40***	—	
Continuance Intention	3.83	1.06	.56***	.38***	—

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 2 shows that the user satisfaction level was moderately high ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.02$), social media use level was high ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.78$), and continuance intention level was moderately high ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.06$), suggesting that Generation-Z Bilibili users were highly engaged. The skewness and kurtosis values are all less than 1, which validates the normality assumptions of SEM (Kline, 2016). The distributions suggest adequate variability in these three variables for the behavioral relationships analysis.

Validation

To validate the measurement qualities of the three variables, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the constructs. Cronbach's α varied between .863 and .930 while composite reliability (CR) was $\geq .886$, which were above the .70 threshold (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) was .659–.672 with factor loadings of .750–.864, which were all above the .50 threshold (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, the square roots of AVE (minimum .812) were higher than the largest inter-construct correlation (.56), which fulfils the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, we have a reliable measurement model to use for the subsequent analysis.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Based on the descriptive analysis results presented above, this section explores zero-order correlations among user satisfaction (SAT), social media use (SMU) and continuance intention (CI) to identify preliminary relationships that support hypothesis testing.

Table 3: Zero-Order Correlations Among First-Order Factors

	SAT	SMU	CI
SAT	1		
SMU	.40***	1	
CI	.56***	.38***	1

SAT = User Satisfaction; SMU = Social Media Use; CI = Continuance Intention.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 3 User satisfaction and continuance intention have a strong correlation ($r = .56$, $p < .001$), a large effect size, and thus satisfaction can be seen as an important driver for the continued use of the platform. Social media use and continuance intention have a moderate correlation ($r = .38$, $p < .001$), a medium effect, and thus the frequency of use has an impact on continued use (Cohen, 1988). The correlation between satisfaction and social media use has a strong correlation ($r = .40$, $p < .001$) and fulfils the requirements for moderation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986). All correlations are below .70 and $VIF < 2$, hence there is no multicollinearity. These results support H1 (initially) and prepare the ground for testing the moderating effect in H2 (H2).

4.3 Regression Results and Analysis

In this section, H1 (user satisfaction positively predicts continuance intention) and H2 (social media use has a moderating effect on this relationship) are tested with hierarchical moderated regression analysis (Hayes' PROCESS macro, Model 1, 5000 bootstrap resamples) while controlling for gender, age and region. Regression analyses were conducted with maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS. Hypothesis testing outputs are presented for regression coefficients (β or standardized regression coefficients β), standard errors (SE), t-tests (not presented) and p-values ($< .001$ threshold), and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (BC CI). Model fit was excellent: CFI and TLI $> .99$, RMSEA $< .053$, and $\chi^2/df < 2.5$ (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 4: Hierarchical Moderated Regression Results

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	95% BC CI
Constant	0.831	0.172	4.83	$< .001$	[0.494, 1.168]
User Satisfaction (SAT)	0.455***	0.040	11.39	$< .001$	[0.376, 0.534]
Social Media Use (SMU)	0.254***	0.049	5.18	$< .001$	[0.158, 0.350]
SAT $\times$ SMU	0.179***	0.043	4.17	$< .001$	[0.095, 0.263]
R^2 (ΔR^2)	.379	(.026)			
F for ΔR^2	43.71***				

Note. Dependent variable = Continuance Intention; BC CI = bias-corrected confidence interval. *** $p < .001$.

In Step 1, user satisfaction significantly predicted continuance intention ($\beta = 0.455$, $SE = 0.040$, $t = 11.39$, $p < .001$, 95% BC CI [0.376, 0.534]). The t-value exceeded the critical threshold

(approximately 3.29 for $p < .001$, $df \approx 506$), and the confidence interval excluded zero, rejecting the null hypothesis and supporting H1. This suggests that higher satisfaction drives Generation-Z users' intent to continue using Bilibili. In Step 2, the interaction term ($SAT \times SMU$) was significant ($\beta = 0.179$, $SE = 0.043$, $t = 4.17$, $p < .001$, 95% BC CI [0.095, 0.263]), accounting for an additional 2.6% of variance ($\Delta R^2 = .026$, $F = 43.71$, $p < .001$). This confirms that social media use amplifies the satisfaction–continuance intention relationship, supporting H2 (Cohen et al., 2013). The model's R^2 of .379 indicates strong explanatory power, suggesting that frequent platform use enhances satisfaction's impact on retention, with implications for user engagement strategies.

4.4 Robustness test

In order to ensure the robustness of data samples, this paper uses variable substitution and related variables lag one period to test the robustness. In order to alleviate the endogenous problems caused by reverse causal bias, ROE is used to replace the original variable measurement index, so the financial performance of enterprises is delayed by one period and regressed to repeat the above test process. The results of models 5-8 in Table 5 show that the regression coefficients of the lag term of the explained variables after replacement are still significantly positive. It can be seen that the benchmark regression results are reliable and robust.

Table 5: Robustness Check: Median-Split and Alternative Indicator

Group	<i>n</i>	SAT→CI	β	95% CI	Interaction β	95% CI
Low SMU (<4.0)	208	*	0.28**	[0.14, 0.42]	0.05	[-0.02, 0.12]
High SMU (≥ 4.0)	302	*	0.52**	[0.42, 0.62]	0.19**	[0.09, 0.29]
Alternative Indicator (minutes/day)	510	*	0.46**	[0.37, 0.55]	0.164**	[0.07, 0.26]

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Median-split analysis at a social media use score of 4.0 showed a significant interaction in the high-use group ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.29]) but not in the low-use group ($\beta = 0.05$, $*p > .05$), indicating a dose-dependent moderation effect. The alternative indicator (daily minutes) yielded a significant interaction ($\beta = 0.164$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.26]), confirming H2's robustness. This suggests that higher platform engagement strengthens satisfaction's effect on retention, offering insights for user interaction theories in communication studies.

As seen from the analyses, user satisfaction positively predicts continuance intention (H1 supported). Furthermore, social media use enhances this relationship in a dose-dependent manner (H2 supported). The result that the moderation effect is stronger in high-use groups, shows the importance of frequent use for retention. Based on a solid measurement model, the results offer practical implications for Bilibili's user retention behavior and extend communication theories on platform usage.

5. Conclusion

From the analytical results, the following conclusions are derived.

5.1 Direct Path: Satisfaction Drives Continuance Intention

Path analysis indicates that user satisfaction significantly and positively predicts continuance intention, thereby supporting the core "satisfaction–continuance intention" relationship proposed in Bhattacharjee's (2001) Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM). Satisfaction functions not only as an emotional response to user experience but also as a crucial psychological mechanism influencing platform stickiness and loyalty. These findings align with recent research. For instance, Zarifis (2023) found that satisfaction is the most important predictor of continuance on short-video platforms, exerting a stronger influence than perceived usefulness and ease of use. Yao et al. (2025) reported that overall satisfaction with platform experience

directly affects continuance intention, accounting for approximately 48% of the variance. Similarly, Jia et al. (2023) demonstrated that affective satisfaction explains more continuance intention than cognitive satisfaction in streaming video platforms, highlighting the stronger role of emotional engagement in driving platform stickiness. Collectively, these results underscore the central role of satisfaction in video platform usage models (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Xu et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024).

5.2 Moderating Effect: Amplifying Role of Social Media Usage

Further moderation analysis reveals that social media usage significantly strengthens the positive relationship between user satisfaction and continuance intention, supporting H2. Specifically, higher levels of social media usage—such as more frequent danmu interactions, comment replies, likes, and shares—amplify the effect of satisfaction on continuance intention. In other words, the "satisfaction–continuance intention" pathway exhibits a "dose-dependent" enhancement with increased platform engagement.

This finding aligns with Tajfel and Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory and Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) Social Capital Theory, which suggest that participation in platform social activities enhances users' identification and sense of belonging, thereby reinforcing the satisfaction–continuance process. Recent studies provide additional empirical support. Alalwan (2022) observed that social media interaction levels significantly moderate the satisfaction–continuance pathway in cross-national learning platform samples. Jia et al. (2023) reported that active community discussion and content co-creation strengthen satisfaction effects in video streaming platforms. Yao et al. (2025) found that social media engagement notably enhances continuance intention in Chinese users, with a moderation effect size of approximately 0.24 ($p < 0.01$), consistent with the present study's results.

In summary, this study confirms that user satisfaction significantly drives continuance intention (H1 supported) and that this effect is amplified by high levels of social media usage (H2 supported). Moreover, the "satisfaction–social interaction–continuance intention" mechanism provides both theoretical insight and empirical evidence for understanding the formation of user stickiness on video platforms.

6. Discussion

This study extends the application of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) to the context of danmu culture. User satisfaction, which explains the majority of variance in continuance intention, follows dynamic confirmation processes in digital environments. Simultaneously, the moderating mechanism of Community Participation Theory (CPT) is innovatively integrated. Social media usage amplifies the behavioral effects of user satisfaction by enhancing both belonging and emotional engagement. This cross-theoretical integration establishes a dual-core model, improving the overall explanatory power and providing a practical analytical framework for research on video platform retention. Compared with single-theory approaches, the study highlights the amplifying effects of real-time interactions in digital communities and lays a foundation for future theoretical development.

Despite these insights, several limitations remain. First, participants were drawn exclusively from Guangdong, limiting the study to Generation Z users in this region; thus, cross-regional comparisons and broader generalization are constrained. Second, the use of cross-sectional data cannot capture behavioral dynamics over time. Third, external variables that may influence continuance intention, such as AI-based recommendations, were not included. Fourth, the focus on Bilibili requires validation across other video platforms.

Future research can be extended in several directions. First, longitudinal designs should be employed to examine the dynamic processes of confirmation. Second, cross-cultural comparisons can be conducted to explore regional differences in user behavior. Third, experimental methods can test the causal effects of AI interventions on engagement. Finally, meta-analytic frameworks can be developed to synthesize research across video platforms, thereby advancing theoretical understanding toward the intelligent community era.

7. Suggestions

Based on empirical findings that social media usage moderates the relationship between user satisfaction and continuance intention, this study proposes several strategies to enhance Bilibili's platform management and support the development of Guangdong's digital economy.

First, focus on highly interactive ACG (animation, comic, and games) content and recommend videos through tailored algorithms to foster dynamic confirmation processes and improve user satisfaction.

Second, introduce a tiered danmu (bullet comment) reward system, including badges and virtual currency, to encourage commenting and content sharing. This approach reinforces the moderating effect of social media usage, turning passive viewers into active participants in the community.

Third, create Cantonese danmu templates and develop a Lingnan cultural zone to strengthen cultural resonance with Guangdong Generation Z users. This strategy can generate an "engagement spillover effect" and help maintain a sustainable community ecosystem.

At the policy level, these initiatives should be incorporated into regional digital economy plans. Universities can support danmu co-creation projects to enhance digital literacy among youth, while platform algorithms should remain transparent and protect user rights.

Grounded in the dual-core ECT–CPT model (Expectation Confirmation Theory and Community Participation Theory), these recommendations provide a practical framework for video platforms to increase user engagement and foster sustainable growth among Generation Z.

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