

Xiaohongshu Platform Usage: Exploring the Impact of Content Values, User Satisfaction, and Continuance Intention Among Chinese Tourists

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Abstract. As the travel industry increasingly embraces digital platforms, Xiaohongshu has become an essential tool for tourists planning their trips. This study investigates the relationship between content value, user satisfaction, and continuance intention through a web-based survey of 465 Chinese Xiaohongshu users. The findings reveal that both functional and experiential content values play pivotal roles in shaping user satisfaction during travel planning. Specifically, the practical utility of travel information (functional value) and the enjoyable browsing experience (experiential value) significantly enhance user satisfaction. Importantly, this satisfaction strongly predicts users' intention to continue using the platform. These results provide valuable guidance for travel brands seeking to optimize their presence on Xiaohongshu, suggesting they should focus on delivering high-quality, engaging content that enhances user satisfaction and fosters long-term platform engagement. The study contributes novel insights into user behavior patterns on this influential social media platform, particularly illuminating the mechanisms through which content value translates into sustained platform usage.

Keywords: Content values; User Satisfaction; Continuance intention; Xiaohongshu.

1. Introduction

The digital transformation of travel planning has created a paradox: while platforms like Xiaohongshu empower tourists with unprecedented information access, the very abundance of resources raises critical questions about how content value shapes decision-making efficiency and long-term platform loyalty. As China's leading social-commerce hybrid, Xiaohongshu exemplifies this tension, with 68% of its 200 million monthly active users leveraging its visual diaries and crowdsourced reviews for trip organization. Yet, despite its dominance in lifestyle-driven travel planning, academic inquiries remain fragmented: prior studies focus either on its e-commerce integration ^[10] or visual aesthetics ^[12], neglecting the systemic examination of how content value dimensions — particularly functional utility (e.g., route optimization tips) versus experiential immersion (e.g., atmospheric destination videos)—collectively drive user commitment.

This gap carries significant implications. Industry reports indicate that 73% of Xiaohongshu travel content consumers exhibit "platform promiscuity," cross-referencing 2.8 competing apps per trip-planning session [TravelTech China, 2023]. Such behavior underscores a pressing challenge for brands: how to transform fleeting user engagement into sustained platform allegiance through content strategy. The stakes are particularly high in China's experience-driven tourism economy, where 56% of Gen Z travelers rank "content authenticity and practicality" as their primary platform selection criteria, surpassing algorithmic personalization features [CIC, 2022].

This study aims to investigate the simultaneous impact of content value dimensions (functional, social and experiential) on tourist satisfaction within the Xiaohongshu platform, as well as how this influence affects the intention of Xiaohongshu users to continue using the platform. In other words, the study is dedicated to developing a novel model that assesses tourists' satisfaction with the pre-trip experience and their intention to continue using emerging content-sharing platforms such as the Xiaohongshu website. This model is based on the dimensions of content value (functional, social and experiential), satisfaction, and the intention to continue using the platform.

Specifically, this study deepens the current body of knowledge in several ways. Firstly, it offers insights into the satisfaction of Xiaohongshu users when seeking travel advice. Secondly, it enriches the theoretical and empirical perspectives on user continuance intention within the context of shared content platforms. Thirdly, its findings will assist developers of Xiaohongshu's website and its enterprise managers in enhancing the user information search experience, thereby increasing user satisfaction and intention to continue using the platform.

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

The theoretical framework used in this study provides the definitions of satisfaction and its antecedents, namely, content values (conceptualised as a multidimensional construct of functional, social, and experiential values), and outcome, that is, continuance intention, as well as their interconnections (Figure 1). This section also provides the definitions of sharing and the sharing economy as well as their distinction.

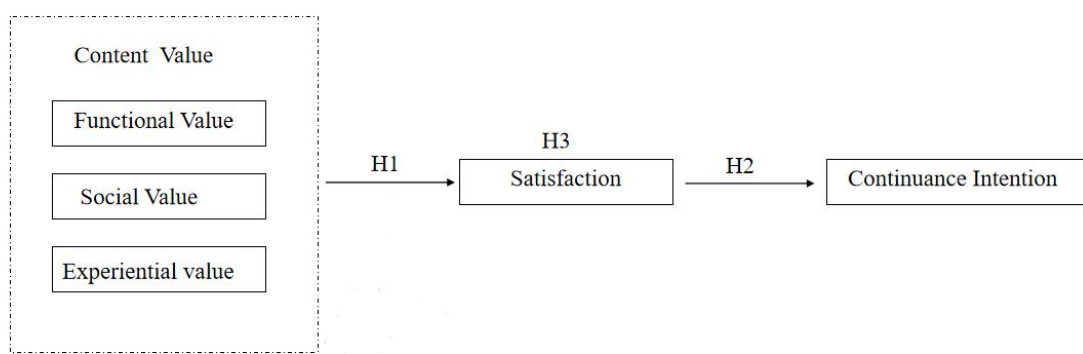


Fig.1 The research model

2.1 Content Value

Through social media, consumers contribute, create, consume, and exchange content^[7]. Content value refers to consumers' perceptions of the trade-off between the benefits gained from interacting with interest-relevant contents versus the sacrifices required to obtain them^[3]. Content value is a positive outcome of the weighting of research efforts and resources engaged and the quality of the information obtained through that process. Past research showed that consumers derive substantial content value from their participation in SMP (social media platform).

As a highly efficient communication and distribution channel^[12], they may communicate effectively with other participants to obtain valuable information from them^[8]. In addition, as emphasized by Chung et al.^[10], digital environments facilitate the archiving of past content inexpensively, so that SMP constitute an aggregate of collective expertise on topics, that is difficult to find elsewhere, and which creates a "capital of knowledge" which increases all the more its value for all members. Finally, SMP have a potential of getting consumers together and back into dynamic conversations, which enable them to get information about the brand from various sources^[4].

Existing research indicates that visual content provided by a website can foster positive attitudes among customers in terms of trust, satisfaction, loyalty and commitment and can be a driver of purchasing behaviour for perceived usefulness and enjoyment^[1,5,9]. Additionally, because online shopping entails a certain amount of risk and uncertainty^[1], vendors' visual content may help customers meet their information needs^[10]. This satisfaction may, in turn, lead to improved trust and finalisation of the transaction^[12]. Therefore, electronic-Word of Mouth (e-WOM), including visual content, has a more significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions than e-WOM with out visual information^[13]. Based on the above argument and literature, content value, such as travel

guides from other visitors on platforms like Xiaohongshu, can enhance user satisfaction by providing authentic and reliable information that aids in effective travel planning.

Gokce et al (2023) suggest that the validity of a unidimensional measure of content value is open to criticism due to its assumption that consumers have a shared meaning of value, while a multidimensional scale can overcome the validity problem by operationalizing perceived value using, for example, a five-dimensional construct consisting of social, emotional, functional, epistemic, and conditional responses^[9]. Abdul-Muhmin (2010) argued that the five values are critical in influencing consumer decision choices. However, the theory of consumption values also argues that the relative importance of the value components likely varies from context to context^[1,12]. Moreover, many existing tourism studies adopt a wider view that treats the concept of perceived value as a multidimensional construct^[6]. Based on their analysis of these works, the researcher identified three common dimensions of perceived value: functional value, social value, and experiential value. Therefore, we hypothesise that:

H1: Content value positively influences satisfaction.

H1a: functional value positively influences satisfaction.

H1b: social value positively influences satisfaction.

H1c: experiential value positively influences satisfaction.

2.2 Atisfaction and Continuance Intention

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The concept of continuance intention has been discussed in the information systems literature^[7]. Continuance intention is the strength of consumers' intention to perform a specified behaviour^[7]. It is also congruent with repeat purchase decisions^[6]. Continuance intention refers to an individual's judgment of whether to repurchase a specified product or service from the same business, taking into account his or her current situation and likely circumstances^[12]. Continuance decisions are not made in a vacuum. For most services, there are alternatives that may influence users' decision to continue their usage, depending on their satisfaction with that product or service. For example, individuals who have a positive experience with software or social networking sites tend to have a higher continuance intention compared to those who have a negative experience^[14]. However, it has rarely been studied in the context of tourism^[9]. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H2: Satisfaction has a positive effect on Continuance intention with using the Xiaohongshu

2.3 The Meditation Role of Satisfaction

Attractive visual material evokes an emotional response^[13] and improves the quality assessment of a website^[6]. In contrast, Seckler et al. (2015) shows that people are more likely to be suspicious of a website has content that is unpleasant or poorly made. Significant changes in customer choices are caused by visual content for both new and current purchasers^[14]. According to Gokce et al.^[13] one piece of visual content is equivalent to a thousand words. Literature suggests that customers' satisfaction, desire to participate in transactions and loyalty toward e-vendors in e-commerce may be enhanced by their confidence in vendors^[13]. Previous literature studied the role of satisfaction as a mediator; Website fulfilment, reliability, ease of use and expertise increase website customer loyalty mediated by the customer satisfaction^[12]; social commerce website reputation and information increase customer repurchase intention and WOM through customer

satisfaction[1]. Users satisfaction may motivate them to exchange content with other customers and turn to higher- continuance intention. Therefore, we postulate that:

H3: Satisfaction mediates the effect of content value on continuance intention.

3. Research Methodology

The research problem is quantified through an empirical research methodology. Empirical research allows the researcher to generate numerical data associated with research variables, which can be analysed statistically to produce meaningful results to solve the research problem. This study adopts a predictive research design, which attempts to determine the mediating role of satisfaction between content value and continuance intention variables, as shown in Figure 1. This study examines the interplay between content value, user satisfaction, and continuance intention among 465 Chinese users on the Xiaohongshu platform through a web-based survey. Data were collected in China on July 2024 through the Credamo online questionnaire platform. Participants were recruited via Xiaohongshu's official user communities and third-party sampling pools, with screening questions verifying: 1) active platform usage for travel planning (>3 monthly logins), 2) completion of ≥ 1 trip planned via Xiaohongshu in 2024. From 632 initial responses, 465 valid submissions were retained after eliminating incomplete ($n=89$) and speeders (<3 minutes completion time, $n=78$), yielding a 73.6% valid response rate. Respondents were invited through an electronic survey questionnaire. The employed e-survey was measured using a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree". The sample is selected with purposeful objectives to answer the research question. Respondents were filtered, and only those who had experience healthy consumption-based online community on social media platforms like Xiaohongshu were eligible to participate in the survey.

3.1 Measurement Items

Scales and items used to measure the variables were derived from previously validated scales in the existing literature and adapted to fit the study context. Continuance intention measurement items' were adapted from Bhattacharjee^[7] and the satisfaction measurement items' were adapted from Abdul-Muhmin et al^[1], and the three content value measurement items' were adapted from Hajli^[7].

3.2 Sample Profile

The study participants exhibited diverse sociodemographic characteristics. Females accounted for 67.3% of respondents, outnumbering males (32.7%) by approximately two to one. The age distribution skewed young, with a significant majority (62.9%) being under 30 years old. Educationally, about half of the participants held bachelor's degrees. Regarding platform engagement, 58.2% reported using Xiaohongshu with moderate frequency, accessing the platform 1-3 times daily.

3.3 Analysis and Results

We used the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method, specifically SmartPLS 3^[11], as the primary tool to test the hypotheses proposed. PLS is a suitable method for testing path models. Data analysis was performed using PLS-SEM, a variance-based structural equation modelling (SEM) technique that allows simultaneous analysis of both the measurement model and structural model, PLS has become an increasingly prominent methodological approach^[11], with a number of high-profile journals publishing review studies documenting its use across a variety of disciplines (see for instance^[12]). PLS was chosen in this study over covariance-based SEM as it is more appropriate for predictive applications and theory building (as is the case here)^[11] than testing established theory, and it facilitates the identification of success drivers (in this study, Continuance intention)^[9,12] PLS-SEM is often employed in travel and tourism literatur^e^[9].

3.3.1 Measurement model analysis

The measurement model was evaluated following Hair et al.'s (2014) guidelines, using a dataset comprising 17 items. To assess convergent validity, we examined factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), all of which demonstrated satisfactory results. Subsequently, discriminant validity was tested using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio^[11] to ensure each construct was distinct from the others. The analysis confirmed discriminant validity, as all inter-construct correlations remained below the threshold of 0.85.

3.3.2 Structural model analysis

Assessment of the variance-based structural model (PLS-SEM) differs from the method of covariance-based SEM, which employs a number of goodness of fit measures to evaluate the difference between the theoretical and empirical covariance matrices. Conversely, PLS-SEM employs a series of crucial metrics, including the importance of path coefficients, R^2 values, f^2 effect sizes, and Stone-Geisser's Q^2 predictive relevance value, to assess the effectiveness of its predictions regarding endogenous constructs^[11]. The results of hypothesis testing are summarised in Figure 2. In Figure 2, R^2 values (demonstrating the model's predictive power) are presented for each endogenous variable. Figure 2 illustrates that the model explains 14.8% of the variance in satisfaction and 40.8% of the variance in Continuance intention. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 represent small, medium and large effect sizes, respectively. The f^2 value of 0.049 for satisfaction on Continuance intention indicated a medium effect size and the f^2 values of 0.173 and 0.417 for content value on satisfaction and continuance intention, respectively, indicated large effect sizes.

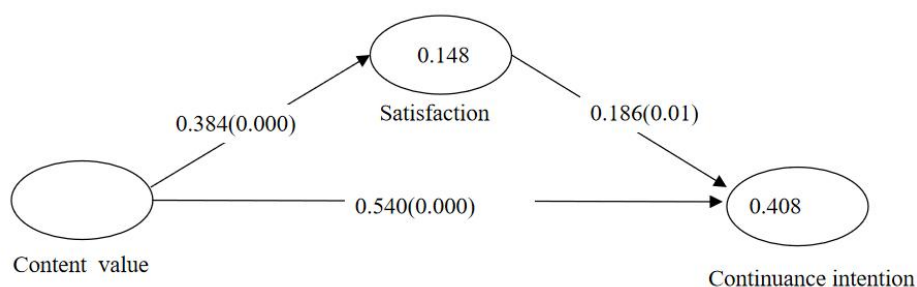


Fig.2 Structural model results

The computation of the Stone-Geisser criterion^[11] by applying the PLS predict yielded Q^2 values of 0.118 for satisfaction and 0.348 for continuance intention, thus demonstrating the model's predictive relevance. In order to test and get the significant levels for the hypothesised associations, bootstrapping was executed to compute t-statistics and obtain significance levels for each of the hypothesised associations; the parameter settings for bootstrapping comprised 465 cases and 5,000 subsamples.

The bootstrapping analysis confirmed the significance of all hypothesized relationships in the model. The results demonstrated a significant mediation effect, where satisfaction partially complements the relationship between content value and continuance intention (H3). Specifically, functional value showed a strong positive impact on satisfaction (H1a: $\beta=0.484$, $p<0.001$), while experiential value also significantly enhanced satisfaction (H1c: $\beta=0.284$, $p<0.001$). However, social value did not significantly influence satisfaction (H1b: $\beta=0.076$, $p>0.05$). Furthermore, satisfaction itself positively predicted continuance intention (H2: $\beta=0.186$, $p<0.05$). These findings collectively support hypotheses H1a, H1c, H2, and the mediated relationship proposed in H3, while rejecting H1b regarding social value's nonsignificant effect.

The analysis revealed a significant indirect effect ($B=0.071$, $p<0.05$), indicating that satisfaction serves as a complementary partial mediator between content value and continuance intention. These results demonstrate that while content value directly influences continuance intention, satisfaction also plays an important mediating role. Consequently, hypothesis H3 is supported by the findings.

4. Summary

This study makes significant contributions to the understanding of user behavior in social media platforms, particularly in tourism-related contexts. Focusing on Xiaohongshu - a visually-oriented platform popular among Chinese millennials and Gen Z users - the research provides valuable insights into how content value dimensions influence satisfaction and continuance intention.

Theoretically, this work advances existing knowledge by examining three key dimensions of content value (functional, experiential, and social) and their differential impacts on user satisfaction. The findings reveal that functional value ($\beta=0.484$, $p<0.001$), representing practical benefits like high-quality travel content, and experiential value ($\beta=0.284$, $p<0.001$), relating to enjoyment and relaxation, both significantly enhance user satisfaction. However, social value ($\beta=0.076$, $p>0.05$), concerning peer recognition, showed no significant effect. The study further confirms satisfaction's crucial mediating role ($\beta=0.186$, $p<0.05$) in linking content value to continuance intention.

From a practical standpoint, these findings offer important implications for tourism marketers. The results suggest that emphasizing functional and experiential aspects of content - such as providing authentic, high-quality travel information and creating enjoyable browsing experiences - can effectively boost user satisfaction and foster long-term platform engagement. This insight is particularly valuable for businesses targeting China's younger demographic through Xiaohongshu.

Methodologically, the study contributes by developing and testing a comprehensive model integrating content value theory with continuance intention in the social media context. This approach extends previous research that primarily relied on technology acceptance or trust-based frameworks.

However, several limitations should be noted. First, the exclusive focus on Xiaohongshu may limit generalizability to other platforms. Future research could benefit from cross-platform comparisons. Second, the reliance on self-reported survey data may introduce response biases, suggesting the need for complementary methods like observational studies. Third, the PLS-SEM approach, while robust, has certain fit limitations that alternative methods could address. Finally, the Chinese user sample may not represent global social media behaviors, indicating opportunities for cross-cultural studies.

These limitations notwithstanding, the study provides a solid foundation for future research to further explore the complex dynamics of user engagement in social media environments, particularly in the rapidly evolving domain of travel-related platforms.

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