

KEY INFLUENCERS OF INTENTION TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN CHENGDU, CHINA

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Abstract

This research investigates the various factors influencing the intention to use social media in ten universities. The proposed conceptual framework delineates the causal associations between the usage of social media, utilitarian value, hedonic value, social safeness, share intention, social benefit, social overload, and life satisfaction. The study employed a quantitative methodology with a sample size of 500 participants. Questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate students from ten selected universities who use WeChat. A sampling method was purposive, stratified random, and convenience sampling. The researcher utilized the Structural Equation Model and Confirmatory Factor Analysis techniques to analyze the data, assessing model fit, reliability, and construct validity. The study's findings revealed that utilitarian value significantly influences shared intention. Share intention presented the strongest impact on life satisfaction, followed by social benefit and social overload. Six hypotheses were proven to fulfill research objectives. Hence, it is recommended that social media developers, higher educators, and educators focus on improving social media functions to enhance students' perception of its social benefit and foster a positive attitude and intention toward their life satisfaction.

Keywords: Usage of Social Media, Utilitarian Value, Share Intent, Social Benefit, Social Overload, Life Satisfaction

Introduction

The advent of Web 2.0 technologies has significantly hastened the move towards a networked society (Castells, 2000). This is primarily due to the ease with which individuals can utilize ubiquitous web technologies to connect with like-minded individuals across different time zones and physical locations, as highlighted by Bruns (2008). Since the 21st century, computer information technology has developed rapidly. Various fields of the Internet have continued to iterate and create new ones. They have tried every means to tap people's needs and launched products for various needs covering daily social interaction, food, travel, payment, entertainment, and other aspects—the product. Social media is one of the most important “inventions.”

Social media is a concept that has been introduced previously. It first appeared in 2008 in a book called “What is Social Media” (what is social media). Mayfield (2008) defines social media as a new type of online media that gives users a great space for participation and has the following characteristics: participation, openness, communication, dialogue, community, and connectivity. The most distinctive features of social media are its vague definition, rapid innovation, and the “fusion” of various technologies. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a series of programs built on the Web 2.0 network application based on technology and ideology, allowing user-generated content to be created and exchanged (UGC). Levinson (2009) believed there are three types of media: traditional or old media, new media, and social media.

University students increasingly embrace social media, relying heavily on it for daily interactions and communication (Hussain, 2012). Integrating social media into education is beneficial across all educational levels, although it is particularly popular among university students who exhibit a heightened enthusiasm for its use (Davis et al., 2011). A widespread belief among educational professionals is that universities have a unique advantage in leveraging social media approaches to facilitate the joint development of knowledge among students and the wider community (Moskaliuk et al., 2009). However, university students face some issues and challenges when using social media. The use of social media to access information and knowledge has sparked considerable debate, with many expressing concerns about its potential to dumb down and erode intellectual capabilities and skills (Selwyn, 2012). Carr (2010) argues that social media users are transitioning from being curators of personal knowledge to becoming explorers in the vast landscape of electronic information. As we navigate this transformation, we inevitably lose many captivating aspects of our minds (Carr, 2010).

Literature Review

1. Utilitarian Value

Utilitarian value is an important consideration for the effective operation of social

media app. Utilitarian value of social media app can be measured in terms of effectiveness, task-specificity, and economic factors (Lee & Kim, 2018). Utilitarian values are judicious, logical, conducive to sound decision-making, and directed towards a particular goal (Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). It considers cognitive elements of opinion, like the cost-benefit ratio and appraisals of convenience and time efficiency (Ha & Jang, 2010). Previous research has suggested that utilitarian value is a powerful driving force behind the utilization of information and communication technology for knowledge sharing in different organizational contexts (Ardichvili, 2008). Thus, a hypothesis is indicated:

H1: Utilitarian value has a significant impact on share intention.

2. Hedonic Value

Hsu and Chen (2018) provide a comprehensive definition of hedonic value, which they describe as an individual's assessment of experiential benefits gained from a product or service. Additionally, an individual's pleasure and satisfaction is derived from fun and amusement, known as hedonic value (Babin et al., 1994). Hedonic value encompasses positive emotions, amusement, and satisfaction derived from a product/service (Ryu & Han, 2010); hedonic value encapsulates the more enthusiastic and enjoyable elements of the experience (Vieira et al., 2018). Thus, a hypothesis is indicated:

H2: Hedonic value has a significant impact on share intention.

3. Usage of Social Media

Social media refers to websites and apps that permit people to share data (text and visuals) and view and comment on information posted by others (Venkatesh, 2016). Websites that facilitate user-generated content and interactions, based on Web 2.0 technology, are generally referred to as social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Jadhav (2014) noted that younger generations especially favor a computer or mobile device when it comes to social media. People benefit from much more convenient communication today, which was heavily reliant on social media (O'Connor et al., 2022). Thus, a hypotheses are indicated:

H3: Usage of social media has a significant impact on social benefit.

H4: Usage of social media has a significant impact on social overload.

4. Share Intention

Ma et al. (2018) defines share intention as the user's willingness to share content from corporate official accounts on their social media platforms. Donagan (2017) emphasized the significance of "will" in understanding shared intentions and intelligent behavior. When a user finds information to be useful or interesting, they will likely take action to share it with others, which is share intention (Moghavvemi et al., 2017). Considering the relationship between share intention and life satisfaction, Gagné (2009) and Jiang and Hu (2016) proposed that knowledge sharing can positively influence an individual's overall contentment with life. H3: Work group cohesiveness has a significant impact on innovative behavior. Thus, a hypothesis is indicated:

H5: Share intention has a significant impact on life satisfaction.

5. Social Safeness

Studies by Gilbert (2009) have associated feelings of social safeness with increased contentment, which is understood to be the perception of one's social atmosphere as comforting, secure, and tranquil. According to Carter (1998), being comforted, nurtured, and cared for can prompt the release of oxytocin and endorphins, resulting in a sense of social safeness that can reduce stress, fear, and arousal. Gilbert (1989, 2005) characterized the system as a "contentment and social safeness system" due to its associations with love, care, and calming. Thus, a hypothesis is indicated:

H6: Social Safeness has a significant impact on life satisfaction.

6. Social Benefit

Kuo and Feng (2013) proposed that fostering and sustaining relationships with others, such as friendships, intimacy, and social support, can provide considerable social benefits. The advantages of participating in social activities, such as forming friendships, obtaining social support, establishing intimate relationships, increasing supportive communication, and expanding one's interpersonal circle, can be regarded as social benefits (Oh et al., 2014). Using online social media can help foster relationships that bring about positive social and psychological benefits for members of a particular brand's community (Huang et al., 2022). People with strong and broad social networks may experience greater satisfaction with life (Best et al., 2014). Thus, a hypothesis is indicated:

H7: Social benefit has a significant impact on life satisfaction.

7. Social Overload

Social overload is regarded as a kind of stress, as the social environment triggers it and brings about an immediate state of being overwhelmed; in that situation, individuals may find it difficult to cope with the numerous social obligations and responsibilities that they are faced with (Baum et al., 1982; McCarthy & Saegert, 1978). Maier et al. (2012, 2015) have identified a fascinating phenomenon known as social overload, which refers to the experience of social media users feeling overwhelmed by the excessive social pressure they encounter. Helms et al. (2010) suggest that social overload is a small yet persistent annoyance in everyday life. Thus, a hypothesis is indicated:

H8: Social overload has a significant impact on life satisfaction.

8. Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction, an individual's evaluation of their own life (Diener et al., 1985), is often called an overall assessment. It is considered a component that contributes to an individual's overall sense of happiness and contentment in life (Akkaş & Turan, 2023). It has been suggested that having a satisfying job, being physically and mentally well, experiencing positive life events, having strong relationships with others, and earning a decent wage are all signs of contentment in life (Lelkes, 2008).

Research Framework

The development of the conceptual framework is predicated upon an in-depth examination of prior research frameworks, and its formulation draws upon the integration of three distinct theoretical models. The proposed conceptual framework for this study is depicted in Figure 1.

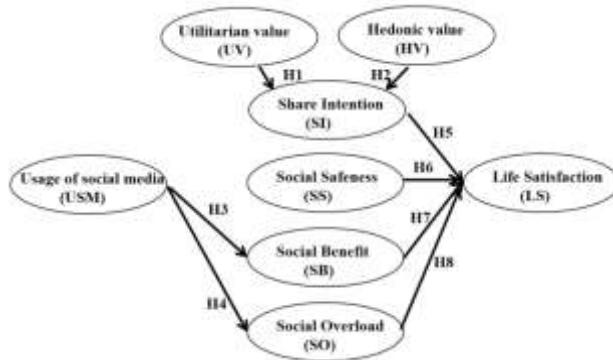


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

The hypotheses of the research variables based on the conceptual framework are;

- H1: Utilitarian value has a significant impact on share intention.
- H2: Hedonic value has a significant impact on share intention.
- H3: Usage of social media has a significant impact on social benefit.
- H4: Usage of social media has a significant impact on social overload.
- H5: Share intention has a significant impact on life satisfaction.
- H6: Social safeness has a significant impact on life satisfaction.
- H7: Social benefit has a significant impact on life satisfaction.
- H8: Social overload has a significant impact on life satisfaction.

Research Methodology

The researcher utilized a multistage sampling method to gather our study sample, incorporating elements of both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The researcher's approach initially used purposive sampling, followed by stratified random sampling in the second phase, and finally, convenience sampling was chosen in the third stage to gather the data. The questionnaire was mainly distributed online. The survey comprises three distinct sections. Initially, the screening questions are employed to ascertain the specific attributes of the respondents. Subsequently, a 5-point Likert scale was utilized to gauge the levels of agreement or disagreement for eight proposed variables. The pilot testing process entailed evaluating the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) through expert rating and conducting a pilot test with a sample size of 30 respondents. The study employed the Cronbach's Alpha method to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The survey was distributed to the desired participants after the reliability test, yielding 500 valid responses.

1. Population and Sample Size

This study's focus population is undergraduates within the ten selected universities in Chengdu, China. Upon inputting all essential data into the calculator, the researcher obtained a recommended minimum sample size of 444. Drawing from previous research, 500 samples were collected from ten universities in Chengdu to ensure statistically sound results. Thus, a sample size of 500 was appropriate for this study and suitable for implementing the structural equation modeling (SEM) statistical technique.

2. Sampling Techniques

To ensure the representation of the entire geographical area of Chengdu, China, the study employed judgmental sampling to select ten universities situated in distinct regions of the province. Thus, the target audience for this research consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in Chengdu, China, who have experience using social media. The statistical data in Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the target population.

Results and Discussion

1. Demographic Information

The demographic profile of the study encompasses a sample size of 500 participants, as depicted in Table 1. Male respondents constitute 48% of the sample, while female respondents make up 52%. Concerning grade distribution, the largest proportion of participants falls within the sophomore bracket, representing 29% of the respondents. This is followed by 25.8% of participants who were freshmen, 23.4% who were juniors, and 21.8% who were seniors. Regarding major background, most respondents studied science 23.2% studied arts. Regarding the Frequency of using WeChat daily, almost half of the respondents (44.8%) use WeChat for more than 6 hours a day.

Table 1 Demographic Profile

Demographic and Behavior Data (N=500)		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	240	48%
	Female	260	52%
Grade	Freshman	129	25.8%
	Sophomore	145	29%
	Junior	117	23.4%
	Senior	109	21.8%
Major	Arts	116	23.2%
	Science	179	35.8%
	Economics	107	21.4%
	Medicine	80	16%
	Others	18	3.6%

Frequency of using WeChat per day	<1h	47	9.4%
	1h-3h	90	18%
	3h-6h	139	27.8%
	>6h	224	44.8%

2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to examine the discriminant validity of the variables. Notably, all items within each variable were statistically significant and exhibited factor loadings, substantiating their ability to discriminate between the constructs under investigation.

Table 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Result, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	Source of Questionnaire	No. of Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Factors Loading	CR	AVE
Usage of social media (USM)	Zhan et al. (2016)	6	0.886	0.730- 0.767	0.8860	0.5644
Utilitarian Value (UV)	Ma et al. (2018)	3	0.810	0.758- 0.785	0.8109	0.5885
Hedonic Value (HV)	Ma et al. (2018)	4	0.868	0.763- 0.809	0.8603	0.6065
Social Safeness (SS)	Maziriri et al. (2022)	5	0.876	0.727- 0.806	0.8862	0.6091
Share Intention (SI)	Ma et al. (2018)	3	0.793	0.728- 0.781	0.7943	0.5630
Social Benefit (SB)	Zhan et al. (2016)	3	0.802	0.745- 0.767	0.7942	0.5626
Social Overload (SO)	Zhan et al. (2016)	6	0.893	0.717- 0.796	0.8936	0.5835
Life Satisfaction (LS)	Ma et al. (2018)	4	0.854	0.769- 0.773	0.8541	0.5941

Source: Created by the author.

Factor loadings are important in the research as numerical representations of the association between observed variables and factors. Chau (1997) pointed out that to establish convergent validity, the factor loading must be above 0.5, and the t-value should reach significance at a level higher than 2.0. Table 3 shows that the construct reliability (CR) surpasses

the threshold of 0.7, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds the prescribed cut-off value of 0.5, as Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested, signifying a satisfactory level of convergent validity.

Table 3 Goodness of Fit for Measurement Model

Index	Acceptable Values	Statistical Values
CMIN/DF	< 5.00 (Al-Mamary & Shamsuddin, 2015; Awang, 2012)	1.121
GFI	≥ 0.85 (Sica & Ghisi, 2007)	0.940
AGFI	≥ 0.80 (Sica & Ghisi, 2007)	0.929
NFI	≥ 0.80 (Wu & Wang, 2006)	0.936
CFI	≥ 0.80 (Bentler, 1990)	0.993
TLI	≥ 0.80 (Sharma et al., 2005)	0.992
RMSEA	< 0.08 (Pedroso et al., 2016)	0.016
Model summary		Acceptable Model Fit

Note: CMIN/DF = The ratio of the Chi-square value to degree of freedom, GFI = Goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = Adjusted goodness-of-fit index, NFI = Normed fit index, CFI = Comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation.

Determining the square root of the average variance extracted reveals that all correlations surpass the corresponding correlation values for the respective variable, as indicated in Table 3. Furthermore, indicators such as GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA are utilized to evaluate the adequacy of the model in CFA testing.

Table 4 Discriminant Validity

	USM	UV	HV	SS	SI	SB	SO	LS
USM	0.751							
UV	0.389	0.767						
HV	0.209	0.326	0.779					
SS	0.245	0.280	0.298	0.780				
SI	0.335	0.488	0.249	0.295	0.750			
SB	0.342	0.433	0.284	0.303	0.433	0.750		
SO	0.266	0.319	0.322	0.221	0.291	0.307	0.764	
LS	0.313	0.526	0.300	0.276	0.418	0.419	0.328	0.771

Note: The diagonally listed value is the AVE square roots of the variable

The examination of convergent and discriminant validity in this study, as indicated by the values presented in Table 5, surpasses the acceptable thresholds. This confirms the presence of both convergent validity and discriminant validity. Additionally, these outcomes regarding model measurement alleviate concerns regarding discriminant validity and serve as a validation for assessing the validity of subsequent estimations in the structural model.

3. Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) provides a detailed statistical technique for evaluating the relationships between measurable and unobservable variables, enabling the testing of hypotheses effectively (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Keesling, 1972), as shown in Figure 4. The measurement of goodness of fit indices for the Structural Equation Model (SEM) is exemplified in Table 6.

Table 6 Goodness of Fit for Measurement and Structural Model

Index	Acceptable Criterion	Statistical Values
CMIN/DF	< 5.00 (Al-Mamary & Shamsuddin, 2015; Awang, 2012)	1.980
GFI	≥ 0.85 (Sica & Ghisi, 2007)	0.887
AGFI	≥ 0.80 (Sica & Ghisi, 2007)	0.871
NFI	≥ 0.80 (Wu & Wang, 2006)	0.882
CFI	≥ 0.80 (Bentler, 1990)	0.938
TLI	≥ 0.80 (Sharma et al., 2005)	0.933
RMSEA	< 0.08 (Pedroso et al., 2016)	0.044
Model Summary		Acceptable Model Fit

Note: CMIN/DF = The ratio of the chi-square value to degree of freedom, GFI = Goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = Adjusted goodness-of-fit index, NFI = Normed fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation CFI = Comparative fit index, and TLI = Tucker-Lewis index

4. Hypothesis Testing Result

The research framework is evaluated by determining the significance of individual variables based on their regression weights and R² variances. The findings presented in Table 6 indicate that six out of eight proposed hypotheses were upheld with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Table 6 Hypothesis Results of the Structural Equation Model

Hypothesis	(β)	t-Value	Result
H1: UV→SI	0.607	9.860*	Supported
H2: HV→SI	0.127	2.675	Not Supported
H3: USM→SB	0.419	7.685*	Supported
H4: USM→SO	0.313	6.174*	Supported
H5: SI→LS	0.374	6.868*	Supported
H6: SS→LS	0.097	2.056	Not Supported
H7: SB→LS	0.287	5.470*	Supported
H8: SO→LS	0.185	3.834*	Supported

Note: * $p<0.05$

Source: Created by the author.

The findings from Table 6 can be elucidated as follows: H1 has substantiated that utilitarian value is a pivotal catalyst for fostering shared intention when using social media, as evidenced by the standard coefficient value of 0.607 observed in the structural pathway. Supporting this assertion, Ma et al. (2018) have affirmed that the impact of utilitarian value surpasses that of hedonic value on users' predisposition to share. Thus, a higher perception of utilitarian or hedonic value in the information increases the likelihood of users expressing their willingness to share. H2 reveals no significant relationship exists between hedonic value and shared intention ($\beta=0.127$). Thus, H2 is not supported.

Regarding H3 and H4, the analysis results substantiated the hypothesis concerning the substantial impact of social media usage on social benefit and social overload, as indicated by the standardized coefficient values of 0.419 and 0.313, respectively. Consistent with the research of Zhan et al. (2016), the discourse suggested that media use positively influences both social and social overload. In terms of H5, the findings of the analysis provided support for the hypothesis positing a substantial impact of share intention on life satisfaction, as indicated by the standard coefficient value of 0.374. According to Ma et al. (2018) investigation, the discourse suggested a positive association between users' propensity to share and their level of life satisfaction, suggesting that an inclination towards sharing positively influences individuals' overall satisfaction with their lives. H6 fails to demonstrate a statistically significant association between social safety and life satisfaction ($\beta=0.097$), indicating non-support for H6. Regarding H7 and H8, the analysis findings provide empirical support for the hypothesis positing a significant influence of both social benefit and social overload on life satisfaction. This is evidenced by the standardized coefficient values of 0.287 and 0.185, respectively. According to Zhan et al. (2016) research, the presence of social benefit yields a constructive impact on

an individual's life satisfaction, implying that the advantages derived from social media platforms can lead individuals to form a positive appraisal of their own lives. Besides, social overload has a weak impact on life satisfaction.

Conclusions, Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

1. Conclusions

This research is dedicated to examining the substantial influence of the factors that impact the intention to use social media within ten universities in Chengdu, China. The study employs a conceptual framework of hypotheses to delineate the causal associations between social media usage, utilitarian value, hedonic value, social safeness, shared intention, social benefit, social overload, and life satisfaction. Questionnaires were meticulously crafted and distributed to a targeted sample of undergraduates using WeChat within the ten selected universities in Chengdu, China. The subsequent data analysis elucidates the influencers shaping their intention to use social media within this group and geographic region. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) procedures were undertaken to assess and validate the conceptual model's reliability. Subsequently, the influential factors affecting innovative work behavior were scrutinized by applying Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The investigation subsequently delineated its findings. Initially, it is imperative to underscore that utilitarian value support exerts the most pronounced and statistically significant influence on share intention when using social media, which means the likelihood of users expressing a willingness to share information is positively correlated with the perceived utilitarian value of that information.

2. Recommendations

The researcher identified pivotal determinants of undergraduates' intention to use social media within selected ten universities in Chengdu, China, encompassing utilitarian value, hedonic value, social safeness, share intention, social benefit, social overload, and life satisfaction. Therefore, it is recommended that these facets be cultivated and enhanced throughout the social media industry to foster positive performance. The findings of this study offer valuable insights for operators of social media (WeChat) content, which may enhance their ability to engage prospective and current users more effectively. Based on our findings, for literature and practical implications, a utilitarian value significantly influences users' intention to share content. Therefore, for operators of social media accounts, it is imperative to assess the utilitarian value of the information being disseminated. While hedonic information should also be included, its prominence should not overshadow utilitarian content (Ma et al., 2018).

3. Limitations and Future Research

The study's limitation lies in its focus on a specific population and sample, namely undergraduates from selected ten universities in Chengdu, China. It is important to note that

varying results may arise in analyses conducted on companies of different sizes, cultures, or in different countries. To address this limitation, future research endeavors may explore additional constructs influencing behavior intention of using social media, such as source credibility, social habit, social media functions, social support, and others. Furthermore, it is recommended that social media developers focus on optimizing social media functions and thinking of the consumer mentality to enhance users' social benefit and foster a positive attitude and intention towards their life satisfaction.

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