The Influence of Hedonic Gratifications, Habit, and Regret on Binge-Watching Engagement of Vertical Short Drama on Tiktok

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the influence of hedonic motivation, habit, and anticipated regret on the continuous viewing behavior of short vertical dramas on the TikTok platform. Specifically, it analyzed hedonic motivation in terms of entertainment and passing time, as well as anticipated regret and habit. Data were collected from 385 respondents through an online questionnaire, using a non-probability purposive sampling method. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed, alongside Process Model 4 to test indirect effects.

The results indicated that all four factors entertainment, passing time, anticipated regret, and habit had a significant positive effect on the intention to continue viewing. Habit exhibited the strongest influence, followed by anticipated regret, passing time, and entertainment, respectively. Furthermore, habit and viewing intention significantly influenced actual continuous viewing behavior, with intention partially mediating the relationship between habit and behavior.

These findings can inform the development and design of short vertical dramas that align with audience motivations and viewing behaviors, thereby enhancing engagement and attention in contemporary digital media environments.

Keywords: Hedonic Gratifications, Anticipated Regret, Habit, Binge-Watching Engagement, Vertical Short Drama

Introduction

In the current digital era, online media have become the primary channel for entertainment consumption among Thai consumers, driven by the continuous advancement of internet and smartphone technologies, which enable users to access media on demand (PwC, 2024). This shift enables consumers to select content based on their interests from various online platforms, and there is a growing tendency to prefer short, fast-paced entertainment (Meltwater, 2025). As a result, new content formats such as "vertical short dramas," particularly on TikTok, have begun to play a significant role in the media consumption behaviors of contemporary Thai users.

Vertical Short Drama refers to sequential vertical short-form videos designed for smartphones, typically lasting 1–5 minutes per episode. These videos often include plot twists that encourage viewers to continue watching (Gizmott, 2025), and their fast-paced narrative structure links episodes in ways that motivate continued viewing (Flayelle, Maurage, Billieux, et al., 2019).

This format also reduces time constraints and provides opportunities for brief moments of entertainment (Montag, Yang, & Elhai, 2021). In addition, they can be produced quickly and at low cost, enabling both professional and independent creators to tell stories flexibly and to generate a diverse range of narratives (PasuOnline, 2025). One short vertical drama that has recently gained significant attention is "Lakhon Kathoei Tham" on TikTok, which went viral due to its short episodes infused with humor (Thai Rath Online, 2024). At the same time, the creators intentionally portray real-life stories and provide accessible entertainment (Amarin TV, 2024), making "Lakhon Kathoei Tham" an important example of modern online content that influences viewing and sharing behaviors among digital media users, particularly on TikTok.

TikTok has become one of the most influential platforms shaping Thai consumers' content-viewing behaviors, as the number of users continues to grow. Data indicate that in 2025, TikTok users in Thailand spend an average of approximately 37 hours per month on the platform (Meltwater, 2025). Trend reports also highlight a significant shift in the viewing habits of Thai users, categorized under "Storytelling Unhinged," reflecting an increasing push toward a more intensive "follow culture" (TikTok, 2024). These characteristics make vertical short dramas a storytelling format that aligns with contemporary lifestyles, and it can be stated that TikTok has become a major space that facilitates binge-watching behaviors, especially for serial short-form content such as vertical short dramas, which have recently grown highly popular in Thailand.

Binge-watching refers to the behavior of watching multiple episodes consecutively in a single sitting, particularly in the context of short-form episodic content (Chang & Peng, 2022). This behavior often begins with enjoyment from the initial episode, leading to curiosity and continued viewing (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). The entertainment derived from viewing acts as a source of motivation and gratification, explaining why users choose to continue consuming media (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). However, continuous viewing may sometimes occur automatically as a result of habits, meaning that an explicit initial intention is not always required (Limayem, Hirt, & Cheung, 2007). Such habits are triggered by everyday life situations (Wood & Neal, 2007), including brief yet frequent smartphone checking, which happens automatically (Oulasvirta et al., 2012). Additionally, viewers may experience a "sense of regret if they stop watching," driven by anticipated outcomes of decision-making (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007), while curiosity for new information also influences decision-making behaviors (Litman, 2005).

Previous studies have examined various aspects of binge-watching. Bastos, Zolotov, and Aparício (2024) investigated behavioral and emotional factors influencing binge-watching on streaming platforms and found that habit positively affects both intention and actual viewing behavior, while regret exerts a negative but inconsistent influence depending on viewer contexts. Aytas and Topatan (2024) explored entertainment and media accessibility among university students, finding that these factors significantly influence both intention and binge-watching behavior, especially when content is concise and easily accessible. Moreover, Chang and Peng (2022), using qualitative methods, examined the experiences of viewers who watch multiple episodes consecutively and found that binge-watching is closely associated with enjoyment and immersion while also highlighting that the definition of binge-watching in modern media remains unclear. However, most existing studies focus on long-form streaming platforms, which differ in narrative structure and viewing experience from short-form video media. As a result, there remains a lack of understanding of viewer behaviors across diverse media formats. The limited and specific sample groups used in previous research further restrict generalizability, and cultural contexts must also be considered. Although prior studies provide partial explanations of binge-watching behavior, the conceptualization and scope of binge-watching in new media forms remain ambiguous. Therefore, further investigation is needed to better understand viewing

behaviors on platforms with distinct content structures and viewing rhythms compared to traditional media (Bastos, Zolotov & Aparício, 2024; Aytas & Topatan, 2024; Chang & Peng, 2022).

Accordingly, this study aims to address these gaps by examining the influence of hedonic motivation, habit, and regret on the intention to binge-watch and actual binge-watching behavior of vertical short dramas on TikTok. The study considers motivation for viewing, including entertainment, relaxation, and passing time, which contribute to the perception of enjoyment. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to academic discourse by enhancing understanding of binge-watching mechanisms in the context of short-form video media. Additionally, the results will be beneficial for content creators and marketers in designing content that aligns effectively with the viewing behaviors of contemporary audiences.

Objectives

1. To study the influence of entertainment on the continuous intention to binge-watch.
2. To study the influence of passing time on the continuous intention to binge-watch.
3. To study the influence of anticipated regret on the continuous intention to binge-watch.
4. To study the influence of habit on the continuous intention to binge-watch.
5. To study the influence of habit on binge-watching engagement of vertical short drama on the TikTok platform.
6. To study the influence of continuous intention to binge-watch on binge-watching engagement of vertical short drama on the TikTok platform.
7. To study the mediating influence of continuous intention to binge-watch on the relationship between habit and binge-watching engagement.

Research Hypotheses

H1: Entertainment has an influence on continuous intention to binge-watch.
H2: Passing time has an influence on continuous intention to binge-watch.
H3: Anticipated regret has an influence on continuous intention to binge-watch.
H4: Habit has an influence on continuous intention to binge-watch.
H5: Habit has an influence on binge-watching engagement on the TikTok platform.
H6: Continuous intention to binge-watch has an influence on binge-watching engagement on the TikTok platform.
H7: Habit indirectly influences binge-watching engagement via continuous intention to binge-watch, which functions as a mediating variable.
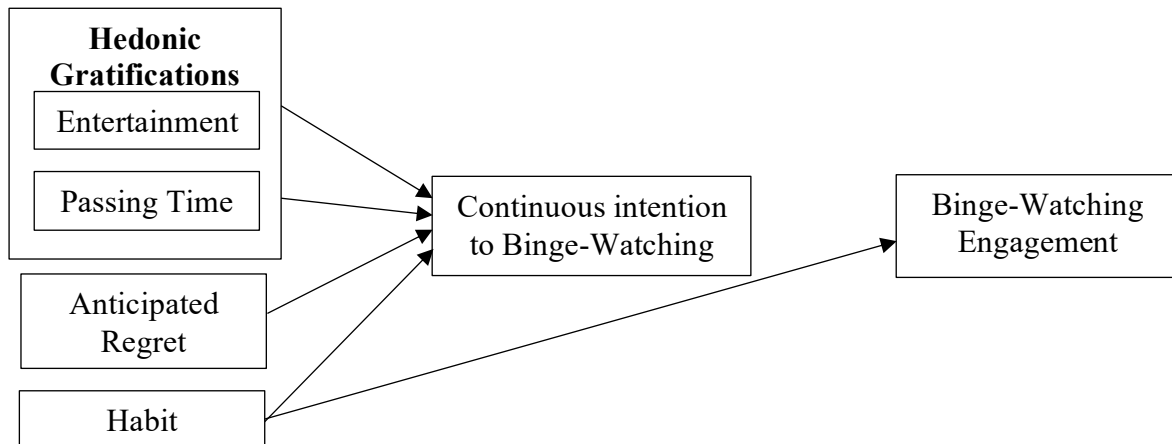
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant literature, concepts and theories that form the foundation for examining continuous viewing behavior of vertical short dramas on the TikTok platform. The objective is to compile, analyze, and synthesize existing knowledge from previous studies to develop the theoretical framework of this research. This section provides an overview of the key concepts involved, including Hedonic Gratifications, Habit Formation Theory, Anticipated Regret, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Media Engagement Theory, all of which play significant roles in explaining the psychological mechanisms influencing continuous viewing intention and binge-watching behavior.

Theoretical Background

Uses and Gratifications Theory: UGT

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) explains that media consumers are not merely message receivers but choose to consume media purposefully to satisfy their needs for information, entertainment, relaxation, and social interaction. The theory emphasizes the internal motivations of media users, which aligns with modern media consumption behaviors. Later, McQuail (1983) categorized media-use motivations into several dimensions to explain the fulfillment of emotional, social, and informational needs in daily life. In addition, Rubin (1984) divided media use into instrumental use and ritualized use, with ritualized use being related to relaxation and emotional regulation. All of these are consistent with Whiting and Williams (2013), who found that social media users are motivated by entertainment, passing time, and expressing opinions within the UGT framework. Moreover, the theory explains hedonic gratification, which refers to emotional satisfaction such as enjoyment or escape from stress (Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2018) and can also explain binge-watching behavior because users tend to seek pleasure rather than informational content. This study considers two key components under hedonic gratifications as follows:

Entertainment refers to activities or media content designed to create enjoyment, pleasure, or emotional satisfaction for audiences, with the primary purpose of relaxation, stress relief, or fulfilling emotional needs (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994).

Passing Time refers to an individual's motivation or behavior aimed at using certain activities to kill time, reduce boredom, or fill free moments in a way that enhances feelings of enjoyment (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

From the literature review, it is evident that media users tend to select media to satisfy their own needs, namely emotional gratification rather than being passive recipients of messages, as explained by the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The primary motivations for using digital media involve seeking entertainment and passing time, which are key components of hedonic motivations. These motivations significantly influence human behavior on social media platforms and online media (Luo, 2020; Sabharwal, 2023).

Habit Formation Theory

Habit Formation Theory explains that certain behaviors occur repeatedly and "automatically" through the association between contextual cues and responses that have been reinforced over time, to the point where they require little deliberate thought (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Wood & Rünger, 2016). This concept posits that when individuals perform the same behavior frequently within the same context, the association among "cue–behavior–reward" becomes ingrained as a habit. When the same cue is encountered again, the behavior is triggered quickly, even without strong rational motivation at that moment (Ouellette & Wood, 1998; Lally et al., 2010).

From the literature review, the concept of habit formation can explain repeated media-use behaviors that occur automatically through reinforced cue response associations (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Wood & Rünger, 2016). In the context of digital media, repeated use of a platform at similar times can create a "media habit," whereby users engage in the behavior unintentionally (LaRose, 2010). This aligns with Tefertiller and Maxwell (2018), who found that binge-watching becomes habitual when viewers receive repeated gratifications. Similarly, Flayelle et al. (2020) and Billaux et al. (2023) indicated that binge-watching behavior is driven more by habit than by momentary motivation. In essence, habit is a psychological mechanism that significantly influences continuous viewing, particularly on online video platforms that facilitate repeated use and automatic progression to subsequent episodes (LaRose, 2010; Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2018; Flayelle et al., 2020).

Anticipated Regret

Regret is a negative emotion that arises from realizing that the outcome of a decision was not the best possible choice, as explained by Regret Theory proposed by Bell (1982) and through comparisons with what the outcome could have been (Gilovich & Medvec, 1995). Loomes and Sugden (1987) further developed the concept of Anticipated Regret, which refers to the expectation of future regret prior to making a decision, causing individuals to choose more cautiously to avoid negative outcomes (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2008). Furthermore, Zeelenberg (1999) stated that anticipated regret is an emotion within the category of anticipated affect, which guides behavior by leading individuals to make decisions based on predicted emotional outcomes rather than logic. Regret has three characteristics: it involves comparing alternatives, it is an emotion combining affect and cognition, and it plays both reactive and anticipatory roles (Zeelenberg et al., 2000). The work of Sung, Kang, and Lee (2018) also found that digital media viewers often "continue watching" to avoid potential regret that may occur if they stop before reaching key moments.

From the literature review, it is found that the concept of anticipated regret is a major development of Regret Theory that explains the influence of anticipated emotions on human decision-making (Loomes & Sugden, 1987; Zeelenberg, 1999). Particularly in contexts involving media consumption, anticipating future regret affects not only internal motivations but also influences the intention to continue watching, as viewers often choose to keep watching to avoid missing important scenes. This aligns with modern consumer behavior driven by emotion and fear of missing out, which results from the mechanism of anticipated regret in the process of continuous viewing (Zeelenberg et al., 2000; Sung et al., 2018).

Theory of Planned Behavior: TPB

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1985; 1991) explains that an individual's behavior can be predicted from "behavioral intention," which is determined by three key components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. TPB is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), incorporating the variable perceived behavioral control to account for behaviors that are not entirely under an individual's volitional control (Ajzen, 1991; 2002).

Intention to Continue Binge-Watching corresponds directly to the variable "behavioral intention" within the TPB framework, referring to the degree of commitment or readiness of an individual to continue watching media content over a given period (Flayelle et al., 2020; Panda & Pandey, 2017). Research indicates that such intention arises from attitudes shaped by positive experiences, such as entertainment and emotional gratification derived from viewing (Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2018), and may also be reinforced by habitual behaviors such as automatically opening the app or scrolling (LaRose, 2010).

From the literature review, it is found that within the TPB framework, emotional factors and hedonic motivations play a crucial role in determining the intention to continue watching. Hedonic motivation can enhance positive attitudes that lead to sustained viewing intention (Panda & Pandey, 2017; Flayelle et al., 2020), while anticipated emotions such as anticipated regret influence individuals to engage in behaviors that avoid expected negative emotional outcomes (Richard et al., 1996; Zeelenberg et al., 2000). This may encourage viewers to "continue watching" to avoid the feeling of missing out later. In summary, hedonic motivation, habit, and anticipated emotions are psychological variables that support the formation and maintenance of the intention to continue viewing content in accordance with the TPB framework.

Media Engagement Theory

The Media Engagement Theory explains the process through which consumers develop a sense of involvement, connection, and deep-level response to media not only through content consumption but also through the emotional, cognitive, and motivational experiences that arise from interacting with media (Calder & Malthouse, 2009). This theory views "engagement" as a motivational experience that reflects attachment, interest, and satisfaction toward media rather than quantitative measures such as frequency or duration of exposure. This engagement can occur at the personal level (Personal Engagement), which reflects individual emotional responses such as immersion, feelings of connection with characters or the storyline, and at the social level (Social Engagement), which involves interaction, sharing, or discussing media with others. All of these reflect the "quality of experience" that media can create for consumers (Calder, Malthouse & Schaedel, 2009).

In the context of online media consumption, this concept has been used to explain "Binge-Watching Engagement," which refers to the level of emotional and motivational involvement of viewers with content consumed continuously (Flayelle et al., 2019). Flayelle et al. (2019; 2020) developed the Binge-Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire (BWESQ) to differentiate "positive engagement," arising from motivation and enjoyment, from

"problematic behaviors" resulting from excessive and uncontrolled media use. The findings indicate that high levels of engagement do not necessarily imply media addiction but represent a state of attention and emotional involvement that reflects positive responses to the content (Flayelle et al., 2020).

From the literature review, media engagement is found to be a key mechanism explaining continuous viewing behavior in the digital media era, especially in the context of binge-watching. Studies by Billaux et al. (2023) and Starosta et al. (2020) indicate that "Binge-Watching Engagement" results from emotional motivation and the gratification viewers obtain from continuous media consumption, leading to attachment, enjoyment, and the desire to keep following the content. Viewers with higher engagement levels do not merely consume media entertainment but also demonstrate deeper emotional connection and internal motivation. In other words, media engagement reflects psychological processes and plays an important role in shaping and maintaining continuous viewing behavior (Starosta et al., 2020; Billaux et al., 2023).

Review of Existing Literature

Based on previous studies, scholars have shown substantial interest in media consumption behavior in the digital era, particularly in the phenomenon of binge-watching and the use of short-form video platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. These platforms represent rapidly growing forms of media consumption, especially among younger generations. Existing research in this area can be broadly classified into three main groups according to their analytical approaches and focal points, as outlined below.

Group A: Studies on Binge-Watching Behavior in Streaming Media Contexts

Research in this group primarily seeks to explain binge-watching behavior within the context of streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney+, with a strong emphasis on psychological factors and audience media use patterns. Merrill and Rubenking (2019), in a study of university students in the United States, found that viewing frequency and duration were influenced by internal drives and levels of self-control. Viewers who experienced enjoyment and stress relief during viewing sessions were more likely to engage in prolonged consecutive viewing. Similarly, Aytas (2024) examined university students' attitudes toward binge-watching and found that positive perceptions of the activity were associated with higher levels of satisfaction and positive emotional experiences. In addition, Chang et al. (2022), using a qualitative approach among media consumers, identified recurring themes such as enjoyment, narrative immersion, and difficulty in stopping viewing, suggesting that binge-watching represents not only a media use behavior but also an emotionally driven viewing experience.

In summary, studies in this group contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological and behavioral dimensions of binge-watching by emphasizing emotional factors, hedonic enjoyment, and engagement patterns that emerge during continuous viewing.

Group B: Studies on Media Use Intention and Motivation

Research within this group focuses on decision-making processes and user attitudes toward online media use, particularly on digital video platforms that allow audiences to freely select content. Bastos, Naranjo-Zolotov, and Aparício (2024) developed a model to explain consumers' binge-watching decisions in the digital age and found that perceived usefulness, habitual media use, and affective drivers significantly influenced binge-watching intention. Likewise, Chanakan Butsa et al. (2024) examined short-form video consumption behavior among Thai consumers and reported that users were more likely to engage in repeated viewing and sustained content following when they experienced enjoyment and familiarity with the platform's format.

Overall, studies in this group highlight the importance of motivational factors and user attitudes in explaining digital media consumption behavior. These findings align with contemporary media consumption trends, in which younger audiences increasingly engage in extended viewing sessions via online platforms.

Group C: Studies on Short-Form Video Platforms and Media Engagement

The third group of studies concentrates on understanding user behavior on short-form video platforms, particularly TikTok, which has become a central space for contemporary media consumption. Meng and Leung (2021) investigated TikTok user engagement in China and found that entertainment and stress-avoidance motivations were primary drivers that directly influenced levels of media engagement. Similarly, Bucknell Bossen and Kottasz (2020) reported that young users utilized TikTok for relaxation and positive emotional regulation, which led to sustained platform use and high levels of interaction with content.

In summary, studies in this group demonstrate that short-form video platforms have transformed audiences from passive content recipients into active participants, engaging users across dimensions of time, attention, and interaction. These dynamics form a critical foundation for continuous viewing behavior in the digital media era.

Reearch Gap

Based on a review of relevant prior studies, the existing literature can be broadly categorized into three main streams examining binge-watching behavior across different media contexts, namely streaming platforms and short-form video platforms. The first stream primarily focuses on binge-watching behavior through psychological dimensions such as enjoyment, relaxation, and narrative immersion, highlighting the influence of affective and hedonic motivations on continuous viewing behavior (Merrill & Rubenking, 2019; Aytas, 2024; Chang et al., 2022). The second stream extends this perspective by examining binge-watching intention, employing theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and habit formation to explain the mechanisms underlying continuous viewing behavior (Bastos et al., 2024; Chanakan Butsa et al., 2024). The third stream investigates binge-watching within the context of short-form video platforms, revealing that viewers are primarily driven by entertainment and relaxation; however, these studies have yet to systematically integrate the processes of behavioral intention or sustained engagement into their analytical frameworks (Meng & Leung, 2021; Bucknell Bossen & Kottasz, 2020).

When comparing these three research streams, despite the extensive examination of binge-watching from multiple perspectives including emotional motivation, repetitive viewing behavior, and psychological outcomes many scholars converge on the conclusion that the psychological mechanisms leading to binge-watching behavior remain insufficiently understood. A substantial number of studies focus predominantly on outcome-oriented variables such as happiness, enjoyment, or perceived addiction, rather than explicating the underlying processes that translate internal motivations into actual viewing behavior (Merrill & Rubenking, 2019; Chang et al., 2022). Moreover, the linkage between intrinsic motivations and the behavioral enactment of binge-watching has often been examined in a fragmented or unsystematic manner (Aytas, 2024). Within the context of short-form video platforms such as TikTok, although existing studies affirm the role of entertainment and stress relief, several researchers acknowledge the limited consideration of additional psychological factors that capture the continuity of viewing behavior, including habit and anticipated regret (Meng & Leung, 2021; Bucknell Bossen & Kottasz, 2020). Furthermore, the reliance on narrow or context-specific samples constrains the generalizability of findings and limits their capacity to explain contemporary patterns of short, continuous media consumption (Butsa et al., 2024).

Accordingly, the present study seeks to address these gaps by systematically examining the psychological mechanisms that lead to binge-watching behavior, with a particular emphasis on understanding viewing continuity as a process driven by viewers' internal forces rather than merely as an external outcome. To this end, the study develops a conceptual framework that analyzes the relationships among hedonic motivation, media use habits, and anticipated emotions, which are psychological constructs with strong explanatory potential for binge-watching behavior. The empirical context of this study is Vertical Short Dramas on the TikTok platform, as this media format possesses distinctive characteristics that strongly facilitate continuous viewing behavior, including short episode duration, rapid narrative progression, and episodic connectivity. These features reduce temporal constraints and encourage repeated viewing decisions, allowing media consumption to evolve from a single rational choice into habitual and emotion-driven engagement distinguishing this context from traditional long-form streaming platforms. Consequently, Vertical Short Dramas provide an appropriate setting for advancing theoretical understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying binge-watching behavior in the digital media era and for systematically extending existing theories by integrating motivation, habit, and anticipated emotion within the context of short-form video platforms.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample Group

The population defined by the researchers as the target group comprises consumers who watch vertical short-form dramas on the TikTok platform. The sampling approach employed was a non-probability sampling technique, as the actual size of the population could not be clearly identified. Purposive sampling was applied, with the inclusion criteria requiring respondents to have continuously watched vertical short-form dramas on the TikTok platform for more than 15 minutes. Therefore, to ensure that the selected sample appropriately aligns with the research objectives, the researchers designed preliminary screening questions to verify respondents' qualifications before proceeding with the actual data collection. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's (1977) formula, with a confidence level of 95% and an acceptable margin of error of 0.05. The calculation resulted in a required sample size of 385 respondents.

Research Instrument

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The components of the questionnaire are as follows:

Part 1: Screening questions using a checklist format to confirm respondents' eligibility.

Have you ever engaged in continuous viewing of vertical short dramas on the TikTok platform for 15 minutes or more?

Part 2: Questions regarding basic demographic information and behaviors related to the viewing of vertical short dramas on TikTok.

Part 3: Questions related to the factors of Entertainment, Passing Time, Anticipated Regret, Habit, Intention to Continue Binge-Watching, and Binge-Watching Behavior, measured using a 5-point Likert Scale.

Part 4: Additional suggestions presented as open-ended questions allowing respondents to freely express their opinions.

Data Collection

This research investigates the influence of hedonic motivation, habit, and anticipated regret on continuous viewing behavior of vertical short dramas on the TikTok platform. The researcher conducted survey research and employed an online questionnaire (Google Forms). Data collection was carried out in November 2025, from November 13 to November 30, 2025,

totaling 18 days. The sample size of 385 respondents, as calculated, was obtained through distributing the survey link via online platforms. Subsequently, all data were processed and analyzed using the statistical analysis program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to ensure accurate, reliable, and valid results that fully address the research objectives.

Statistics and Data Analysis

In this research, data were collected and analyzed using two main statistical approaches. First, descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the general characteristics of the respondents. Second, inferential statistics were used to analyze the sample data for the purpose of drawing inferences about the larger population. These analyses involved estimation procedures and hypothesis testing, which enabled the researchers to address the research questions and examine the proposed hypotheses. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to assess the relationships among variables, and multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables. This also included an analysis of the mediating role using PROCESS Model 4.

The research specified four independent variables of Entertainment, Passing Time, Anticipated Regret, and Habit to examine their influence on Continuous Intention to Binge-Watch. Multicollinearity was assessed using Tolerance values and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The results indicated that the Tolerance values ranged from 0.431 to 0.616, and the VIF values ranged from 1.623 to 2.320.

In addition, when two independent variables, Habit and Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching were included to examine their influence on Binge-Watching Engagement, the analysis yielded a Tolerance value of 0.431 and a VIF value of 2.318. Since all Tolerance values exceeded 0.1 and all VIF values were below the threshold of 10, in accordance with the criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2010), it can be concluded that the independent variables did not exhibit multicollinearity issues. Thus, they were deemed appropriate for use in multiple regression analyses.

Research Findings

The analysis of general information of the 385 respondents revealed that the majority were female, totaling 290 individuals 75.3%. Most were between 18–29 years old, totaling 249 individuals 64.7%. A total of 268 individuals 69.6% used TikTok every day, and 121 individuals 31.4 spent more than 2 hours per day on the platform. A total of 243 individuals 63.1% commonly used TikTok at night (19:00-00:00). A total of 188 individuals 48.8% watched vertical short dramas on TikTok 2-3 days per week. A total of 229 individuals 59.5% usually watches vertical short dramas via the "For You Page" (FYP). Apart from TikTok, 156 individuals 40.5% watched vertical short dramas through Facebook. A total of 162 individuals 42.1% watched vertical short dramas during breaks or short free periods. A total of 191 individuals 49.6% watched vertical short dramas continuously for 10–30 minutes. A total of 276 individuals 71.7% viewed vertical short dramas on TikTok as a form of entertainment and relaxation. A total of 346 individuals 89.9% usually watches vertical short dramas alone. A total of 221 individuals 57.4% selected vertical short dramas based on interesting storylines. A total of 206 individuals 53.5% continued watching vertical short dramas instantly due to cliffhangers or unresolved plot points. Respondents were accepting as long as the content was not too long in cases where product placement appeared during viewing. A total of 159 individuals 41.3% preferred vertical short dramas with a length of 3-5 minutes per episode. A total of 133 individuals 34.5% preferred one-episode standalone vertical short dramas. A total of 31 individuals (8.1%) watched vertical short dramas in the comedy/light-hearted category. A total of 222 individuals 57.7% preferred storytelling structures that begin quickly and get to the point. A total of 243 individuals 63.1% expected "fun" as the

primary outcome from watching vertical short dramas. The results of the analysis of respondents' opinion levels covered the following factors: Entertainment, Passing Time, Anticipated Regret, Habit, Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching, and Binge-Watching Engagement.

Table 1 The mean, standard deviation, and interpretation of the levels of respondents' opinions, both overall and by each dimension

Variable	$\overline{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Entertainment	3.963	.620	High
Passing Time	3.848	.755	High
Anticipated Regret	3.592	.845	High
Habit	3.454	.986	High
Continuous intention to Binge-Watching	3.615	.866	High
Binge-Watching engagement	3.722	.779	High
Total	**3.699**	**.670**	**High**

Table 1 the mean and standard deviation indicate that the overall level of opinions is at a high level, with a mean score of 3.6990. Considering each aspect, all dimensions show a high level of opinion, ranked from the highest to the lowest mean as follows: Entertainment, Passing Time, Binge-Watching Engagement, Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching, Anticipated Regret, and Habit.

The results of the analysis of the influence of Entertainment, Passing Time, Anticipated Regret, and Habit on Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching, as well as the analysis of the influence of Habit and Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching Engagement, were conducted using Multiple Regression Analysis.

Table 2 Analysis of the influence of Entertainment, Passing Time, Anticipated Regret, and Habit on Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching

Variable	B	β	t	P-Value	Tolerance	VIF
Entertainment	.012	.086	2.230	.026	.616	1.623
Passing Time	.104	.091	2.187	.029	.526	1.901
Anticipated Regret	.320	.312	6.788	.000	.431	2.320
Habit	.387	.440	9.715	.000	.444	2.251
R = .808, R^2 = .653, Adjust R^2 = .650, F = 179.107, P = .000						

Table 2 the results of the analysis of the influence of entertainment, passing time, anticipated regret, and habit on continuous intention to binge-watch show that the habit factor has the strongest positive influence (β = .440, P-Value = .000) This indicates that habit is a key driving force that leads viewers to maintain their intention to watch regularly or to watch whenever they have time. Next, anticipated regret is found to have a significant positive influence (β = .312, P-Value = .000), reflecting that when viewers anticipate that they might feel regret if they do not continue watching such as fear of missing the storyline, fear of falling behind trends, or fear of spoilers it encourages them to continue. Then, passing time is found to have a significant positive influence (β = .091, P-Value = .029), indicating that some viewers use watching series as an activity to fill their free time. Entertainment is also found to have a significant positive influence (β = .086, P-Value = .026), showing that enjoyment and pleasure derived from the content serve

as one of the motivators that drive viewers to continue watching. Therefore, it can be concluded that entertainment, passing time, anticipated regret, and habit have a significant influence on continuous intention to binge-watch

Table 3 Analyze the influence of Habit and Continuous Intention to Binge-Watch on Binge-Watching Engagement.

Variable	B	β	t	P-Value	Tolerance	VIF
Habit	.106	.134	2.805	.005	.431	2.318
Continuous intention to Binge-Watching	.615	.684	14.310	.000	.431	2.318
R = .790, R^2 = .624, Adjust R^2 = .622, F = 316.592, P = .000						

Table 3 The analysis of the influence of Habit and Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching-on-Binge-Watching Engagement showed that Continuous Intention had the strongest positive influence (β = .684, P-Value = .000). This reflects those viewers who initially intend to continue watching—whether driven by enjoyment, excitement, or the desire to keep up with the storyline tend to exhibit clearly continuous and prolonged viewing behavior. The second factor, Habit, was found to have a significant positive influence (β = .134, P-Value = .005), indicating that regular viewing that develops into a routine contributes to a greater tendency for continuous watching. Although the weight is lower than that of Continuous Intention, it still shows a significant effect on continuous viewing behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that Habit and Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching significantly influence Binge-Watching Engagement.

From the analysis using Process Model 4 with a bootstrapping method of 5,000 resampled observations to examine the indirect effect of Habit on Binge-Watching Engagement through Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching as a mediating variable, it was found that Habit had an indirect effect on Binge-Watching Engagement through Continuous Intention (LL = 0.059, UL = 0.188). Since the Bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero, this indicates statistical significance. Additionally, the VAF value was 0.79, which falls between 0.20 and 0.80, indicating that the mediating variable has a partial mediation effect.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the factors influencing Continuous Intention to Binge-Watching among viewers of vertical short dramas on TikTok. The research focused on the effects of hedonic gratifications including entertainment and passing time as well as anticipated regret and habit of continuous viewing intention. Additionally, the study examined how habit and continuous viewing intention influence binge-watching engagement. The discussion of the findings is presented as follows.

Entertainment was found to positively influence continuous intention to binge-watching. This relationship can be explained through the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that audiences actively select media to satisfy their needs for enjoyment and positive experiential outcomes. When content generates fun and emotional satisfaction, viewers are more likely to continue watching in order to maintain these positive feelings. This finding is consistent with prior research identifying enjoyment as a primary motivation underlying binge-watching behavior (Shim & Kim, 2018; Flayelle et al., 2020), and demonstrating that perceived entertainment value is directly associated with viewers' intention to follow subsequent episodes (Vaterlaus et al., 2019). However, some studies have reported contrasting results, indicating that entertainment alone may

be insufficient to explain long-term continuous viewing intention, particularly when prolonged viewing leads to reduced enjoyment, emotional fatigue, or content saturation, which may ultimately diminish viewers' willingness to continue watching (Vorderer et al., 2004; Exelmans & Van den Bulck, 2017).

Passing time was found to positively influence continuous intention to binge-watching, which is consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, suggesting that media consumers choose media to fill leisure time and avoid boredom. When consecutive episode viewing effectively fulfills this need, viewers are more likely to develop stronger intentions to continue watching (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). This finding aligns with prior studies by Panda and Pandey (2017) and Steiner and Xu (2018), which demonstrated a positive relationship between time-passing motives and binge-watching behavior. However, motivation for continuous viewing is not limited solely to passing time. In certain contexts, viewers may become increasingly influenced by emotional motivations or content engagement as viewing progresses (Flayelle et al., 2020). This does not imply that passing time lacks significance; rather, it indicates that passing time often functions as an initial motivational driver that facilitates the onset and persistence of continuous viewing intention (Vorderer et al., 2004), before more complex motivations, such as narrative attachment or character identification, develop and play a complementary role at later stages (Sung et al., 2018). Overall, these findings suggest that passing time remains a key motivational factor shaping continuous binge-watching intention in digital media contexts. Even as other motivations become more salient over time, passing time continues to serve as a foundational mechanism that significantly supports the development and maintenance of continuous viewing intention (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020).

Anticipated regret was found to positively influence continuous intention to binge-watching. Although in certain contexts anticipated regret does not always lead to continuous viewing behavior and may instead result in behavioral avoidance⸺particularly when individuals perceive that such behavior could generate negative consequences, such as time loss or feelings of guilt after prolonged media use (Tsiros & Mittal, 2000) viewers generally anticipate that discontinuing viewing may cause them to miss important content or reduce narrative enjoyment. This anticipation creates a motivational force that encourages continued viewing in order to avoid future regret. This finding is consistent with the concept of anticipated regret, which suggests that when individuals foresee negative future outcomes, they increase their behavioral intention to act in ways that minimize the likelihood of experiencing regret (Zeelenberg, 1999). It also aligns with prior research identifying regret as a significant predictor of behavioral intention in media consumption and digital behavior contexts (Connolly & Reb, 2005). Accordingly, viewers tend to continue watching to avoid feelings of being "left hanging" or missing key episodes, thereby reinforcing their continuous intention to binge-watch (Shim & Kim, 2018).

Habit was found to influence continuous viewing intention. Repeated exposure to similar viewing contexts leads to the formation of automatic behavioral patterns, prompting viewers to continue watching even without explicit motivation. This aligns with the concept of habitual behavior, which suggests that consistently repeated actions within stable contexts become automatic and resistant to disruption (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003). Prior studies also indicate that viewing habits play a significant role in sustaining continuous viewing intention on streaming platforms (LaRose, 2010). When media consumption becomes part of a routine, audiences develop a higher tendency to engage in consecutive episode viewing to maintain behavioral continuity (Steiner & Xu, 2018). However, in certain contexts, habit can directly influence continuous viewing behavior without necessarily being mediated by continuous viewing intention. Such behavior may arise from repetitive daily practices or familiar media usage patterns, leading

viewing to occur automatically without the need for explicit decision-making or deliberate planning (Bastos et al., 2024).

Habit was found to positively influence binge-watching engagement. Habit represents a pattern of behavior that develops through repeated performance within a stable context, eventually becoming triggered by environmental cues rather than deliberate, rational decision-making. Habit theory suggests that once a behavior is sufficiently repeated and internalized, it evolves into an automatic action that can occur without the need for new motivational input (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003). In the context of media consumption, repeated viewing at similar times or in similar situations fosters predictable and continuous behavioral patterns, which can automatically lead to the consumption of multiple episodes consecutively. Accordingly, habit plays a critical role in translating continuous viewing tendencies into actual binge-watching behavior through mechanisms of familiarity, routinization, and repeated responses that do not require renewed conscious decision-making each time (Wood & Neal, 2007). In addition, some studies suggest that platform characteristics, such as the autoplay function, may work in conjunction with entertainment factors to stimulate continuous viewing behavior (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). However, prior research also indicates that although habit may explain behavior more effectively than intention in certain contexts, its influence may diminish when contextual conditions change or when viewers become aware of the negative consequences of continuous viewing. In such situations, self-regulatory processes may regain prominence, thereby moderating the impact of habit on binge-watching engagement (Ouellette & Wood, 1998).

Continuous viewing intention was found to influence binge-watching engagement. When viewers have a firm intention to watch multiple episodes consecutively, such intention acts as an internal motivator that leads to actual behavior. This aligns with behavioral theories positing that intention is one of the strongest predictors of action, especially when individuals expect pleasure or continuity from the consumption experience (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Consistent with prior findings, viewers tend to follow through on their viewing intentions (Shim & Kim, 2018), and those with higher continuous intention are more likely to increase the duration and number of episodes watched in each session (Flayelle et al., 2020).

Moreover, the research found that habit indirectly influenced binge-watching engagement through continuous viewing intention, which served as a mediating variable. Habits formed through repeated viewing behavior reduce cognitive effort in decision-making and facilitate stronger intentions to continue watching subsequent episodes (Lim et al., 2022; LaRose, 2010). As viewing becomes more habitual, audiences often engage in continuous episode viewing automatically, reflecting the dominant influence of habit over situationally formed intentions (Bastos et al., 2024). Subsequently, continuous intention directly drives actual binge-watching behavior, consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which identifies intention as a key predictor of future action (Ajzen, 1991).

The overall findings of this study align with the theoretical foundations reviewed, particularly the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that audiences select media content to fulfill needs related to entertainment, relaxation, and passing time (Katz et al., 1973; McQuail, 1983; Rubin, 1984). The results mirror these principles, as TikTok short-drama viewers predominantly use the platform for enjoyment and stress relief during leisure time, leading to strengthened continuous viewing intention. Additionally, the findings support evidence suggesting that using media to pass time enhances media-use intentions (Pittman, 2015; Panda & Pandey, 2017), especially in contexts where algorithmic feeds continuously supply content that shapes intentions automatically. The influence of anticipated regret is also consistent with theories by Loomes and Sugden (1987) and Connolly and Zeelenberg (2008), which posit that individuals make continued decisions to avoid regret—clearly reflected here as viewers proceed to the next

episode to avoid missing critical plot developments. Furthermore, the results correspond with habit theories demonstrating that repeated activities reinforce automatic behavioral patterns even without new motivations (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Wood & Neal, 2007), as seen among respondents who use TikTok daily and for extended periods. Lastly, the relationship between intention and binge-watching behavior aligns with behavioral intention principles (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Emphasizing that intention serves as a strong predictor of actual behavior. Collectively, the findings illustrate how hedonic gratifications, anticipated regret, and habit interact systematically to shape continuous viewing behavior of short dramas on TikTok. These mechanisms reflect established theoretical foundations and represent key drivers of binge-watching behavior in contemporary digital media environments.

Suggestions

The research findings, together with the behavioral data of the respondents, highlight important implications for content creators on TikTok who aim to enhance continuous viewing of vertical short dramas. The results indicate that most viewers use TikTok daily and primarily consume content at night. This aligns with the finding that hedonic motivations, particularly "entertainment" and "passing time" serve as key drivers of continuous viewing intention. Accordingly, content design should cater to short breaks or brief idle periods by providing 3-5 minute episodes that begin quickly, move directly into the main plot, and deliver light-hearted enjoyment that matches viewers' expectations.

Regarding viewing behavior influenced by the platform's recommendation system (FYP), a substantial proportion of respondents reported consuming content through algorithmic suggestions. This finding reflects the combined role of habit and algorithmic reinforcement, which encourages viewers to continue watching automatically. Therefore, content should feature short, sequential episodes or cliffhanger endings. The data show that over 53% of viewers continue watching because of unresolved plot points, which is consistent with the influence of anticipated regret, prompting viewers to avoid missing the next episode. Additionally, the fact that most viewers watch content alone suggests that storytelling strategies should focus on evoking individualized emotional responses rather than relying on social interaction.

Finally, the results show that most viewers watch for 10-30 minutes per session and are generally unbothered by brand integration as long as the content remains engaging and concise. This presents a significant opportunity for brands to utilize vertical short dramas as a form of seamless advertising that does not disrupt the primary viewing experience. Collectively, the findings suggest that content designed to offer immediate entertainment value, incorporate follow-up hooks, and employ short and frequent episode uploads can effectively enhance both continuous viewing intention and binge-watching engagement.

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