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Perceived value, habit, and engagement in Chinese university students' use of Himalaya FM

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Abstract

Modern mobile audio platforms provide groundbreaking methods to listen to digital content since these platforms now enjoy high popularity among users. The study focuses on identifying factors that lead Chinese university students to maintain Himalaya FM usage by conducting experiments about user-perceived value, engagement, and habit formation dynamics. A print questionnaire received 374 valid responses from Chinese university students participating in this survey. The authors confirmed their suggested hypotheses using SEM as their method for analysis after gathering research data. Chinese university students use Himalaya FM because functional, emotional, and social benefits lead to direct maintenance effects ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$). Repeated audio and playlist usage enables users to develop service platform loyalty, making habit the most potent predictive variable ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$). The platform achievements heavily depend on building platform commitment, made possible through their active features ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). Mobile audio application development teams and marketing professionals must implement research findings in their work activities. Customers develop a better impression of the platform through exceptional content quality, personalized features, and interactive elements that realize persistent usage. Himalaya FM must develop AI-based recommendation systems with community and gamification features to remain the leading audio platform in the Chinese digital audio competition. The patterns of user retention and experiential components that modify mobile audio streaming platform retention behaviors are researched in original studies. Future research needs to combine investigations of mobile audio listening behavior and psychological, technological, and cultural aspects in human beings.

Keywords: Perceived value, Habit, User engagement, Mobile audio applications, Digital streaming, Consumer behavior, Himalaya FM, China

1. Introduction

Mobile audio applications have rapidly evolved into platforms that combine entertainment and learning, transforming how users access digital content [1]. In China, Himalaya FM has become the leading mobile audio service, offering podcasts, audiobooks, and educational materials that meet the needs of university students seeking both convenience and customized experiences [2]. Unlike traditional media such as radio or television,

digital audio platforms provide interactive and personalized features, which improve user retention rates and create competitive advantages for providers [3].

Despite this growth, sustained usage of mobile audio applications depends on multiple factors beyond initial adoption. Prior studies highlight three major determinants of retention: perceived value, habit formation, and user engagement [4]. Perceived value reflects users' assessment of the benefits they receive compared to the costs of using the platform [5]. In the case of Himalaya FM, functional features such as diverse content formats and intuitive interfaces, combined with educational resources, contribute strongly to this perceived value. However, perceived value alone does not fully explain long-term loyalty.

Habit formation has been identified as another key factor shaping digital consumption behaviors. When users repeatedly engage with a platform, their actions can become automatic, reducing cognitive effort and fostering loyalty over time [6],[7]. For students who integrate audio content into daily activities such as commuting, exercising, or studying, habit may explain the persistence of usage patterns. Engagement further strengthens retention by encouraging emotional connections and interactive participation, such as commenting on content or joining community discussions [8].

While research on digital media adoption is growing, limited attention has been paid to the behavioral and psychological mechanisms that sustain the use of mobile audio platforms among Chinese university students. Understanding how perceived value, habit, and engagement interact to influence retention provides important insights for developers, marketers, and educators. This study, therefore, investigates the continued use of Himalaya FM by examining how these three factors jointly shape students' loyalty to the platform. By applying structural equation modeling (SEM) to survey data from 374 respondents, the research offers both theoretical contributions to digital media literature and practical implications for improving user retention in China's competitive audio streaming market.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

The development of mobile audio applications now lets users pick custom digital content at their convenience after switching away from traditional media forms such as radio and television. Mobile audio services run by Himalaya FM have gained popularity among Chinese university students thanks to their modern content, designed for digital-generation students, as found by Huo and Li [8]. Users choose these digital platforms because they offer educational resources, entertainment options, and self-growth content [9].

University students who maintain long-term usage encounter technical barriers with these applications. According to [10], research confirms that early adopters of mobile applications usually abandon their applications during their first few months of use. The study determines how Chinese university students rate value while analyzing their mental habits and interactive levels concerning their continued usage behaviors with Himalaya FM. User behavior forms as a result of perceived benefits together with repeated usage patterns and system engagement through the lenses of technology continuance theory (TCT) and unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT2), according to [11].

Perceived value plays a central role in determining whether users continue using a mobile audio platform. Users evaluate platforms by weighing benefits against costs [12], while [13] demonstrated that value perceptions increase satisfaction and lengthen usage. Extending this, [14] found that functional value—such as high-quality content and user-friendly interfaces—significantly enhances loyalty. Similarly, [15] emphasized that functionality often outweighs other considerations in platform choice. However, [16], [17] highlighted that emotional value, such as comfort and motivation, also creates lasting user bonds. Personalized content strengthens this relationship by aligning services with individual preferences [18]. Taken together, these findings suggest that functional, emotional, and personalized values interact to sustain retention. In the case of Himalaya FM, this indicates that beyond providing diverse content formats, emotional resonance and tailored experiences are essential for maintaining student loyalty. Implementing social functions in digital systems

between customers leads to increased customer loyalty, according to [19]. According to [20], users form enduring connections to their platform as they continue using it indefinitely after perceiving increased value. System habits automatically activate user tendencies when customers perform tasks repeatedly [21]. Regular scheduling by Himalaya FM enables automatic continued engagement from customers, according to [22]. Himalaya FM reaches university students throughout their educational sessions, transportation, workout schedules, and leisure periods [23]. The status of system usage acceptance creates favorable conditions that prevent users from abandoning the application [24],[25]. User habit strength reaches a threshold that decreases cognitive effort, so users can disconnect their dependence on outside motivation [26]. Users who subscribe to Himalaya FM demonstrate habitual conduct, which prevents them from looking for alternative solutions [27].

User engagement research investigates digital platform usage strength among users and their platform involvement levels, according to [28]. In the context of Himalaya FM, engagement encompasses content consumption, interactive participation, and emotional connection with the platform [29].

Users perform different levels of knowledge-focused actions combined with content evaluation activities through cognitive engagement [30]. User platform involvement escalates progressively as their cognitive connection intensifies, thus sustaining their platform engagement until they finish using it [31]. Forming strong emotional bonds with a platform enables users to develop better retention patterns in their behavior. Users develop strong emotional connections with Spotify after experiencing playlists incorporating recommended content and uploaded materials. Platform commitment between customers increases when they actively engage through community discussions, content rating activities, and social network sharing. User engagement improves customer satisfaction and extends platform duration [32]. Through engagement, the user retention strength between perceived value and habit increases because it stimulates continued use intention. Based on the findings from [33], the model of user perceptions and continued use behavior progresses through engagement.

Platform users provide a strong commitment by consuming content with vigorous intensity while moving between different features, which deepens their application bond. An increasing engagement between users and the platform triggers longer platform commitment by deepening their bond. Users who use the application routinely acquire better knowledge of its features due to continuous usage, thus increasing the activation of their platform [34]. Social platform users who fully activate interactive and social features strengthen their commitment to the platform services.

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **H1:** Perceived value has a positive effect on continued use intention.
- **H2:** Habit has a positive effect on continued use intention.
- **H3:** User engagement has a positive effect on continued use intention.
- **H4:** User engagement mediates the relationship between perceived value and continued use intention.
- **H5:** User engagement mediates the relationship between habit and continued use intention.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a quantitative method to analyze what determines Chinese university students' commitment to Himalaya FM usage. This study conducted a cross-sectional survey to obtain data from Chinese students enrolled in universities who actively use Himalaya FM at present. The research methodology delivers empirical evidence regarding the connection between user perception of value and habit formation and user engagement toward continued use intention. According to the research design, the analysis will use structural equation modeling to validate hypotheses about the connection between fundamental variables.

University students from China who have been using Himalaya FM for at least three months form the target audience for this research. The sampling method used stratified random sampling to achieve reasonable student representation while considering participants from various universities, academic subjects, and demographic characteristics [35]. The researchers distributed 461 questionnaires online and through university digital forums, which led to 374 valid responses and produced an 81% response rate. The collection of 374 valid responses exceeds the SEM analysis requirements, thus producing statistically reliable results that may be generalized.

The questionnaire utilized an organized format that derived scales from confirmed measurement instruments found in past research. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section collected demographic information such as gender, age, and education level. The second section measured the study constructs: perceived value, habit, user engagement, and continued use intention. All constructs were adapted from established scales in prior studies to ensure content validity, and responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Perceived value was measured using four items adapted from [36], covering functional, emotional, and social benefits of using Himalaya FM. Habit was measured with four items adapted from [37], focusing on automaticity and routine behaviors associated with platform use. User engagement was measured using four items adapted from Bitrián et al. [32], reflecting cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of engagement. Continued use intention was measured with four items adapted from [38], assessing students' willingness to maintain their use of Himalaya FM.

Data analysis followed a procedure incorporating structural equation modeling (SEM) on AMOS 24 to evaluate the relationships proposed by the study [39],[40]. AMOS was chosen because covariance-based SEM is more suitable for confirmatory studies testing theoretical models, whereas PLS-SEM emphasizes prediction. The analysis proceeded through two steps: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which assessed construct validity and reliability, and model fit for measurement models. The structural model analysis used path coefficients together with significance tests and CFI, TLI, and RMSEA model fit indicators to verify the proposed hypotheses [41],[42]. Many diagnostic tests revealed that predictor variables functioned independently, while another method confirmed no standard method bias between variables. The research design protects the validity of study outcomes, which yields important information about Chinese university students who persist in using Himalaya FM.

4. Results and analysis

This research provides statistical data about what influences Chinese university students to maintain their use of Himalaya FM. SEM analysis through AMOS 24 thoroughly evaluated all proposed relationships in the study. The population description shows that Himalaya FM university students mainly consist of male and female participants between 18 and 24 years old. As shown in Table 1, women comprised 45.4% of the total participants, and males comprised the remaining 54.6%. According to the research data, a significant 72.3% of Himalaya FM users in China belong to the 18-24 age group, then the 25-29 age group (21.5%). This established that young adults comprise the bulk of Himalaya FM users in China. Results indicate that Himalaya FM has gained high popularity among university learners since undergraduate students comprise 67.8% of the total, while graduate students comprise 24.5%. 57.9% of respondents demonstrated extensive experience with Himalaya FM since they began using the platform.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) checked the measurement model's validity and reliability through the examination presented in Table 2. The measurement indicators were appropriate based on the 0.70 cutoff value during factor loading validation. The measurement consistency of the model is strong because composite reliability (CR) scores fall between 0.87 and 0.92. Table 3 displays average variance extracted (AVE) data, which exceeded 0.50, thus demonstrating model validity. The proposed model demonstrated an excellent fit with statistical data according to the verification of RMSEA at 0.041, CFI at 0.943, and TLI at 0.931.

Students who use Himalaya FM demonstrate a significant connection between their continued use and the variables of perceived value and habit, and user engagement, according to Table 4. User retention depends

mainly on perceived value since students showing positive perceptions tend to keep using Himalaya FM ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$). Results demonstrate that habit was the main driver impacting long-term engagement with the platform because it produced the highest effect ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). The study results show that active user engagement practices ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) enhance users' probability of maintaining Himalaya FM platform usage.

Research findings reveal important insights regarding Chinese university students' digital audio streaming service behavior and their patterns of premium content promotion alongside periodicals and user participation developments. Enhanced student retention became possible because researchers implemented better user pathways and interactive design components based on analytical study outcomes to develop individualized recommendation systems. User stability at Himalaya FM results from simple system features, reliable broadcasting, and their method of selecting audio content through user interactions.

The research has improved user satisfaction, but investigating the links between diverse content and network influence with game mechanics systems would deliver superior user retention results. Due to technological progress, more scientific research about user persistence must be conducted because it evaluates persistence through platform features and artificial intelligence content selection. Himalaya FM development teams require this research to develop methods for sustaining Chinese university students on their platform.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	204	54.6%
	Female	170	45.4%
Age Group	18-24 years	270	72.3%
	25-29 years	80	21.5%
	30+ years	24	6.2%
Education Level	Undergraduate	254	67.8%
	Graduate	92	24.5%
	Other	28	7.7%
Himalaya FM Usage Duration	Less than 6 months	64	17.1%
	6-12 months	94	25.0%
	More than 1 year	216	57.9%

The demographic profile shows that the majority of users are university students in the 18–24 age group. This concentration highlights the importance for managers to design features and content tailored to younger audiences, such as flexible learning materials and entertainment-focused options.

Table 2. Construct reliability and validity assessment

Constructs	Number of Items	Factor Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Perceived Value	4	0.73 - 0.89	0.65	0.89	0.87
Habit	4	0.75 - 0.91	0.68	0.91	0.89
User Engagement	4	0.71 - 0.88	0.63	0.88	0.86
Continued Use Intention	4	0.74 - 0.90	0.66	0.90	0.88

The results in Table 2 confirm that all constructs are reliable and valid. This assures researchers and practitioners that the measurement of perceived value, habit, and engagement is consistent, making the findings applicable for designing platform strategies.

Table 3. Model fit indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Threshold	Decision
RMSEA	0.041	RMSEA < 0.08	Good Fit
CFI	0.943	CFI > 0.90	Good Fit
TLI	0.931	TLI > 0.90	Good Fit
Chi-Square/df	2.07	< 3.00	Good Fit

As shown in Table 3, the model fit indices indicate strong validity. This suggests that the framework is robust and can be applied by platform managers to assess user retention strategies in practice.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-Value	Result
H1: Perceived Value → Continued Use Intention	0.37	0.06	7.3	<0.001	Supported
H2: Habit → Continued Use Intention	0.45	0.07	7.9	<0.001	Supported
H3: User Engagement → Continued Use Intention	0.41	0.08	6.9	<0.001	Supported

Table 4 shows that all hypothesized relationships are supported. In practice, this means that managers should prioritize habit formation and engagement features, since these variables have the strongest impact on sustaining user loyalty.

The primary reason Chinese university students maintain their Himalaya FM subscription is habit. However, their continued use of the platform depends on their assessment of its value and their interactive experiences. Combining personalized platform features enables customer commitment by establishing advanced user interaction methods for maximizing audio streaming quality. The platform manager needs collaboration between developers and marketing specialists to implement AI-based content customization solutions based on research findings to achieve mobile streaming market success.

5. Discussion

A research investigation identifies essential factors influencing Chinese university students to use Himalaya FM. The structure of this section presents the research analysis and its relation to existing studies while proposing possible explanations and future research directions. Students at Himalaya FM continue using the platform due to their appreciation of its value, established listening behaviors, and desire to interact with the platform. The investigation confirms modern mobile app adoption studies by demonstrating that developers must prioritize digital content value improvements, interface quality improvement, and user experience enhancements.

The users who utilize Himalaya FM exhibit enduring use because they discover extensive perceived value within the platform. User retention rates significantly increase when digital platform users recognize the platform's crucial functional, emotional, and social values, according to [28]. The positive user perceptions of Himalaya FM stem from its wide range of content, premium audio delivery, and user-tailored suggestions. Mobile audio platforms that offer premium content to users gain superior retention rates since subscribers consider these dual-purpose services as educational yet entertaining platforms, according to [43].

Research studies indicate that Chinese university students are choosing digital learning and entertainment solutions as their preference because of perceived value, which leads to platform continuity. Digital content demand and online learning needs have created a student search for platforms delivering reliable, compelling content material. People who use Himalaya FM like the service because it incorporates educational podcasts, audiobooks, and motivational talks in each service offering. According to Zhu and Yang, students select digital platforms based on features such as interactive comments and community discussion areas with social value.

Habit emerged as the strongest predictor of continued use ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing earlier studies that highlight habitual use as a critical factor in long-term platform retention [44]. The ability to listen while multitasking, such as commuting or studying, makes audio content particularly convenient. Over time, this passive engagement becomes automatic, embedding the platform into students' daily routines and reducing the likelihood of discontinuation.

Research by [33] showed that regular mobile entertainment app usage leads to higher user retention. Frequent platform experience makes users comfortable with all user interface elements, recommendation systems, and customized features. According to, frequent application interaction creates automatic behavior patterns that help users stay on the platform, thus reducing their need to switch to different applications.

The behavior of listening to audio content helps explain why habit is the primary factor in continued use of Himalaya FM. Students can listen while commuting or studying, which makes usage passive and convenient. Over time, this passive engagement develops into a persistent habit. Users develop habitual use of the platform because its recommendation algorithms continuously present tailored content based on their listening habits to the users.

Scientific studies demonstrate that user engagement remains key to maintaining Himalaya FM users because the platform provides compelling user experiences. According to [45], users demonstrate stronger platform commitment to online platforms if the platforms present impactful audience engagement systems. Users extend their platform session time by using content-sharing facilities and forums for interpersonal communication, which results in stronger bonds between creators and users as well as platform affiliation.

The user retention strategy successful for online platforms stems from implementing elements that facilitate user engagement, including gamification features and achievement badges, along with interaction capabilities within communities, according to [46]. Strong customer loyalty ensues from better discovery of content at Himalaya FM through its audience features, which unify listener comments and artist follower functions, and content discussion tools.

Users of digital content say social engagement is the key factor keeping them active on the platform. According to [29], university students choose custom platforms because they satisfy their needs with features that enhance peers' social connections and recommendations. The engagement strategies employed by Himalaya FM work towards market stability because the company faces increasing competition from mobile audio platforms in China.

The research outcomes in this study established continuity with earlier digital retention investigations since they show that retention success depends on user-perceived value and patterns of habitual use and engagement methods. The experimental results of this investigation show minor atypical outcomes when compared to former research data obtained through alternative study environments. User retention in mobile learning applications improves when people develop habits through active engagement rather than through easy-to-use interfaces, according to [47]. Mobile audio applications achieve success through behavioral reinforcement systems since they produce better results than usability elements in meeting performance objectives.

According to [48], the retention rate of mobile applications is higher based on user-oriented elements, including value perception and product connection, than privacy concerns and regulatory measures. Users of Himalaya

FM favor designs that serve better content and interactive programs since these qualities improve public development and personalized programming capabilities.

The findings provide several important implications for practice. For platform developers, the results highlight the need to strengthen personalization and automation. AI-driven recommendation systems, playlist notifications, and adaptive content can reinforce habitual use by keeping content relevant and reducing user effort. These technological features make usage more convenient and embed the platform into students' daily routines, which enhances long-term loyalty.

From a marketing perspective, retention strategies should focus on social interaction and gamification. Integrating features such as badges, leaderboards, and collaborative playlists can enhance user engagement and emotional connection. By motivating users through interactive and social dynamics, Himalaya FM can differentiate itself from competitors and sustain loyalty in the increasingly crowded digital audio market.

For educators, Himalaya FM also offers opportunities to support flexible learning. By integrating educational podcasts and course-related discussions into the platform, universities can provide students with accessible resources that complement formal teaching. This dual role of entertainment and education can increase students' engagement while expanding Himalaya FM's appeal as a learning support tool. These managerial insights complement the theoretical contributions of the study and provide actionable strategies for sustaining user retention in digital audio platforms.

Research must evaluate mobile audio application retention factors by looking into AI-guided suggestions, psychological motivators, and cultural patterns of digital consumption habits. Research using age-based and geographic variables reveals additional essential user characteristics and preferences.

Research shows that Himalaya FM succeeds in keeping Chinese university students because its services align with their evaluation system while catering to their actions alongside interaction patterns. To maintain long-term user retention, Himalaya FM must develop valid content alongside strategic study applications that boost user behaviors and engagement levels. Analyzing Himalaya FM user data enables the company to create superior products and target effective strategic announcements for Chinese mobile audio streaming platforms.

6. Conclusion

This study examined Chinese university students' continued use of Himalaya FM by analyzing the effects of perceived value, habit, and user engagement. The findings confirm that students remain committed to the platform when it delivers functional, emotional, and social value, fosters habitual usage, and provides engaging interactive features.

From a practical perspective, platform developers should focus on AI-based recommendations, personalized playlists, and interactive design to sustain engagement. Marketers can enhance loyalty by promoting social and community features that strengthen emotional connections with the platform. Educators may also use Himalaya FM as a tool to support student learning by integrating educational content.

Theoretically, this research extends the understanding of digital media consumption by applying continuance intention models such as the technology continuance theory (TCT) and UTAUT2 to the context of audio streaming. By showing that habit is the strongest driver while engagement mediates value and loyalty, the study contributes to ongoing debates in information systems and consumer behavior literature about the mechanisms that sustain technology use over time.

Future research should extend this work to diverse cultural and demographic contexts and explore the role of psychological and technological factors in shaping digital audio consumption. Incorporating social and dynamic gasification features will further enhance user experiences and improve long-term retention.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial or non-financial competing interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Author contributions

Ji Yuan contributed to the conceptualization of the study, the development of the literature review, the design of the methodology, and provided overall supervision. Rania Al Zumot contributed to the development of the research instrument, data validation, interpretation of the results, and manuscript editing. Abdallah Ali Mohammad Alrifae was responsible for data collection, data analysis, manuscript drafting, and correspondence with the journal. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Ethical approval statement

Our institution does not require research ethics approval for reporting individual cases or case series.

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study prior to data collection.

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