

From Motivation to Participation: Understanding User Dynamics in Bilibili's Subculture

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ABSTRACT

With the ACGN (Animation, Comics, Games, Novels) subculture gaining popularity in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly through platforms like Bilibili, users are actively engaging in community participation and content contribution. This study investigates the motivations driving these behaviours, focusing on the relationship between user attitudes and engagement intentions. Utilising a quantitative survey method, data was collected from 204 university students in Guangzhou, China, who are familiar with the ACGN subculture and use Bilibili. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS, revealing that social interaction, altruism and reputation positively influence users' attitudes toward the platform. Conversely, expected reciprocal benefits did not significantly affect attitudes; and self-expression was found to have a negative correlation. These findings suggest that users who value social connections and altruistic contributions are more likely to engage with the platform, while those seeking self-expression may develop negative perceptions. The research extends the uses and gratifications theory by highlighting the importance of user attitudes in shaping engagement behaviours. Practically, the results can inform Bilibili's strategies to enhance user satisfaction and participation by addressing the needs of core users, ultimately stabilising the platform's community culture and economic viability. Future research should explore broader ACGN user groups and employ qualitative methods to uncover deeper motivational dynamics.

Keywords: *ACGN subculture, motivation; community participation, content contribution, attitudes towards the web.*

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become one of the avenues for people to socialise and consume (Arfan et al., 2023; Kurt, 2024). Among them, virtual communities or social media have become an important hub on the internet to connect people with common interests and goals (Alshehri, 2024; Kasmani et al., 2022). At present, the classification of social media is getting more and more blurred as they are all multifunctional.

Taking video websites as an example, functions such as consuming, commenting, posting and creating serve as the basis for new functions such as socialising, events, community, live streaming and shopping (Giertz et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Video websites are not only becoming more professional in their fields but they also serve as integrated function centres (Li et al., 2023; Ørmen & Gregersen, 2023; Shoufan & Mohamed, 2022). After video websites became accessible on mobile devices, the number of users, social

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influence, consumption and creation among others have become increasingly significant. These are all now part of people's entertainment lives.

Subscription-based video sites with a strong presence include Netflix, Disney+ and others (Jovanka & Maulana, 2023; Wang & Guo, 2023). YouTube and YouKu are examples of UGC-led (User-Generated Content) online video platforms. Professionally Generated Content (PGC) began to appear after the UGC model faced issues such as low content quality, complicated variety and management difficulties. At this stage, more video websites have combined the advantages of UGC and PGC to form a hybrid production model of PUGC, or Professional User-Generated Content (Zhang & Han, 2022). This model is more satisfying to users at this stage, and the increase in activity of users provides higher economic benefits for video websites (Wu, 2022). Some video websites such as YouTube, Youku, Iqiyi and Bilibili, among others, operate through specialised internet-generated content as well as occupational-generated content. Behaviours such as content producers' and users' sharing form an inner-cycle green process of creation and consumption (Ding et al., 2022; Zhao & Wang, 2022). Video websites, in which users can act as both the subject of creation and the object of consumption, have a favourable development prospect at the current phase.

Among the numerous video websites with significant influence, Bilibili represents a special case, differing from other video websites in terms of the selection of core users and the mode of operation of its content. As a platform focusing on animation, comic, game, and novel (ACGN), it has gradually formed a multicultural ecosystem around its users, creators and content, with a diverse and active circle (Zhao & Wang, 2022). ACGN as a subculture is especially popular in East and Southeast Asia, and its market share is increasing in the Asia-Pacific region year by year (Raje, 2025). Bilibili has not only specialised the platform construction direction for the ACGN subculture, but also created online communities with the active participation of users (Chen & Yang, 2023). Most of these users belong to Gen Z, so they rely strongly on the Internet (Yang et al., 2024). These users have their favourite and specialised areas and are active in community activities. It further stimulates the generation of new content and drives continued engagement from users who tend to consume (Wang & Zhang, 2021). The establishment of this particular audience selection and active community has facilitated the production of platform by-products, as well as more video content showcasing specialised areas of expertise (Cong, 2022; Wu, 2022). It further stimulates users' buying and consuming appetite for the products.

Although ACGN is categorised as a subculture, it has an extremely large population base and a huge amount of related activities (Liu et al., 2024; Liuyan et al., 2024). The comics community alone, a small branch of The Malaysian ACG Community, is close to 60,000 people (Parameswaran, 2021). Related events and cultural centres are also of a certain size, with ACGN industry venues in Kuala Lumpur and other cities (INCUBASE Studio, 2025). Furthermore, there are dozens of ACGN-related events scheduled for 2025 (David, 2025). Similarly in China, industry revenues from animation in ACGN have reached 25 billion CNY, and the pan-ACGN community is over 500 million strong (Guo, 2024).

Not to mention, ACGN has gained a massive fan base. Video websites, especially Bilibili, have a significant contribution to this process. Bilibili, as a platform for hosting ACGN culture in Asia, has been in Malaysia since 2022 and has a stable portion of users (Chee, 2022). The total number of Bilibili users is more than 300 million and most of them are young users, especially university students. They engage in learning (Jiang et al., 2022), cultural exchange (Bai et al., 2024), purchasing products (Wang, 2023) and more. In other words, these college students would first consider using Bilibili to fulfil their needs. These ACGN college students,

on the other hand, contribute more to Bilibili and participate more frequently by participating in community activities, purchasing value-added services and producing videos and articles. Their active purchases have served as Bilibili's primary source of revenue.

Several problems arose during Bilibili's rapid growth phase. Firstly, Bilibili faced economic pressure due to expansion and development (Huang, 2023). Secondly, the roots of the ACGN community as the core were shaken in order to attract more users (Cong, 2022). Finally, there is an imbalance of content in order to break through the platform's content barriers to groups other than young people (Sun et al., 2023). These problems are all attributed to the fact that the core of ACGN users has been destabilised. The core users are the main force behind the purchase of value-added services and products, as well as the creation of high-quality content that attracts new users and stabilises old ones. As such, their active participation in Bilibili, especially in community activities and content contributions, has significantly helped to solve this problem. In other words, helping Bilibili to build a well-established community culture has helped to stabilise user usage and consumption. This also further stabilises Bilibili's revenue and helps it to better tide over negative net income. The community culture is reflected by the users who use Bilibili interacting with the website, which in turn relates to the motivation and behaviour of the users. Studying this relationship can help Bilibili to understand its users and thus give advice on constructing a community.

Research on the relationship between multiple motivations and behavioural intentions has focused more on the public and rarely on specific ACGN groups. Most research on this group also tends to be qualitative. Attitude is also a psychological factor that cannot be ignored when discussing what exactly drives ACGN university students to participate and contribute (Chang & Chang, 2023). It is generally used as a prerequisite for ultimate choice and intent to use (Sari et al., 2022). In the media industry, attitudes towards advertising, media and websites are all influenced by different motivations and continue to influence their behaviours (Bilro et al., 2022; Herrando & Martín-De Hoyos, 2022). When exploring these relationships further, relevant studies have occasionally overlooked attitudes toward websites. To better understand the relationship between users' motivations and engagement intention on the Bilibili platform, this study considers the users' attitudes towards the website. As a result, this research posed the following research questions: i) What are the motivations that influence users' participation in Bilibili communities?; ii) To what extent do these motivations influence attitudes towards the website? and iii) To what extent do attitudes towards the website influence users' community participation and content contribution?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivations of Users in Media

There are many forms of motivation classification in past literature. Most social media-related research classifies motivation into hedonic, social, companion, identity, information and others (Bae, 2023; Pan, 2023). Returning to the community-building and content-development aspects of the platform, among the various types of user motivation, those that revolve around the needs for self-expression, expected reciprocal benefit, reputation and altruism are more likely to lead users to share and have a better attitude toward the Web (Hsu & Lin, 2008). In addition, social interaction is one of the main motivations for maintaining users' use of platforms with social functions (Bae, 2023). Motivations such as entertainment

are more common in the general media environment, but individuals in community environments place greater emphasis on interaction and image building.

Social interaction, i.e. the desire to connect with others, is hardly ignored in research on video websites with social functions (Carlson et al., 2022). Self-expression is seen as a motivation for users to use online platforms to show their personality, values and characteristics to the public (Liu et al., 2020). It encourages users to express their ideas through different platforms. Interaction through *Danmaku* or comment sections is one of the main activities of users in community participation and consumption. In other words, users' motivation for self-expression provides sufficient support for their actual participation (Chen & Liao, 2023).

Expected reciprocal benefit refers to the extent to which an individual believes that they can derive benefits from their participation. It enables users to give back to the platform community after obtaining knowledge or greater satisfaction from consuming videos and comments, thereby increasing their content contribution to the community and even the entire website. Reputation refers to the status and sense of respect that users receive from others when using Bilibili. Establishing reputation signals can motivate people to make purchases and other actions (Taher et al., 2022). The level of expertise and strategy of these users is a reflection of their reputation and also influences the intentions of users (Sharipudin et al., 2023; Yao et al., 2024).

Reputation also affects users' sharing and continued use of similar large-scale community platforms like Bilibili. Altruism is the level of intention of an individual to help others without expecting anything in return. As opposed to non-altruistic individuals, these altruistic individuals are more active in posting comments and rating websites (Hoyer & Van Straaten, 2022). It has a direct and significant impact on online knowledge sharing. Bilibili's content categories have a large proportion of courses and communities, so altruism may have a significant influence. These three motivations not only have an impact on continued use and sharing but also moderate the behaviour of advertising content (Kaur et al., 2023). Both UGC and commenting activities and even private chats, demonstrate the importance of the motivation of social interaction. Related research has linked motivation very closely to actual behaviour, while the link between motivation and attitude has proven to be slightly weaker.

Xu and Li (2015) argued that reputation on knowledge-sharing platforms was not enough to influence user participation. They found that only reciprocity influenced content contribution and only altruism influenced community participation. Chiang and Hsiao (2015), however, found that on YouTube, all these motivations influence continued use, while self-expression had no effect. Hoyer and Van Straaten (2022) emphasised the positive impact of altruism on comments. In different network environments, these motivations may vary. Bilibili's environment includes video content consumption and online communities. Considering the passionate nature of ACGN users, these motivations and their effects may also differ from other environments.

Attitude Toward The Web

An attitude can be defined as a state of readiness that exerts a guiding influence on reactions through the organisation of experience (Mladenova, 2022) and it is very valuable to understand and interpret consumer behaviours (Han & Balabanis, 2024). Attitude toward the Web is a tendency for a user to react to web content in a natural context (Anisimova & Weiss, 2023). Previous research on the relationship between motivation and attitude has focused on the main motivations such as entertainment and information (Moon & An, 2022; Song et al.,

2023). Some research has also expanded on motivation to include social interaction (Ho & See-To, 2018). Research has pointed to the mediating role of attitude toward the Web between motivation and actual purchase behaviour (Sharma et al., 2023).

In addition to user aspects, relevant indicators for the Web have also been included in research that affects user attitudes and even their actual behaviours (Al Kurdi et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2023). The relationship between motivation and attitude is not limited to video websites. Hsu et al. (2010) found a link between motivation and attitude in consumers, which suggests that this relationship also exists in the tourism industry as a tourist. A similar relationship has been found for learning behaviour (Hidayatullah & Csikos, 2024; Tambunan et al., 2024). The relationship between motivation and attitude is even clearer in social media. Lee and Fiore (2024) found that motivation and attitude are positively correlated in the dissemination of fashion-related information in social media, and that attitude continues to affect subsequent intention to use social media. On top of that, consumers' purchase intentions are influenced by motivations and attitudes (Singh et al., 2024).

The research environment related to attitudes is even broader, including media consumption, purchasing, learning, and other intentions and actual behaviours. However, in the context of online communities, most scholars tend to analyse satisfaction and attitudes are not seen as a popular research topic. As a result, research on attitudes may reveal more unexplored psychological factors and causes of such behaviours.

Engagement Intention

Users of video websites have three main ways of approaching content: consumption, participation, and production (Alzub, 2023). Consumption refers to the user's behaviour of just watching, reading, or viewing without interacting. Participation behaviour includes both user-to-user and user-to-content interactions. Production is the activity of users creating and uploading content. According to this definition, production behaviour can also be subsumed under participation behaviour. The reason for this classification is that the user also interacts with the platform during the content upload process. Among the many user interaction behaviours, content contribution refers to members' active contribution of content in the form of original articles, videos, photos, and any other form.

Video producers, especially those with a high level of influence and attention, take their reputation seriously and work harder to create content that will increase their visibility and other earnings in the community (Shi et al., 2022). They are forward-thinking in their analysis and are conscientious of their future reputation to produce impactful content. Community participation refers to the interpersonal interaction of members, both online and offline, such as discussing group issues, participating in media management, and participating in or even hosting community events (Ding et al., 2022).

These participation activities include contributing to video content or community-related activities both online and offline, such as offline shows and gatherings, or online interactions and voting. It also includes discussing and voicing opinions on different thematic circles within the community, or even mobilising teammates to support their idol or anime character. There is also the mutual help of users within the community. It helps to maintain interpersonal communication between users. This study focuses on these two user behaviours towards community activities. Content contribution and community participation are also influenced by self-construal and community interaction. For instance, in publicly edited online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia, these three needs are also influencing user

behaviour such as content contribution. Nevertheless, there has been relatively little research in this category in video websites.

Hypotheses Development

Ma and Chan (2014) found that altruism nowadays in knowledge-sharing platforms has an impact on users' sharing and interaction behaviour. Xu and Li (2015) discovered that the influence on community participation is more derived from altruism, while the influence on content contribution is derived from reproduction and reciprocity. Self-expression also plays a minor role in user participation (Omar & Dequan, 2020). Hsu and Lin (2008) discovered that altruism and reputation significantly influence attitudes toward blog use. Considering that attitude is influenced by users' motivation, it also continues to influence users' intentions and behaviour (Luo, 2002). Therefore, this study connects the relationship between motivation and engagement intention with attitude.

Table 1 illustrates some of the frameworks relevant to this research. These studies emphasise five motivations: social interaction, self-expression, expected reciprocal benefit, reputation, and altruism. Participation is also classified into content contribution and community participation.

Table 1: Part of the framework relevant to this research

Author & Year	Motivations	Engagement
Omar & Dequan (2020)	Social-interaction, self-expression and so on.	Consuming, participating, and producing.
Xu & Li (2015)	Reputation, Reciprocity, Altruism, and so on.	Content contribution and community participation.
Ma & Chan (2014)	Altruism.	Online knowledge sharing behaviour.
Hsu & Lin (2008)	Altruism, expected reciprocal benefit, reputation.	Attitude and intention to blog.
Luo (2002)	Attitude	Web usage and satisfaction

The main purpose of this study is to better understand these core subcultural users, especially their motivations and attitude toward the Web. This study attempts to identify the relationship between users' motivations and engagement behaviours in the community, suggest ways to stabilise core subculture users, and seek a healthier and long-lasting model of cooperation between users and platforms at this stage. This research is based on the uses and gratifications theory and investigates the relationship between users' engagement motivations and behavioural intentions, as well as the role of attitudes, to predict factors related to stable use. Through the discussion of past literature, the motivations that may influence users' behaviour during their participation in Bilibili community participation are identified; namely, expected reciprocal benefit, reputation, altruism, self-expression, and social-interaction. Therefore, this study investigates the following hypotheses:

- H1: Social-interaction is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.
- H2: Self-expression is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.
- H3: Expected reciprocal benefit is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.
- H4: Reputation is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.
- H5: Altruism is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.
- H6: Attitude toward the Web is positively correlated with content contribution.
- H7: Attitude toward the Web is positively correlated with community participation.

Based on the uses and gratifications theory and past studies, a research model and hypotheses are proposed from the perspective of the relationship between users' motivations and engagement intention. This model seeks to explore the relationship between users' motivations of social-interaction, self-expression, expected reciprocal benefits, reputation, altruism and attitude toward the Web, as well as the relationship between attitude toward the Web and content contribution and community participation in Bilibili.

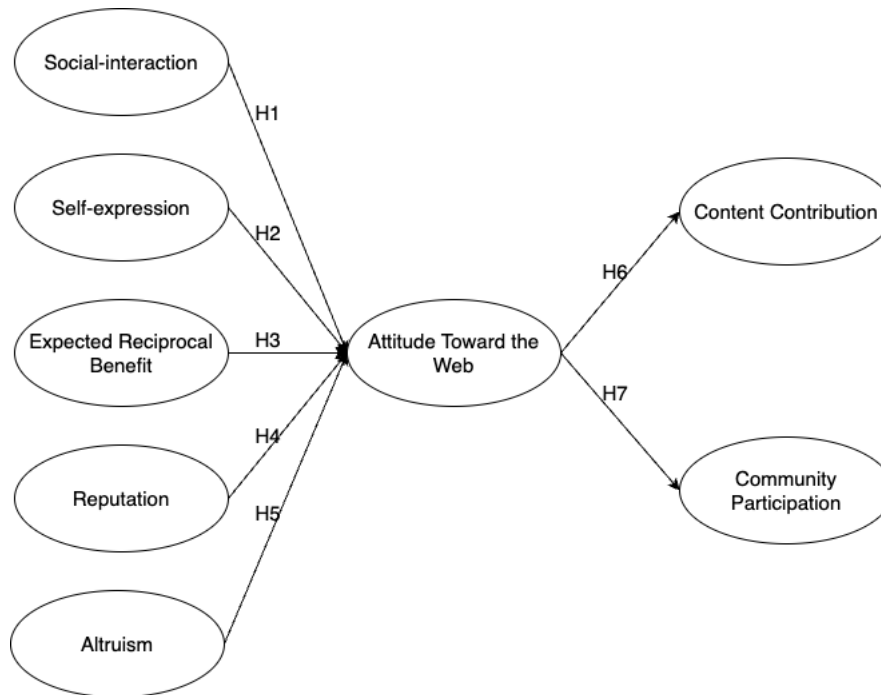


Figure 1: Motivation, attitude and participation intention model

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a positivist quantitative survey to test the hypotheses. Initially, we adapted the scales for the relevant variables, conducted a pre-test, and collected raw data from university students involved in the ACGN subculture who use Bilibili. Using SmartPLS to analyse the data. SmartPLS was used due to its ability to meet the minimum sample requirements of this study, and the data was found to be non-normally distributed through Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis calculation.

Instrument Development

The questionnaire consists of 8 variables and 49 items, all measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. We adopted the scale of social-interaction from Khan (2017) and Kaye (1998), the scale of self-expression from Liu et al. (2020) and Chiang and Hsiao (2015), expected reciprocal benefits, reputation, and altruism from Xu and Li (2015) and Chiang and Hsiao (2015), attitude toward the Web from Chen et al. (2002) and Liu et al. (2023), and content contribution and community participation from Hu et al. (2016) and Xu and Li (2015).

After the ethics clearance application had been approved, this study modified the wording of the questionnaire items to suit the Bilibili platform and the ACGN users' context of use. Then, we carried out the cross-cultural validation. A panel of four linguistic experts

translated the scale. Next, we invited the expert panel to conduct the content validity test on the items of the questionnaire. The result was that 10 items were deleted, and 39 items were retained. The questionnaire was reliable by the pre-test from 33 participants.

Data Collection

The main users of Bilibili are high school and university students. Due to financial and time constraints, high school students relatively have less flexibility to participate in the community and to contribute content. Therefore, the main population of this study is university students who use Bilibili. As a first-tier city in China, Guangzhou not only has university students with higher purchasing power but also has advantages in the development and exchange of new cultural trends. ACGN subculture events and exhibitions held in Guangzhou are extremely frequent, and even offline animation stores are seeing continuous growth in customer traffic (Huang, 2024). The prospects for ACGN culture in Guangzhou are even brighter, with rapid growth expected in the future.

This research was conducted by distributing an online questionnaire to university students in Guangzhou. ACGN is more of an expression of a preference for specific content, and these subculture university students do not have any observable common characteristics. Even though some subgroups, such as Otaku, may have similar T-shirts and sneakers in the Akihabara style, Otaku do not represent the entire ACGN group and not all Otaku dress in this way. This makes it difficult for researchers to accurately identify them based on external characteristics. Considering that the ACGN group is difficult to identify by external characteristics, we used volunteer sampling. Before filling out the questionnaire, the researcher asked participants whether they used Bilibili and whether they like ACGN and have a certain extent of knowledge about ACGN to determine whether the participants were eligible for this study. Data were collected from 1st of April 2024 to the end of June.

The questionnaire was released through the WeChat applet 'So Jump'. Collecting through WeChat applet ensured that all university students had the ability to participate in the survey. The applet only allowed for the submission of the questionnaire after all the items had been answered. Before the questionnaire could be completed, the participants had to fill out an informed consent form. The consent form explained the purpose, risks, and confidentiality of the study. A total of 204 valid questionnaires were used to analyse the data after excluding those who chose no in the consent form, as well as duplicates and invalid questionnaires. The minimum sample size was derived from G*Power as 138, i.e. the sample size of this study met the requirement.

The profile of the participants is presented in Table 2. 48% of the participants are male. Most of the participants are aged over 18 and more than 90% of participants have a monthly disposable income of less than 4,000 CNY. In terms of time spent on Bilibili per day, the half-hour to one-hour range has the most choices. A full member is defined as those who have passed Bilibili's ACGN exam to obtain full user interaction features, which are possessed by more than 60% of the participants. With 46.6% users, big members are those who purchased value-added services to get more consumable video content.

Table 2: Profile of respondent

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	98	48%
	Female	106	52%
Age	<18	7	3.4%
	18	14	6.9%
	19	26	12.7%
	20	26	12.7%
	21	30	14.7%
	22	40	19.6%
	>22	61	29.9%
Disposable income per month (CNY)	<2000	51	25%
	2000-2999	59	28.9%
	3000-3999	37	18.1%
	4000-4999	18	8.8%
	>5000	39	19.1%
Average daily usage time (mins)	<30	49	24%
	31-59	71	34.8%
	60-89	50	24.5%
	90-119	19	9.3%
	>120	15	7.4%
Full member	Yes	139	68.1%
	No	65	31.9%
Big member	Yes	95	46.6%
	No	109	53.4%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Analysis

The results of determining reliability and convergent validity are shown in Table 3. Firstly, the lowest Cronbach's alpha is 0.896, which is higher than the requirement of 0.7. The minimum composite reliability was 0.927, which is higher than the requirement of 0.708. These indicate that the internal consistency of variables meets the criteria. Secondly, the AVE of the least is 0.699, which is higher than the requirement of 0.5. Every Factor loading was above 0.708. These indicate that convergent validity also meets the criterion. The discriminant validity of the questionnaire is assessed by comparing the square root of the AVE with the correlations between the variables. As seen in Table 4, the discriminant validity between these variables is ensured. Therefore, the questionnaire meets the requirements in terms of reliability.

Table 3: Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Constructs and Items	Factor loadings
A. Social-interaction (Cronbach's alpha=0.926, AVE=0.772, CR=0.944)	
1. I use Bilibili to meet interesting people	0.872
2. I use Bilibili to feel like I belong to a community	0.918
3. I use Bilibili to connect with people who share same of my values	0.905
4. I use Bilibili because it's something to do when friends come over	0.865
5. I use Bilibili so I can talk to other people about the Bilibili and its content I've accessed	0.832
B. Self-expression (Cronbach's alpha=0.903, AVE=0.717, CR=0.927)	
1. I can record and express my ideas and inspirations etc. on Bilibili	0.832
2. I can record and express my feelings about life on Bilibili	0.878

3. I like to tell others about myself on Bilibili	0.871
4. I tend to provide personal information about myself on Bilibili	0.825
5. I try to well describe my personality to others on Bilibili	0.827
C. Expected Reciprocal Benefit (Cronbach's alpha=0.912, AVE=0.740, CR=0.934)	
1. I feel a personal obligation to participate and contribute in Bilibili because I consume content of Bilibili	0.804
2. If I receive useful content from Bilibili, I should participate and contribute in return	0.880
3. I want to be a beneficial asset to Bilibili if I receive help from others' contributions	0.876
4. I find that participating and contributing on Bilibili can be mutually helpful	0.859
5. I find my participation and contribution in Bilibili can be advantageous to me and other users	0.880
D. Reputation (Cronbach's alpha=0.896, AVE=0.762, CR=0.928)	
1. I earn respect from other users by participating and contributing in Bilibili	0.853
2. I feel that participating and contributing improve my status (followers, likes etc.) in Bilibili	0.913
3. I participate and contribute to enhance my reputation in Bilibili	0.849
4. Participating and contributing would enhance my personal reputation in Bilibili	0.875
E. Altruism (Cronbach's alpha=0.919, AVE=0.755, CR=0.939)	
1. I enjoy helping others by participating and contributing in Bilibili	0.829
2. It feels good to help others by participating and contributing in Bilibili	0.886
3. Participating and contributing with others gives me pleasure	0.891
4. Participating and contributing can help others with similar problems	0.871
5. I enjoy helping others through Bilibili	0.867
F. Attitude Toward the Web (Cronbach's alpha=0.914, AVE=0.699, CR=0.933)	
1. Bilibili makes it easy for me to build a relationship with this website	0.788
2. I would like to visit Bilibili again in the future	0.830
3. I'm satisfied with the service provided by Bilibili	0.859
4. I feel comfortable in surfing Bilibili	0.860
5. I feel surfing Bilibili is a good way for me to spend my time	0.852
6. Compared with other video websites, I would rate this one as (one of the worst-one of the best)	0.826
G. Community Participation (Cronbach's alpha=0.919, AVE=0.755, CR=0.939)	
1. I assist other Bilibili members with their questions	0.817
2. I take part in discussions about community issues in Bilibili	0.891
3. I actively participate in activities organized by the Bilibili	0.893
4. I offer ideas and effort to improve the functionality of the Bilibili community	0.886
5. I take part in votes in the Bilibili community	0.854
H. Content Contribution (Cronbach's alpha=0.925, AVE=0.817, CR=0.947)	
1. I often add new self-produced video and comments content to Bilibili	0.905
2. I often edit self-produced video and comments content on Bilibili	0.919
3. I often write articles and edit comments on Bilibili	0.914
4. I often add new Danmaku content on Bilibili	0.877

Table 4: Results of validity analysis

	COC	ALT	REP	ATW	SOI	COP	SEE	ERB
COC	0.904							
ALT	0.705	0.869						
REP	0.639	0.738	0.873					
ATW	0.700	0.765	0.634	0.836				
SOI	0.646	0.740	0.589	0.690	0.879			
COP	0.781	0.735	0.647	0.701	0.671	0.869		
SEE	0.678	0.730	0.693	0.596	0.778	0.731	0.847	
ERB	0.585	0.728	0.755	0.623	0.663	0.630	0.703	0.860

Note: Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE while the off-diagonals represent the correlations;
ALT = Altruism, COC = Content Contribution, COP = Community Participation, ERB = Expected Reciprocal Benefit, REP = Reputation, SEE = Self-expression, SOI = Social-interaction, ATW = Attitude Toward the Web

Structural Model Analysis

Prior to the structural model test, the VIF value of the internal model did not exceed 5. This indicates that there is no serious multicollinearity problem in the results of this research. As shown in Figure 2, the path coefficient and the corresponding beta, p-value, and t-value for each relationship were obtained by one-tailed bootstrapping.

The results show that social-interactions, reputation, and altruism are significantly positively correlated with attitude toward the Web, with t-values greater than 1.645 and p-values less than 0.05, supporting H1, H4, and H5. Self-expression is significantly negatively correlated with attitude toward the Web, with t-values greater than 1.645 and p-values less than 0.05, rejecting H2. Expected reciprocal benefits are not significantly correlated with attitude toward the Web, with a t-value of 0.429 and a p-value of greater than 0.05, rejecting H3. Attitude toward the Web is significantly positively correlated with content contribution and community participation, with a t-value greater than 1.645 and a p-value of less than 0.05, supporting H6 and H7.

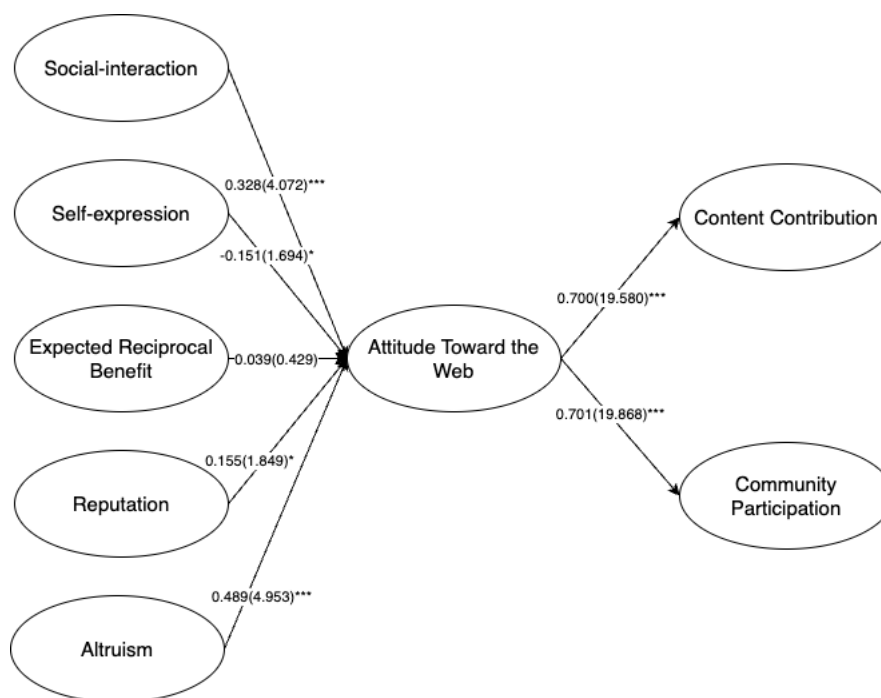


Figure 2: Structural model results

This research explains the variance of the dependent variable through R². In this research, we analysed the coefficient of determination R² for the three dependent variables. Among them, the R² for attitude toward the Web was 0.633, indicating that the independent variables explained 63.3% of the variance; the R² for content contribution was 0.490, indicating that it explained 49% of the variance; and the R² for community participation was 0.492, indicating that it explained 49.2% of the variance. Overall, the explanatory power of the research model was relatively strong, especially in explaining attitudes toward the Web.

Discussion

This research explores the motivations and attitudes associated with using the Bilibili website for community participation and content contribution, to determine the relationship between motivations, attitudes, and engagement intention. Five of the seven hypotheses were supported after being tested, while two were not. Table 5 summarises the hypotheses and results.

Table 5: Results of validity analysis

Hypothesis (H)	Significant	Supported
1. Social-interaction is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.	Yes	Yes
2. Self-expression is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.	Yes	No
3. Expected reciprocal benefits are positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.	No	No
4. Reputation is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.	Yes	Yes
5. Altruism is positively correlated with attitude toward the Web.	Yes	Yes
6. Attitude toward the Web is positively correlated with content contribution.	Yes	Yes
7. Attitude toward the Web is positively correlated with community participation.	Yes	Yes

Note. Significant level, p value < 0.05. H1: $p = 0.00$, H2: $p = 0.00$, H3: $p = 0.334$, H4: $p = 0.00$, H5: $p = 0.00$, H6: $p = 0.00$, H7: $p = 0.00$

a. Descriptive Analysis of Basic Information

Although men are fonder of mecha, sci-fi, and college themes in ACGN content, women focus more on elements such as romance and moe (Loh et al., 2024; Osawa et al., 2022). However, the male and female ratio is closer among the ACGN university student population. This demonstrates that although there are differences in gender preferences between men and women, each element has a certain level of group support and favouritism in the ACGN circle. Regarding age, the participants collected in this study are all university students, so most of them are between 18-23. However, most participants are 22 and older. This indicates that students in their sophomore year and above can have more independent time and the ability to participate in Bilibili.

Disposable income is more widely distributed, and although most college students have limited income, there are still users who live a more well-off life. These higher-income users are also likely to be those with greater purchasing power. Regarding the average daily duration of using Bilibili, most of them are concentrated in the interval of less than one and a half hours. This shows that most participants already consider Bilibili as a part of their daily life. The small number of participants who use Bilibili for more than one and a half hours shows that a certain proportion of college students still have a high level of loyalty and engagement with the platform.

Regarding full members, most of the users have passed the exam to become a full member who can use Bilibili's functions. It indicates that they expect to actively participate in the communication activities between Bilibili's community and users, or that they identify more with Bilibili's environment and hold a higher interest in it. Users who do not pass the test to become full members are more likely to be lurkers, tending to consume content rather than interact. Although the number of users with big member qualifications is slightly lower than that of non-big members, this result is already considerable, which indicates that almost half of the ACGN university students tend to buy Bilibili's value-added services. This can reflect a certain intention to consume and recognition of content by users.

b. The Role of Social-interaction, Reputation, and Altruism

The results show that there is a significant correlation between Bilibili users' social interactions, reputation, and attitude toward the Web. This indicates that users prefer to have more contact with other users or content and seek respect from their peers. On this premise, these users will hold a more positive attitude toward the Web, which also makes users more willing to provide topics, share videos, write comments and articles.

The result is in contrast to, and even substantially different from the findings of Xu and Li (2015), especially in terms of the motivation of reputation. Compared to knowledge-sharing platforms, Bilibili, as a video website, has stronger social attributes. When participating in community activities on Bilibili, users tend to consider their social identity on the platform and their influence. The recognition and appreciation of individuals by other users can affect their perception of the website as excellent and satisfying, which in turn leads to more active participation and creation. In addition, the positive influence of altruism is inconsistent with Xu and Li's (2015) research. Users on Bilibili are more likely to be expected to help others, especially by showing their expertise in their field when answering questions. This situation unexpectedly and positively affects attitudes and content contributions. This further extends the significant influence of altruism on sharing behaviour in Ma and Chan (2014), which is related to participation and contribution.

c. Expected Reciprocal Benefit Irrelevant to Attitude

In contrast, previous research has confirmed that Bilibili users' sharing behaviour as one of the community participation behaviours and expected reciprocal benefit is not an important influencing factor. In this research, it also did not lead to a better attitude toward the Web. This result is different from that of users of online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia (Rode, 2016; Xu & Li, 2015). The reason for this result may be that users have different motivations for using online encyclopaedias and modifying and adding content. The content composition and interaction modes of the two platforms are also very different. When users participate in activities on Bilibili, they do not care about whether they can get something from others while also contributing something to others. The users also do not appear to be concerned about receiving actual benefits, such as approval or praise from others.

Unlike this two-way behaviour, altruism, as a motive that simply considers the interests of other users, can influence user attitudes and thus increase their willingness to participate. As a video website, Bilibili has more complete social functions than an online encyclopaedia. It also focuses on content such as videos and live broadcasts and does not have as diverse social channels as platforms such as Weibo. Even if users tend to be social when using Bilibili, content consumption remains their primary motivation. Therefore, some of the motivations for using social platforms, especially two-way social motivations, may be relatively weak.

d. Self-Expression and Negative Attitude

Self-expression is negatively correlated with attitude toward the Web and contradicts with past literature. Most research, such as Jo et al. (2025) and Sharma et al. (2022), has found that self-expression has a positive effect on user intention, even in different media environments. Alternatively, negative experiences or feedback that users may encounter when recording their lives, providing complete information, and introducing and describing themselves may lead to dissatisfaction with the platform (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015; Omar &

Dequan, 2020). In the same way, the more users want to express their personality and characteristics, the more active they will be to participate in the platform's activities. However, the literature also shows that such relationships generally revolve around the relationship between self-expression and engagement intention, not attitude.

After obtaining this negative result, we speculate that the relationship between self-expression and attitude or other psychological factors might be more complicated. The convenience of online communities, self-confidence, and identity all influence self-expression on the internet (Stuart et al., 2022). Untruthful self-expression may also lead to negative needs satisfaction and happiness (Al-Khouja et al., 2022). ACGN subcultures have relatively higher requirements for content and community environment because they want to be in a harmonious community with like-minded people. After participating in community activities, they may encounter a series of disharmonious or aggressive reactions and feedback. Their higher expectations brought about by positive self-expression will be disappointing, leading to dissatisfaction with the website. At that point, they will develop a negative attitude toward the Web.

e. A Good Attitude Leads to Active Intention

In addition, some users are more inclined to help others to gain a positive attitude that the website can meet their needs, which ultimately stimulates users to provide more content, such as comments and videos. In addition, users who can socialise with others, gain more respect, and help others will also have a better attitude toward the Web stimulating them to participate in more Web activities, such as activity voting, online or offline event participation, participating in discussions and helping to build the platform. This idea of attitudes having an influence on participation and ensuring continued use by users is also demonstrated in the study by Fang and Zhang (2019). The difference is that their study points to a Chinese social Q&A community. This relationship is further amplified in video websites where videos, comments, and activities are the main content. Positive attitudes can influence all aspects of a user's behaviour on a website (Lee & Fiore, 2024; Singh et al., 2024). In other words, users place a high value on the opportunities for social interaction, respect and helping others that they get when they are on Bilibili. The platform can also carry out activities and increase or adjust the modes of interaction between users to stimulate further user contributions and interactions, to better maintain the quality of the platform's content.

CONCLUSION

Key Findings and Implications

We constructed a conceptual framework to analyse the relationship between different motivations and attitudes toward the web, and how attitudes influence users' content contribution and community participation intentions. Empirical research shows that social interaction, reputation, and altruism among Bilibili users enhance their positive attitudes toward the web, which in turn motivates them to participate in community activities and contribute more content. In addition, expected reciprocal benefits are not significantly related to attitudes in this study, while self-expression is significantly negatively correlated with attitudes. These results are inconsistent with most studies on the behaviour of users in online communities.

Practically, this result can serve as a reference for video websites to help them adjust their platform development strategies, especially their focus on the needs of core users. When facing revenue pressure, they can stimulate core users to create content and

participate in the community by satisfying their needs, thereby stimulating their intention to purchase value-added services and advertisements. Theoretically, the diverse motivations for users to participate in online communities is proven by extending the framework of the uses and gratifications theory. At the same time, this study emphasises on the important role of attitude in the relationship between user motivation and intention. This allows the theory to separate itself from the context of media consumption and apply it to broader research on user intentions and behaviour. Most articles related to uses and gratifications theory focus on mass users, but this study could apply the theory to smaller subcultures and attempt to verify it. The unexpected results also remind us that the uses and gratifications framework still need a large amount of development and verification.

Limitations and Future Work

First, this study only collected questionnaires in Guangzhou, China. Although the sample in this region is representative of Bilibili's university student users, it is not representative of ACGN subculture groups in the entire Asia-Pacific region. Second, cross-sectional research lacks testing of actual user behaviour. Although quantitative research methods are generalisable, qualitative research is needed to discover new possible relationships and supplement the findings. Finally, this study has theoretical limitations. The choice of uses and gratifications theory makes this study focus more on the relationship between user motivation and intention. When researching participation in online communities, factors such as environment, social norms, and platforms may also influence this relationship. Although this study explored the multiple motivations of ACGN users for using Bilibili and used attitude as a psychological factor to explore the relationship, due to the diversity of user needs, there are still many needs-based motivations that have not been discovered. Future research should expand the selection of research locations to verify ACGN groups in larger areas. At the same time, qualitative research can also be used to develop ACGN-related scales and explore deeper motivational relationships. It is also urgent to verify whether there are more complex relationships in this relationship, such as mediating relationships.

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