

Consumption and Technology Values in Digital Service Platforms: Explaining Weibo Membership Repurchase Intention

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Abstract. As social media platforms evolve into subscription-based digital service systems, understanding what drives membership repurchase intention has become a key concern in digital service management and platform operations. This study examines membership repurchase intention on Weibo, one of China's leading social media platforms, by integrating the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) into a unified research model that combines consumption values—functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional—with technology values—convenience, medium appeal, and social presence. User satisfaction is incorporated as a mediating variable to examine its role in the relationship between perceived values and repurchase intention. A quantitative approach was employed using an online survey distributed through snowball sampling. A total of 402 valid responses were collected from Chinese Weibo users, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS. The results indicate that both consumption values and technology values positively influence user satisfaction, which in turn affects repurchase intention. Mediation analysis shows that user satisfaction transmits most of the effects of perceived values on repurchase intention, except for the paths from social presence, social value, and epistemic value. Although the model demonstrates limited explanatory power for repurchase intention ($R^2 = 5.7\%$), it provides preliminary empirical evidence on how consumption and technology values shape user satisfaction and membership repurchase intention within a Chinese social media subscription context. The findings contribute to digital service science by advancing understanding of informatics-enabled consumer retention and subscription platform design within the Chinese digital ecosystem.

Keywords: Weibo Membership Subscription, Repurchase Intention, Digital service platforms, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Theory of Consumption Values (TCV)

1. Introduction

Social media has reshaped the landscape of online interaction by fostering dynamic information exchanges, especially between online users. The rapid advancement of technology has fundamentally transformed how they communicate, consume content, and engage with digital platforms. As one of China's leading social media networks, Weibo integrates communication, entertainment, and commerce into a comprehensive digital ecosystem (Li, 2024). The platform increasingly depends on subscription-based services, which are designed to enhance user engagement and generate sustainable profitability. In this regard, Weibo membership can be understood as a platform-based information service whose value is co-created through content access, interface convenience, social interaction, and subscription design. However, the effectiveness of this model is closely tied to users' willingness to renew their subscriptions. Therefore, it is essential to examine the various factors influencing users' intentions to repurchase subscriptions. Understanding these motivations can provide valuable insights into improving user retention strategies and ensuring the long-term success of the platform.

The declining subscription trends on digital platforms highlight the growing importance of understanding user satisfaction and repurchase intentions in today's evolving digital ecosystem. Despite the importance of studying the Weibo membership repurchase intention, the current trends indicate a 4% decrease in the company's revenue. For the first quarter of 2024, Weibo reported total net revenues of \$395.5 million, down from \$413.8 million in the first quarter of 2023. It also indicates a reduction of 3% in subscribing to value-added memberships from \$58.4 million reducing to \$56.5 million (Sina Weibo, 2024). It then raises concerns about user satisfaction, highlighting the need for a deeper exploration of the membership repurchase intention. Given the unique digital culture in China, characterised by high mobile penetration and platform-driven ecosystems, understanding user behaviour in this context is crucial. This makes Weibo membership an important case for examining subscription retention within platform-based digital service environments.

With the increasing reliance on subscription models in digital platforms, it is imperative to understand the mechanisms that drive continued user satisfaction and membership repurchase intention. Although prior research has examined consumption values (Mehrabioun, 2024; Chakraborty et al., 2023) and technology-driven gratifications (Janzer, 2020) as separate frameworks for understanding user behaviour in digital services, their theoretical integration in the context of paid membership subscriptions remains underexplored. Existing studies on Weibo have focused primarily on general user satisfaction and content engagement (Liu et al., 2016), leaving the specific dynamics of membership retention and repurchase intention largely unaddressed. Furthermore, while user satisfaction is widely recognised as a mediating variable in repurchase behaviour, its role in bridging consumption and technology values within a Chinese subscription-based platform context has not been systematically examined. This study therefore integrates TCV and UGT to investigate how consumption values and technology values influence membership repurchase intention through user satisfaction, using Weibo membership as an empirical context.

This study makes three contributions to the existing literature. First, it advances theoretical integration by combining TCV and UGT into a unified model, demonstrating how consumption-value perceptions and technology-value gratifications jointly explain user satisfaction and membership repurchase intention in a subscription-based digital service environment. Second, it extends the empirical scope of subscription retention research by focusing on Weibo, a distinctively Chinese social media platform, thereby addressing the limited attention paid to paid membership behaviour within China's platform-driven digital ecosystem. Third, from a digital service science perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of informatics-enabled consumer retention by identifying which value dimensions effectively drive satisfaction and renewal in platform-based subscription services, offering practical guidance for subscription platform design and digital service management.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1.Subscription economy and membership subscription on social media

Social media platforms offer an advantageous environment for the promotion of subscription services, utilising their extensive user base and advanced targeting capabilities. The shift from one-time purchases to ongoing subscriptions has reshaped consumer expectations and business strategies. In fact, platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter X have evolved from social networking sites into formidable marketing instruments. Some other businesses (YouTube, Reddit and Instagram) have also begun to implement loyalty programs that require members to pay to participate (Hu et al., 2022). The impact of loyalty programs is mostly determined by the nature and quality of the advantages and awards. In addition, the rise of personalised advertising and real-time engagement has empowered brands to connect with their audiences more effectively (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

The subscription economy, characterised by recurring revenue models, has gained substantial traction across various industries. Companies like Netflix, Spotify, and Dollar Shave Club have popularized this model by offering convenience, personalized experiences, and continuous value to subscribers (Tzuo & Weisert, 2018).

YouTube Premium was launched in 2014 by Google, which owns YouTube. Its original intent was to serve as a platform for music services, allowing consumers to pay a little to remove annoying advertisements and boost the quality of their music. Since then, it evolved into a service that boasts the ability to remove ads from "millions of videos," and the ability to download videos for offline viewing. (YouTube Premium, 2023). It offers a variety of payment plans, including one for families, one for individuals, and one just for students. YouTube announced that it would surpass 50 million subscribers in 2021 (YouTube, 2021). Services like premium movie and music streaming fall under this category. YouTube later revealed in 2022 that it had achieved 80 million premium members (Cohen, 2022). The traditional consumer market has been influenced by the rise of this subscription model, which has also brought in a substantial amount of money for businesses.

Compared with the membership services of these international media platforms, Weibo membership had its own unique logo and system on June 18, 2012. Sina took a significant step towards the comprehensive commercialization of Weibo by officially launching Sina Weibo membership. After more than a decade of development, Weibo membership has undergone revolutionary changes. On June 18, 2023, Weibo's membership and content value-added general manager, Ma Zhuo, made a public statement on Weibo, announcing the division of the membership system into three tiers: VVIP, SVIP, and VIP (Weibo adjusts membership system, 2023). The equity settings of the Weibo platform are most relevant to three main categories of users. For ordinary consumer users who primarily seek information, opening a membership can enhance their consumption interaction experience through VIP membership benefits. Social users with a greater need for content sharing and social interaction based on real identities and relationship connections can open SVIP membership benefits to meet their needs for personalized identity expression while enhancing social efficiency and security. Meanwhile, "head accounts" can establish themselves as influential platform leaders through the newly established VVIP membership, proactively and continuously enhancing social influence, accumulating social assets, building personal IPs, and even gaining monetization capabilities and improving marketing efficiency. Therefore, from the existing literature and the development of various platforms, the subscription economy with a membership system has become a new track for major platforms to compete for user value.

2.2.Repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription

In economy research and strategy development, inquiries regarding consumers' repurchasing intentions are frequently utilized (Dong et al., 2022). Many scholars have conducted research on the concept of repurchase and its influencing factors (Mehraboun, 2024; Chakraborty et al., 2023; Du et al., 2022).

The term "repurchase" refers to the recurrent buying of a product or service by the same consumer (Herjanto & Amin, 2020). This implies that users have already made a purchase before engaging in repurchase behavior. It is crucial to have enough insight into purchase intention to obtain a deep grasp of repurchase intention. Hanaysha et al (2025) found that individuals who are satisfied with website service quality tend to develop loyalty to social networking platforms, leading to subsequent purchase behaviors. Guo & Liu (2023) demonstrated through research that positive consumer experiences on social networking sites positively influence their willingness to purchase VIP memberships on the website, while the length of time users have been using the website does not affect their willingness to purchase VIP memberships. Naeem (2019) found through their research that sharing information among users on social networking platforms enhances trust and relationships between them, thereby encouraging purchase intentions. Similarly, in Asian social media contexts, consumer behavioral intentions are shaped not only by personal evaluations but also by social normative pressures embedded in platform interactions, underscoring the complex social dynamics that drive engagement and purchasing decisions on digital platforms (Nguyen Van Thanh Truong et al., 2026).

Understanding repurchase intention is crucial for businesses because it directly influences customer retention, brand loyalty, and long-term revenue growth. Unlike first-time purchase intention, which focuses on attracting new customers, repurchase intention reflects customers' continued evaluation of satisfaction, trust, and perceived value over time. Prior research has shown that retaining existing customers is significantly more cost-effective than acquiring new ones (Arslan, 2020), and repurchase intention is widely regarded as an important indicator of customer lifetime value (CLV) that helps firms refine marketing strategies and improve user experience (Jabr et al., 2023). In digital platform environments, where services are continuously delivered through platform interfaces and interactions, platform design, personalized services, and interactive features have been shown to significantly influence user engagement and loyalty (Ratchatakulpat et al., 2025).

In the domain of repurchase intentions on social media, certain scholars have also conducted research. In order to determine which consumption values play a role in trust creation and impact the repurchase intention of social media platform subscribers, Chakraborty et al. (2023) expanded the model of theory of consumption values. Mehrabioun (2024) proposed a new conceptual framework that elucidates the many factors that users consider when deciding whether or not to maintain their engagement with social media after adoption. Utilizing information derived from 425 survey replies, Mehrabioun (2024) affirmed that this new model effectively predicts users' intent to continue to use social media and underscores the significant contribution of the components of the Theory of Consumption Value. Liu et al. (2016) conducted a survey of 230 Weibo users and analyzed the influencing factors of the four dimensions of content satisfaction, social satisfaction, process satisfaction, and technical satisfaction, and comprehensively analyzed users' satisfaction with Weibo. Furthermore, Chu et al. (2022) investigated the influence of brand prestige on the relationships between brand post characteristics and customer engagement. The researchers utilized Chinese Sina Weibo as their subject of study to examine the impact of explicit brand post attributes on customer engagement. These items are quantified by the frequency of likes, comments, and shares on brand posts.

2.3. Consumption values and user satisfaction

The concept of consumption values has been extensively studied in consumer behavior research, offering a multidimensional perspective on how individuals assess the worth of products and services. Sheth et al. (1991) categorized consumption values into five primary dimensions: functional, social, conditional, emotional, and epistemic. These values serve as key determinants in consumer decision-making processes, influencing their purchase intentions, continued engagement, and overall satisfaction. In digital service environments, such as social media subscription models, consumption values play a crucial role in shaping user experiences and retention rates (Mehrabioun, 2024).

Functional value refers to the practical benefits that a service offers, such as efficiency, usability, and performance quality (Mehraboun, 2024). Studies suggest that users tend to favor social media platforms that provide seamless experiences, enhanced security, and cost-effective premium services (Tandon et al., 2021). Platforms that deliver strong functional value by offering personalized content and exclusive features tend to report higher user satisfaction (Doshi et al., 2023). In the context of Weibo membership, functional value specifically captures the perceived worth of premium features and exclusive content that the Weibo membership delivers, and is conceptually distinct from convenience value, which concerns the ease of accessing those features rather than their substantive quality.

Social value is derived from the association with a particular social identity or community (Sheth et al., 1991). Consumers perceive a higher degree of satisfaction when their membership in a service provides social recognition or exclusive benefits (Kuncoro et al., 2021). Research has shown that digital memberships offering status-enhancing features, such as VIP badges or priority interactions, enhance social value and, consequently, user satisfaction (Büyükdag & Kitapci, 2021). Unlike social presence value, which concerns the technology-mediated experience of feeling connected to others, social value in this study is rooted in identity-based perception—the sense of belonging, status recognition, and group affiliation that a Weibo membership confers upon the user. These two constructs therefore capture distinct dimensions of user experience and are expected to contribute unique explanatory value to user satisfaction independently.

Conditional value arises from situational or promotional factors that influence a consumer's decision-making process (Bernardo, 2023). In subscription-based services, users often exhibit higher satisfaction levels when exclusive deals, discounts, or time-sensitive promotions align with their purchasing needs (Chakraborty et al., 2023). For instance, limited-time subscription discounts on Weibo can increase perceived value, reinforcing user satisfaction and loyalty. In this study, conditional value specifically reflects how situational incentives associated with Weibo membership shape users' satisfaction and repurchase intentions. The conditional value of consumers' advantages is contingent upon certain factors like as time, location, promotions, discounts, and necessity (Chakraborty et al., 2023). Consumers are more likely to create intent to make a purchase when this conditional value is connected with promotions or incentives that are appealing to them.

Emotional value is associated with the affective response that a service elicits in users. Digital platforms often integrate gamification, personalized engagement, and exclusive content to enhance emotional attachment (Huang et al., 2023). Research indicates that features designed to evoke positive emotions, such as interactive livestreams and VIP-exclusive entertainment, significantly contribute to user satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2019). In this study, emotional value captures the affective engagement users derive specifically from Weibo's membership-exclusive interactive features, representing a dimension of perceived value that is experiential and feeling-oriented rather than functional or utilitarian.

Epistemic value pertains to the novelty and knowledge-seeking experiences a service provides (Teng, 2019). Users engage more with platforms that offer continuous innovation, diverse content, and new experiences (Furukawa et al., 2019). Weibo's premium subscription services, which include exclusive insights and early access to trending topics, cater to users' desire for discovery, reinforcing satisfaction and long-term engagement. In this study, epistemic value specifically reflects users' perception of novelty and knowledge discovery enabled by Weibo's premium membership content, representing a cognitively driven dimension of value distinct from the emotionally driven dimension captured by emotional value. As such, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: Functional value is positively associated with the user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

H2: Social value is positively associated with the user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

H3: Conditional value is positively associated with the user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

H4: Emotional value is positively associated with the user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

H5: Epistemic value is positively associated with the user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

2.4. Technology values and user satisfaction

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) provides a valuable framework for understanding why users engage with digital media platforms to fulfill specific needs. Originally developed by Katz et al. (1973) and Blumler and Katz (1974), UGT posits that audiences are active participants who select media to satisfy particular social and psychological needs, including knowledge acquisition, entertainment, social interaction, and relaxation. As digital media has evolved, UGT has been widely applied to social networking sites, mobile applications, and streaming platforms (Hossain, 2019). In the context of social media, research has identified technology value—comprising convenience value, medium appeal value, and social presence value—as a key dimension of gratification that users seek from digital platforms (Liu et al., 2016). This study draws on UGT to explain how these three technology-related values drive user satisfaction with Weibo membership services, as each corresponds to a distinct category of gratification that users actively seek from the platform.

With the increasing integration of digital services into everyday life, technology value has become a crucial determinant of user satisfaction, particularly in online platforms. Technology value refers to the perceived benefits users derive from the ease of use, interactive appeal, and immersive social experiences provided by digital platforms (Liu et al., 2016). Prior studies suggest that three key dimensions of technology value—convenience value, medium appeal value, and social presence value—significantly influence user satisfaction in subscription-based social media services (Liu et al., 2016).

Convenience value refers to the ease of accessing and utilizing a platform's services with minimal effort (Alkharabsheh et al., 2021). In digital environments, users prioritize platforms that offer seamless navigation, efficient information retrieval, and user-friendly interfaces (Liu, 2016). Research has consistently shown that convenience value positively correlates with user satisfaction, as ease of use enhances engagement and reduces cognitive load (Yang & Wang, 2021). On platforms like Weibo, where users demand instant access to personalized content, the perceived convenience of the platform directly affects their overall satisfaction. Within the UGT framework, users are motivated to engage with Weibo membership because it reduces the effort required to access personalized content and services, thereby fulfilling their need for efficient information retrieval. While functional value captures the substantive benefits a membership service delivers, convenience value is distinctly concerned with the effortlessness of the user experience—specifically how smoothly and efficiently users can access and navigate those benefits. These two constructs thus operate at different levels of user evaluation and are each expected to independently predict user satisfaction through different cognitive pathways.

Medium appeal value pertains to the extent to which a digital platform offers an engaging and visually appealing user experience (Xu et al., 2021). In social media contexts, this includes high-quality content presentation, diverse interactive features, and user-friendly design (Hameed et al., 2025). Platforms that successfully integrate these elements tend to enhance user satisfaction by providing a richer, more immersive experience. Weibo's media appeal, characterized by dynamic visuals, interactive posts, and personalized news feeds, plays a critical role in retaining users and reinforcing their satisfaction levels. Medium appeal value captures users' need for enjoyment and aesthetic stimulation—the visually rich and interactively engaging features of Weibo's membership interface serve as a source of entertainment gratification that reinforces continued platform engagement (Liu et al., 2016). In this study, medium appeal value specifically reflects users' perception of Weibo's visual richness and interactive design as gratifications derived from engaging with the platform's membership interface, grounded in UGT's notion of entertainment and aesthetic gratification.

Social presence value reflects the degree to which a platform enables users to feel connected and engaged with others in a virtual environment (Munnukka, 2022). Studies indicate that social presence fosters trust, enhances perceived enjoyment, and strengthens user loyalty (Oh et al., 2023). Enhancing

social presence through interactive features such as real-time commenting, virtual communities, and personalized recommendations has been shown to significantly improve user satisfaction on social media platforms (Liu et al., 2016). According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), individuals engage with media to satisfy social and emotional needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974); social presence value directly fulfills this social interaction gratification by enabling users to experience connectedness, co-presence, and interpersonal communication within Weibo's virtual environment. Unlike social value, which reflects identity-based belonging and status recognition derived from membership itself, social presence value in this study captures the technology-mediated sense of being connected to others—the feeling of human warmth and co-presence experienced through Weibo's interactive features. Therefore, the associated proposition can be stated as:

H6: Convenience value is positively associated with user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

H7: Medium appeal value is positively associated with user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

H8: Social presence value is positively associated with user satisfaction among Weibo users in China.

2.5. User satisfaction and Weibo membership repurchase intention

The term "user satisfaction" is used to describe the favourable emotional reaction that users have when interacting with a social media platform (Mehraboun, 2024). User's impressions and assessments of the system's features and performance are the usual sources of this emotional reaction, which in turn affects their propensity to stay involved and make use of the platform (Mehraboun, 2024). Consumers report high levels of user satisfaction when their expectations for a product or service are satisfied or surpassed by their actual experience using it (Patrick et al., 2020). For consumers, user satisfaction is measured throughout the process of purchasing and using products or services, as well as receiving products or services. Since only the people who really use or consume the product can gauge their level of satisfaction with it, customer satisfaction is subjective and includes all the customers' impressions, assessments, and emotional reactions to the experience. After determining whether the service or product meets their expectations or provides a pleasant experience, consumers usually decide to buy or keep buying (Majeed et al., 2022). Similarly, research on digital service platforms suggests that customer value and e-service quality can enhance user satisfaction, which subsequently contributes to user loyalty and continued service usage (Nun et al., 2025). In this study, user satisfaction serves as the central mediating variable, representing users' overall evaluative response to Weibo membership services after experiencing both consumption and technology values.

The term "repurchase" refers to the repeated acquisition of a product or service by the same customer (Herjanto & Amin, 2020). This implies that users have already made a purchase before engaging in repurchase behavior. It is crucial to have enough insight into purchase intention to obtain a deep grasp of repurchase intention. In this study, the concept of Weibo membership repurchase intention refers to the intention of users to subscribe to Weibo membership again. This notion is derived from Mehraboun's (2024) study, which investigates the determinants that impact users' persistence in utilizing social media.

Numerous previous studies on social media services have confirmed that consumer satisfaction with social platform services not only increases their willingness to continue using the services but also enhances their loyalty (Du et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021; Aida et al., 2020; Fadella, 2020). As part of Weibo's value-added services, maintaining customer satisfaction is a critical factor in sustaining sufficient competitiveness in the industry. The choice to maintain or discontinue a particular service or product is determined by client satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Ouyang & Mark, 2026). Satisfied customers are more likely to buy the same product or service and may even reject competitive offers (Ghamry & Shamma, 2022). High levels of satisfaction, consistently maintained over the long term, lead to enduring relationships with customers (Alkhurshan & Rjoub, 2020). Furthermore, this sense of satisfaction can also foster emotional commitment from customers towards SNS (Suti & Sari, 2023). In this case, consumers satisfied with Weibo VIP services will continue to utilize them to strengthen their

relationships. Hence, the associated proposition can be stated as:

H9: User satisfaction is positively associated with the Weibo membership repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

2.6. The role of user satisfaction as a mediator

In the field of consumer behavior and service loyalty, customer satisfaction is widely considered to be a key mediating variable that can effectively connect different independent variables with the user's repurchase intention. Zhang et al. (2023) emphasized that the multifaceted structure of customer value can substantially improve user loyalty and repurchase intention via user pleasure. High satisfaction can eliminate uncertainty and enhance user trust in the service, thereby promoting repurchase behavior. Sanyal et al. (2021) proposed that the impact of personal and technical factors on online customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The efficacy of Weibo's membership service, as a subscription-based business model, relies on users' assessment of both consumption value and technology value.

The role of user satisfaction as a mediator between various concepts and purchasing intention has been thoroughly investigated (Ginting et al., 2023; Trivedi & Yadav, 2020; Sari, 2020; Mustikasari et al., 2021). Research indicates a correlation between user satisfaction and customer retention (Saputro et al., 2020). The Weibo platform provides a service that requires subscription through regular repurchase; therefore, customer retention is a key function of Weibo platform marketers. User satisfaction plays an important role in subscription-based services (Li & Ou, 2023). Therefore, this study has reason to believe that user satisfaction plays a mediating role among the forces that influence repurchase intention, which in this study are the consumption value and technology value. The following hypotheses correspond to the foregone discussion:

H10a: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between functional value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

H10b: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between social value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

H10c: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between conditional value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

H10d: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between emotional value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

H10e: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between epistemic value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

H10f: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between convenience value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

H10g: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between medium appeal value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

H10h: User satisfaction mediates the relationship between social presence value and repurchase intention among Weibo users in China.

2.7. Theoretical Framework and Conceptualization

To clarify the theoretical basis of the research model, Table 1 summarizes the ten key constructs examined in this study, specifying their theoretical origins, variable types, and conceptualization within the context of Weibo membership subscription. The five consumption-value constructs are grounded in the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), while the three technology-value constructs are derived from Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). Together, these two frameworks provide complementary explanatory perspectives: TCV accounts for the value-based motivations that drive user satisfaction, while UGT explains the gratification-seeking behaviors that underpin users' engagement with the platform's technology features. User satisfaction and membership repurchase intention serve as the

mediating and dependent variables respectively. Figure 1 illustrates the research hypotheses presented above.

Table 1. Mapping Table

Construct	Theoretical Origin	Variable Type	Conceptualization
Functional Value	TCV	Independent	Captures the perceived worth of premium features and exclusive content that the Weibo membership delivers.
Social Value	TCV	Independent	The sense of belonging, status recognition, and group affiliation that a Weibo membership confers upon the user.
Conditional Value	TCV	Independent	Reflects how situational incentives associated with Weibo membership subscriptions
Emotional Value	TCV	Independent	Captures the affective engagement users derive specifically from Weibo's membership-exclusive interactive features,
Epistemic Value	TCV	Independent	Reflects users' perception of novelty and knowledge discovery enabled by Weibo's premium membership content
Convenience Value	TCV	Independent	The effortlessness with which users can access and navigate Weibo membership services, fulfilling information-seeking gratification.
Medium Appeal Value	UGT	Independent	Users' perception of Weibo's visual richness and interactive design, fulfilling entertainment and aesthetic gratification
Social Presence Value	UGT	Independent	The technology-mediated sense of connectedness and co-presence experienced through Weibo's interactive features, fulfilling social interaction gratification
User Satisfaction	UGT	Mediating	Users' overall evaluative response to Weibo membership services after experiencing both consumption and technology values
Repurchase intention of Weibo Membership Subscription	TCV	Dependent	The intention of users to subscribe to Weibo membership again

Note: TCV=Theory of Consumption Values; UGT=Uses and Gratifications Theory

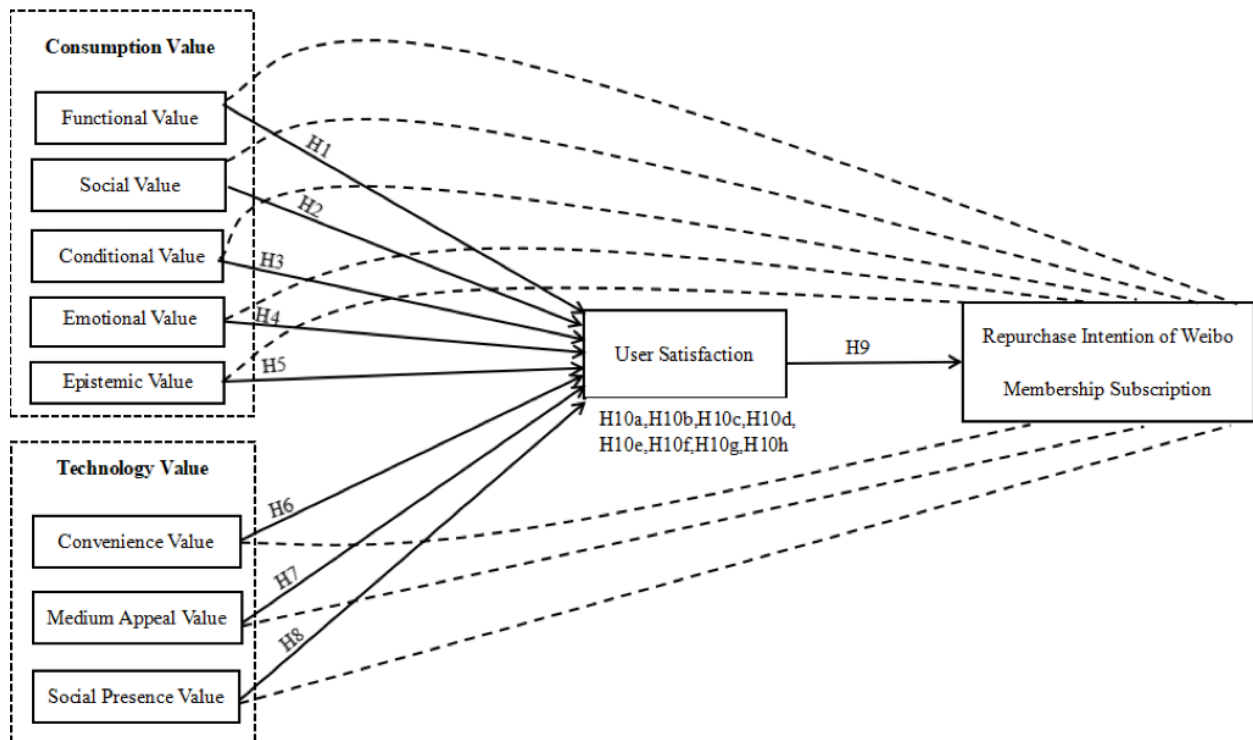


Fig.1. The Theoretical Framework of The Study

3. Method

3.1. Sample

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between consumption values, technology values, user satisfaction, and repurchase intention in the context of Weibo membership subscriptions. A structured survey questionnaire was used to collect data, and the analysis was conducted using statistical techniques. Given the focus on Weibo users, an online survey method was chosen for its efficiency in reaching digital consumers (Adams & McGuire, 2022), allowing for the systematic examination of multiple variables. Due to the impracticality of surveying the entire population of Chinese Weibo users, a non-probability sampling technique, specifically snowball sampling, was employed. Initial respondents meeting predefined criteria were selected and encouraged to refer other eligible participants, making it an effective method for accessing Weibo users with prior membership experience. The target population consists of Chinese Weibo users who have previously purchased a Weibo membership. Data were collected via an online survey distributed through the Questionnaire Star platform, a widely used tool in China, over a four-week period to ensure sufficient responses. To enhance response quality, two screening questions were included: (1) Are you Chinese and over 18 years old? and (2) Have you purchased a Weibo membership in the past?. Only those who answered “yes” to both proceeded with the survey, ensuring relevance to the research focus. A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument, initially developed in English and subsequently translated into Chinese using a translation and back-translation procedure to ensure linguistic accuracy and conceptual equivalence. The translated version was reviewed by two bilingual researchers, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion before finalization. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot test was conducted to assess item clarity and comprehensibility, and minor wording adjustments were made accordingly. It comprised two sections: Section A, which gathered demographic information (age, gender, income, education level), and Section B, which measured key variables, including functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, conditional value,

convenience value, medium appeal value, social presence value, user satisfaction, and repurchase intention, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). This structured methodology ensures reliability and validity in analyzing the factors influencing the repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscriptions. A total of 423 questionnaires were collected, of which 402 provided valid responses, with a response rate of 95%. Remarkably, 21 of the questionnaires had irregularities and had to be excluded. The analysis of the data was performed using SmartPLS 4.0 software.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Table 2 presents the sample profile based on all valid survey responses. The age distribution of respondents in this survey reveals that the highest proportion of respondents in this survey is the 25-34 age group, accounting for 40.05%, followed by 18-24 years old at 30.35%, followed by 35-44 years old at 13.43%, followed by 45-54 years old at 10.45%, and the lowest is 55 years old and above at 5.72%. The majority of respondents were between 25-34 years old (40.05%). This age group mainly comprises students and individuals at the early stages of their careers, aligning with China's general age demographics where younger people are concentrated in education or beginning their employment. This data corresponds to the Main Data of the Seventh National Population Census published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, confirming the consistency of demographic findings (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Table 2. Demography of the Respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	182	45.27
	Female	220	54.73
Age	18-24	122	30.35
	25-34	161	40.05
	35-44	54	13.43
	45-54	42	10.45
	55 and above	23	5.72
Education	High School and Below	63	15.67
	Junior college	99	24.63
	Bachelor's Degree	153	38.06
	Master's Degree	69	17.16
	PhD	18	4.48
Monthly Income	Below 3000	83	20.65
	3001-5000	122	30.35
	5001-7000	106	26.37
	7001-9000	55	13.68
	9001 and above	36	8.96

Notes: N=402

4.2.Measurement Model

4.2.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

As shown in Table 3, the values of the factor loadings and AVE values of each construct in this study exceed the recommended threshold, further Supporting the validity and reliability of the scale. These results align with previous research, indicating the stability of the measurement model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, all CR values in this study are above 0.7, and AVE values are above 0.5, which indicates that these variables exhibit satisfactory internal consistency and reliability, fulfilling the requirements for convergent validity. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha coefficients in this study exceed 0.8, which indicates that the scale demonstrates good internal consistency and high reliability. To assess multicollinearity at the indicator level, outer model VIF values were examined for all items. All indicator VIF values fall below the recommended threshold of 3.3, with the highest value being 3.030, confirming the absence of multicollinearity among the measurement items (Hair et al., 2020).

Table 3 Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Items Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	Outer model VIF
Functional Value	Fun1	0.855	0.891	0.920	0.696	2.357
	Fun2	0.859				2.455
	Fun3	0.817				2.048
	Fun4	0.827				2.166
	Fun5	0.813				2.064
	Soc1	0.818				2.083
	Soc2	0.811				2.048
Social Value	Soc3	0.855	0.885	0.916	0.685	2.34
	Soc4	0.815				2.016
	Soc5	0.838				2.169
	Cond1	0.866				2.293
	Cond2	0.823				2.161
Conditional Value	Cond3	0.787	0.885	0.916	0.685	1.858
	Cond4	0.818				2.101
	Cond5	0.841				2.32
	Emo1	0.867				2.519
	Emo2	0.852				2.383
Emotional Value	Emo3	0.834	0.898	0.924	0.710	2.273
	Emo4	0.86				2.54
	Emo5	0.798				1.926
Epistemic Value	Epi1	0.843	0.902	0.927	0.718	2.284
	Epi2	0.836				2.225
	Epi3	0.843				2.511
	Epi4	0.855				2.385
	Epi5	0.860				2.384
Convenience Value	Conv1	0.877	0.874	0.914	0.726	2.536
	Conv2	0.867				2.253

Medium Appeal Value	Conv3	0.846				2.061
	Conv4	0.817				1.94
	Ma1	0.876				2.566
	Ma2	0.826				2.212
	Ma3	0.779	0.894	0.922	0.703	1.93
Social Presence Value	Ma4	0.844				2.361
	Ma5	0.862				2.453
	Sp1	0.832				2.121
	Sp2	0.852				2.261
	Sp3	0.793	0.887	0.917	0.688	2.011
User Satisfaction	Sp4	0.823				2.123
	Sp5	0.846				2.181
	Us1	0.842				2.208
	Us2	0.818				2.048
	Us3	0.840	0.886	0.917	0.688	2.228
Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription	Us4	0.799				1.957
	Us5	0.845				2.331
	Riow1	0.833				2.346
	Riow2	0.871				2.81
	Riow3	0.836	0.914	0.935	0.744	2.349
	Riow4	0.878				2.754
	Riow5	0.893				3.03

Note: CR=Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, VIF=Variance Inflation Factor

To further evaluate common method bias, a full collinearity test was performed at the construct level following Kock (2015). As presented in Table 4, all inner model VIF values fall below the threshold of 3.3, ranging from 1to 1.591, suggesting that common method bias is not a significant concern in this study.

Table 4 Collinearity Statistics

Construct	Us	Riow
Fun	1.231	-
Soc	1.383	-
Cond	1.525	-
Emo	1.591	-
Epi	1.042	-
Conv	1.384	-
Ma	1.390	-

Sp	1.333	-
Us	-	1.000
Riow	-	-

Note: Fun → Functional Value, Soc → Social Value, Cond → Conditional Value, Emo → Emotional Value, Epi → Epistemic Value, Conv → Convenience Value, Ma → Medium Appeal Value, Sp → Social Presence Value, Us → User Satisfaction, Riow → Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity

This study employs the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess discriminant validity. According to this approach, each factor's correlation coefficient with other factors should be less than the square root of its own AVE. Table 3 results confirm that the correlation coefficients between any two factors are indeed lower than the square root of each factor's AVE, indicating adequate discriminant validity among all constructs within the research model. This demonstrates that the constructs in the model are distinct and measure separate concepts effectively.

Table 5 Discriminant Validity (Fornell- Lacker Criterion)

	Fun	Soc	Cond	Emo	Epi	Conv	Ma	Sp	Us	Riow
Fun	0.835									
Soc	0.260	0.828								
Cond	0.352	0.384	0.828							
Emo	0.301	0.415	0.460	0.843						
Epi	0.124	0.102	0.101	0.130	0.847					
Conv	0.271	0.322	0.398	0.414	0.147	0.852				
Ma	0.311	0.364	0.392	0.412	0.090	0.364	0.838			
Sp	0.249	0.358	0.355	0.403	0.155	0.330	0.261	0.830		
Us	0.345	0.378	0.426	0.444	0.180	0.322	0.415	0.357	0.829	
Riow	0.187	0.343	0.358	0.395	0.057	0.262	0.294	0.290	0.238	0.862

Note: Fun → Functional Value, Soc → Social Value, Cond → Conditional Value, Emo → Emotional Value, Epi → Epistemic Value, Conv → Convenience Value, Ma → Medium Appeal Value, Sp → Social Presence Value, Us → User Satisfaction, Riow → Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription

The results in Table 6 show that all HTMT values meet these standards, indicating that the distinctions between constructs are sufficiently significant. Therefore, the HTMT results enhance confidence in the model's validity.

Table 6 Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) Criterion)

	Fun	Soc	Cond	Emo	Epi	Conv	Ma	Sp	Us	Riow
Fun										
Soc	0.295									
Cond	0.395	0.427								
Emo	0.334	0.466	0.513							
Epi	0.14	0.111	0.108	0.142						
Conv	0.307	0.367	0.455	0.468	0.307					
Ma	0.346	0.406	0.433	0.457	0.098	0.413				
Sp	0.28	0.401	0.393	0.45	0.174	0.37	0.287			
Us	0.388	0.425	0.474	0.495	0.198	0.446	0.461	0.398		
Riow	0.206	0.386	0.397	0.435	0.069	0.294	0.321	0.319	0.261	

Note: Fun → Functional Value, Soc → Social Value, Cond → Conditional Value, Emo → Emotional Value, Epi → Epistemic Value, Conv → Convenience Value, Ma → Medium Appeal Value, Sp → Social Presence Value, Us → User Satisfaction, Riow → Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription

4.3. Structural Model

4.3.1 Hypothesis Testing: Direct Effect

As shown in Table 7, the results showed that H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, and H9 were all supported by the data. This shows that consumption value and technology value (convenience value, medium appeal value and social presence value) have a significant impact on user satisfaction, and user satisfaction also has a significant impact on repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription.

Table 7 Path Coefficient of Hypothesis

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta(β)	Standard Deviation	t-value	P-value	Bootstrapped CI BC		Decision
						2.5% LL	97.5% UL	
H1	Fun → Us	0.115	0.047	2.459	0.014	0.029	0.227	Supported
H2	Soc → Us	0.101	0.048	2.109	0.035	0.029	0.206	Supported
H3	Cond → Us	0.129	0.051	2.543	0.011	0.05	0.239	Supported
H4	Emo → Us	0.146	0.049	2.995	0.003	0.007	0.159	Supported
H5	Epi → Us	0.077	0.039	1.995	0.046	0.025	0.206	Supported
H6	Conv → Us	0.119	0.045	2.619	0.009	0.063	0.255	Supported
H7	MA → Us	0.157	0.049	3.226	0.001	0.006	0.186	Supported
H8	SP → Us	0.096	0.046	2.073	0.038	0.01	0.197	Supported
H9	Us → RIOW	0.238	0.05	4.799	0.000	0.145	0.341	Supported

Note: Fun → Functional Value, Soc → Social Value, Cond → Conditional Value, Emo → Emotional Value, Epi → Epistemic Value, Conv → Convenience Value, Ma → Medium Appeal Value, Sp → Social Presence Value, Us → User Satisfaction, Riow → Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription.

4.3.2 Mediation Analysis

As shown in Table 8, in the mediation analysis, H10a, H10c, H10d, H10f, and H10g were Supported by the data. This shows that user satisfaction plays a mediating role in the functional value, emotional value, conditional value, convenience value, medium appeal value and the repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription.

Contrary to the hypotheses of the study, this study Rejected H10b, H10e, and H10h. This means that user satisfaction has no significant mediating effect on social value, epistemic value, social presence value, and repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription.

Table 8 Mediation Analysis

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta(β)	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	Bootstrapped CI BC		Decision
						2.5% LL	97.5% UL	
H10a	Fun → US → RIOW	0.027	0.013	2.153	0.031	0.006	0.055	Supported
H10b	Soc → US → RIOW	0.024	0.013	1.848	0.065	0.014	0.07	Rejected
H10c	Cond → US → RIOW	0.031	0.015	2.11	0.035	0.001	0.051	Supported

H10d	Emo → US → RIOW	0.035	0.01 5	2.337	0.019	0.002	0.053	Supported
H10e	Epi → US→ RIOW	0.018	0.01	1.857	0.063	0.007	0.063	Rejected
H10f	Conv → US→ RIOW	0.028	0.01 2	2.31	0.021	0.007	0.055	Supported
H10g	MA → US→ RIOW	0.037	0.01 4	2.608	0.009	0.01	0.068	Supported
H10h	SP → US→ RIOW	0.023	0.01 3	1.803	0.071	0.001	0.051	Rejected

Note: Fun → Functional Value, Soc → Social Value, Cond → Conditional Value, Emo → Emotional Value, Epi → Epistemic Value, Conv → Convenience Value, Ma→ Medium Appeal Value, Sp→ Social Presence Value, Us→ User Satisfaction, Riow→ Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription

4.3.3 Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

According to Table 9, the R^2 value for User Satisfaction is 0.357, showing that the model accounts for 35.7% of the variance in user satisfaction, indicating moderate explanatory power. Meanwhile, the remaining 64.3% of the variability may be attributed to other factors not covered in this study.

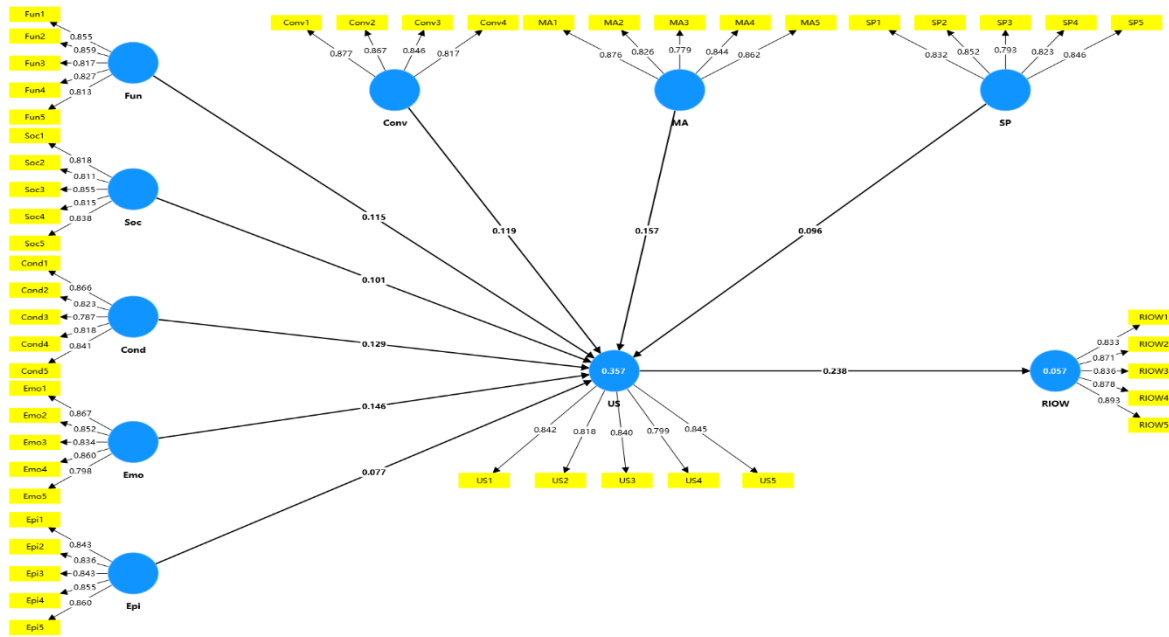
For the repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription, the R^2 is 0.057, implying that 5.7% of the variability can be explained by the model, with the remaining 94.3% influenced by other variables not discussed in this study (Hair et al., 2020). This finding also implies that user satisfaction, while a statistically significant predictor, may not be sufficient on its own to fully account for users' decisions to repurchase their Weibo membership. The model may therefore require further expansion to include additional potential predictors to enhance its explanatory power.

Regarding predictive relevance, the Q^2 for the repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription is 0.105, which, while positive, suggests weak predictive capability. Conversely, the Q^2 for User Satisfaction is 0.325, indicating stronger predictive relevance. The model demonstrates limited but positive predictive relevance for repurchase intention, while showing stronger performance for user satisfaction. These results suggest the need to refine the model to improve its effectiveness for the repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription.

Figure 2 presents the path coefficients between variables and their corresponding R^2 values in this study. The results indicate that the model demonstrates stronger explanatory power for user satisfaction than for membership repurchase intention, with the mediating role of user satisfaction validated across most hypothesized pathways. The role of the mediating variable in the model is also validated, which had a significant impact on the relationships between variables. According to relevant literature (Wang et al., 2021), the role of mediating variables in social science research has received increasing attention, especially in complex multivariate analysis models. Mediating effects help uncover deeper mechanisms underlying surface relationships, thereby enhancing the explanatory and predictive power of the model.

Table 9 Model Results for R^2 and Q^2

Construct	R^2	Q^2
User Satisfaction	0.357	0.325
Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription	0.057	0.105

Fig.2: Structural Model with Path Coefficient and R²

5. Discussions

This study used the theory of consumption values and uses and gratification theory as the main guidance to study the factors that affect the repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscriptions. Furthermore, this study expands on the consumption values by incorporating technology value (convenience value, medium appeal value and social presence value) as additional influential factors. It also introduces user satisfaction as a mediating factor to develop a comprehensive theoretical model for understanding the repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscriptions among Weibo users in China.

The results of direct effects revealed that consumption values play a fundamental role in shaping user satisfaction, though their relative contributions vary in magnitude. This finding aligns with existing research showing that consumers continue to utilize social media platforms that they find satisfying and helpful (Naeem & Ozuem, 2021). Among the five consumption value dimensions, emotional value emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta=0.146$), suggesting that affective engagement with Weibo's membership-exclusive features is particularly influential in driving satisfaction. Conditional value ($\beta=0.129$) and functional value ($\beta=0.115$) demonstrated comparable effects, indicating that situational incentives and practical membership benefits contribute meaningfully to user satisfaction. In contrast, social value ($\beta=0.101$) and epistemic value ($\beta=0.077$) showed comparatively weaker effects. Although both paths are statistically significant, their substantive contribution to user satisfaction appears limited, suggesting that novelty-seeking and social identity motivations may play a less central role in the Weibo membership context than functional, conditional and emotional drivers.

In addition to consumption values, this study highlights the importance of technology values in shaping user satisfaction. Among the technology value dimensions, medium appeal value demonstrated the strongest effect on user satisfaction ($\beta=0.157$), suggesting that the visual richness and interactive design of Weibo's membership interface are particularly salient gratifications for users, consistent with UGT's emphasis on entertainment and aesthetic needs (Liu et al., 2016). Convenience value ($\beta=0.119$) also contributed meaningfully to user satisfaction, reflecting users' need for effortless access to membership services. Social presence value ($\beta=0.096$), while statistically significant, showed a comparatively weaker effect, suggesting that the sense of connectedness it provides may already be

partially fulfilled through Weibo's free features, reducing its incremental impact within the paid membership context. These findings are broadly consistent with prior studies (Wang & Ameen, 2023; Ariffin et al., 2023; Le-Hoang, 2020), while adding nuance by distinguishing between stronger and weaker technology-value drivers of satisfaction.

This study found that user satisfaction has a significant impact on repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscription. This shows that by improving satisfaction, the Weibo platform can not only strengthen membership repurchase intention, but also stabilize and expand the platform's long-term revenue. This positive cycle helps to improve the market competitiveness of membership services. This result is consistent with previous studies (Du et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021; Aida et al., 2020; Fadella, 2020). Customers are more inclined to repurchase the same product or service, and may even resist competitive offers (Ghamry & Shamma, 2022).

Furthermore, the mediation analysis provides empirical support for the role of user satisfaction in influencing repurchase intention. Users who report higher satisfaction with their Weibo membership are more likely to repurchase their subscriptions, emphasizing the importance of maintaining high service quality and continuously improving platform features. The adoption of a fully mediated model is theoretically grounded in prior research suggesting that perceived value dimensions influence behavioral intentions primarily through the cognitive and affective evaluation of satisfaction, rather than through direct pathways (Zhang et al., 2023; Ginting et al., 2023; Trivedi & Yadav, 2020). User satisfaction, in this framework, serves as the psychological mechanism through which value perceptions are converted into repurchase decisions.

In the case of social value, one possible explanation is that social recognition and identity-based gratifications on Weibo are not exclusively tied to paid membership—free users can equally accumulate social capital by participating in trending discussions, following breaking news, and attracting followers through engaging content, meaning the incremental social value conferred by a paid membership may not be sufficiently distinctive to translate satisfaction into repurchase decisions. Turning to epistemic value, Weibo's free ecosystem already provides users with abundant access to information, trending topics, and diverse content, such that the additional knowledge discovery enabled by premium membership features may represent only a marginal improvement over what is freely available, weakening the pathway through which epistemic satisfaction drives repurchase intention. As for social presence value, it is possible that the sense of connectedness and co-presence that users seek can be largely fulfilled through Weibo's free interactive features, such as commenting, reposting, and participating in public discussions, and since these gratifications are accessible without a paid subscription, user satisfaction derived from social presence may not sufficiently differentiate the membership experience to motivate membership repurchase. Taken together, these findings suggest that social value, epistemic value, and social presence value may function more as platform-level gratifications than as membership-specific benefits, thereby limiting the role of satisfaction as a mediator in driving repurchase intention.

Overall, these findings provide preliminary empirical evidence on how consumption values and technology values shape user satisfaction and membership repurchase intention in the context of Chinese social media platforms. While the model demonstrates stronger explanatory power for user satisfaction than for repurchase intention, the results offer initial insights into the value-satisfaction dynamics underlying membership repurchase intention behavior. Given the limited explanatory power for repurchase intention, these findings should be interpreted as a starting point for future research rather than definitive guidance for platform operators, and further theoretical and empirical refinement is needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of membership repurchase intention in digital service environments.

5.1. Conclusion

5.1.1 Practical implications

The findings of this study carry targeted implications for subscription platform operators. Since medium appeal value and emotional value emerged as the strongest drivers of user satisfaction, platforms should prioritize visually rich and emotionally engaging membership-exclusive content—a direction likely applicable to other entertainment-oriented subscription services such as YouTube Premium and Bilibili. The stronger role of conditional value also suggests that time-sensitive promotions and tiered membership incentives are particularly effective in the Chinese digital market. In contrast, the non-significant mediating paths from social value, epistemic value, and social presence value indicate that these dimensions function as platform-level gratifications already satisfied through Weibo's free ecosystem, and should therefore not be positioned as primary membership differentiators. Instead, operators should focus on deepening the functional and emotional exclusivity of paid features to create clearer value boundaries between free and premium tiers. From a digital service management perspective, user satisfaction should be treated as an ongoing operational target rather than a static outcome, with continuous monitoring of which value dimensions most effectively drive membership repurchase intention behavior.

5.1.2 Theoretical implications

This study extends TCV and UGT beyond their traditional domains by applying them to subscription-based social media membership repurchase intention, while also revealing important theoretical boundaries in this context. TCV, originally developed to explain one-time purchase decisions, demonstrates applicability to recurring subscription repurchase behavior, while UGT's gratification-seeking perspective proves useful in explaining technology-driven satisfaction in platform-based services. Together, the two frameworks provide complementary lenses for understanding how value perceptions and media gratifications jointly shape user retention in digital subscription environments. However, the non-significant mediating paths from social value, epistemic value, and social presence value represent theoretically interesting departures from expectations. These results suggest that when platform-level gratifications are readily available through free services, the theoretical assumptions underlying both TCV and UGT—that consumption value and gratification fulfillment drive behavioral intentions—may not hold in paid membership contexts. This points to a need to refine both theories by distinguishing between platform-wide value and membership-specific value, a distinction that has important implications for how TCV and UGT are operationalized in future subscription research.

This study extends the application of TCV and UGT to the Chinese social media context, contributing to a growing body of research that examines whether Western-developed theories travel across cultural and platform boundaries. The findings suggest partial transferability: the role of emotional and functional values in driving satisfaction appears generalizable, while the weaker roles of social and epistemic values may reflect context-specific features of Weibo's open, content-rich ecosystem.

5.2. Limitations and future research

Firstly, this study focused on the impact of consumption value and technical value on user satisfaction and repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscriptions. The eight factors tested in this study are functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, conditional value, convenience value, medium appeal value and social presence value. However, these eight independent variables are not the only factors driving user satisfaction and repurchase intention of Weibo membership subscriptions. For future research, it is recommended to consider the impact of other factors on user satisfaction and repurchase intention. The low explained variance in repurchase intention ($R^2=5.7\%$) suggests that membership repurchase intention may be substantially influenced by additional determinants not captured in the present model, such as price sensitivity, subscription habit, switching costs, perceived exclusivity, platform dependency, and the attractiveness of competing platforms. Future research should

therefore consider incorporating these economic and competitive factors alongside psychological value dimensions to develop a more comprehensive explanatory model. In addition, future researchers should consider multiple mediating effects and moderating factors to further complicate the model relationship. Furthermore, although demographic information including age, gender, education, and income was collected, these variables were not incorporated as control variables in the structural model. Given that membership repurchase intention may vary across demographic groups, future research should consider including key demographic variables as controls or conducting supplementary group analyses to assess whether findings hold across different user segments.

Secondly, this study used snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling method that has the problem of respondent bias and may lead to homogeneity bias. Since the expansion of the sample is based on recommendations, the recommended individuals often have similar characteristics or backgrounds (such as interests, occupations, geographic locations, etc.) to the recommenders. This homogeneity bias may limit the diversity of the research and cause the research results to fail to fully reflect the diversity of the group. Therefore, for future research, probability sampling techniques can be used for data analysis to enhance the authority of the sample. Additionally, the screening criteria used in this study only distinguished between those who had previously purchased a Weibo membership and those who had not, without further differentiating between current subscribers, former subscribers, or users with varying levels of engagement and recency of purchase. As membership repurchase intention may vary substantially across these groups, future research should incorporate more refined screening criteria to improve sample homogeneity and the interpretability of findings. Accordingly, the findings of this study are most applicable to active, digitally engaged, and socially connected Weibo users, and should not be generalized to the broader population of Chinese social media subscribers.

Thirdly, the present study adopted a fully mediated structural model in which user satisfaction serves as the sole pathway through which value dimensions influence membership repurchase intention. While this design is theoretically grounded, it may be overly restrictive, as certain value dimensions—particularly functional value, emotional value, and convenience value—could plausibly exert direct effects on repurchase intention independent of satisfaction. Future research should consider testing partial mediation models to determine whether direct paths from selected value constructs to repurchase intention yield additional explanatory power.

Finally, the data samples of this study mainly come from Chinese Weibo users. Although the results are representative to a certain extent, they cannot be completely generalized to user groups in other regions or cultural backgrounds. In particular, there may be significant differences in the consumption habits and behaviors of users on social platforms in different countries or regions, which may affect the external validity of the conclusions. Therefore, future research should consider social media platform users in different national contexts to enhance existing databases.

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Appendix. Measurement Items

Functional Value (adapted from Chakraborty et al. 2023)

Fun1: Weibo membership offers content of consistently good quality.

Fun2: Weibo membership offers the content they promise.

Fun3: Weibo membership offers content of an acceptable standard.

Fun4: Weibo membership is a good product for the price.

Fun5: Weibo membership offers good value for money.

Social Value (adapted from Chakraborty et al., 2023; Mehrabioun, 2024)

Soc1: I feel more accepted when I use Weibo membership.

Soc2: I feel it makes a good impression on others when I use Weibo membership.

Soc3: I feel that using Weibo membership improves the way I am perceived.

Soc4: I feel that using Weibo membership will grant me social approval.

Soc5: Attending Weibo membership makes me feel like I belong to a greater community.

Conditional Value (adapted from Chakraborty et al., 2023)

Cond1: I will subscribe to Weibo membership, if Weibo membership provides a discount.

Cond2: I will subscribe to the Weibo membership, if there is a promotional offer.

Cond3: I will subscribe to the Weibo membership, if they offer more content of my choice.

Cond4: I will subscribe to Weibo membership since it can assist me in completing the things I want to do.

Cond5: I will subscribe to Weibo membership as it helps me get what I need in certain situations.

Emotional Value (adapted from Sweeney & Soutar, 2001)

Emo1: Weibo membership is one that I would enjoy.

Emo2: Weibo membership would make me want to use it.

Emo3: Weibo membership is one that I would feel relaxed about using.

Emo4: Weibo membership would make me feel good.

Emo5: Weibo membership would give me pleasure.

Epistemic Value (adapted from Chakraborty et al., 2023; Mehrabioun, 2024)

Epi1: Using Weibo membership makes me curious.

Epi2: Using Weibo membership provides me with a fantastic experience.

Epi3: I experience something unique while using Weibo membership.

Epi4: Weibo membership offers extraordinary services.

Epi5: I believe using Weibo membership is a good opportunity for me to learn new things.

Convenience Value (adapted from Liu et al., 2016)

Conv1: Weibo is convenient to use.

Conv2: I can get what I want with less effort by using Weibo.

Conv3: I can use Weibo anytime, anywhere.

Conv4: Weibo is easier to use.

Medium Appeal Value (adapted from Liu et al., 2016; James et al., 1995)

MA1: I like Weibo where I can post things I want to say immediately.

MA2: Weibo is the easiest, most cost-effective way to publish.

MA3: Weibo is easier for me to maintain.

MA4: I enjoy using Weibo as it is available at any time of the day.

MA5: I enjoy using Weibo membership as it provides the ability to communicate globally.

Social Presence Value (adapted from Liu et al., 2016)

SP1: There is a sense of human contact in Weibo.

SP2: There is a sense of personalness in Weibo.

SP3: There is a sense of sociability in Weibo.

SP4: There is a sense of human warmth in Weibo.

SP5: There is a sense of human sensitivity in Weibo.

User Satisfaction (adapted from Vila & Kuster, 2011)

US1: I am satisfied with Weibo membership.

US2: I am satisfied with the service provided by Weibo membership.

US3: I am satisfied with the improvements to the Weibo membership system.

US4: My experience of using Weibo membership has been satisfactory.

US5: I believe I made the right choice by subscribing to Weibo membership.

Repurchase Intention of Weibo Membership Subscription (adapted from Bhattacharjee, 2001; Chakraborty et al., 2023)

RIOW1: I intend to continue using Weibo membership rather than discontinue its use.

RIOW2: My intentions are to continue using Weibo membership rather than use any alternative means.

RIOW3: If possible, I want to continue using Weibo membership.

RIOW4: I plan to continue using Weibo membership in the future.

RIOW5: I will likely continue to use Weibo membership in the future.