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# Can Short Videos Work? The Effects of Use and Gratification and Social Presence on Purchase Intention: Examining the Mediating Role of Digital Dependency

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of this study is to examine how use and gratification and social presence might influence the purchase intention of the products presented in the short videos, mediated by perceived value, attitude, and digital dependency. The research model was constructed using structural equation modeling (SEM) and was tested by using the LISREL technique. Some significant findings of our empirical study include the following: First, use and gratification and social presence significantly enhance consumers' perceived value, which subsequently positively influences their attitude towards short video content. Second, perceived value and attitude towards short videos have positive effects on digital dependency, which consequently enhances purchase intention. Third, digital dependency mediates the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention, as well as between attitude and purchase intention. We concluded that the AI system algorithm increases the likelihood of users encountering videos aligned with their preferences, thereby fostering a greater digital dependency. Businesses utilizing short video marketing must enhance content quality, focusing on user engagement and social presence, to effectively attract both new and returning viewers. When users possess a strong understanding of value and attitude, algorithms can cultivate a digital dependence on video content, subsequently influencing their purchase behavior.



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**Keywords:** short video; use and gratification; social presence; digital dependency

## 1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of Internet technology has also facilitated the swift development of social media, which has had a substantial impact on various aspects of our lives. In our daily lives, short video platforms such as TikTok videos, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and similar services have become indispensable. Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok comprise the five most widely used social media platforms [1]. As of 2024, TikTok has 1.2 billion monthly active users worldwide and a 5-year search growth rate of 227%, making it one of the fastest-growing social media platforms [2]. The average engagement rate of TikTok videos is 5.3%. These platforms have become crucial commercial marketing channels in addition to providing entertainment content [3]. Consumer Insights indicates that 68% of YouTube consumers utilize videos to assist in their purchasing decisions [2]. It allows marketers to generate revenue using video advertising, branded content, and in-app purchases [4].

Short-form videos rapidly gain traction across social media platforms and demonstrate elevated engagement rates [1]. Over 57% of individuals engage with YouTube, primarily focusing on short video content. Short videos feature minimal entry barriers, abundant information, and rapid transmission speed, effectively meeting viewers' visual and auditory needs at the same time, while fully engaging consumers' virtual senses [5]. The demographic of short video viewers tends to skew younger, particularly among individuals aged 16 to 34. TikTok employs algorithms powered by artificial intelligence to create content that is highly tailored to individual users, which enhances engagement and prolongs the duration of time users spend on the platform [6]. Conversely, when individuals view short videos, they might find themselves drawn to the products or advertisements integrated within those videos. Short videos have a notable impact on consumer purchasing behavior, particularly among younger audiences who are more inclined to explore and gather product information via these platforms [6].

Previous research has indicated that use and gratification (U&G) plays a crucial role in media studies, examining the reasons and methods by which individuals actively select particular media to fulfill their needs [7,8]. Short videos offer concise and captivating material that can be absorbed in mere seconds to a couple of minutes. Short videos serve to fulfill consumers' demands for entertainment, information, and social interaction, etc. [9–11]. While prior studies have examined the effects of U&G on social media, there is a notable scarcity of research concentrating on viewers' U&G and its effects on engagement with short videos. This serves as a primary objective of this study.

Furthermore, as a perceptual aspect of social interaction, social presence is thought to significantly influence the behavioral choices of media users [12]. Studies on social presence and short videos have been increasingly prominent, particularly with the emergence of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels. Can social presence enhance viewer engagement in short videos? What is the impact of social presence on engagement in advertisements that incorporate short videos [13]? These are the research questions of this study. Moreover, perceived value typically involves an assessment of the cost incurred by customers in relation to the quality and benefits they believe they have gained from using the product. Studies indicate that perceived value significantly impacts user behavior and purchase intentions regarding short videos. Short videos can enhance social interaction and relationship management, potentially increasing their perceived value. The current literature often considers perceived value or attitude as factors influencing purchase intention, yet it tends to overlook their potential function as mediating variables in user behavior [14]. This investigation will explore its mediating function between social presence and purchase intention.

Short videos have emerged as a new instrument for communication and dissemination strategies [15]. Although short video marketing has advantages, it may result in an individual becoming digitally dependent. The term "short video dependency" refers to the high frequency with which users view short videos, the challenge they face in regulating their utilization behavior, and the adverse psychological and behavioral consequences that ensue [16,17]. With the continued advancement of short video platforms, it will be crucial for social media research to determine the impact of digital dependency on short videos. In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to address the research voids by investigating the influence of U&G and social presence on consumers' product purchase intentions. This concept is encapsulated in the short video. The objective of this study is to offer practical advice for the operation and marketing strategies of short video platforms, with a particular emphasis on the mediating function of perceived value and attitude and digital dependency.

The Introduction is followed by a literature review, hypothesis development, and the research framework. Section 3 includes research methodologies, questionnaire design, and data collection. Section 4 of this study encompasses the data analysis and findings. Section 5 presents the research conclusions and managerial implications. Section 6 delineates the research limitations.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

According to Kotler and Keller, the stimulus–response model serves as a starting point for comprehending consumer behavior. Marketing stimuli (short video) enter the consumer’s consciousness, and a series of psychological processes (e.g., U&G theory and social presence) combine with certain consumer traits to result in a purchase decision. Moreover, mediators, such as customer-perceived value and digital dependency, will connect psychological aspects to purchase intention. This section will analyze each variable employed in this study and clarify the relationships between them.

### 2.1. Use and Gratification Theory and Short Videos

Katz et al. were the first to propose the use and gratification theory (U&G) [7]. The theory’s primary focus is on the way individuals utilize media to satisfy specific needs. Unlike other media theories that regard audiences as passive consumers, this theory presupposes that media users are proactive. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch observed that individuals observe media selectively in accordance with their personal social and psychological requirements, and they derive satisfaction from the media they see [7]. U&G can be defined as the psychological gratification and emotions that consumers experience while consuming products or services. It is a critical determinant in determining the discrepancy between consumers’ actual experiences and their expectations of products [18]. U&G is a significant antecedent factor of consumer purchase intention, as per Oliver’s expectation–disconfirmation theory [19]. U&G theory has the potential to not only increase consumers’ repurchase intention but also to further strengthen their loyalty and trust [20–22]. The U&G theory can also be employed as a theoretical framework to comprehend the reasons and processes by which consumers select specific media [23]. This satisfaction can be of various varieties, including cognitive (e.g., information acquisition), emotional (e.g., entertainment or emotional satisfaction), social (e.g., social interaction or relationship development), and other types [24].

The U&G theory examines the reasons behind individuals’ choices of particular media content and investigates the effects of media consumption, including its influence on attitudes and behaviors [25]. Recently, this theory has gained significant traction in elucidating the motivations and behavioral outcomes associated with the use of various media types, particularly in the context of social media. Sung et al. identified that the primary satisfactions derived from social media usage encompass information acquisition, social interaction, and entertainment needs. Boudkouss and Djelassi demonstrated that consumers utilize interactive technologies to fulfill a range of needs, including information retrieval, entertainment, and social interaction [26]. Individuals utilize these technologies to fulfill their requirements and anticipations, thereby creating a sense of U&G. Engaging with influencers through short videos offers consumers the satisfaction they seek, encompassing aspects such as practicality, interactivity, sociability, entertainment, exploration, and innovation. The role of internet influencers is a crucial element in the success of online shopping [27].

Considering the growing prevalence of short videos, users who experience satisfaction after viewing a specific video tend to cultivate a favorable perception of the social media platform. This additionally impacts their behavior, including ongoing media usage [28],

and has a direct effect on users' attitudes towards the brands featured in the video and their intention to purchase [20,29].

## 2.2. Social Presence and Short Videos

The concept of social presence theory emerged from communication studies. The initial proposal was made by Short, Williams, and Christie in 1976. This pertains to the extent to which an individual perceives themselves as "real" and engaged within a media communication context. Short et al. highlighted that intimacy and immediacy serve as the two fundamental components of social presence. The effectiveness of the media in conveying these two elements is contingent upon the quality of the medium itself. Gefen and Straub indicated that in B2B e-commerce, enhanced social presence can foster customer trust and consequently have a positive impact on online purchase intention. Oh, Bailenson and Welch conducted a systematic analysis to examine the concept, antecedents, and definition of social presence [30]. They differentiated social presence from telepresence and self-presence, with telepresence denoting the feeling of being physically present in a remote or virtual setting, while self-presence pertains to how much users perceive their virtual self or avatar as an extension of their actual self. A greater social presence correlates with a reduced psychological distance among consumers. The decrease in distance may additionally improve their intention to purchase [31].

Furthermore, Ansel, de Vreede, Spector, Padmanabhan, Singh, and de Vreede discovered that when the communicated media lacks audio and visual cues, it becomes challenging to evoke a strong sense of social presence [32]. Consequently, guiding consumers' social interaction and engagement with social presence in a digital context is an important issue for short video platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. Zheng and colleagues noted that short video platforms are intense competition; thus, creating interactive, authentic, and immediate content can enhance users' social presence and subsequently affect their emotional experiences. In the realm of short video e-commerce, the presence of social elements can significantly boost consumers' intention to purchase by fostering a feeling of intimacy and trust [33].

What makes social presence particularly important in a virtual setting? What is the reason behind the social influence exerted by the interaction (i.e., presence) between consumers and social actors? Previous studies have shown that social presence has a positive impact on trust, perceived usefulness, and purchase intention in the context of online shopping [30,34]. However, there is a deficiency in studies regarding consumer social presence in the context of short videos. This study aims to examine the impact of social presence in short videos on product attitudes and purchase intentions.

## 2.3. Customer Perceived Value (CPV)

### 2.3.1. Customer Perceived Value and Use and Gratification

The overall assessment made by consumers regarding a product or service is influenced by their evaluation of its costs and benefits. Zeithaml highlighted that perceived value is determined by the balance between the benefits consumers experience after acquiring the product and the cost they incur. In short video marketing, perceived value is influenced not only by the quality of the content but also by the information presented in the short video, as well as the functional and emotional value of the product. The study conducted by Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal indicated that an increase in perceived value correlates with a heightened intention to purchase among consumers. This relationship is especially significant in contexts of social commerce. The perceived value, including utilitarian, hedonic, and social values, plays a crucial role in influencing consumer satisfaction and purchase intention [29]. As mentioned earlier, use and gratification refers to the

psychological satisfaction experienced by consumers following their engagement with a product or service [35]. Elements of U&G include (1) social interaction, which can improve users' positive emotional experience of the platform and elevate perceived value [36,37]. Boudkouss and Djelassi discovered that a more robust interactive technology on the platform correlates with an enhanced sense of engagement and satisfaction among consumers, subsequently increasing its perceived value [26]. (2) Information acquisition: the greater the amount of information obtained from the short video, the higher its perceived value, particularly in educational and product evaluation contexts [38,39]. (3) Time-killing, which may also serve as a motivation for viewing short videos, especially when users experience boredom or seek relaxation [40]. These studies indicate that a high level of U&G can increase consumers' perceived value of a product, thereby making them more inclined to make repeat purchases or recommend the product [41,42]. Consequently, we put forth a hypothesis:

**H1.** *Use and gratification will have a positive and significant impact on customer perceived value.*

### 2.3.2. Customer Perceived Value and Social Presence

Moreover, social presence relates to the extent to which an individual perceives the presence of another individual during a communicative exchange. This theory is frequently applied to analyze the ways individuals perceive and engage within digital spaces, including virtual classrooms, social media, and online shopping platforms. Hernández-Ortega emphasized that enhancing social presence can diminish the psychological distance between users and brands [31]. This decrease in distance facilitates consumers' ability to establish trust and connection with the brand, consequently enhancing perceived value. Weidlich, Göksün, and Kreijns investigated the online learning environment and discovered that when students experience a greater sense of social presence, their perceived value and satisfaction with online interactions increase correspondingly [43]. Yin, Huang, and Ma illustrated that in the realm of online shopping [44], a heightened sense of social presence among consumers correlates with an increased perception of value in the offered products or services, ultimately leading to a greater intention to purchase. In the realm of short video marketing, real interactions and emotional expressions within the content significantly improve brand credibility and foster emotional connections with users. In light of this, this study puts forward the second hypothesis:

**H2.** *Social presence has a significantly positive influence on perceived value.*

### 2.4. Short Videos and Digital Dependency

Digital content is highly inclusive because of the widespread use of digital devices. Individuals can swiftly and directly engage with the global landscape, access information, and acquire goods or entertainment [45]. The concept of "digital well-being" encourages individuals to persist in their engagement with digital resources. Nonetheless, excessive and compulsive engagement with digital platforms can result in a phenomenon of digital addiction [46,47]. Earlier investigations have recognized internet addiction as an unhealthy psychological reliance on digital technology, which interferes with an individual's cognitive perception and everyday functions [48]. The concept of digital dependency is similar to digital addiction; however, the negative effect of psychological dependency is viewed as somewhat less severe than that of digital addiction [49]. In contrast to Internet addiction, the phenomenon of short video dependency arises from the widespread use of mobile devices. The extensive adoption of smartphones and short videos has transformed them into a "portable" medium for content consumption, serving as a significant avenue for



entertainment, social interaction, and information acquisition [5,16]. Short video platforms utilize an algorithmic system to improve user engagement and extend viewing time [50]. These systems subtly promote a tendency among users to engage in regular viewing, potentially leading to psychological addiction or dependency [51]. Moreover, the abundant variety of content, along with immediate responses (likes and comments) on short video platforms, significantly amplifies users' feelings of dependency [16,48]. This dependency often presents itself through users dedicating considerable amounts of time to watching short videos and struggling to manage their viewing habits, which can disrupt daily activities, work, or academic pursuits [50,51].

The impact of short videos varies across different platforms. For instance, mobile devices like smartphones and tablets allow users to access content anytime and anywhere, which may lead to a heightened dependency on these technologies [45]. Research has indicated that various forms of short video content, including entertainment, educational, and social types, may exhibit varying levels of user dependency [50]. The formation of short video dependency is strongly connected to user engagement, content preferences, and the design of the platform [15,51]. Huang and Lu highlighted that there is a positive correlation between the perceived value of short videos and the level of digital dependency [52]. Individuals who favor short video content are more inclined to engage with this platform regularly. Consequently, we propose the third hypothesis as follows:

**H3.** *Consumer's perceived value of short video content significantly positively affects digital dependency.*

### *2.5. Attitude, Digital Dependence, and Purchase Intention*

Attitude indicates the ongoing and thorough assessment individuals make regarding a particular subject. This includes elements like product preference, satisfaction, trust, value, and perceived quality [53]. Product attitude can typically be categorized into three primary components, affect, behavior, and cognition, referred to as the ABC model [54]. In the fields of psychology and sociology, attitudes are considered to have various functions that can influence individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions [55,56]. Furthermore, attitudes may influence social interactions. Individuals often engage with others who share similar attitudes, facilitating interaction and creating a sense of resonance. Attitudes can impact how individuals assess others, thereby exerting social influence during interactions [56].

Tran showed that by watching live broadcasts, consumers can more easily recognize the quality of products, thereby increasing their interest and positive attitude towards those products [57]. Short video formats have the potential to swiftly form consumer perceptions by leveraging vivid visuals and emotional resonance, leading to favorable assessments of products or brands [44]. In this case, short videos effectively and swiftly convey the product's core value while also increasing perceived value through visual and emotional connections. When consumers recognize significant value in products or services, their perceptions of brands and products generally become more favorable. Based on this, we put forward the subsequent hypothesis:

**H4.** *Perceived value has a significantly positive impact on consumers' attitudes toward short video content.*

The concept of "digital well-being" motivates people to continue using digital resources. When watching short videos with a positive attitude, people tend to spend more time interacting with them [45]. In other words, a positive attitude towards a video encourages users to engage more frequently, creating a cycle with positive experiences. This dependency can become a significant factor in how consumers interact with digital

content and services. Weidlich, Göksün, and Kreijns pointed out that because short videos provide them with pleasure and satisfaction, viewers who have a positive attitude toward them are more likely to continue exploring and searching the channel [43]. This further exacerbates the users' reliance on social media. As a result, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H5.** *The more positive consumers' attitudes toward short video content are, the higher their dependency on short videos will be.*

Purchase intention is the possibility of a consumer buying a particular product or service within a certain period. Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard believed that the psychological activities of consumers during the purchase decision process [58], along with the impact of marketing stimuli, will ultimately determine their final purchase behavior. Shen and Wang found that algorithms utilized on short video platforms can provide personalized content customized to users' interests and behavior [5]. This capability enables users to engage more deeply with the platform, consequently enhancing the probability of purchasing. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H6.** *The greater the digital dependency of consumers on short video content, the stronger their intention to buy the products or services presented in those videos.*

Short video platforms such as TikTok are designed to be highly engaging, often resulting in behaviors indicative of dependency. However, if individuals engage with these platforms thoughtfully to mitigate adverse effects, they can provide enjoyment and facilitate connections with others. Liu and Wang emphasized that short videos featuring both informative and entertaining content significantly enhance consumers' perceived value and purchase intention [15,34,59]. This study seeks to explore the mediating role of digital dependency and analyzes its impact on purchase intention.

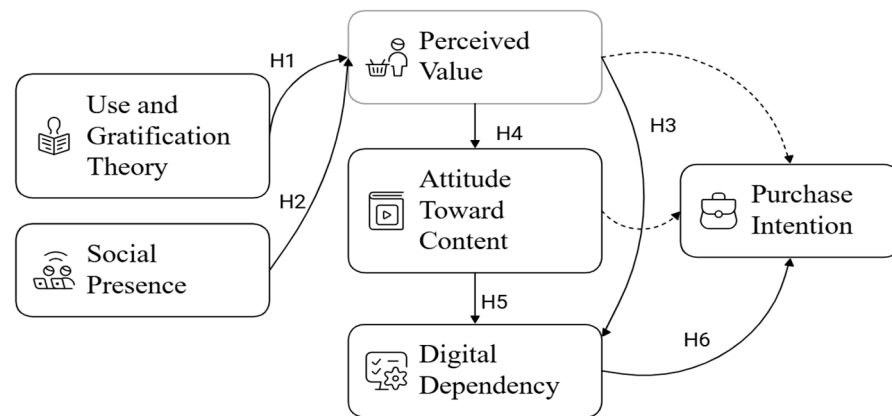
That is, the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention is influenced by digital dependency. Is there a mediating effect of digital dependency on the relationship between attitude, perceived value, and purchase intention? Therefore, we established the following hypotheses:

**H7a.** *Digital dependency has a mediating effect between perceived value and purchase intention.*

As mentioned earlier, the greater the interest consumers have in the content of short videos, the more favorable their attitude towards these videos will be [43]. A positive attitude will subsequently affect digital dependency and purchasing intentions.

**H7b.** *Digital dependency plays a mediating role between attitude and purchase intention.*

The framework for this study is illustrated in Figure 1. The literature and hypotheses development suggest that various factors influence consumers' purchasing decisions after watching short videos. The current research employs the use and gratification theory along with social presence as antecedent variables, while perceived value, attitude toward the content, and digital dependency serve as mediating variables. Purchase intention is identified as the dependent variable.



**Figure 1.** Research framework. Source: Conducted by this research.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Subjects and Research Design

Short videos posted on TikTok serve as the main subject of our empirical study. Previous studies have demonstrated that the most effective promotional strategy entails utilizing user-generated short movies distributed via social media platforms [60]. Organizations may attract their target audience by disseminating a variety of engaging short videos and interacting with them through live streaming to augment the advertising of their products or services. The survey examines the culinary broadcasts of the Internet celebrity “Mi Zijun” as the subject of study (see Figure A1). “Mi Zijun” gained a considerable following, with over 14.708 million fans. Her short videos examine various kinds of cuisines, highlighting city restaurants, gourmet dining places, and street food specialties. Concurrently, she handles culinary competitions and provides gourmet recipes with new meals.

This study examines Chinese viewers who actively participate in short video platforms, namely, those who regularly watch and engage with brand-related content. The survey employed a method of convenience sampling for its implementation.

#### 3.2. Questionnaire Design

There are two parts to the survey, the demographic profiles of respondents being the first part, while the second part contains items that measure the dimensions of this study. All the items were adapted for short video context from previous studies and measured by using a Likert scale (starting from 1, “Strongly Disagree”, to 7, “Strongly Agree”).

Table 1 illustrates that the use and gratification questionnaire, derived from the research of Whiting and Williams [40], encompasses three dimensions, social interaction, information acquisition, and time-killing, consisting of 9 measurement items, including “This video is a good platform for me to interact and socialize with others”. The social presence questionnaire is derived from the research of Gefen and Straub [61], with six items, including the question, “When browsing the content posted by other users, I feel like I am interacting with people”. Perceived value comprises six measurement items, including “Watching food exploration videos can reduce my time cost”, as used by Liu and Wang [15]. The short video dependency measurements are derived from Chen, Chen, and Ross and consist of six questions, including “I feel very focused on watching some short videos”. [46] The questionnaire assessing consumer purchasing intention comprises four measurements derived from Chen and Zhu [62].



**Table 1.** Measurement scale used in this study.

Constructs	Measurement Items	References				
Social interaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The video is a good platform for me to interact and socialize with others.</li> <li>2. This video helps me communicate with others more smoothly than face-to-face communication.</li> <li>3. This short video provides me with a more diverse social life.</li> </ol>	Whiting and Williams (2013) [40]				
	Seeking information		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This short video provides me with information and offers discounts on the product.</li> <li>2. Through this short video, I better understand the recent development of food products.</li> <li>3. This short video helps me understand current events.</li> </ol>			
			Passing time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Watching this short video is a good way to kill time.</li> <li>2. I will watch this short video when I feel bored.</li> <li>3. I like to watch this short video in my spare time.</li> </ol>		
Social presence				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Browsing user-generated content gives you a sense of interacting with people.</li> <li>2. When I browse content users post, I feel a sense of closeness between me, the publisher, and other users.</li> <li>3. When browsing content posted by users, I feel the opinions or suggestions of the publisher and other users.</li> <li>4. My emotions and those of other users are influenced by each other when browsing user-posted content.</li> <li>5. When I browse user-posted content, I feel like the publisher is watching me closely.</li> <li>6. I feel a sense of warmth when browsing user-posted content.</li> </ol>	Gefen and Straub (2004) [61]	
	Perceived value			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Watching restaurant videos can save me time.</li> <li>2. Store exploration videos make my shopping process more efficient.</li> <li>3. Short videos of food exploration can simplify my shopping process.</li> <li>4. Short video ads make me happier than other ads</li> <li>5. I am more satisfied with the products/stores recommended by short videos.</li> <li>6. Short video ads can be viewed as entertainment videos.</li> </ol>	Liu and Wang (2023) [15]	
			Short video dependence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I am much more focused when watching short videos.</li> <li>2. It is difficult for me to stop watching short videos online.</li> <li>3. I feel anxious when I want to stop watching short videos.</li> <li>4. I tend to watch short videos longer than I originally planned.</li> <li>5. I will not tell others that I have been following short videos online.</li> <li>6. Maybe watching short videos online is a good way to escape daily stress.</li> </ol>	Chen, Chen, and Ross, (2010) [46]	
				Attitude	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Watching the video makes people feel good/bad</li> <li>2. The video made people feel very happy/very unhappy after watching it.</li> <li>3. After watching the video, people feel that they like it very much/dislike it very much.</li> </ol>	Spears and Singh (2004) [55]

**Table 1.** *Cont.*

Constructs	Measurement Items	References
Purchase intention	1. This short video assists me in making better decisions before purchasing a product.	Chen and Zhu (2022) [62]
	2. Watching this short video will increase my interest in purchasing this product.	
	3. Compared with other videos, I will buy the products this short video recommends.	
	4. I am willing to recommend the products in this short video to others.	

Source: Conducted by this research.

### 3.3. Data Collection

Convenience sampling was implemented to recruit target users for participation in this investigation, and 500 questionnaires were distributed using an online survey platform. A total of 440 questionnaires were gathered from 1 August to 14 August 2024, and 28 invalid questionnaires were deleted, resulting in a validated questionnaire ratio of 82.4%. In Table 2, the respondents’ basic data are demonstrated.

**Table 2.** Basic information of the respondents.

		Number of People	Percentage
Gender	Male	210	50.97%
	Female	202	49.03%
	Total	412	100%
Age	Under 20 years old	32	7.77%
	21–30 years old	153	37.14%
	31–40 years old	123	29.85%
	Over 41 years old	104	25.24%
Education	total	412	100%
	Below college level	198	48.06%
	College	109	26.46%
	Undergraduate	62	15.05%
	Master	26	6.31%
Profession	PhD	17	4.13%
	Total	412	100%
	Public Officers	132	32.04%
	Company Employee	190	46.12%
	Freelancer	58	14.08%
Revenue (CNY)	Student	32	7.77%
	Total	412	100%
	Below CNY 4000	32	7.77%
	CNY 4001–6000	43	10.44%
	CNY 6001–8000	123	29.85%
	CNY 8001–10,000	99	24.03%
	CNY 10,001–20,000	74	17.96%
CNY 20,001 or more	41	9.95%	
Area	Total	412	100%
	Northeast China	79	19.17%
	Southeast China	92	22.33%
	Central China	95	23.06%
	Northwest China	65	15.78%
	Southwest China	81	19.66%
Total	412	100%	

Source: Conducted by this research.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1. Reliability and Validity Analysis

This research employed SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis, as well as for assessing reliability and validity, while LISREL software was utilized to implement the structural equation model (SEM). Table 3 demonstrates that (1) each dimension’s Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  value exceeds 0.7, signifying high internal consistency, and (2) each variable’s KMO value is

greater than 0.7, and the *p*-value from the Bartlett sphericity test is less than 0.01, indicating strong validity and appropriateness for factor analysis.

**Table 3.** Reliability and validity analysis.

Variable	Cronbach's $\alpha$	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity <i>p</i>	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Social Interaction Seeking Information	0.903	0.755	0.000	5.20	1.694
Passing Time	0.906	0.756	0.000	5.18	1.670
Social Presence	0.917	0.758	0.000	5.16	1.727
Perceptual Value	0.956	0.943	0.000	5.05	1.805
Dependency	0.958	0.943	0.000	4.88	1.865
Attitude	0.954	0.940	0.000	5.02	1.823
Purchase Intention	0.907	0.757	0.000	5.05	1.750
	0.940	0.870	0.000	4.87	1.886

Source: Conducted by this research.

#### 4.2. Hypothesis Testing

It can be seen from Table 4 that GFI = 0.925, AGFI = 0.911, NFI = 0.975, NNFI = 0.992, and RMSEA = 0.0296. All goodness of fit indices satisfy the fitting standards, suggesting that the structural equation model demonstrates a strong overall fit.

**Table 4.** Parameter estimates and measures.

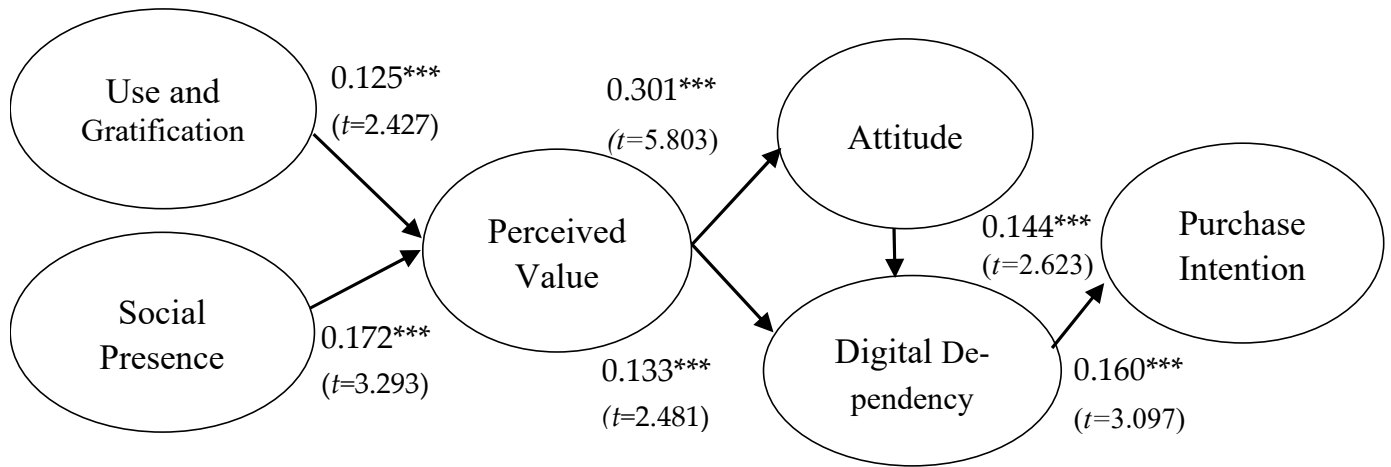
Completely Standardized Solution				
Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	<i>t</i> -Value	Hypothesis
H1	Use and Gratification → Perceived Value	0.125 ***	2.427	accept
H2	Social Presence → Perceived Value	0.172 ***	3.293	accept
H3	Perceived Value → Digital Dependency	0.133 ***	2.481	accept
H4	Perceived Value → Attitude	0.301 ***	5.803	accept
H5	Attitude → Digital Dependency	0.144 ***	2.623	accept
H6	Digital Dependency → Purchase Intention	0.160 ***	3.097	accept
Fit indices	GFI = 0.925 AGFI = 0.911 NNFI = 0.992 NFI = 0.975 $\chi^2_{(343)} / df = 466.9 / 343$ RMSEA = 0.0296			

Note: \*\*\* represents a significant at 5% level. Source: Conducted by this research.

The structural equation model estimation results are presented in Table 4 and Figure 2. The path testing results confirm all hypotheses' significance (Hypotheses 1–7). Hypothesis 1 examines the effect of use and gratification on users' perceived value. Table 4 indicates a path coefficient value of 0.125, which is statistically significant. Consequently, the hypothesis is accepted. Hypothesis 2 examines the effect of social presence on perceived value. The structure coefficient value is 0.171 and is statistically significant. Consequently, Hypothesis 2 is accepted. The path coefficient values for Hypotheses 3–6 are all positive and statistically significant, leading to the acceptance of all the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 7a and Hypothesis 7b test the mediating role of digital dependency. If digital dependency fully mediates the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention, there will not be a significantly direct effect from perceived value to purchase intention. We add an additional path from perceived value to purchase intention and find that the coefficient value of this path is positive and significant (0.304; *t* = 5.944). The chi-square test ( $\chi^2_d(1) = 29.69; p > 0.001$ ) also shows that there is no fully mediating effect (please refer to Table 5). However, the path coefficient value from digital dependency to purchase intention becomes small but still significant (0.105; *t* = 2.085) after we add the

path from perceived value to purchase intention. That is, the effect of perceived value on purchase intention can be indirectly mediated by digital dependency and directly affect purchase intention. Only a partial mediating effect exists. Therefore, Hypothesis 7a is partially accepted.



**Figure 2.** Results of structural model analysis. Source: Conducted by this research. Note: \*\*\* represents a significant at 5% level.

**Table 5.** The mediating effect of digital dependency tests.

	Path	Loadings	t-Value	Chi-Square Test
H7a	Perceived Value → Purchase Intention	0.304 ***	5.944	$\chi^2_{(342)} = 437.21$
	Perceived Value → Dependency → Purchase Intention	Digital Dependency → Purchase Intention	0.105 ***	$\chi^2_d(1) = 29.69$ ( $p > 0.001$ )
H7b	Attitude → Purchase Intention	0.305 ***	5.781	$\chi^2_{(342)} = 422.56$
	Attitude → Dependency → Purchase Intention	Digital Dependency → Purchase Intention	0.103 ***	$\chi^2_d(1) = 44.34$ ( $p > 0.00191$ )

Note: \*\*\* represents a significant at 5% level.

Similarly, for Hypothesis 7b, an additional path is added from attitude to purchase intention. It can be seen from Table 5 that the coefficient value of this path is significantly positive (0.305 \*\*\*;  $t = 5.781$ ). The path coefficient value from digital dependency to purchase intention becomes more minor but still significant (0.103 \*\*\*;  $t = 2.029$ ). The  $\chi^2$  test ( $\chi^2_d(1) = 44.34, p > 0.00191$ ) indicates no fully mediating effect. However, there is a partial mediating effect. Therefore, Hypothesis 7b is partially accepted.

In addition, Table 6 shows the results of the direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect of the path. Regarding the total effect on “digital dependency”, perceived value on digital dependency is the strongest and most significant (0.177 \*\*\*), followed by attitude (0.144 \*\*\*), U&G, and social presence. As for the total effect on purchase intention, digital dependence has the strongest and most significant effect on purchase intention (0.160 \*\*\*), followed by perceived value (0.028 \*\*\*) and attitude (0.023 \*\*\*). U&G and social presence have no significant total effect on purchase intention; this may imply that the mediating variables in this study play an important role in transferring the effects from U&G and social presence to purchase intention.

**Table 6.** Direct, indirect, and total effects of latent variable paths.

	Value			Attitude			Digital Dependency			Purchase Intention		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
Use and Gratification	0.125 *** (2.427)		0.125 *** (2.427)		0.038 *** (2.248)	0.038 *** (2.248)		0.022 *** (1.988)	0.022 *** (1.988)		0.004 (1.676)	0.004 (1.676)
Social Presence	0.172 *** (3.293)		0.172 *** (3.293)		0.052 *** (2.881)	0.052 *** (2.881)		0.030 *** (2.387)	0.030 *** (2.387)		0.005 (1.895)	0.005 (1.895)
Value				0.301 *** (5.803)		0.301 *** (5.803)	0.133 *** (2.481)	0.044 *** (2.404)	0.177 *** (3.436)		0.028 *** (4.677)	0.028 *** (4.677)
Attitude							0.144 *** (2.623)		0.144 *** (2.623)		0.023 *** (2.007)	0.023 *** (2.007)
Digital Dependency										0.160 *** (3.097)		0.160 *** (3.097)

Notes: 1. *t* values are in parentheses. 2. \*\*\* represents a significant at 5% level. 3. DE indicates “direct effect”; IE indicates “indirect effect”; TE indicates “total effect”. Source: Conducted by this research.

## 5. Research Conclusions and Management Implications

### 5.1. Findings and Discussion

Digital technology is ubiquitous and fascinating, leading to widespread dependency on its different forms and functions [63]. This study mainly focuses on short videos and explores the effects of U&G and social presence on digital dependence on perceived value and attitude towards the video; at the same time, digital dependency will affect the intention to buy the products marketed in the video. This study proposed eight research hypotheses, and its main conclusions are as follows.

First, according to our empirical study, U&G significantly positively affects consumers’ perceived value. It indicates that if the short video content can satisfy users’ social interaction, information search, and time-killing needs, they will obtain higher perceived value on the video content [40]. This conclusion is consistent with the research results of Sweeney and Soutar [42]. The short videos of another famous influencer, Li Ziqi (please refer to Figure A2), provide viewers with information search and time-killing functions by showing traditional Chinese food culture and rural life. Through comments and sharing by reviewers that achieve social interaction needs, when watching her videos, viewers obtain a higher level of U&G, which not only improves the perceived value of the video but also enhances the purchase intention of the products shown in the video.

Second, our study showed that social presence has a significantly positive impact on perceived value. On short video platforms, consumers can enhance their perceived value of short videos through interaction and participation, as well as emotional interaction and care between them and other users [64]. Take the Chinese short video influencer Liu Anan as an example. He successfully created a strong sense of social presence by showing the daily life of a scrapyard. The audience can see his expressions and movements in real time through the screen, just like face-to-face communication. He also interacts with the audience through a barrage of comments and gifts, making both parties feel coexistent. Also, his non-verbal information such as expressions and body language deepens the audience’s understanding of the video content and forms a sense of identity in the virtual space. It can be seen from the video that his videos are highly interactive. Liu Anan’s positive and optimistic attitude and self-deprecating humor bring intimacy and authenticity to the audience, enhancing the fans’ sense of participation and interactivity. In these ways, Liu Anan’s videos greatly enhance users’ sense of social presence, thereby enhancing users’ perceived value of his short videos and attracting a large number of fans’ attention and love.

Third, the perceived value of short videos by users will positively affect their digital dependency on the videos. When users feel that watching food exploration videos can

reduce their time costs, make the shopping process more efficient, or that the short videos make them happy or better understand the product content compared to other information sources, they will feel a better perceived value [26]. In this way, users are encouraged to form a habit of repeated viewing and even regard watching online short videos as a good way to escape daily stress, further forming a dependence on the video (digital dependence). This is consistent with the findings of Fullwood et al. [51].

Fourth, this study showed that the perceived value of short video content positively affects their attitudes toward the videos. This phenomenon is particularly evident in short video marketing because short videos can quickly and intuitively convey the core value of the product and enhance perceived value through visual and emotional resonance [65,66]. For example, MrBeast (see Figure A3) is a famous influencer known for extravagant challenges and philanthropy. His short videos capture the essence of his larger-than-life content in bite-sized clips. His content blends humor with impressive stunts and charitable acts, successfully attracting many fans to follow.

Fifth, similar to the studies by Mwencha et al. [67], our empirical results also confirmed that attitude has a positive and significant impact on video dependency. When users like the short video content very much and feel very delighted after watching it, they will have a more positive attitude towards the video. In order to keep their enjoyment, users continue to look for similar videos, which further enhances their dependency on the short video platform. In addition, this study also found that users' video dependency will further affect their willingness to purchase the products launched in the video.

Sixth, this study evidenced that a mediating effect existed. U&G and social presentation have no direct effect on purchase intention but through perceived value, attitude, and digital dependency. The previous literature has pointed out that when U&G increases, it can enhance consumers' perceived value of the product, making them more likely to repeat purchases or recommend the product [68,69]. However, this study found that U&G and social presentation can increase perceived value, but they should through other mediating variables to affect purchase intention. These mediating variables include attitude and digital dependency.

Seventh, digital dependency was an important mediating variable in this study. This study found that although digital dependency did not show a complete mediating effect between perceived value and purchase intention, and between attitude and purchase intention, the partial mediating effect was significant [9,70]. In other words, digital dependence not only affects users' purchase intention after watching short videos but also plays a conductive role between perceived value and purchase intention and between attitude and purchase intention. Take Aimee Song as an example (Figure A4). She is a fashion blogger and influencer who started the blog "Song of Style". She has her own clothing line, Song of Style, which is known for its chic and trendy designs. Aimee often shares quick styling tips and outfit ideas. Her videos highlight how to mix and match different pieces, accessorize, and create trendy looks. We can find her short videos on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where she engages with her audience through visually appealing and informative content. A lot of users habitually watch Aimee's short video content and may form a certain digital dependency, which further affects their purchase intention.

## 5.2. Managerial Implications

Our empirical study's managerial implications and practices are as follows: First, a company that wants to implement short video marketing should try to increase users' U&G. For example, we might facilitate viewer engagement by using polls, questions, and comments; promote conversations by creating a community around our content to increase user social interaction; and layer in two or more activities that resonate with the audience



and may meet the user's information-seeking desire. Marketers may also employ humor to create an engaging tale; emotional appeal may help customers pass the time.

Second, to establish a social presence, companies can collaborate with relevant content creators to leverage their established audience through short videos. A company can retain an audience by adhering to a regular post schedule. Building a devoted following is facilitated by consistency. For example, Liu Anan publishes videos with interactive content, which may considerably improve consumers' sense of social presence, consequently increasing their perceived value.

Third, short videos offer immediate entertainment and information, satisfying our need for immediate satisfaction. This may result in an increased reliance on digital devices and an increase in screen time. In particular, when a user finds a video enjoyable, they will continue to seek out similar videos in order to maintain their gratification, thereby increasing their dependency on the short video platform. We suggest that companies produce valuable videos to increase the awareness of their products or brands and to encourage viewers to view them on a regular basis.

Fourth, digital dependency acts as a bridge between perceived value and purchase intention, as well as attitude and buy intention. AI algorithms' exact recommendations, along with the convenience of mobile phones, may have boosted this digital dependency. Providing viewers with access to short content at any time and from any location increases their likelihood of purchasing the things she promotes. As a result, investing in good lighting, sound, and camera equipment, as well as optimizing SEO, will help videos appear professionally and trustworthy. In terms of video content, one may add value by giving expertise, suggestions, and insights. Educational information is frequently regarded as more valuable since it provides advantages to the audience. Videos can be made more discoverable by adding relevant keywords, hashtags, and descriptions.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

This study still has some shortcomings: (1) This study explored the impact of use and gratification and social presence on consumer purchase intention, but there may be other variables that could affect online consumer behavior, such as consumer personality traits or brand awareness. Future research can explore different independent variables. (2) The data collection process mainly relied on online questionnaires and failed to consider offline surveys. There may be deficiencies in sample diversity and representativeness. Future research can adopt more comprehensive data collection methods to enhance the universality of research conclusions [71,72]. (3) As mentioned in the previous literature, the performance of short videos in different usage scenarios is also different [45]. Therefore, future research can try to analyze different platforms and different short video content categories to examine the impact of short videos on user purchasing behavior.

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## Appendix A



Figure A1. Mi Zijun's TikTok video diagram. Source: Mi Zijun's Douyin.

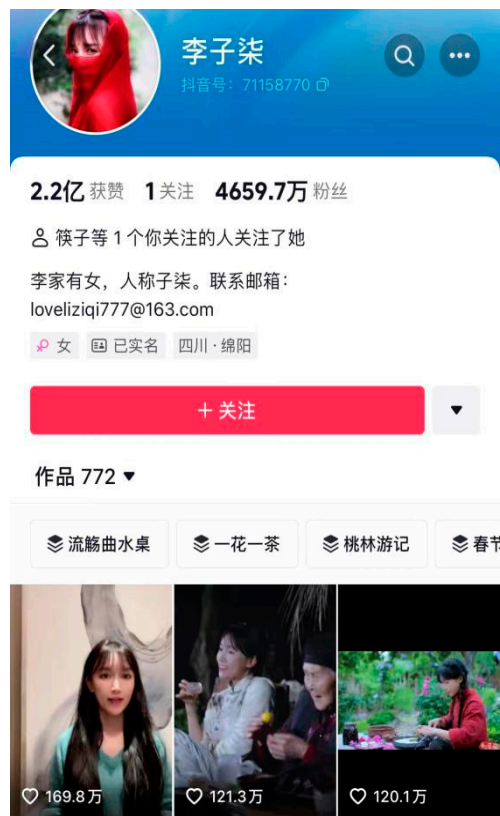
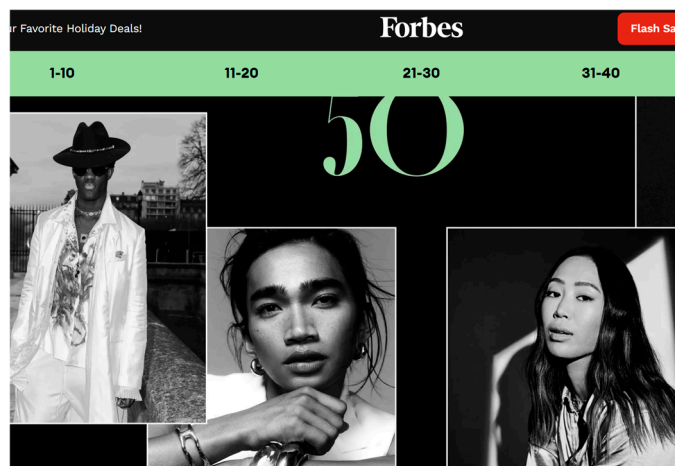


Figure A2. Li Ziqi's TikTok video diagram. Source: Li Ziqi Douyin.



**Figure A3.** MrBeast's video diagram. Source: Screenshot of MrBeast's YouTube video.



**Figure A4.** Aimee Song's Song of Style. Source: Forbes Top Creators: Fashion 50, The Millionaire Tastemakers of TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.

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