From Cognitive Absorption to Habitual Usage: Explaining Generation Z's Continued Intention toward OTT Platforms

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Abstract: *This study investigates the factors influencing continued intention to use OTT platforms among Generation Z users by integrating Cognitive Absorption, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Habit. Data were collected from Generation Z OTT platform users through a structured questionnaire. A total of 186 valid responses were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that Cognitive Absorption significantly influences Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Habit, and Continued Intention to Use OTT platforms. Habit emerged as a strong predictor of continuance intention, whereas Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use showed insignificant effects in the presence of Habit. This study contributes to continuance intention literature by integrating Cognitive Absorption, TAM, and Habit within the OTT streaming context and explaining how immersive engagement develops into habitual usage behavior among Generation Z users.The findings suggest that OTT service providers should focus on immersive and habit-forming platform experiences to enhance long-term user retention and sustained engagement. The study highlights the growing influence of immersive OTT environments on Generation Z media consumption behavior and digital engagement patterns.This study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding post-adoption OTT usage behavior by integrating cognitive, experiential, and habitual perspectives within a single model.*

Keywords: *Cognitive Absorption; Over-the-Top (OTT) Platforms; Continued Intention; Habit; Perceived Ease of use; Perceived Usefulness; PLS-SEM*

Introduction

Generation Z, often considered "digital natives", is the first generation to have been raised in a world shaped by technology and digital media. They are the latest generation born between 1995 and the early 2010s (Priporas et al., 2020). Generation Z consumes more content than any other age group, spending nearly 11 h a day across all their devices (Adobe, 2018). Alongside increasing importance of this cohort, the rapid growth of the technology environment, shifts in consumer preferences and Gen Z's withdrawal from traditional media enabled and encouraged a new age of content consumption, namely: Over-

the-top (OTT) services (Chalaby and Plunkett, 2021).

Over-the- Top (OTT) video streaming services have grown drastically, changing the viewing habits of the people who watch entertainment. Particularly, the students' media habits now revolve only around platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Jio Hotstar and SonyLIV, etc. OTT services are services that provide streaming media to all devices in an online setting, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and HBO (Palomba, 2022). In India, student population is becoming the biggest and most active customer sector for Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms due to accessible mobile devices, inexpensive data, and tailored content delivery. OTT service providers increasing compete to attract Gen Z due to their increased spending capacity and high level of Content Consumptions (Davis, 2020). Even though initial adoption has increased, service providers continue to have difficulties in keeping users' intention to utilize these platforms. Notably, it is critical to understand the factors that stimulate users to continue using such services (e.g. Lin et al., 2012; Palomba, 2022).

Recent research indicates that habitual usage patterns have a significant impact on post-adoption behavior in addition to cognitive and utilitarian reasons.. In the context of over-the-top (OTT) platforms, binge-watching tendencies, algorithm-driven recommendations, and frequent exposure to customized content may progressively turn conscious usage into habitual behavior. As a result, comprehending continuing purpose without taking habit into account may not fully explain user behavior, particularly among Generation Z, who display significant levels of digital engagement and recurring consuming behaviors.

Technology usage behavior is described through concepts like Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) by theoretical frameworks such as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis,1989). However, the psychological immersion consumers experience when interacting with digital platforms is captured by Cognitive Absorption (CA), a profound state of involvement marked by temporal dissociation, focused immersion, heightened enjoyment, curiosity, and control (Aggarwal & Karahanna, 2000). While TAM explains rational evaluations and Cognitive Absorption captures deep experiential engagement, neither fully explains how repeated exposure translates into automatic continued usage. In this regard, habit act as an important behavioral mechanism that connects experiential engagement and continued intention to use. Users who experience high cognitive absorption may repeatedly engage with OTT platforms, which over time develops into habitual usage, ultimately strengthening their continued intention to use.

Therefore, this study extends the existing framework by incorporating habit as a mediating variable between cognitive absorption, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and continued intention to use OTT platforms. This study provides a deeper understanding of both conscious and unconscious drivers of continuance behavior in Generation Z users.

The study follows a comprehensive model that primarily targets cognitive absorption (CA) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theories to examine the Continued Intention to use OTT platforms by Gen Z students. Additionally, it integrates habit as a key mediating construct to capture the transition from intentional to automatic usage behavior in OTT consumption.

In order to understand the effects of Cognitive Absorption on Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and continued intention to use OTT service, this study incorporates habit as a mediator that explains how repeated engagement translates into sustained usage behavior.

Literature Review

OTT video streaming platforms and Gen Z

The rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms marks a pivotal change in how consumers experience digital entertainment, leaving its mark on the

industry. With its mark on the industry, Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms have become a dominant force in the digital entertainment world. Unlike conventional TV broadcasting, OTT services offer Internet-based, on-demand viewing of entertainment content that allows viewers to view content anywhere and at any time, using various digital devices. Growing internet penetration, adoption of smart phones, and the technological advancements in streaming technologies have been the driving force behind the growth of OTT services, especially in emerging markets like India (Gupta & Singharia, 2021). Additionally, OTT platforms have technological capabilities like personalized recommendations, algorithm-driven content curation, and seamless viewing experiences that boost user engagement and satisfaction. This evolution has helped drive the transition from linear TV to more personalized and immersive digital entertainment experiences.

Generation Z is one of the most powerful groups of users in the OTT space. Generation Z (also known as the digital generation) has been raised in a technologically rich environment and is highly familiar with the technologies used for communicating, accessing information and entertainment (Prensky, 2001). These users are more likely than their predecessors to be convenience oriented, prefer to be able to personalize their experience, be more interactive, and want content to be available immediately. OTT platforms are also very flexible and are quite similar to the media habits of Gen Z, who tend to binge watch, explore content, and engage in multi-device usage. These behaviors tend to stem from a purpose of enjoyment, immersion, and uninterrupted experience of entertainment, which are tightly related to the concept of flow in digital environments and cognitive engagement (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Sherry, 2004).

OTT viewers' behavior could start to become addictive as they interact with the streaming platforms a number of times, which in turn affects their intentions to continue using the service in the long term. Previous studies indicate that habit has a significant impact on shaping technology continuance behavior, which can operate outside of the consumers' conscious decisions (Limayem et al., 2007). Likewise, the continuance intention of information systems and digital services was found to be an important factor in the success of information systems and digital services over time (Bhattacherjee, 2001). In the OTT space, the people who experience value, fun and seamless experiences are more inclined to remain signed up for and keep on utilizing the platform (Menon, 2022). More recent studies also have shown that enchanting experiences and repeated actions are key to users' ongoing engagement with OTT platforms (Soren & Chakraborty, 2023). Because of this, the psychological and behavioral mechanisms of continued intention to use OTT platforms among Generation Z users has become of paramount importance for both academics and practitioners to improve the retention of customers and the growth of the platforms.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Cognitive Absorption

The foundation of CA is grounded in the concept of cognitive engagement (Webster and Ho, 1997) and the theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The theory of flow provides a experiential understanding of the theory of CA. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described flow as a sensation that individuals feel when they act with total involvement. However, the conceptual construct of CA stems from Agarwal and Karahanna (2000). These authors referred to CA as a "state of deep involvement with software". It can be considered the state of engagement and involvement that users experience during OTT service consumption and, according to Agarwal and Karahanna (2000), it is determined by five dimensions. First, temporal dissociation, which captures individuals' engaged interaction without recognizing the passage of time. Second, focused immersion, which captures people's immersed involvement while other important considerations are disregarded. Third, people's enjoyable encounters are described as heightened enjoyment. The fourth factor is

control, which captures individuals' perceived control that they possess during the interaction. And finally, curiosity, which captures an individual's expectation and cognitive curiosity to examine the interaction in greater depth. Researchers have found that younger people have higher levels of CA, which extends to increased social media usage (Brooks and Longstreet, 2015) and it has been applied in the domains related to technology usage (Balakrishnan and Dwivedi, 2021).

Davis et al. (1989) suggested that technology use intentions are predicted by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Although the original formulation of TAM included attitude as a construct mediating the effects of beliefs on intentions (Davis, 1989), subsequently attitude was dropped from the specification of TAM (Davis et al., 1989). A person's perception of how easy it will be to interact with technology is known as perceived ease of use; in other words, ease of use is a reflection of how easily a person can interact with a specific software artifact. It has been shown that individuals are more likely to interact with new technologies if they perceive that relatively little cognitive effort will be expended during the interaction (Adams et al., 1992). According to Davis (1989), perceived ease of use represents an intrinsically motivating aspect of human-computer interactions. Perceived usefulness is defined as the "degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance"(Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness has been found to have a significant influence upon system utilization because of a user's belief in the existence of a use-performance relationship. (Zhou, 2013) utilized flow experiences with dimensions such as attention focus, perceived enjoyment, and perceived control to find out the adoption of Mobile TV among users. The findings revealed that flow experience has significant impact on users' perceived usefulness with the effect of ease of use, content quality, and access speed. The study recommended the utility of constructs such as curiosity and interest in the future. (Rodríguez-Ardura and Meseguer-Artola, 2016) study immersive experience in the context of e-learning and found flow experience greatly impacts the perceived usefulness. (Weniger,2010) investigate the driving forces in user adoption of IPTV and found a direct link between user Cognitive absorption of IPTV and its perceived usefulness based on user beliefs and experiences. This study applies Cognitive Absorption as a second-order construct.

Habit and Post Adoption Behavior

In information systems research, habit has been widely acknowledged as a significant determinant of post-adoption behavior, along with cognitive assumptions and experiential engagement. According to (Chiu et al, 2012), habit has been widely conceptualized as an automatic behavioral tendency developed through repeated performance in stable contexts. It represents learnt action sequences that are activated by situational signals without requiring conscious cognitive processing. Once formed, habit reduces the need for active decision-making and allows behavior to be executed with minimal mental effort. Previous research has shown the significant mediating role that habit plays in explaining continued consumption behavior. For example, habit modulates the relationship between behavioral beliefs and usage intention in addition to directly influencing continuance intention (Limayem et al., 2007; Venkatesh et al., 2012). In context of Over-the-top (OTT) platforms, individuals who express high levels of cognitive absorption are more likely to interact with the platform on a regular basis, which in return creates habitual usage behavior. Many previous studies state that alters the role of cognitive beliefs in predicting behavior.

Specifically, as behavior becomes habitual, the influence of cognitive evaluations such as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use diminishes, since habitual actions are performed automatically without extensive cognitive deliberation (Chiu et al., 2012). This indicates that in post-adoption contexts, habit may override

traditional determinants of technology usage Similar to this, recurrent encounters can be reinforced by perceived utility and ease of use, which strengthens the development of habits. As a result, habit acts as a behavioral link between users' intentions to continue using OTT platforms, their experiential engagement, and their cognitive assessments.

Research Gap and Conceptual Foundation

While previous research has explored the continuance intention of digital platforms from the TAM and cognitive engagement lenses, only a few studies have combined Cognitive Absorption and Habit in the OTT streaming context. Furthermore, there is limited evidence on the understanding of how immersive engagement converts to the behavior of habitual continuance among the users of Generation Z. Hence, this study fills this void by combining TAM, Cognitive Absorption and Habit to account for continued intention to use OTT platforms.

Moreover, most of the previous studies have concentrated on the initial adoption of technology instead of post-adoption continuance behavior of the users of highly immersive OTT settings. To fill this gap, this study aims to combine TAM, Cognitive Absorption, and Habit to investigate the continued intention of Generation Z users to use OTT platforms.

Conceptual framework and hypotheses

The review of literature helps in understanding the factors affecting Continued Intention to use OTT Video Streaming Platforms among Gen Z and provide foundation for developing conceptual framework. This conceptual model is shown in **Figure 1** and the related hypotheses are outlined

The effect of Cognitive Absorption on Gen Z's continued usage

The perspectives of digital service adoption are also extracted from the cognitive psychology domain (Abraham et al., 2013). Also, user involvement and cognitive experiences are considered important factors influencing service related behaviors. Specifically, involvement and cognition were found to influence technology-oriented product usage (Walsh et al., 2010). Since Cognitive Absorption reflects deep involvement and engagement so higher level of Cognitive Absorption are likely to encourage continued usage intention, when using OTT services. Therefore, and in accordance with scholars who show the role of CA in predicting technology Continued Intention to use (Balakrishnan and Dwivedi, 2021), this study proposes,

H1: Cognitive absorption positively affects continuance Intention to use OTT services.

The effect of Cognitive Absorption on Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use

OTT platforms are a hedonic resource whose utilitarian value is to provide entertainment to users in terms of the pleasure of watching the content, refreshing mood, reducing the cognitive burden, and passing the time (Menon, 2022). The study defines perceived usefulness as a measure of utility value of OTT platforms in consumers' daily lives. Past studies that have examined the relationship between perceived usefulness and cognitive absorption include (Shang et al, 2005; Roca et al, 2006; Lin, 2009; Mpinganjira,2018). Furthermore, (Salimon et al.,2021) investigated the impact of cognitive absorption on the fundamental variables of the Technology Acceptance Model. The study's findings indicate that cognitive absorption has a direct, substantial, and favorable influence on the perceived usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use in context of E-learning platforms, as well as an indirect effect on e-satisfaction and e-retention.

Therefore, this study proposes,

H2: Cognitive Absorption positively affects the Perceived Usefulness of OTT platforms.

H3: Cognitive Absorption positively affects the Perceived Ease of Use of OTT platforms.

Role of Habit in Continued Intention to Use

In post-adoption behavior, habit has been identified as an important factor that influences continued usage behavior. Limayem et al. (2007) state that habits are formed by repeated actions that eventually become automatic, reducing the significance of conscious purpose. Features like auto-play, personalized recommendations, and binge-watching behaviors in over-the-top (OTT) platforms promote recurrent usage, which eventually shapes users' habitual consuming habits.

Additionally, previous studies indicate that habit modulates the relationship between cognitive beliefs and behavioral results in addition to directly influencing continuance intention (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Users are therefore more likely to acquire regular usage patterns, which in turn reinforce their continued intention to use these platforms, if they have greater levels of cognitive absorption and believe that OTT platforms are practical and simple to use.

H4: Cognitive Absorption positively affects Habit.

H5: Perceived Usefulness positively affects Habit.

H6: Perceived Ease of Use positively affects Habit.

H7: Habit positively affects Continued Intention to Use OTT platforms.

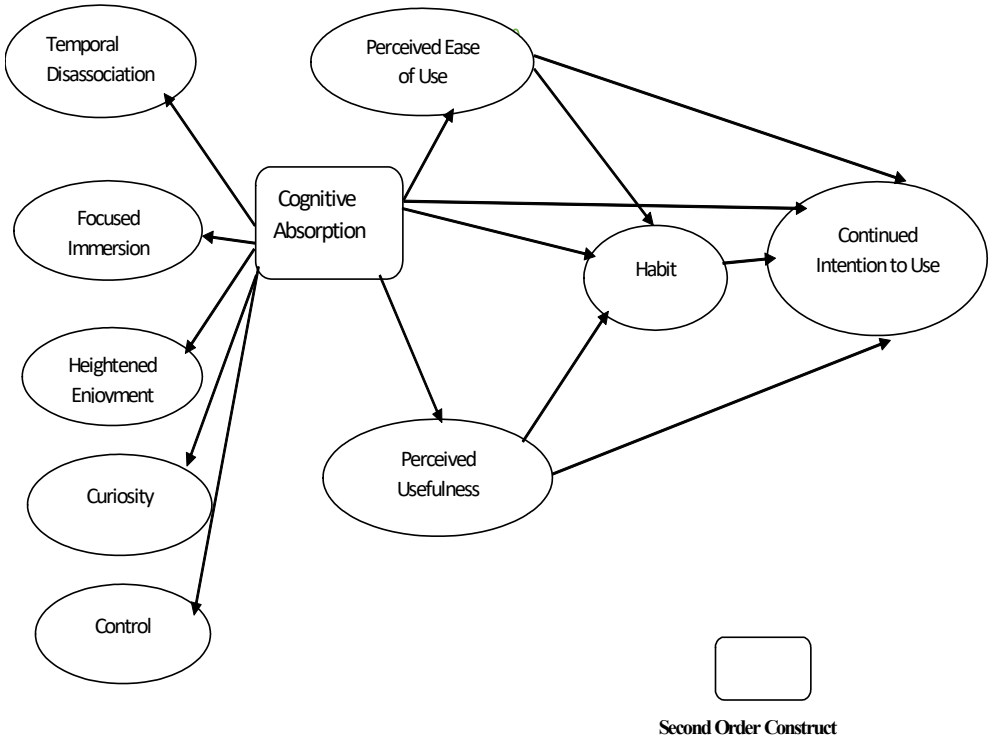


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Impact of Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use on Continued Intention to Use

Perceived Usefulness is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will increase his or her job performance" (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness has been found to be a strong and direct determinant of continuance usage intentions in previous studies (Mouakket, 2015; Wu & Chen, 2017). Perceived Ease of Use as "the degree to which a person

believes that using a technology will be free from effort" (Davis 1989). In this study, Perceived ease of use refers to the perception of OTT video streaming platforms users who believe that their continued use of these platforms is free of effort. If a system is relatively simple and easy to use, individuals will be more inclined to learn about its features and they will eventually plan to continue using it.

Studies indicate that PEOU is positively associated with continuance intention (Chiu & Wang, 2008). Although some previous research has shown that Perceived Ease of Use is a significant predictor of technology adoption (Davis, 1989), recent post adoption studies have found that its impact diminishes as users grow more accustomed to digital platforms (Bhattacherjee, 2001; Liu et al., 2019). While these results are mixed, ease of use does play an important role in users' ongoing engagement with digital platforms, especially in entertainment contexts like OTT. For this reason, the hypothesis that is proposed is:

H8: Perceived Ease of Use positively affects Continuance Intention to Use OTT platforms

H9: Perceived Usefulness positively affects Continued Intention to Use OTT platforms.

Research Methodology

Target Population and Sample

In this study, we targeted Generation Z (Gen Z) university and college students aged 18-26 years residing in Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana. These three cities are major urban and educational hubs of Punjab, India. Also the study targeted the Gen Z students who were active users of OTT platforms. A purposive sampling technique was used to target Gen Z students who had been using at least one OTT platform from last 6 months. Data were collected using offline survey mode. Out of the 200 distributed questionnaires, 186 valid responses were retained for final analysis. Based on the sample size, the number of samples was determined to be sufficient for performing PLS-SEM analysis. The minimum sample size is recommended to be 10 times the maximum number of structural paths converging to the construct under study in the model, according to the commonly used "10-times rule" in Partial Least Squares (PLS) Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The maximum number of structural pathways that lead to one construct in this study was 4, which means that at least 40 respondents were needed. So the final sample of 186 responses was larger than recommended and would be adequate for statistical analysis.

Research Design and Measurement Instrument

The current study used a quantitative, cross sectional approach in order to investigate the factors influencing Gen Z Continued Intention to Use OTT platforms. A structured questionnaire was used to gather the data, which were analyzed using Smart PLS 4.0 for Partial Least Squares Structural Modelling for hypothesis testing. Two stage approach was adopted because Cognitive Absorption was conceptualized as reflective-reflective higher order construct.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections-demographic details and construct measurement items. For Cognitive Absorption, the scale was adapted from Agarwal & Karahanna (2000); for Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use, Davis (1989) scale was used; for Continued Intention, Bhattacherjee (2001) scale was used; **and for Habit, the scale was adapted from** Viswanath Venkatesh **et al. (2012) and** Mohamed Limayem **et al. (2007), capturing automaticity and repeated usage behavior of OTT platforms.** Responses were measured using five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of 186 respondents are presented. 86 males (46.2%) and 100 females (53.8%), were included in this study.

In terms of respondents' age, 25.8% of the sample were 18-20 years and most respondents belong to the 21-23 age group. 61 respondents were from Amritsar, 63 from Jalandhar and 62 from Ludhiana City. Of all respondents, 38.7% respondents mostly prefer Netflix over other OTT Platforms followed by Amazon Prime Video and Jio Hotstar.

Table 1 Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	86	46.2
	Female	100	53.8
Age Group (years)	18–20	48	25.8
	21-23	92	49.5
	24-26	46	24.7
City	Amritsar	61	32.8
	Jalandhar	63	33.9
	Ludhiana	62	33.3
Preferred OTT Platforms	Netflix	72	38.7
	Amazon Prime Video	55	29.6
	Jio Hotstar	41	22
	Others	18	9.7

Measurement Model Assessment

In this study, CA is considered as reflective second-order constructs in this study. The first order model was evaluated for item and construct reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. Standardized loadings exceeded the critical threshold limit of 0.70 and the composite reliability index was also above the critical cut-off point of 0.70 as shown in Table 2. All the values of Average variance extracted (AVE) was above the limit of 0.5 , ensured the satisfactory first order model reliability and discriminant validity.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_a	rho_c	AVE
CI	0.788	0.803	0.856	0.545
CT	0.702	0.791	0.822	0.613
CU	0.801	0.815	0.863	0.561
FI	0.807	0.829	0.861	0.512
HE	0.838	0.844	0.882	0.557
TD	0.794	0.825	0.864	0.617
HAB	0.870	0.879	0.912	0.722
PEOU	0.894	0.916	0.919	0.654
PU	0.832	0.841	0.878	0.548

Finally, Fornell and Larcker's criterion (1981), as well as Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios (Henseler et al., 2015), were dissected to verify the discriminant validity of the model. This is shown in Table 3 and 4. In Table 3, all the HTMT values are below threshold limit of 0.85 The HTMT value between Cognitive Absorption and Perceived Usefulness was slightly higher (0.91) but remained within the acceptable threshold of

0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015), indicating acceptable discriminant validity.

Additionally, common method variance was assessed. This study applied statistical and procedural methods to identify potential bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). With respect to the statistical procedures, a full collinearity test based on VIF revealed no indication of the existence of common method bias as suggested by values below 3.3 (Kock, 2015)

Table 3: HTMT Ratio

Construct	CI	HAB	PEOU	PU	CA
CI	—				
HAB	0.756	—			
PEOU	0.475	0.155	—		
PU	0.687	0.449	0.730	—	
CA	0.768	0.585	0.693	0.910	—

5.3 Structural Model Analysis

In the second stage of SEM, the structural model was tested to verify the conceptual model and its hypotheses. To assess the statistical predictive power of the model, we followed the procedure suggested by Shmueli et al. (2019).In this stage, we use latent scores of variables; Temporal Dissociation, Heightened Enjoyment, Curiosity, Focused Immersion, Curiosity and Control.

The results indicated that Cognitive Absorption (CA) significantly influences Perceived Ease of Use ($\beta = 0.593$, $t = 9.004$, $p < 0.001$) and Perceived Usefulness ($\beta = 0.750$, $t = 17.151$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2 and H3. Furthermore, CA has a significant positive effect on Continued Intention ($\beta = 0.231$, $t = 2.354$, $p = 0.019$), supporting H1. Cognitive Absorption also significantly affects Habit ($\beta = 0.504$, $t = 4.520$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that immersive user experiences contribute to the development of habitual usage behavior. Habit, in turn, exerts a strong and significant positive effect on Continued Intention ($\beta = 0.458$, $t = 7.291$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H7.

Perceived Ease of Use shows a significant negative effect on Habit ($\beta =$ "0.321, $t = 3.907$, $p < 0.001$), while its direct effect on Continued Intention is not significant ($\beta = 0.134$, $t = 1.718$, $p = 0.086$), thus not supporting H9. Similarly, Perceived Usefulness does not significantly influence Continued Intention ($\beta = 0.132$, $t = 1.270$, $p = 0.204$) and does not significantly affect Habit ($\beta = 0.219$, $t = 1.899$, $p = 0.058$), leading to the rejection of H8 and H5.

Overall, the findings suggest that while Cognitive Absorption directly and indirectly influences Continued Intention, Habit emerges as a key determinant of continued usage behavior, whereas traditional TAM relationships (PEOU '! CI and PU '! CI) are not supported in the presence of Habit.

Table 4 Direct Relationship

Path	β (O)	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Decision
CA ? CI	0.231	0.098	2.354	0.019	Supported
CA ? HAB	0.504	0.112	4.520	0.000	Supported
CA ? PEOU	0.593	0.066	9.004	0.000	Supported
CA ? PU	0.750	0.044	17.151	0.000	Supported
HAB ? CI	0.458	0.063	7.291	0.000	Supported
PEOU ? CI	0.134	0.078	1.718	0.086	Not Supported
PEOU ? HAB	-0.321	0.082	3.907	0.000	Supported
PU ? CI	0.132	0.104	1.270	0.204	Not Supported
PU ? HAB	0.219	0.115	1.899	0.058	Not Supported

Robustness Analysis

Table 5: Comparison of Structural Model Results before and After Introducing Habit

Relationship	Baseline Model (Without Habit)	Extended Model (With Habit)
CA ? CI	β = 0.423***	β = 0.231*
CA ? PEOU	β = 0.632***	β = 0.593***
CA ? PU	β = 0.774***	β = 0.750***
PU ? CI	β = 0.259*	β = 0.132 (Not Significant)
PEOU ? CI	β = -0.007 (Not Significant)	β = 0.134 (Not Significant)
HAB ? CI	—	β = 0.458***

*Notes: *p < .05; ***p < .001*;

The results of the baseline model were compared to the results of the extended model to assess the additional explanatory power of Habit. The results show that Perceived Usefulness was a significant predictor of the Continued Intention in baseline model, but did not reach significance level once Habit was added to the model, suggesting that habit overrides the utility assessments in the prediction of OTT continuance with Generation Z users.

Indirect Effects (Mediation Analysis)

To examine the mediating role of Habit, indirect effects were analyzed using bootstrapping. The results reveal that Habit significantly mediates the relationship between Cognitive Absorption and Continued Intention (β = 0.231, t = 3.827, p < 0.001), this indicates partial mediation.

Additionally, Perceived Ease of Use exhibits a significant indirect effect on Continued Intention through Habit (β = "0.147, t = 3.385, p = 0.001), suggesting full mediation. The negative coefficient indicates that ease of use promotes interaction with the system, it may reduce reliance on habitual engagement over time.

Furthermore, the sequential mediation path (Cognitive Absorption '! Perceived Ease of Use '! Habit '! Continued Intention) is also significant (β = "0.087, t = 2.930, p = 0.003), highlighting the indirect mechanism through which cognitive absorption influences continued usage behavior.

In contrast, indirect effects of construct Perceived Usefulness were not significant. So, the habit mediation mode is not supported for relationship between Perceived Usefulness and continued intention to use.

Table 6: Indirect Effects

Path	β (O)	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Result
CA ? HAB ? CI	0.231	0.060	3.827	0.000	Supported
PEOU ? HAB ? CI	-0.147	0.043	3.385	0.001	Supported
CA ? PEOU ? HAB ? CI	-0.087	0.030	2.930	0.003	Supported
CA ? PU ? CI	0.099	0.081	1.218	0.223	Not Supported
CA ? PU ? HAB ? CI	0.075	0.042	1.799	0.072	Not Supported
PU ? HAB ? CI	0.100	0.056	1.805	0.071	Not Supported

Discussion

The current study discussed the factors affecting Continued Intention to Use OTT platforms. The findings revealed that Cognitive Absorption has significant impact on Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness.

This is consistent with existing research that states deep involvement and immersion makes appear technology more useful (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Saadé & Bahli, 2005; O'Brien & Toms, 2008). The results align with the theory that immersive engagement has a positive effect on the development of important cognitive beliefs in digital service settings, particularly with Gen Z.

Moreover, the results suggest that Cognitive Absorption has a significant effect on Habit. This indicates that immersive experiences facilitates the development of automatic usage behavior. This is consistent with previous studies that states the repetition of experience results in the formation of Habit. (Chiu et al., 2012).

Whereas, Perceived Ease of Use did not significantly affect Continued Intention to Use. This finding is similar to the most recent post adoption research conducted by (Ayyoub et al., 2023) which states that Perceived Ease of Use had a significant impact on individual performance, but not on continuance intention. There are other continuance studies in the literature that show similar non-significant relationships between ease of use and continuance, indicating that ease of use becomes less important as familiarity with a technology increases (Bhattacherjee, 2001; Liu et al., 2019). These results are contrary tomore early technology acceptance research literature that focuses on perceived ease of use as a determinant of behavioral intention (Davis, 1989), but supports more recent studies that shows Ease of use is less explanatory in mature and familiar digital platforms.

Moreover, the present study showed that the Perceived Ease of Use indirectly impacted Continued through the mediation of Habit. This indicates that ease of use leads to increased use, which eventually develops into a habit. It is now common behavior, and ultimately motivates continued intention. These results indicated that behavior changes from conscious evaluation to automatic execution during post-adoption stages (Chiu et al., 2012).

On the other hand, in previous literature Continued Intention is affected by Perceived Usefulness; but here the results indicates that it does not have direct impact on continued Intention. This suggests that when consumers depends more on automatic usage patterns than on conscious assessment of utility, the impact of Perceived Usefulness decreases. This result is different from the major literature on continuance intention (Bhattacherjee, 2001; Venkatesh et al., 2012), but it is in line with studies showing that as conduct becomes habitual, cognitive factors become less predictive (Chiu et al., 2012).

The role of Habit is also crucial in explaining the Continued Intention to Use OTT platform, which is one of the important findings of this study. Habit was found to be one of the most-significant factors associated with continued use: With frequent interaction with OTT services, the use of the platforms becomes a reflexive action. This result corroborates previous continuance studies that indicated that as users become more experienced with a system, it becomes a more dominant factor in technology usage (Limayem et al., 2007; Venkatesh et al., 2012; Kim, 2010). The robustness analysis also found that the inclusion of Perceived Usefulness had a strong impact on Continued Intention without the inclusion of Habit, but no impact once Habit was added to the model. This indicates that the more users start to become accustomed to using OTT, the less they will be able to consciously assess the usefulness, and the more they will adhere to automatic behavior patterns. Thus, OTT consumption amongst Gen Z seems to be as much cognitive as the formation of habit to watch the content.

Moreover, by demonstrating that immersive involvement could positively and significantly affect Continued Intention to Use even in the absence of utilitarian concepts, the study found that Cognitive Absorption had a positive influence on Continued Intention to Use in the

presence of both constructs expanding previous study (Balakrishnan & Dwivedi, 2021). Furthermore, it was found that the influence of Habit on Continued Intention was strong and significant, indicating the important role played by Habit as a predictor of the long-term behavior of using OTT. This result is in line with earlier studies that highlight how habit directly influences recurrent behavior and lessens the need for conscious cognitive assessments (Mohamed Limayem et al., 2007; Viswanath Venkatesh et al., 2012). Furthermore, studies in the domain of digital and mobile services indicate that habits boost automatic service usage, thus reinforcing continuance intention. (Kim, 2010; Mouakket, 2015).

The results presented here suggest that besides cognitive Absorption, Habit plays an important role in the creation of Gen Z's Continued Intention for using the digital platforms, signaling a shift from intention to action. This shows the shift from cognitive assessment (TAM) to automatic behavioral processes (Habit), and gives a better understanding of the behavior after adoption of the digital platforms.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

First, this study contributes to post adoption literature by redirecting the focus from cognitive factors to behavioral mechanisms. As of now, previous research has enlightened the important role of Cognitive Absorption (CA) in technology adoption but this study extends the perspective by explaining its relevance in continued usage behavior among Gen Z students. Furthermore, this study depicts contribution of immersive experiences in the formation of habitual usage patterns, therefore offering a deeper behavioral explanation of continuance. This finding align with previous research that also suggests that continued behavior leads to habit formation and reduces dependence on conscious intention.(Mohamed Limayem et al., 2007; Kim, 2010).

Second, this study extends the technology continuance literature by integrating TAM with Cognitive Absorption and also incorporating Habit as a mediator. The present study goes beyond the direct relationship between CA, Perceived Usefulness, and Perceived Ease of Use and explained how repeated engagement transform cognitive evaluations into automatic behavioral responses. This study enriches existing TAM-based continuance framework by positioning habit as a crucial link between experiential engagement and continued usage.

Third, this study contributes to the technology continuance literature by providing evidence of the mediating effect of Habit on post-adoption behavior. Although the traditional continuance theories focus on cognitive factors (e.g., Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use), the results suggest that habit is more likely to be a reason for continued use among experienced users. The results indicate that continuance decisions become increasingly automatic, rather than conscious, which corroborates the arguments put forward by Limayem et al (2007) and Venkatesh et al (2012). This helps to gain deeper insight into the OTT continuance from cognitive and behavioural perspectives.

Managerial implications

Firstly, the findings suggest that OTT service providers should focus on fostering habitual engagement rather than traditional usability focused strategies among users. Managers should create platforms that will promote repeated interaction because repeat usage is driven more by habit. The use of various features like personalized recommendations, auto-play functions, and continuity of content can fuel repetitive use patterns and promote habit building.

Secondly, managers should focus on user engagement with strategies rooted in experience that increase the cognitive absorption process. Managers should strive to provide engaging and

fun viewing experiences by using high-quality content, interactive elements, and smooth streaming. Firms should consider engagement not a one-off event, but a process of building the habit of engagement.

Third, the findings of this suggests that retention strategies should shift from persuasion to reinforcement. To encourage repeated behavior, managers should focus on maintaining consistent user experiences rather than continuously convincing the users about ease of using the platforms. Loyalty programs, watch history tracking, and personalized notifications can serve as behavioral cues that trigger habitual usage.

Fourth, the reduced importance of Perceived Ease of Use suggests that ease of use is now a basic factor rather than a specialized feature that differentiates OTT video streaming platforms. Therefore, OTT platforms should maintain smooth and basic usability standards but more emphasis should be given to value creation, content relevance, and user engagement mechanisms specifically when the major viewing users are from Gen Z.

Finally, the findings depicts that managers should focus on making OTT platforms as regular part of users' daily entertainment needs. By transforming usage into a habit, OTT platforms can achieve stronger Competitive position in highly competitive OTT market.

Conclusion

The present study emphasizes on post adoption behavior in digital platforms, especially in OTT platforms by integrating Cognitive Absorption Theory with TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) to explain continued intention to use among Gen Z students. The major findings depicts that Cognitive Absorption is a significant antecedent of Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness as well as a direct determinant of Continued Intention. Profoundly, the present study extends framework by incorporating Habit as a key mediator, showing that how continued usage behavior is formed over time. The results also showed that Cognitive Absorption also indirectly affects Continued Intention through Habit. This highlights the dual role of experiential engagement in shaping both intentional and automatic usage behavior.

The results also show that the relationship between continued Intention to use of OTT among Gen Z Students is better explained by a habit than by traditional evaluations of cognition. The robustness analysis revealed that the influence of Perceived Usefulness on Continued Intention was statistically significant only when Habit was not included in the model, suggesting that after a while, the conscious evaluation of usefulness becomes a habit. The study, therefore, empirically presents evidence for a shift between the intention-driven and habit-driven usage of OTT consumption.

Critically, this study highlights that Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use have no significant direct effect on Continuation Intention in the presence of Habit, it depicts that traditional cognitive evaluations become less effective once usage behavior becomes habitual. This indicates that in digitally mature environment operational simplicity and perceived benefits act only as initial drivers but they are eventually replaced by automatic behavioral patterns. This study expands the previous post adoption research by providing more comprehensive explanation of OTT continued usage behavior by not only emphasizing on the psychological depth of user engagement but also showed the transition from conscious intention to habit-driven usage among Gen Z students.

Limitations and future research

The present study has certain limitations beyond its contributions. First, the results may have been impacted by self-selection bias. Our sample comprises only active OTT Platforms users, therefore users who had left using OTT platforms may have different who had already left using the OTT platforms may have different perceptions. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as only explaining continued usage

intentions of OTT platforms users. Secondly, as the data are cross-sectional, all the statistically supported relationships can only be viewed as tentative and associational. Thirdly, while the current study integrates TAM, Cognitive Absorption, and Habit, other relevant factors such as perceived enjoyment, satisfaction, content quality, subscription cost, and platform trust were not included and may further provide important insights in the understanding of OTT continuance behavior.

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