

User Experience Matters: A Qualitative Exploration of Effort Expectancy and Behavioural Intention in Social Media Use Among Korean Pop (K-pop) Fans

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Abstract

This qualitative observational study investigates the relationship between Effort Expectancy (EE) and Behavioral Intention (BI) to use Social Media (SM) among K-pop fans, drawing on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). Utilizing non-participant observation, the researcher systematically documented participants' SM activities on platform X (formerly Twitter), focusing on their interactions, posting habits, and comments regarding various SM platforms. Findings indicate that K-pop fans perceive significant differences in the ease of use of these platforms, with user interface design and functionality significantly shaping their judgments of EE. Despite these variations, participants consistently demonstrated a strong intention to use SM for fan-related activities, such as connecting with other fans and supporting their favorite artists. This highlights the critical role of EE in driving fan engagement, while also suggesting that emotional connections to fandom and social interactions influence BI. The study contributes to understanding technology adoption in fan communities and the applicability of UTAUT in SM contexts. Future research should explore additional factors like social influence and perceived value, as well as investigate other platforms to provide a broader understanding of fan engagement across different cultural contexts.

1. Introduction

The Korean pop phenomenon, also referred to as K-pop, has been attracting millions of fans worldwide [1] and breaking through cultural barriers to become an international hit in recent years [2]. The dynamic and enthusiastic involvement of K-pop's fan base, which creates lively online communities and actively engages in a variety of fandom activities, is crucial to the genre's immense popularity [3]. Fans of K-pop can connect with one another, share content, and show support for their favorite artists through Social Media (SM) platforms, which are essential channels for communication, interaction, and information exchange [4].

Understanding what factors are impacting K-pop fans' use of SM is crucial for academics and professionals who aim to understand the dynamics of fan communities in the digital era. Effort Expectancy (EE), which has to do with how simple people think SM platforms are to use, is one such factor [5]. According to the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and other technology acceptance models (TAM), EE is a crucial

factor in determining people's intentions to adopt and use technology. Its precise impact on the K-pop fandom, however, has not yet been fully studied.

To fill this knowledge gap, this study will look at the relationship between K-pop fans' Behavioral Intention (BI) to use SM platforms and the EE in the context of UTAUT. This study aims to provide insight into the basic principles influencing SM usage among K-pop fans by examining the degree to which fans' intentions to interact with SM are influenced by perceived ease of use.

This study's potential contributions to theory and practice make it significant. Theoretically, it aims to deepen the knowledge to understand the technology acceptance theories by examining how social and cultural elements influence people's perceptions of technology usability and applying them to the unique context of fan communities. In practical terms, the findings of the study could help marketers, K-pop agencies, SM platform developers, and other stakeholders optimize their approaches to connecting with and satisfying the demands and preferences of K-pop fans.

In the following sections, relevant literature will be reviewed on technology acceptance theories, SM usage among K-pop fans, and related concepts. Subsequently, the research methodology, results, and discussion will be presented, culminating in a conclusion that summarizes the key findings and implications of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Technology Acceptance Theories

Within the field of information systems and related disciplines, the study of technology adoption and usage has become the center of attention. Venkatesh et al.'s UTAUT is a well-known theoretical framework in this field [5]. To provide a thorough understanding of the factors influencing people's acceptance and usage of technology, UTAUT incorporates elements from several current theories, such as the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), and the TAM [6].

The idea of EE, or the perceived ease of using a specific technology, is fundamental to UTAUT [5]. EE is a significant predictor of people's intentions to use technology, according to research based on UTAUT, and adoption behavior is positively influenced by perceived ease of use (PEoU) [5,7-10].

2.2 SM Usage Among K-pop Fans

Due to the success of Korean popular music, or K-pop, there is now a growing, international fan community that uses SM platforms to interact with other fans, show support for their favorite artists, and take part in fandom activities [11]. For K-pop fans, SM is the primary platform for community building, communication, and information sharing [12].

Many researchers have investigated various aspects of K-pop fans' use of SM. For instance, social interaction, entertainment, and information seeking were found to be among the main reasons why fans engaged with K-pop fan communities on X, formerly known as Twitter, according to Maros et al. [13]. Similar to this, Syawal [14] looked at how SM helps fans and K-pop idols engage in parasocial interactions, emphasizing how crucial SM is for creating a feeling of closeness and connection.

2.3 Gaps in the Literature

Even though K-pop is becoming more and more popular, and its fans are using SM extensively, there is still a lack of thorough knowledge about the precise factors influencing K-pop fans' intentions to interact on SM, particularly when it comes to the relationship between BI to use SM and EE in the context of K-pop fandom. Although EE has been found to be a significant factor in the adoption of technology generally, more research is necessary to fully understand its importance and how it affects K-pop fans' use of SM.

According to a recent study by Mohd Jenol & Ahmad Pazil's [15], K-pop artists' continuous production of goods and distribution of user-generated content on SM platforms significantly boost their popularity and recognition. Their study investigates the reasons behind the creation and promotion of SM content by K-pop fans. The findings show that fans participate in a collaborative culture where they actively create media content and assume roles of authority in their respective fan communities.

With the help of the V Live app, K-Pop idol groups from different and various entertainment companies can communicate with their fans online and stream live. "Live broadcasting" is the practice of allowing viewers to directly comment or react on the screen during a live broadcast [16]. Even though V Live has been around for nearly five years and has seen steady growth in both size and profits, Ham & Lee [17] claim that most research being done today concentrates on live streaming services such as Periscope, Twitch, and Afreeca TV. There is not enough user-level research on V Live.

To close this gap in knowledge, this study looks at user-level research on SM in general and how EE affects K-pop fans' BI to use SM platforms. Additionally, this study aims to shed light on the variables influencing K-pop fans' tendency to use SM. Through the application of technology acceptance theories to the context of fan

communities, this study attempts to advance the knowledge to understand the variables influencing the use of SM among K-pop fans.

2.4 EE in the Context of K-pop Fandom

The world of K-pop fans on SM is influenced by EE factors for several reasons. Firstly, K-pop fans take a sense of fulfilment in staying up to date on the newest releases, events, and idols and groups they admire [18]. K-pop fans typically go to concerts, meet-and-greets, and other events to support and keep in touch with their idols, according to an article [4]. Fans have a better overall experience because SM platforms make it simple for them to stay in touch and get real-time updates [19].

One of the many benefits of SM is that it facilitates communication between users more easily than traditional systems [20]. According to motivation experts, reinforcement, whether positive or negative, can affect an individual's behavior [21, 22]. EE has been shown in prior research to have a positive impact on the willingness of individuals to use technology [23–26]. SM platforms are user-friendly, support visual content, have tools for multimedia communication, hashtags, push notifications, gamification elements, and are mobile friendly. All these efforts are intended to increase K-pop fans' online support for EE. Fans can easily join the committed K-pop fandom because these platforms are designed to meet their needs. Thus, it is expected that among K-pop fans, EE and BI will have a strong and positive relationship when using SM.

H1: *EE* has a significant effect on *BI* to use SM among K-pop fans.

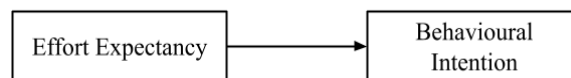


Fig. 1 Research Framework.

3. Methods











3.1 Research Design

To examine the relationship between K-pop fans' BI to use SM and their expectations regarding EE, this study used an observational qualitative research design. In the context of this study, EE refers to the PEoU of SM platforms, while BI refers to the motivation of K-pop fans to continue engaging with these platforms. Through SM account observation, the researcher was able to learn more about the posting habits, interactions, and usage patterns of K-pop fans. Researchers used non-participant observation and documentation as a form of data collection. Witnessing people without engaging in their activities is known as non-participant observation [27].

3.2 Data Collection

The participants in this study are K-pop fans who actively use SM for K-pop-related activities. They will be selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who identify as K-pop fans and regularly use SM platforms like X, to represent a range of engagement levels and roles within the fan community. Rather than employing a direct observational approach, the researcher will use the X SM platform to gather data on the behaviors, usage patterns, and perceptions of K-pop fans in relation to usage of SM. The researcher intends to document the observations made by several SM users using this method, which will be done in accordance with Widya & Wahyuengsih's methodology [28], by observing the participants without interacting with them directly. Table 1 contains specific information on the selected accounts, such as their usernames, user IDs, account creation dates, and total followers. By examining these various accounts, the study hopes to gain a holistic picture of how different aspects of EE interact within the K-pop fandom on SM.

Table 1 Participants details.

Username	User ID	Account creation	Total followers
Berns   	@borastarblooded	04/2021	180
mish7    	@koookieberry	04/2012	6,556
ON NCT MENFESS	@nct_menfess	06/2020	642,700
BLUEJAYSHOP	@bluejayshop	01/2021	99,400
ky 	@cheowielne	07/2023	2,467
Allie7  semi ia	@romanvante	07/2019	146
crystal raine 	@sunscrolls	12/2022	103
Cris	@CristCh_22	02/2013	315

3.3 Data Analysis

To find patterns, themes, and trends pertaining to K-pop fans' BI and EE when using SM, data analysis involving qualitative interpretation of the SM activity has been observed. The researcher methodically examined the gathered information, seeking out recurrent patterns and significant findings.

The goal of the analysis was to find illustrations of how participants' interactions and posting behaviors on SM content reflected their expectations regarding the usefulness and advantages of using these platforms for K-pop-related activities. These events were analyzed with respect to the larger background of K-pop fandom and the interaction of the participants with SM.

3.4 Conclusion Drawing

The relationship between K-pop fans' BI to use SM and the EE was determined through an analysis of their observed SM activity. The UTAUT and other theoretical frameworks were taken into consideration when interpreting patterns and trends found in the posting behaviors and interactions of the participants.

4. Results and Discussion

The qualitative observational study's findings provided important insights into the relationship between K-pop fans' BI to use SM and the EE. The observations from the X platform allowed the researcher to analyze public posts and interactions to assess the impact of EE on BI in the context of K-pop fandom.

4.1 User Interface Design

First, a review of the SM content that was seen revealed that K-pop fans have different opinions about how user-friendly different SM platforms are. In their discussions of their experiences using various SM platforms, participants frequently brought up how functionality, navigation, and UI design affected how they perceived the EE. Participants, for instance, appreciated platforms with user-friendly interfaces and streamlined features, calling them simple to use and navigate.



Fig. 2 Screen capture from the user's post (a) @borastarblooded; (b) @koookieberry.

One noteworthy example of this can be found in the comments left by users sharing their Weverse app experiences on the X platform. User @borastarblooded noted how much they liked the new Weverse Concerts interface improvements, particularly how simple it was to hide the chat and switch between single and multi-view

modes (Fig. 2(a)). The fact that the user finds the new features to improve the overall experience by making it easier and more efficient to navigate, suggests that the platform's usability and EE are viewed favorably.

In a comparable manner, user @kookieberry expressed admiration for the enhanced Weverse interface on Fig. 2(b), saying it is "so nice." This simple but dedicated remark emphasizes how crucial user interface design is in influencing users' conceptions of EE. A visually appealing and intuitive interface can greatly improve the user experience by lowering the amount of work needed to complete desired actions on the platform.

The examples provided show how much users appreciate SM sites that put an emphasis on usability through well-thought-out layout and useful additions. User-friendly features and intuitive navigation increase EE, increasing the likelihood that users will interact with the platform on a regular basis. These findings support the hypothesis (H1) that EE has a significant effect on BI, as users are more likely to interact with platforms that offer a smoother, more user-friendly experience, consistent with the UTAUT framework.

4.2 Easy to Connect with Other Fans

The SM content that has been observed offers important insights into how participants intend to use SM in the context of K-pop fandom. Users showed a strong BI to engage with SM for a variety of purposes, including supporting their favorite artists, interacting with other fans, and sharing content, despite differences in EE across platforms.



Fig. 3 Method to connect with other users (a) Follow for Follow Method; (b) Follow and Win Method; (c) Task, Follow and Win Method.

The "Follow for Follow" approach, for instance, as demonstrated by the post in Fig. 3(a), shows participants' goal to develop and widen their network within the K-pop community. By encouraging mutually beneficial following, this technique strengthens bonds between fans. The regularity of these posts reveals participants' commitment to expanding their fan base and increasing their SM presence, indicating a strong BI to use SM for community building.

In the same way, Fig. 3(b) illustrates the users' intention to interact on SM to be eligible to win K-pop-related merchandise through the "Follow and Win" method. By encouraging interaction with likes, reposts, and follows, this approach encourages users to actively engage in SM activities that provide material benefits. Because of the possibility of receiving exclusive content or merchandise, these posts are very popular, which indicates a high level of engagement and a strong BI influenced by perceived rewards.

Fig. 3(c) illustrates the "Task, Follow and Win" method, which shows how willing participants are to complete tasks to receive rewards. In order to use this method, users, who will receive the reward, must follow the user's account, who will give the reward, by interacting with posts (such as likes, comments or repost), and show proof of completion (by streaming, voting, or interacting), all while expressing their desire to support their favorite artists and take part in fan-driven promotional events. The difficulty of the tasks suggests a high degree of dedication and a strong BI to use SM to support their idols' success.

K-pop fans regularly exhibit a strong BI to use SM, despite variations in EE across different platforms, according to the observed SM content. SM plays a crucial role in the K-pop fandom experience, as evidenced by

their frequent posts, interactions, and contributions to online fan communities, which highlight their commitment to fostering relationships with other fans, exchanging content, and supporting their favorite artists. These patterns suggest that while EE may vary, K-pop fans maintain a strong BI to use SM for community engagement and fandom-related activities, further confirming H1 that EE plays a significant role in shaping BI.

4.3 User Experience with the User Interface

Finally, the SM content that was analyzed showed that K-pop fans' BI and EE had complex relationships. Most participants still intended to use SM, despite some expressing irritation or discontent with specific features or technical problems of these platforms. According to this, K-pop fans' BI may also be greatly influenced by variables other than EE, such as social influence, perceived value, and emotional attachment to the fandom.



Fig. 4 Posts from K-pop fans on SM (a) User @romanvante; (b) User @sunscrolls; (c) User @CristCh_22.

Weverse's complicated interface and technical problems are among the features that users are most frustrated and dissatisfied with, as evidenced by their posts. For example, user @romanvante notes on Fig. 4(a) that the interface must be simplified as it is difficult to use, making it difficult to locate purchased content and causing users to watch it infrequently. Fig. 4(c) displays user @CristCh_22's criticism of the app, stating that it is confusing and not user-friendly, especially when following multiple artists. User @sunscrolls, as shown in fig. 3(b), on the other hand, expresses confusion and dislike for the interface. Despite these negative experiences with EE, participants continued to use the platform due to other influential factors, such as social influence, perceived value, and emotional attachment to the fandom.

The impact of social influence, perceived value, and emotional attachment is highlighted by the users' continued use of the platform, even though some of them expressed severe frustration with the Weverse interface's complexity and usability problems. These factors are critical in sustaining a high BI to use SM among K-pop fans, indicating that fandom contexts have complex motivations that go beyond simple Expectancy of Effort.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to understanding of the dynamics of SM usage within the K-pop fandom and the role of EE in influencing BI among fans. The observed variations in EE across different SM platforms highlight the importance of platform design and functionality in shaping users' perceptions of ease of use. SM platforms that prioritize user-friendly interfaces and seamless navigation are likely to be more appealing to K-pop fans, fostering greater engagement and participation within fan communities. This study agrees with the statement proposed by Sutcliffe [29], a positive mood can be produced by a pleasant and enjoyable user experience.

Despite variations in EE, the observed high levels of BI to use SM among K-pop fans underscore the significance of these platforms as central hubs for fan interaction and engagement. According to Chung's research [30], users are more likely to participate in online communities more frequently and intensely if they are willing to put in the necessary effort. The necessary effort in the context of this study such as the strong sense of community due to shared identity, and collective fandom experience, it is observed among participants contribute to the sustained and active participation within online fan communities.

6. Conclusion

As Roslan et al. [31] suggested, this study used a qualitative observational approach to evaluate the association between EE and BI to Use SM among K-pop fans. Therefore, the relationship between EE and BI to use SM among K-pop fans has been investigated in this qualitative observational study. By tracking participants' SM activity, the researcher has found enough evidence to support the hypothesis that EE has a major impact on BI's use of SM for K-pop-related activities.

The findings highlight the significance of EE in shaping K-pop fans' BI regarding SM usage. Participants' perceptions of ease of use varied across different platforms, with factors such as user interface design and

functionality influencing their judgments. Despite variations in EE, participants demonstrated a consistent and strong intention to use SM for fan-related activities, such as connecting with other fans, sharing content, and supporting their favorite artists.

The observed patterns suggest that PEOU plays a crucial role in driving fans' intentions to engage with SM within the K-pop fandom context. Platforms that are perceived as easy to use and navigate are more likely to facilitate fan engagement and participation. However, it is important to note that the findings focus specifically on the influence of EE and do not address other potential factors that may also play a role in shaping SM usage among K-pop fans.

In conclusion, this study contributes to understanding of technology adoption within fan communities and underscores the importance of EE in influencing fans' intentions to engage with SM platforms. By providing insights into the factors shaping SM usage among K-pop fans, this research informs efforts to optimize fan engagement and interaction within online communities.

Future research should examine additional variables that may contribute to SM usage among K-pop fans, such as social influence and intrinsic motivation. Expanding the scope to include other fandoms or cultural contexts could further validate the findings and offer broader insights into fan engagement across different communities.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

*The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation:** Muhammad Amirul Asyraf Roslan; **supervision, reviews and amendment:** Nurul Amelina Nasharuddin, Masrah Azrifah Azmi Murad. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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