Journal of Education and Educational Research
ISSN: 2957-9465 | Vol. 10, No. 1, 2024

Factors Influencing the Intention of Knowledge Paying Consumer Behavior among College Students in Guangdong

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Abstract: This study utilizes the TPB-TAM integrated model to construct a theoretical model of consumer behavioral intention for knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province. Using university students in Guangdong as a case study, the research analyzes the factors influencing the consumer behavioral intentions of knowledge payment users and summarizes the relationships between the relevant variables. The empirical research adopts quantitative methods and an online questionnaire survey. The data collected from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, validity analysis, factor analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The study finds that perceived behavioral control, copyright awareness, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived service quality are significantly and positively correlated with users' consumption intentions. Additionally, perceived behavioral control, consumption intentions, and perceived service quality are significantly and positively correlated with users' actual consumption behavior. To enhance the consumption experience and satisfaction of knowledge payment users, it is crucial for knowledge payment platforms, relevant government departments, and users themselves to work together. This collaboration should focus on effectively managing user costs, strengthening copyright protection, and prioritizing the development of online reputation, thereby promoting the healthy development of the knowledge payment market among university students in Guangdong Province.

Keywords: Knowledge Payment; Consumer Behavior; TPB-TAM Integrated Model; Quantitative Analysis Method.

1. Introduction

With the robust growth of the global economy and rapid advancements in technology, the demand for paid access to knowledge has been steadily increasing. The origins of knowledge payment can be traced back to the 1990s when media outlets such as newspapers and magazines began charging for their online content, establishing an initial model of online knowledge payment known as the "paywall." In the context of globalization, knowledge payment has had a profound impact on society and the economy. The rapid development of internet technology has made people more inclined to learn and receive training on online platforms, which has fueled the rapid expansion of the knowledge payment industry.

In China, although the knowledge payment industry started slightly later, it has benefited from the rapid growth of the national economy, the deepening of the learning-oriented society, the country's strong emphasis on intellectual property, and the widespread phenomenon of "knowledge anxiety." Platforms such as Ximalaya and Zhihu emerged rapidly since 2016, marking the beginning of a new era of knowledge payment in China. This year is regarded as the "Year One of Knowledge Payment." Since 2016, the acceptance and recognition of knowledge payment among Chinese users have steadily increased, with consumption upgrades driving the growth of cultural expenditure and the continuous expansion of the knowledge payment market. By December 2021, the scale of China's knowledge payment market had reached 67.5 billion yuan, with a user base of 477 million people, laying a solid foundation for the knowledge payment industry. However, as the knowledge payment market matures, users' consumption attitudes have become more rational, and many issues have gradually emerged. Currently, knowledge payment platforms are generally facing the "three low" dilemma of user attrition, declining repurchase rates, and shrinking revenue, which greatly limits the further development of the industry. Adjusting operational strategies to attract user consumption has become an urgent problem for knowledge payment platforms.

Guangdong, as China's leading economic province, with rapid economic growth, high internet penetration, and strong cultural consumption capabilities, provides a vast market space and development potential for the knowledge payment field. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, Guangdong's GDP reached 12.91 trillion yuan in 2022, ranking first in China for 34 consecutive years. As the income levels of Guangdong residents continue to rise, their desire and demand for high-value knowledge payment consumption also increase. The 2022 "China Comprehensive Lifelong Education Platform Big Data Report" shows that Guangdong holds a dominant position in the knowledge payment field. Among users of Tencent Classroom, Guangdong users ranked first in the country, accounting for 15.2%, with an average per capita expenditure on knowledge payment of 1,023 yuan, the highest in the country. These data fully demonstrate Guangdong's leading market position and strong consumption potential in the knowledge payment field. In summary, the development of China's knowledge payment industry in the internet era is of significant research value. Moreover, to further address the "three low" dilemma, promote the construction of a learning-oriented society, and achieve high-quality development, it is crucial to fully understand and identify the factors influencing the consumption behavioral

intentions of knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province. The research objectives and questions of this study are as follows:

(1) What are the factors influencing the consumption behavioral intentions of knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province?

(2) What is the influencing factor model of consumption behavioral intentions for knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province?

(3) What recommendations can the research provide to knowledge payment platforms, relevant government departments, and other stakeholders?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Knowledge Payment

Knowledge payment originated from content payment, with the two being in a subordinate relationship. Knowledge payment specifically refers to profitable knowledge-based content, while content payment includes not only knowledge-based profitable content but also entertainment-based profitable content, such as music, film, and games [1].

The rise of knowledge payment is closely related to the development of computer technology, the protection of intellectual property by the state, information redundancy, and the widespread adoption of mobile payments. However, as the knowledge payment market matures and users shift from impulsive consumption to a more rational consumption mindset, the knowledge payment industry has gradually entered a "cooling period," and many issues with knowledge payment platforms have become increasingly apparent. Some scholars believe that one of the challenges facing the knowledge payment industry is inadequate protection of intellectual property and the severe problem of piracy. It is suggested that government agencies should establish and improve the management mechanisms for the knowledge payment industry, perfect relevant laws and regulations, and also strengthen supervision and scrutiny of knowledge payment platforms, as well as increase the severity of penalties for copyright infringement, to effectively curb such behavior.

Current academic research on knowledge payment user behavior mainly focuses on the factors influencing user intentions and behavior, encompassing both knowledge production and knowledge consumption. Knowledge producers are the foundation of various knowledge payment platforms' operations and sustained development, as well as the primary source of content creation [2]. Users' knowledge consumption behavior ensures the continued growth of knowledge payment platforms and the industry. Scholars are currently studying user knowledge consumption behavior from three aspects: factors related to users themselves, user-to-user interactions, and user-to-platform interactions.

Zhang Yangyi et al. (2018) pointed out in their research that users' thirst for knowledge positively influences their willingness to pay for content [3]. Zhang Ying et al. (2018) found that knowledge producers with strong expertise and high reputation are more likely to attract users' attention, gain users' trust, and have their content more readily consumed by users [4]. Li Gang (2018) noted that users' trust in knowledge payment platforms positively influences their consumption behavior [5]. However, there is little research applying the basic principles of the TPB-TAM model to construct a research model for knowledge payment user behavior. This study, by examining users' knowledge consumption behavior, aims to help knowledge payment platforms fundamentally understand user psychology, meet user needs, and improve user experience, thereby overcoming development bottlenecks and promoting the sustained and healthy growth of the industry, ultimately establishing a positive knowledge economy driven by user payment incentives.

2.2. TPB-TAM

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was first proposed by Ajzen in 1991 [6] and is one of the fundamental models in social psychology for studying specific individual behaviors. It includes three variables: behavioral attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Scholars have widely applied this model in various fields to predict the formation of individual behavioral intentions, and many studies have confirmed that this theory can accurately predict and explain individual behavioral intentions. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), proposed by Davis, is a classic model for studying consumer intentions and acceptance behavior. It includes two variables: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. TAM is effective in predicting consumers' acceptance and use of information technology. Since online knowledge consumption behavior involves the use of information technologies such as online platforms and electronic payments, it is suitable to conduct research based on the TAM model.

3. Theoretical Model and Hypotheses

This study is based on the TPB theory and the TAM model, using six factors—perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, copyright awareness, and perceived service quality—as independent variables. In the context of knowledge payment, copyright awareness and perceived behavioral control fall under the category of user-related factors, subjective norms belong to the category of user-to-user interaction factors, and perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived service quality belong to the category of user-to-platform interaction factors. The study explores the influence of these factors on the consumption behavioral intentions of knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province from three perspectives: user-related factors, user-to-user interaction factors, and user-to-platform interaction factors (Figure 1).

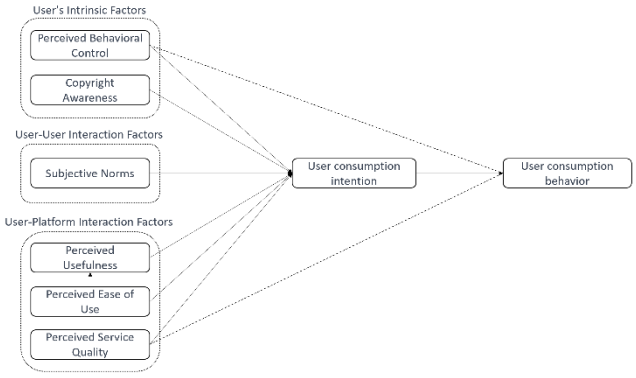


Figure 1. Model of Factors Influencing the Consumption Behavioral Intentions of Knowledge Payment Users among University Students in Guangdong Province

In the theoretical research of TPB-TAM, perceived

behavioral control involves the user's assessment of potential facilitators or barriers in terms of decision-making freedom, time, and financial resources during knowledge consumption. When users are confident that they have sufficient time and financial resources and can effectively control their behavioral choices, their willingness to pay for knowledge significantly increases [7]. Furthermore, when users purchase knowledge products, they are not just paying for the knowledge itself but also for the copyright behind the original content. Users with strong copyright awareness are more likely to recognize the true value of knowledge products and thus are more inclined to purchase legitimate products and pay for the underlying copyright [8]. The higher the degree to which users are influenced by subjective norms, the more likely their knowledge consumption intentions are to be shaped by various social factors, making their behavior more aligned with social expectations [9]. Additionally, when users believe that using these platforms and products can enhance their learning or work efficiency, or add enjoyment to their learning and work, they will develop a strong sense of perceived usefulness, which in turn stimulates positive cognitive and emotional feedback [10]. The research by Liu Xiaoli et al. (2020) also demonstrated that among the multiple factors influencing users' online knowledge consumption intentions, perceived ease of use plays the most significant role [11]. When users find the functionality of knowledge payment platforms easy to operate, their purchasing intentions naturally increase. Perceived ease of use not only strengthens users' purchasing intentions but also enhances their practical evaluation of the knowledge payment platforms and their products [12]. Users assess the value and quality of products based on their perception of the platform's service quality, which directly influences their purchasing intentions [13]. Purchasing behavioral intentions often indicate subsequent actual behavior, and the strength of these intentions directly impacts the probability of behavior implementation. When a behavioral intention is more pronounced, the likelihood of the individual carrying out the related behavior increases. In the absence of other intervening factors, behavioral intentions can explain up to 22% of behavioral changes [14]. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this paper:

H1: Perceived behavioral control significantly and positively influences users' consumption intentions.

H2: Perceived behavioral control significantly and positively influences users' consumption behavior.

H3: Copyright awareness significantly and positively influences users' consumption intentions.

H4: Subjective norms significantly and positively influence users' consumption intentions.

H5: Perceived usefulness significantly and positively influences users' consumption intentions.

H6: Perceived ease of use significantly and positively influences users' consumption intentions.

H7: Perceived ease of use significantly and positively influences perceived usefulness.

H8: Perceived service quality significantly and positively influences users' consumption intentions.

H9: Perceived service quality significantly and positively influences users' consumption behavior.

H10: Users' consumption intentions significantly and positively influence users' consumption behavior.

4. Data Sources and Sample Analysis

4.1. Data Sources

This study identifies the clear concepts and connotations of the research subjects based on a substantial body of literature. A survey questionnaire was designed to investigate the factors influencing the consumption behavioral intentions of knowledge payment among university students in Guangdong Province, considering the actual research situation and previous studies. The questionnaire is divided into four main sections. The first section consists of screening questions to ensure that respondents have purchased knowledge payment products. The second section collects basic information about the respondents, including "gender," "age," and "education level." The third section gathers information on the respondents' knowledge payment consumption behavior, including "monthly expenditure on knowledge payment platforms" and "types of knowledge payment products purchased." The fourth section uses a 5-point Likert scale to measure responses, with options ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral (neither agree nor disagree), disagree, to strongly disagree, corresponding to values of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

Based on this, the study employs a quantitative research method targeting university students in Guangdong Province who have purchased knowledge payment products. The research sample is drawn from 175 higher education institutions within the province [15]. The questionnaires were distributed and collected both online and offline. The distribution period lasted one month, from February 28 to March 28, 2024. The online questionnaires were created using the Questionnaire Star platform and disseminated via QR codes and web links, while offline questionnaires were distributed at Guangzhou University Town and Shenzhen University Town. A total of 389 online responses and 261 offline responses were collected. After screening for the question, "Have you purchased knowledge payment products?" 185 responses were excluded due to a "No" answer. To ensure the accuracy and usability of the data, 54 questionnaires with identical responses to all items were deemed invalid and deleted. This resulted in 411 valid questionnaires. Reliability and validity analyses were then conducted using SPSS 21.0. The most common indicators used are the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure, and Bartlett's test of sphericity for validity. Both the Alpha coefficient and KMO values range from 0 to 1. If the reliability and validity coefficients are above 0.8, the questionnaire is considered reliable and valid [16]. The final analysis showed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the questionnaires were all greater than 0.8 (Table 1), the KMO value was also greater than 0.8, and Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded an approximate chi-square value of 5515.085, with df = 276 and sig. less than 0.05, indicating significance (Table 2). The results demonstrate that the survey has high reliability and validity.

Table 1. CITC and reliability coefficients for all observed variables

Measurement dimension	Item coding	CITC	Cronbach α	Cronbach α
Perceptual behavioral control	ZX1	0.760	0.818	0.873
	ZX2	0.748	0.829	
	ZX3	0.761	0.817	
Copyright awareness	BQ1	0.750	0.799	0.863
	BQ2	0.732	0.815	
	BQ3	0.738	0.809	
Subjective norm	ZG1	0.749	0.795	0.861
	ZG2	0.751	0.793	
	ZG3	0.712	0.828	
Perceived usefulness	GY1	0.721	0.844	0.870
	GY2	0.782	0.788	
	GY3	0.750	0.817	
Perceived ease of use	GYX1	0.726	0.797	0.855
	GYX2	0.726	0.797	
	GYX3	0.727	0.796	
Perceived service quality	FZ1	0.746	0.828	0.872
	FZ2	0.754	0.822	
	FZ3	0.766	0.810	
User consumption intention	XY1	0.708	0.781	0.843
	XY2	0.715	0.774	
	XY3	0.700	0.789	
User consumption behavior	XX1	0.752	0.833	0.876
	XX2	0.762	0.825	
	XX3	0.771	0.817	

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett spheres test analysis table

KMO		0.873
Bartlett	chi-square value	5515.085
	degrees of freedom (df)	276
	significance (sig.)	0.000

Table 3. Description of the overall situation of the sample

Variables	**category**	**frequency**	Percentage (%)
gender	male	256	62.3
	female	155	37.7
age	18-24 years old	256	62.3
	25-30 years old	92	22.4
	31-40 years old	37	9
	41 years old and above	26	6.3
Educational level	Junior college	272	66.2
	Undergraduate	113	27.5
	Master's student	0	0
	Doctoral student	26	6.3
Monthly amount spent on the pay for knowledge platform	below 100 yuan	318	77.4
	101~300 yuan	70	17
	301~500 yuan	23	5.6
	above 501 yuan	0	0
Types of paid knowledge products purchased	Audio category (live broadcast, recorded broadcast)	229	27.50%
	Video (live broadcasting, recording and broadcasting)	314	37.70%
	Graphic reading	178	21.40%
	Question and answer	112	13.40%

Through the analysis of the sample population of knowledge payment among university students in Guangdong Province (Table 3), the profile from this survey indicates the following: males aged 18-30 with associate or bachelor's degrees, who spend less than 100 yuan per month on knowledge payment platforms, with a maximum of 300 yuan. The types of paid products purchased are mainly video and audio content. One notable point is that, in this survey, audio products were also very popular among users. However, according to data from Huajing Industry Research Institute, audio products ranked fourth, with data far lower than that of text and image products [17].

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of the types of paid knowledge products

variable	category		Types of paid knowledge products purchased			
			Audio category (live broadcast, recorded broadcast)	Video (live broadcasting, recording and broadcasting)	Graphic reading	Question and answer
gender	male	frequency	152	177	75	42
		Percentage(%)	59.40%	69.10%	29.30%	16.40%
	female	frequency	77	137	103	70
		Percentage(%)	49.70%	88.40%	66.50%	45.20%
age	18-24 years old	frequency	151	188	85	34
		Percentage(%)	59.00%	73.40%	33.20%	13.30%
	25-30 years old	frequency	24	68	68	43
		Percentage(%)	26.10%	73.90%	73.90%	46.70%
	31-40 years old	frequency	28	32	25	9
		Percentage(%)	75.70%	86.50%	67.60%	24.30%
	41 years old and above	frequency	26	26	0	26
		Percentage(%)	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Educational level	Junior college	frequency	203	175	110	43
		Percentage(%)	74.60%	64.30%	40.40%	15.80%
	Undergraduate	frequency	0	113	68	43
		Percentage(%)	0.00%	100.00%	60.20%	38.10%
	Master's student	frequency	0	0	0	0
		Percentage(%)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Doctoral student	frequency	26	26	0	26
		Percentage(%)	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Monthly amount spent on the pay for knowledge platform	below 100 yuan	frequency	229	221	153	112
		Percentage(%)	72.00%	69.50%	48.10%	35.20%
	101~300 yuan	frequency	0	70	25	0
		Percentage(%)	0.00%	100.00%	35.70%	0.00%
	301~500 yuan	frequency	0	23	0	0
		Percentage(%)	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	above 501 yuan	frequency	0	0	0	0
		Percentage(%)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

This study speculates that the reason for this difference could be that the data from Huajing Industry Research Institute focuses on users over the age of 35, while the cross-tabulation of knowledge payment product types in this study (Table 4) clearly shows that the majority of the university students surveyed are under 30 years old, between 18 and 30. In other words, among young people aged 18 to 30, audio products are more popular than text and image products. However, as people age, particularly after 30, the popularity of text and image products gradually surpasses that of audio products.

Based on this, we suggest that producers of audio products could target a younger audience by creating content that appeals to teenagers, thereby maximizing the audience advantage of their products. Conversely, text and image products could focus on targeting those over 30 years old to better leverage their audience advantage.

Another point of difference is highlighted in the "2022 China Knowledge Payment Industry Report" released by iiMedia in 2022, which noted that people aged 35 and above became the main consumers in the knowledge payment industry [18]. However, in this study, it was the 18-24 age group that made up a large portion of consumers in the knowledge payment industry. This study speculates that the reason for this discrepancy may be due to the fact that the iiMedia report is based on data from 2022, while this study is based on survey data from 2024. Therefore, this study proposes a bold hypothesis: over the short span of two years, the knowledge payment industry has experienced rapid growth, which indeed aligns with the facts [19]. The age of knowledge payment users has shifted downward. This suggests that the knowledge payment industry may need to consider expanding content segments that appeal to younger audiences. This would help in better increasing user engagement. Additionally, another point to consider is that young people aged 18-24 may tend to spend less than 100 yuan per month on knowledge payment, with a maximum acceptable amount of 300 yuan. Therefore, while expanding the youth-oriented segments, knowledge payment industry operators should not overlook this issue.

4.2. Results Analysis

Based on the correlation analysis (Table 5) and regression analysis results (Table 6), it can be observed that the consumption intentions and behaviors of university students in Guangdong Province regarding knowledge payment are positively and significantly influenced by perceived behavioral control, copyright awareness, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived service quality. These results reflect the following:

1. When users in Guangdong Province make purchases on knowledge payment platforms, they not only focus on the content itself but also place significant importance on the time and economic costs involved. Therefore, platforms should strive to optimize processes, enhance efficiency, and reduce the costs associated with acquiring knowledge. Additionally, utilizing big data technology to analyze user behavior can help achieve precise matching between product recommendations and user needs, thereby improving the efficiency of knowledge acquisition.

2. The pricing methods for knowledge products can also be diversified. Instead of the commonly used fixed pricing

methods, differentiated pricing and negotiated pricing could be introduced. Differentiated pricing should consider the expertise of the knowledge producers and the consumption levels of users, allowing the price of knowledge products to fluctuate within a reasonable range. Negotiated pricing would allow users and knowledge producers to negotiate the price based on their perception of the product's value, and after reaching a consensus, determine the price. This approach not only meets users' personalized needs but also incentivizes knowledge producers to provide higher-quality content.

3. Platforms must effectively strengthen the management and protection of the copyrights of knowledge products. Advanced technology can be utilized to expand protection channels, and efforts should be made to cultivate users' awareness of copyright, aiming to further influence their intentions and behaviors towards knowledge payment.

Table 5. Correlation analysis table

measurement dimensions	ZX	BQ	ZG	GY	GYX	FZ	XY	XX
ZX	1	.280	.273	.193	.334	.328	.290	.338
BQ		1	.462	.346	.307	.325	.362	.353
ZG			1	.455	.338	.323	.378	.284
GY				1	.237	.271	.315	.227
GYX					1	.351	.322	.253
FZ						1	.358	.380
XY							1	.285
XX								1
The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).								

Table 6. Regression analysis of user consumption intention

Measurement dimension	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Standardized Coefficient β	t	p
Perceptual behavioral control	0.264	0.254	24.206	0.098	2.066	0.039
Copyright awareness				0.142	2.812	0.005
Subjective norm				0.145	2.739	0.006
Perceived usefulness				0.110	2.247	0.025
Perceived ease of use				0.113	2.336	0.020
Perceived service quality				0.164	3.369	0.001
Dependent Variable: User Consumption Intention						
Measurement dimension	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Standardized Coefficient β	t	p
Perceptual behavioral control	0.209	0.204	35.922	0.215	4.519	0.000
Perceived service quality				0.263	5.394	0.000
user consumption intention				0.129	2.676	0.008
Dependent Variable: User Consumption Behavior						
Measurement dimension	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Standardized Coefficient β	t	p
Perceived Ease of Use	0.056	0.054	24.382	0.237	4.938	0.000
Dependent Variable: Perceived Usefulness						

5. Conclusion

This study is based on the TPB theory and the TAM model as its theoretical foundation, combined with previous scholarly research, to construct a model of the consumption behavioral intentions of knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province and to propose hypotheses. Subsequently, an online and offline survey was conducted among university students in Guangzhou and Shenzhen to collect data, validate the data, and draw the following conclusions:

1. There are three main factors influencing the consumption behavioral intentions of knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province: individual user factors, user-to-user interaction factors, and user-to-platform interaction factors. According to the theory, these factors are further divided into perceptual behavioral control, copyright awareness, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived service quality. Among these, perceptual behavioral control and perceived service quality directly influence users' consumption behavior, while other factors indirectly influence users' consumption behavior by affecting their consumption intentions.

2. The model of factors influencing the consumption behavioral intentions of knowledge payment users among university students in Guangdong Province shows that perceptual behavioral control, copyright awareness, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived service quality are significantly and positively correlated with users' consumption intentions. Additionally, perceptual behavioral control, user consumption intention, and perceived service quality are significantly and positively correlated with users' consumption behavior.

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