

**THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED BENEFITS
AND SACRIFICES ON THE ADOPTION
BEHAVIOUR OF EARTHY SHORT-FORM
VIDEOS: A STUDY ON SMALL-TOWN YOUTH
IN HENAN, CHINA**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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VIDEOS: A STUDY ON SMALL-TOWN YOUTH
IN HENAN, CHINA**

by

GUO PIANPIAN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Adoption
ENJ	Enjoyment
PC	Perceived Cost
PR	Perceived Risk
PRE	Self-presentation
PV	Perceived Value
SEF	Self-efficacy
SOI	Social Interaction
SUB	Subcultural Recognition
TEC	Technicality
USF	Usefulness
VUG	Vulgarity

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**PENGARUH MANFAAT DAN PENGORBANAN YANG DIRASAI
TERHADAP TINGKAH LAKU PENERIMAAN VIDEO PENDEK *EARTHY*:
SATU KAJIAN TERHADAP BELIA DI BANDAR KECIL HENAN, CHINA**

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan teknologi maklumat telah melahirkan era video pendek. Walaupun terdapat kritikan dan keraguan, video pendek bersahaja telah berkembang pesat, dengan cepat mengambil alih apl video pendek utama, platform media sosial, rangkaian dan platform e-dagang. Fenomena populariti ini membingungkan dan patut dikaji sebab disebaliknya dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi. Untuk meneroka pengaruh faktor faedah yang dirasakan dan faktor pengorbanan terhadap nilai yang dirasakan dan penggunaan video pendek yang bersifat *earthy*, kajian ini telah membina model penerimaan nilai untuk video pendek yang *earthy* berdasarkan VAM dan teori nilai persepsi. belia bandar kecil, protagonis video pendek bumi, sebagai objek kajian, mengumpul 548 sampel daripada belia bandar kecil, dan menganalisis data secara statistik menggunakan kaedah pemodelan persamaan struktur. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan video pendek bersahaja oleh belia bandar kecil China ditentukan oleh gabungan nilai persepsi mereka terhadap video pendek bersahaja, keberkesanan diri, pengiktirafan subbudaya dan kegunaan. Pengiktirafan subbudaya, kebergunaan dan teknikal secara positif mempengaruhi nilai yang dirasakan. persembahan diri memberi kesan positif kepada penerimaan. Selain itu, keseronokan, interaksi sosial, kelucuan, kos yang dirasakan dan risiko yang dirasakan tidak mempengaruhi nilai atau penerimaan dengan ketara. Efikasi sendiri boleh

meramalkan penerimaan tetapi tidak menyederhanakan hubungan antara nilai yang dirasakan dan penerimaan. Kajian mendapati bahawa belia bandar kecil China menghasilkan dan menggunakan video pendek bersahaja bukan untuk keseronokan atau sosialisasi, tetapi untuk kegunaan diri dan identiti subbudaya. Mereka tidak mengiktiraf risiko kesihatan, kognitif dan privasi yang dikaitkan dengan video pendek bersahaja, dan mereka juga tidak bimbang dengan bayaran trafik yang ditanggung atau masa dan usaha yang diperluaskan untuk mereka. Mereka kurang mengambil berat tentang kekasaran video pendek bersahaja, tetapi mereka lebih mementingkan pengalaman teknologi memanipulasi video pendek. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada penyelidikan tentang VAM, penyelidikan tingkah laku manusia, penyelidikan subkultur, penyelidikan belia bandar kecil, pembangunan skala, dan penilaian model struktur. Pada masa yang sama, kajian ini memberikan implikasi praktikal untuk pembangunan platform video pendek, subkultur sosial, pengurusan kerajaan, dan pembangunan belia.

THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND SACRIFICES ON THE ADOPTION BEHAVIOUR OF EARTHY SHORT-FORM VIDEOS: A STUDY ON SMALL-TOWN YOUTH IN HENAN, CHINA

ABSTRACT

The development of information technology has given birth to the era of short videos. Despite criticism and skepticism, earthy short videos have flourished, quickly taking over major short video apps, social media platforms, networks, and e-commerce platforms. This phenomenon of popularity is perplexing and worth studying the reasons behind it and the influencing factors. To explore the influence of perceived benefit factors and sacrifice factors on perceived value and adoption of earthy short videos, this study constructed a value adoption model for earthy short videos based on VAM and perceived value theory. The study takes small-town youth, the protagonists of earthy short videos, as the research object, collects 548 samples from small-town youth, and statistically analyzes the data using the method of structural equation modeling. The findings suggest that the adoption of earthy short videos by Chinese small-town youth is determined by a combination of their perceived value of earthy short videos, self-efficacy, subcultural recognition, and usefulness. Subcultural recognition, usefulness, and technicality positively influence perceived value. Meanwhile, subcultural recognition, usefulness, and self-presentation positively affect adoption. Additionally, enjoyment, social interaction, vulgarity, perceived cost, and perceived risk did not significantly influence perceived value or adoption. Self-

efficacy can predict adoption but does not moderate the relationship between perceived value and adoption. The study found that Chinese small-town youth produce and consume earthy short videos not for enjoyment or socialization, but for self-usefulness and subcultural identity. They do not recognize the health, cognitive, and privacy risks associated with earthy short videos, nor do they concern themselves with the traffic fees incurred or the time and effort expended on them. They care even less about the vulgarity of earthy short videos, but they are more concerned with the technological experience of manipulating short videos. This study contributes to research on VAM, human behavior research, subculture research, small-town youth research, scale development, and structural model evaluation. At the same time, this study provides practical implications for the development of short video platforms, social subcultures, government management, and youth development.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the background of the study. Earthy short videos in the era of short videos have exploded in popularity among small-town youth in China and spread rapidly to other circles. This phenomenon has attracted widespread social attention. This chapter describes the significance of this study, the study objectives, and the problem the study is trying to solve, defines the key terms involved in the study, and concludes with an overview of the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

The term *earthy*, as a network buzzword, was born in 2016. Posts often appear on microblogs and posting bars to review, roast, and poke fun at phenomena and behaviors that are not in style, out of trend, very low, vulgar, or even spooky on the Internet or in daily life. These topics were assembled by netizens into a special microblog account, named *Chinese Earthy Series*. Thus, the word *earthy* gradually became popular in the network. In 2017, *earthy* started to become a net popular term in China formally.

The original semantic meaning of *earthy* is *of or like earth or soil, natural, coarse, vulgar, and untrendy* (Collins English Dictionary, 2014). However, in the context of cyberspace, netizens have taken the earthiness and vulgarity of earthy short videos as a selling point, and have criticized, teased, and reposted them, making it a kind of

content that is dislikable yet can't be stopped, and even addicted to (Mei, 2019). Thus, under the teasing and ridicule of netizens, *earthy* reversed the traditional lexical meanings of *outdated*, *unfashionable*, and *not trendy*, developed the semantic meaning *trendy*, turning from a negative tone in the old semantics to a positive one in the new semantics (Liu, 2018).

Earthy short videos are short videos posted on video platforms such as Kuaishou and TikTok, usually filmed in the countryside or underdeveloped towns, and feature rough production, clichéd plots, alternative costumes, and exaggerated performances (Pianpian & Omar, 2023a). The genres and themes of earthy short videos are diverse and rich. It contains different forms such as narrative, earthy love words, earthy social quotes, microphone shouting, earthy performances, earthy eating broadcasts, social rock, country-themed funny jokes, earthy remakes, and self-created skits (Pianpian & Omar, 2023b). Earthy short videos have a strong local flavor (Chen, 2018) and original temperament (Yang, 2019), and are prominently characterized by earthy background and earthy contents (Wang & He, 2018). Pianpian and Omar (2023b) found more negative content (e.g., Spiritual Trendy Girl Love Story) (Huang Huangjin, 2022) than positive content (e.g., Teaching Grandpa English Episode 19) (Tuwei Qixiaofu, 2021) in earthy short videos.

Since its birth in 2016, earthy short videos have aroused a wide range of discussion in society. Most commentators have criticized earthy short videos for adopting the labeling perspective of vulgarity and ugliness. Critic Dr. Huo (2016)

pointed out that the cruel and grotesque life scenes in Chinese society depicted in earthy short videos, such as eating pork raw, strange costumes, and firecrackers blowing up the crotch, show the vulgar and coarse aesthetic state of the public. Wu (2020) argued that some of the eating broadcasts on Kuaishou with vulgar and bizarre content have created a stigma to the image of the countryside. Wan (2021) criticized in an article in *Oriental Outlook* that a large number of commercialized and marketed earthy short videos have even become uncompromising cultural garbage. These criticisms pointed out sharply the issues of earthy short videos. However, earthy short videos have not disappeared amid the criticism but have become more and more popular. This meteoric rise to fame of the ridiculous deserves a thorough investigation. Its popularity may contain more hints beyond the entertainment level. Studying such a distinctive online phenomenon can help us clarify the changes in audience psychology and needs in recent years and explore the development of current online culture and the social ecology behind the screen.

The rise of earthy short videos would not have happened without the rapid development of China's Internet. The development of information technology provides the basic social conditions for the birth of earthy culture. As of January 2023, the number of smartphone users in the world is 6.92 billion. This figure accounts for approximately 85% of the 8 billion global population (Howarth, 2023). China has the largest volume of smartphone users at 910.04 million, with a smartphone penetration rate of 63.8% (Howarth, 2023). With the popularization of 5G mobile communication

technology, the number of Chinese Internet users has been climbing. According to the 49th Statistical Report on the Development Status of the Internet in China released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of December 2021, the size of Chinese Internet users reached 1.032 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reached 73.0% (CNNIC, 2022). Among them, the size of cell phone Internet users is 1.029 billion, and the proportion of cell phone Internet access is as high as 99.7% (CNNIC, 2022).

Internet users have facilitated the dissemination of short-form videos. Compared with traditional PC viewing, people are now more willing to watch videos on cell phone screens. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, the portability of cell phones allows users to be more independent of time and space constraints (Zhao & Wang, 2015), making it more convenient to watch short videos. Secondly, the development of mobile Internet technology has enabled users' demand for smooth video viewing to be fully satisfied (Deng & Zhang, 2018), which has promoted the further development of mobile short videos at the technical level. Thirdly, the short video platforms with the help of big data and algorithm technology achieve personalized content push, with a high frequency of information updates to effectively attract users (Yan, 2016). Fourthly, short videos are increasingly in line with users' fragmented reading habits (Wang et al, 2015; Wang, 2017) due to the advantages of fragmented, brief, and focused content (Yan, 2016), thus becoming a habit of daily media use for many users. Fifthly, short videos are more penetrating and live than pictures and text, and can

deliver more information to users in ten seconds or so (Wang et al, 2015; Deng & Zhang, 2018), so they have developed into the preferred way for people to get information, entertainment, and relaxation.

Short video platforms such as TikTok and Kuaishou are spurting the development of mobile communication technology, announcing the arrival of the short-form video era. The 2020 TikTok Data Report (full version) shows that by August 2020, the daily active users of TikTok exceeded 600 million, and by December 2020, the average daily video searches of TikTok exceeded 400 million (TikTok, 2021). In the first half of 2020, Kuaishou had an average of 302 million daily users and 776 million monthly users, 26% of whom were content creators (Jiang, 2020). In March 2021, the per capita single-day usage time of short-form video apps in China was 125 minutes, and 53.5% of short video users watched short video programs every day (CNNIC, 2022). In 2021, Chinese mobile Internet users' short video usage time has surpassed instant messaging, becoming the industry that occupies the longest time on the Internet (QuestMobile, 2022). As of December 2021, the size of short video users in China was 934 million (CNNIC, 2022). The market size of short-form video in China reached 376.52 billion Yuan in 2022 (iiMedia Report, 2023).

The booming development of short video platforms has changed the kind of social media, and the emergence of short video platforms such as TikTok, Kuai, and Vigo Video has gotten rid of the previous social mode of mainly linear expression, allowing users to convey information through visuals. And in the context of the

massive popularity of short video platforms, major short video platforms have assumed the function of delivering news and messages, providing knowledge, and online skills training, becoming a significant channel for people's leisure and entertainment life. Short-form videos have become the third language of mobile Internet besides graphics and voice (ASKCI, 2021).

Given their popularity, short videos invariably embody specific values that cater to specific user needs. How do users perceive the value of short videos? How do these values influence users to adopt short videos? Studying these questions helps us gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of short videos' popularity. This serves as the background and rationale for introducing the value-based adoption model in this study.

1.2.1 Earthy short videos in China: The Study Context

The birth of earthy short videos may not have happened without the rapid growth of Chinese rural Internet users. In previous media content production and dissemination, the dominant players were media practitioners, and rural people were absent from the production and dissemination process. With the emergence of short-form videos, the barrier between people in rural areas and new media technologies, education background (here mainly marked by the literacy rate), has collapsed. The combination of mobile communication terminals and short-form videos allowed country people, especially small-town youth, to quickly participate in producing and

disseminating earthy content (Li, 2022).

As of December 2021, the size of rural Internet users in China was 284 million, and the Internet penetration rate in rural areas reached 57.6% (CNNIC, 2022). The gradual increase in the number of rural Internet users and the popularity of smartphones has greatly increased the communication ability of rural Internet users. For a long time, the dual structure of China's urban and rural areas and the lack of rural discourse and discourse production capacity have led to a highly urban-centric media communication pattern, with the countryside becoming the other in communication and farmers becoming the silent another half. Rural Internet users have become the last traffic depression in the mobile Internet era, and their communication aspirations and cognitive surpluses are in urgent need of satisfaction and release. To capture rural consumers, major short video companies are desperately competing for the low-end market (Sun, 2021). They have been targeting rural consumers to develop marketing strategies to get small-town youth from underdeveloped areas to quickly join the army of short video producers (Finance Stories, 2019). Kuaishou was the first short video platform to promote to countryside and counties, and its user marketing strategy also attracted a large number of users from rural areas, which is the source of the generation and dissemination of earthy short videos. *2019 Short Video Platform User Research Report* claimed that 73% of users in short video platforms were young people, among which small-town youth users accounted for as much as 49%, and the number of users from rural and undeveloped areas had exceeded 50% (Li, 2019). In 2023, China's rural

short video users totaled 320 million, with a much higher growth rate than in cities (China Netcasting Services Association, 2024).

When the traditionally disadvantaged groups of the Internet got empowered, they quickly rose from their former marginal positions and entered the stage of Internet content production. *2019 Small-town youth Report* shows that Kuaishou has more than 230 million small-town youths active, posting more than 2.8 billion short videos in a year, with more than 2,600 billion video plays (Kuaishou Big Data Institute, 2019). The content production of short videos does not require the literacy level and educational background as text production. As long as one can operate a smartphone, one can shoot and produce videos. Therefore, short video creation has attracted a large number of rural Internet users and users from the lower social strata, who have been silent for a long time in the Internet space. When favored by the Internet world for the first time, they competed to show themselves to gain attention on short video platforms, thus forming their unique styles and creating a unique style of content form - earthy short videos.

In addition to more rural users exposed to mobile networks, the emergence and development of earthy short videos are also closely related to the composition structure of the Chinese netizen population. Users of earthy short videos are mainly low-education and young groups. Data from Mob Research Institute shows that in 2020, 65.7% of TikTok short video users have an education below junior college, and 63.9% of young people aged 16-34 (MobTech, 2020). *2019-2020 China Internet Trends*

Report mentioned that in terms of mobile entertainment, people with low education prefer short videos and segments over variety and games; in terms of short video consumption preferences, 85.7% of low-education users prefer humorous and funny content, and 66.9% of low-education users are willing to watch short videos in traffic-consuming scenarios (Penguin Intelligence, 2019). Users' low education levels and low-income levels have created a short, fast, and flat earthy culture. The composition structure of Internet users with low overall education levels provides rich soil for the emergence and development of earthy short videos.

Analysis of China's Short Video User Scale and Top Companies in 2021 issued by Intelligence Research Group pointed out that the use rate of short videos among audiences in underdeveloped regions reached 90.3%, the usage rate among youths with vocational/technical school education reached 90.7%, and the usage rate of short videos among users under 19 years old reached 87.6% (Li, 2022). For these rural youths without higher education, the earthy short video content provided by Kuaishou and TikTok is more suitable for their preferences. And this group is the small-town youths, the main producers and consumers of earthy short videos.

The 49th Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet showed that as of December 2021, China's minor Internet users had reached 183 million, and the Internet penetration rate among minor Internet users had reached 94.9% (CNNIC, 2022). Some of the earthy videos have insufficient positive energy guidance and even deviate from the mainstream value orientation, which is likely to have a negative

impact on the formation of youth's outlook on life and values. Therefore, research into the factors influencing young people's adoption of earthy short videos is necessary in order to control and direct their behavior.

To sum up, in the context of the massive popularity of short videos, earthy short videos went viral and have realized one after another expansion. The vulgar content in earthy videos has also produced some negative effects on society. As the main audiences who promote the development of earthy short videos, small-town youths are to blame for the explosion of earthy short videos, but they are also to blame for the negative effects caused by earthy short videos. Therefore, this study argues that exploring how small-town youths participate in the spread of earthy short videos, what factors influence their adoption of earthy short videos, how to help them correctly participate in the spread of earthy short videos, how to make good use of short videos to actively spread local culture and promote rural development, and how to promote the healthy development of rural youth, all of which have important theoretical and practical significance for the network environment and academic research.

1.3 Problem Statement

The study on earthy short videos has several research gaps.

First, earthy short videos have triggered some puzzling social phenomena that are not sufficiently understood and thus deserve further investigation. The content of most earthy short videos is shallow, vulgar, and boring, with little or no public significance.

For example, eating raw pork, wearing bizarre clothes, firecrackers blowing up the crotch, and other cruel and grotesque scenes in Chinese rural society (Huo, 2016). However, it is this kind of seemingly absurd and boring video content that has attracted thousands of netizens to watch. Take the blogger Earthy Digger on Sina Weibo as an example, some earthy short videos forwarded by him have been viewed more than 100,000 times (Earthy Digger, 2020). It is intriguing to note that many Chinese intellectuals have consciously become part of the onlookers while denouncing the ghostly and boring nature of earthy videos, placing themselves in a "production-consumption" interactive relationship. It is this contradictory choice of visual consumption that has driven the popularity of earthy videos. In the past few years, mainstream society has never stopped criticizing earthy short videos. Min and Wang (2022) argued that content production in earthy short videos perceived ugliness as an aesthetic: one produces ugliness, while the other consumes it. Hao (2020) criticized that the filmmakers of earthy short videos cater to the tastes of their audience, making earthy synonymous with small-town youth, brainlessness, hilarity, and eye-catching. Their criticism is not unreasonable. However, earthy short videos have gradually infiltrated into the entertainment life on the Internet. The intensification of criticism has instead promoted the spread of earthy short videos in cyberspace. More research is needed to understand the reasons and logic behind this unique phenomenon of reverse bursts of popularity.

Second, existing research on earthy short videos has mainly interpreted them

from the perspectives of phenomenology, youth subculture, and communication, but there is a lack of objective and quantitative research. Phenomenological interpretation of earthy short videos focuses on discourse and symbols. Liu (2018) introduced the history of the development of earthy short videos, their specific manifestations, the reasons for their popularity, and their developmental turn in terms of users and symbols. Xiang and Lu (2021) analyzed the visual and auditory symbols of earthy shot-form videos from the perspective of communication semiotics and explained the textual meanings of the symbols and the interpretive meanings of the audience. Hao (2020) pointed out that in the consumption process of earthy short videos, the body of earthy anchors is transformed from a natural body and a productive body to a consuming body, and their body performances become a kind of symbols directly related to interests, which are being gradually commodified. Sub-culture research mostly concentrates on youth subculture and group identity. Zhao (2021) analyzed the development and change of subcultural characteristics of earthy short videos. Yin and Jiang (2020) found that small-town youth groups in the production of earthy short videos face identity dilemmas. Because the identity of township youth in online short videos is not equivalent to their identity in real society, this identity conflict may make them fall into a double marginalization situation, which leads to role identity confusion. Communication studies are primarily concerned with analyzing earthy short videos' communication mechanisms and exploring the reasons for their popularity. Zhang and Yuan (2020) summarized the dissemination mechanism of earthy short videos. Guo

and Xiao (2021) summarized the communication characteristics of earthy short videos of nonsensical repetition, vernacular style, and collective empathy by dissecting the communication of network joke cases. Gong (2019) discussed the reasons for the popularity of earthy short videos from the aspects of audience psychology, media content supplementation, and UGC short video platform assistance. All three of the aforementioned research perspectives have provided insights into earthy short videos; nevertheless, these studies are deficient in quantitative analysis. Therefore, this study intends to adopt a quantitative approach to investigate the adoption behavior of earthy short video users.

Third, these previous studies on earthy short videos have also overlooked the "value" factor that is closely related to earthy short videos. Value may be able to promote the adoption of earthy short videos because earthy short videos can bring benefits to users. For example, earthy short videos can satisfy the audience's psychology of curiosity and identity (Liu, 2019; Sun, 2021), as well as satisfy the audience's spiritual needs for entertainment and decompression (Li, 2019; Hao, 2020). However, these perspectives are based on the subjective analysis and inferences of researchers, which are unsupported by quantitative studies. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a quantitative approach to investigate how users perceive the benefits of earthy short videos, identify the factors that influence their perceived value of these videos, and determine how these perceived value factors positively impact their adoption behavior.

Fourth, a few empirical studies have focused on the factors affecting the use of short videos. However, these studies primarily concentrate on the motivation to use mobile short video apps and the positive factors that encourage adoption, while neglecting to discuss the factors that impede adoption. Ma & Gao (2019) explored the positive influences on users' motivation to use short video apps based on U&G theory. Tao & Zhu (2020) investigated the factors that influence users' willingness to use short video apps on a consistent basis. Omar & Dequan (2020) investigated the influence of user motivation and personality traits on TikTok usage behavior. Chen & Guo (2021) used the TAM model to study the positive influences that promote users' adoption of short video advertisements. The findings of these studies on short video apps can be used as a reference for this study, but they may not fully apply to the study of earthy short videos. This is because the "value" of earthy short videos has its own uniqueness. While earthy short videos bring benefits to users, they also involve some sacrifices. For example, watching earthy short videos can cause users to downgrade their aesthetics and become earthy in their words and actions (Guo, 2021; Huang & Zhu, 2022). Moreover, by appreciating content criticized by mainstream society, users risk being ostracized by mainstream social groups. Under this positive and negative dual influence of benefits and sacrifice, earthy short videos still attract a large number of Internet users, especially small-town youth (Kuaishou Big Data Institute, 2019). Therefore, it is more meaningful to study how users perceive the sacrifices that are associated with adopting earthy short videos and how these sacrifice factors affect

users' perceived value of earthy short videos and, consequently, their adoption behavior.

Finally, most earlier studies on adoption behavior using the value-based adoption model have mainly looked at the factors that influence it (Kim et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Shelvia et al., 2020) and have overlooked the factors that can change or affect those influences. The study of moderators is even more lacking in the research of earthy short videos. The adolescent population's specificity necessitates that the study introduces moderating variables. The interface design, interaction logic, and algorithmic technology of short-video apps can easily lead to users' addiction behaviors (Xu, 2019; Meng, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019; Chen & Hu, 2020; Xiong et al., 2021; Qin, et al., 2022; Jia & Li, 2023; Xie & Du, 2023). This design logic and algorithmic technology create a seamless entertainment experience and precise stimulation for users, making it difficult for them to escape once they open a short video application (Yan & Chen, 2023). Adolescents are in the growth stage, and their resistance to short videos and discrimination of video content is weaker than adults, making them more likely to become addicted to short video applications (Xu, 2019). *2022 China Game Industry: The Progress Report on the Protection of Minors* points out that most minors who have kicked their gaming addiction have chosen to spend most of their recreational time (65.5%) with short videos instead of e-games, thus suffering from short-video addiction (GPC & CNG, 2022). Therefore, it is very significant to study how users regulate and control their behavior of producing and consuming earthy short videos to regulate and control the short-video addiction

behavior of youth groups. Self-efficacy has previously been identified as an influencing factor in users' adoption of the Internet (Kwon et al., 2007), online transactions (Vijayasarathy, 2004), e-government systems (Mensah & Mi, 2019), and online learning (Turan & Cetintas, 2020; Thongsri, et al.; Zhao et al., 2021). Since self-efficacy has positively influenced the adoption of other information technology/information systems, it is likely to apply to the adoption of earthy short videos, a new product form of information technology. The moderating factors proved for short-video addictive behaviors are positive parental intervention (Qin et al., 2023), physical activity (Ghazanfar et al., 2021), user procrastination (Tian et al., 2022), and user algorithmic usage level (Xie & Du, 2023). No research has been found in the existing literature to investigate the moderating effect of self-efficacy on the adoption behavior of earthy short videos. Therefore, this study intends to introduce self-efficacy as a moderator to study users' production and consumption behavior of earthy short videos.

Based on the aforementioned analysis, this study suggests employing a quantitative method in empirical research to examine the adoption behavior of earthy short videos. The study proposes the introduction of the value adoption model to examine the perceived value factors that influence users' adoption of earthy short videos. Additionally, it proposes the introduction of a moderator to examine the moderating effect on the adoption behavior of earthy short videos among small town youths.

1.4 Research Questions

This study attempts to explore the value factors that influence earthy short video adoption behavior through a study of small-town youth in China and discusses how perceived value factors and perceived value influence earthy short video adoption behavior, why small-town youth users adopt earthy short videos, and whether self-efficacy moderates this adoption behavior. To provide a base framework for the research model, the value-based adoption model (VAM) (Kim et al., 2007) were introduced in this study. This framework suggests that perceived value factors (perceived benefits and perceived sacrifice) can influence perceived value and users' adoption. In addition, to explore the effect of self-efficacy on the adoption behavior of earthy short videos, this study developed an integrated model to investigate the moderating effect of self-efficacy on the adoption behavior of earthy short videos.

This research is instructed by the following questions:

- 1) How do perceived benefits of earthy short videos among small-town youth in China influence their perceived value and adoption behaviors?
- 2) How do perceived sacrifices of earthy short videos among small-town youth in China influence their perceived value and adoption behaviors?
- 3) How does the perceived value of earthy short videos among small-town youth in China influence their adoption behaviors?
- 4) What is the role of perceived value in mediating the relationship between

perceived benefits and the sacrifice and adoption of earthy short videos?

5) What is the role of self-efficacy in moderating the relationship between perceived value and the adoption of earthy short videos?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The main research objective of this study is to develop a value adoption model for the adoption behavior of earthy short videos. It illustrates the perceived value factors and the perceived value that influence the adoption behavior of earthy short videos. Besides, this adoption behavior can be moderated by self-efficacy. Therefore, the main objectives of this study include the following:

- 1) To determine the effect of perceived benefits (usefulness, enjoyment, self-presentation, social interaction, and subcultural recognition) on the perceived value and adoption of earthy short videos among small-town youth in China
- 2) To determine the effect of perceived sacrifices (vulgarity, technicality, perceived cost, and perceived risk) on the perceived value and adoption of earthy short videos among small-town youth in China
- 3) To determine the effect of Chinese small-town youth's perceived value of earthy short videos on their adoption behaviors
- 4) To examine the role of perceived value in mediating the effects of perceived benefits and sacrifices on adoption
- 5) To examine the direct and moderating effects of self-efficacy on the adoption

of earthy short videos among small-town youth in China

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study investigates the consumption behavior of earthy short videos and verifies the influencing and controlling factors that lead to the adoption of earthy short videos among small-town youth in China. The study has different implications in terms of theory, research methodology, and practice.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Based on the value-based adoption model and perceived value theory, this study integrates multidisciplinary intersectional research methods to investigate the factors influencing the consumption behavior of earthy short videos. The study constructs a value adoption model for the consumption behavior of earthy short videos and verifies the influence relationship between perceived value, self-efficacy, and adoption behaviors. It has the following theoretical contributions.

This study enriches the research about short video users' information behavior. Based on the research results of user information behavior, this study explores the fundamental theoretical issues of the adoption behavior of earthy short video users, establishes a research model, and then collects data to conduct in-depth systematic research, which is significant for promoting the development of the theoretical system of mobile short video user information behavior.

The study extends the application of the value-based adoption model. The initial external variables in the value adoption model were Perceived Benefits (Usefulness and Enjoyment) and Perceived Sacrifices (Technicality and Perceived Fee) (Kim et al., 2007). Due to the need for the contextual background of the study, this study introduces Self-presentation, Social Interaction, Subcultural Recognition, and Vulgarity as external variables in the VAM model for the first time to explain the users' adoption behaviors of earthy short videos. Meanwhile, unlike other studies that use self-efficacy as an independent variable, this study adopts self-efficacy as a moderating variable in the value adoption model to verify the relationship between perceived value and adoption behavior. These new independent variables extend the original VAM model and enrich the research on the value-based adoption model.

This study expands the practical research value of subculture theory. This study incorporates subcultural recognition as a research variable into the value-based adoption model and employs the subcultural theory to derive the measurement items for this recognition. The goal is to investigate how subcultural recognition influences the adoption of earthy short videos by young people in small towns. The results of the study confirmed the positive influence of subcultural recognition on perceived value and adoption. This expands the practical research value of subcultural theory.

1.6.2 Methodological Significance

This study introduces quantitative research methods into the fields of

communication and cultural studies, expanding the research paradigm in these fields. In the field of communication, the rationality of a theory or communication phenomenon is usually discussed from the audience's perspective (Yang, 2019; Chen, 2019; Huang, 2019; Gong, 2019; Hao, 2020; Shi, 2020), but user behavior models are less often applied in short video research. In this study, relevant information was obtained through survey research, based on which a model framework was constructed to comprehensively analyze the production and consumption of earthy short videos, to understand the factors that influence the users' adoption behavior. This study extends the scope of research in the field by applying quantitative research methods to the study of earthy short videos. At the same time, this study uses short video application media as a carrier to study the spread of earthy short videos, and introduces quantitative research methods into the study of earthy culture, expanding the research paradigm in the field of cultural research.

The study introduces the moderating variable into the study of adoption behavior, which improves the predictive power and application value of adoption models. In this study, a moderating variable was introduced to verify the control factors affecting users' production and consumption of earthy short videos. The research model with moderating variables is more complex and sophisticated than the adoption model alone and can also provide higher predictive power and reference value. Such a model can verify not only the causes of adoption behavior but also the measures to control adoption behavior. This provides a new approach and idea for the study of adoption

behavior and provides a paradigm for the use of moderating variables in future research.

This study used PLS-SEM to test the measurement model and the structural model. The results of the study again demonstrate the effectiveness of the PLS method for testing non-normally distributed data. In the measurement model evaluation, this study used both Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and reliability coefficient (ρ_A) to assess internal consistency reliability. The Fornell-Larcker test, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio test (HTMT), and the cross-loading test were simultaneously employed to test the discriminant validity. In addition to the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), correlation coefficient (Q^2), and goodness-of-fit (GoF), PLSpredict analysis and Important Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) were introduced for structural model evaluation. These methods provide a reference for future research using structural equation modeling.

1.6.3 Practical Significance

Based on the study results of the production and consumption of earthy short videos by small-town youth users in China, this study proposes countermeasures for guiding the healthy development of rural youth, suggestions for guiding the development of earthy culture, strengthening the management of short video platforms, promoting the development of rural villages and the development of socially disadvantaged groups, which provide references and insights for enhancing the

decision-making of the government and strengthening the management of the society.

The first contribution is to adolescents. In today's society with highly developed online new media technology, youth groups are prone to get lost in diverse values when faced with the impact of multiple cultures. This study helps youth groups establish a correct attitude they should hold in the face of earthy videos, and provides useful references for guiding the thoughts and behaviors of youth groups, which has strong practical significance.

The second contribution is to new media platforms. Earthy short videos contribute huge traffic to mobile platforms, bring huge economic benefits, and have great business potential. This study can provide a reference for enterprises to formulate development strategies and provide policy references for short video platforms and new media companies to cope with the issues in the dissemination of earthy videos, as well as to strengthen the management of user behavior and improve the service quality of short video platforms.

The third contribution is to cultural development. As a newly emerged new form of online youth subculture, the rise of earthy videos has extremely complex real-world social factors and is bound to have an impact on social perceptions and culture, and to interact and collide with mainstream culture. The contents discussed in this study can provide a reference for the government in formulating cultural policies, media policies, and e-commerce policies.

The fourth contribution is to society and rural development. The needs of socially

disadvantaged groups include the desire for cultural capital, social status enhancement, class crossing, taking control of the discourse, escaping from reality, venting pressure, rebelling against the mainstream, seeking recognition, and so on. Once these needs are not dealt with properly, the seeds of social conflicts would be sown easily, which is not conducive to social stability. So they need to be taken seriously by the authorities and handled properly. This study can provide a reference for the government in formulating policies to help disadvantaged groups, shorten the gap between urban and rural areas, and promote rural development.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The current study focuses on the adoption behavior of earthy short videos and the influence of perceived value on the adoption of earthy short videos by small-town youth in China.

Therefore, the focus of this study is to identify and verify the determinants that influence the adoption of earthy videos. In particular, it dwells deeply on the influence of perceived value on the adoption of earthy short videos and the moderating effect of self-efficacy on adoption. Based on an in-depth review of the literature, this study introduces some variables (usefulness, enjoyment, technicality, perceived cost, and perceived risk) identified by previous scholars in their studies (Kim et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2017). Considering the need of contextualizing the study in China, the study develops some new variables (self-presentation, social interaction, subcultural