

INVESTIGATING ATTITUDES, SUBJECTIVE NORMS, AND PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL ON CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PURCHASE INTENTIONS TOWARDS AoFeI ANIME DERIVATIVES

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Abstract

The success of AoFei anime is not only the result of the change of media technology, but also the inevitable trend of the development of mass communication. However, existing research lacks a discussion of the communication mechanism of AoFei anime derivatives, especially for the explanation of the purchase intention of secondary users. Therefore, this study aims to identify the effects of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on Chinese college students' purchase intentions of AoFei anime derivatives based on the framework of the Theory of Plans and Behaviours. The sample for this quantitative study was 453 students from three universities in China. The instrument of the study was a structured questionnaire, and descriptive statistics and linear regression analyses were conducted through SPSS 27.0. The study concluded that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control significantly influenced Chinese university students' purchase intentions towards AoFei anime derivatives. Attitude had the highest level of influence, followed by perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms had the lowest. The structure of this study helps to extend the TPB framework and provides effective suggestions for relevant audiences who love anime works.

Keywords: Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavior Control, AoFei Animation Derivatives, Purchase Intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

In China, the dissemination of anime derivatives not only serves as a channel of public support for favourite anime works, but likewise as a bridge to increasingly updated media technologies (Fan & Feng, 2021). AoFei Animation, as the watchdog of China's anime industry, was the first organisation to start developing and disseminating derivatives (Yao & Wang, 2023). In addition, animation derivatives now account for 70% of sales in China's animation and culture industry (Liu, 2021).

In this context, this particular form of anime derivatives has attracted academic attention. Xie and Hao (2023) explored the channels of development of AoFei anime derivatives and pointed out the challenges that the process is faced. On the other hand, Pan et al. (2019) focused on a historical review of AoFei anime derivatives and pointed out the impact of media technology on the development of derivatives.

However, studies focusing on the diffusion of AoFei anime derivatives are still limited, especially with regard to specific explanations of the diffusion mechanisms of derivatives. Therefore, a mass communication perspective can help to address this issue and help the public to understand the trend of such products.

AoFei anime derivatives refer to related products based on its anime works, which are not limited to traditional anime models, but also include stationery, clothing and other types of electronic products (Pan et al., 2019). In recent years, anime derivatives have become an important communication channel for secondary users to share anime stories and characters, and they are especially popular among college students (Ahmad & Mamat, 2022).

College students in China are an important group of secondary users (Cheng & Nagai, 2024). In other words, investigating the purchase intention of this group can help the dissemination of AoFei's anime derivatives and help secondary users in other countries and regions to have a deeper understanding of the development of China's cultural industry.

Zhang (2024) argues that it has become popular for secondary users to share anime derivatives in social media. Febriyantoro (2020) supports Zhang's (2024) viewpoint and points out that users generating purchase intention is the ultimate purpose of the dissemination of such products.

However, there is still a lack of research on Chinese college students' purchase intentions for AoFei anime derivatives, especially focusing on the influence of specific factors in the theory of planning and behaviour on the purchase intentions of secondary users.

The Theory of Plans and Behaviour (TPB) is widely used to reveal individuals' intentions and behaviours in specific situations (Ali et al., 2023). As stated by Liu et al. (2020), TPB, a popular theoretical framework, is very suitable for explaining users' purchase intentions. Tarawneh et al. (2024) supported Liu et al. (2020) and summarised three specific factors in TPB, which are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In addition, Hu et al. (2023) applied the TPB model and discussed users' motivations for virtual product purchase intentions.

Similarly, Jhantasana (2023), in a non-empirical study, analysed how the perceived factors in the TPB influence users' choice of anime works. However, AoFei anime derivatives is a relatively new field, and further discussion is needed on the specific effects of particular factors in the TPB framework on the purchase intentions of secondary users, with a particular focus on the specific group of Chinese university students.

The overall goal of this study is to identify the relationship between user-specific motivations and Chinese college students' purchase intentions during the communication process of AoFei anime derivatives based on the Theory of Plans and Behaviour.

In order to address this issue, three research questions were proposed:

- 1. What is the effect of attitude on Chinese college students' intention to purchase AoFei animation derivatives?**
- 2. What is the effect of subjective norms on Chinese college students' intention to purchase AoFei animation derivatives?**
- 3. What is the effect of perceived behavioural control on Chinese college students' intention to purchase AoFei animation derivatives?**

This study not only facilitates the dissemination of AoFei anime derivatives among the college student population, but also represents a practical expansion of TPB in this field. The conclusions obtained from the study provide theoretical evidence for relevant enterprises and policy makers, and also bring practical guidance for secondary users who love anime derivatives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. AoFei Animation Derivatives

The development of AoFei anime derivatives cannot be separated from high-quality production and the maintenance of intellectual property rights (Pan et al., 2019). As its dissemination is influenced by both social and cultural factors, some scholars have focused their research on the driving dimension for users' purchase intention. Xie and Hao (2022) pointed out that the production of AoFei anime derivatives is based on the image of the original anime work, and with its interesting narrative plot and the ability to portray the image of the anime, it establishes a special emotional association with the secondary users, which in turn improving user stickiness while increasing the likelihood of purchase intention.

On the other hand, Lee et al. (2022) focused on the communication strategy of AoFei anime, which focused on the use of relevant social media platforms that appealed to the Gen Z demographic.

Meanwhile, Vazquez-Calvo et al. (2019) supported Lee et al. (2022) and argued that interactive communication campaigns fostered a sense of community among fans towards understanding anime. Furthermore, Zhang (2016) states that the success of AoFei's anime communication lies in the fact that it establishes a collaboration between the anime content creators and the users, which leads to empathy between the two, and in doing so, extends the reach of the communication.

However, Chen and Liu (2023) refuted Zhang's (2016) argument and elaborated in their study on the challenges faced by AoFei anime derivatives, i.e., AoFei anime still faces the problem of having a singular audience at this stage of content creation regarding traditional Chinese cultural elements. That is to say, although AoFei anime is always competitive, there is still a gap in its dissemination mechanism compared to big anime countries such as the United States and Japan (Man, 2024). Therefore, understanding users' willingness to purchase AoFei anime derivatives is necessary to solve this problem.

2.2. Purchase intention

According to Fan et al. (2024), willingness to buy refers to the likelihood of a user's purchasing behaviour occurring in the future and encompasses an individual's plans for acquiring a particular product, influenced by the individual's subjective considerations. Several studies have shown that there are multiple factors that influence users' willingness to purchase anime derivatives. For example, when an individual develops a positive attitude towards anime works, it can greatly enhance the user's purchase intention (Liu & Zhang, 2020). In their study, Muliadi et al. (2024) stated that social media sharing can increase an individual's desire to acquire such products, and that common interests and information dissemination play a key role in this process. Meanwhile, Guan et al. (2024) state in another empirical study that users' perception of knowledge is an important factor in the information seeking process that influences the final willingness to purchase anime derivatives. In addition, Maichum et al. (2016) explored the relationship between specific factors in the TPB and users' willingness to purchase green food in a study that showed that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control positively influenced users' willingness to purchase. In other words, the specific factors proposed for the TPB model are applicable and can play an important role in research with regard to purchase intention. Therefore, the discussion on purchase intention in this study is based on the TPB framework.

2.3. Theory of Plan and Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) consistently holds that an individual's intention is the best predictor of eventual behavior occurrence (Ustadi & Mat, 2023). This point of view provides a theoretical framework for the study of Chinese college students' purchase intention of AoFei animation derivatives. According to Azad et al. (2023), attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls within the TPB framework provide important insights into shaping users' purchase intentions.

2.3.1. Attitude

In the TPB model, attitude is defined as an individual's evaluation of certain intentions, and some of these evaluations are positive while others are negative. Golmohammadi et al. (2021) stated in their study that positive attitudes play an important role in shaping users' interest in anime derivatives. Meanwhile, Cevahir et al. (2022) support Golmohammadi et al. (2021) and argue that positive attitudes can be effective in improving the quality of an individual's perception of anime works. On the contrary, Jie (2023) argues that negative attitudes are not only detrimental to users' acceptance of information about anime-derived products, but also limit purchase intentions. In other words, the specific factor of attitude plays an important role in an individual's decision-making in accepting the product in question. Therefore, the hypothesis generated is:

H1: Attitude can significantly influence Chinese college students' purchase intention of AoFei anime derivatives.

2.3.2. Subjective norm

According to La Barbera and Ajzen (2020), subjective norms derive from personal perceptions, which are the individual's perception of social pressures before generating a decision. Cheng and Nagai (2024) conducted an empirical study in which a virtual community was created through the Jieyin platform, where any participant user could post his/her relevant experience with anime derivatives and provide other users with effective suggestions, and the results showed that participating users who shared were more likely to create social identities and significantly increased their purchase intentions for anime derivatives.

In addition, Mohamed and Mohamed (2024) focused on analysing the advice of peers in their social circle and concluded that if college students' friends gave them positive comments, then their purchase intentions towards anime derivatives increased, which not only conformed to group norms but also contributed equally to the enhancement of individuals' social identities. What these studies have in common is that they emphasise the possibility of subjective norms in shaping purchase intentions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Subjective norms can significantly influence Chinese college students' purchase intentions for AoFei anime derivatives.

2.3.3. Perceptual behavior control

In the study, Ajzen (2020) shared the definition of perceived behavioural control as the degree of difficulty an individual has in perceiving specific intentions and behaviours. In the study on anime derivatives, scholars explored the effectiveness of perceived behavioural control on purchase intentions. For example, Guan (2023) highlights that with the development of e-commerce, users' accessibility to their favourite anime derivatives has increased, and the ease of access enhances an individual's confidence in obtaining such products, thus reducing the impediments to purchase intentions.

In addition, Vamvaka et al. (2020) focused on the relationship between perceived behavioural control and user self-efficacy and concluded that prior positive experiences with anime works can avoid the risk of anxiety and generate sustained purchase intentions in the future. This implies that perceived behavioural control is an integral and important factor in exploring Chinese university students' diffusion of AoFei anime derivatives. Therefore, the related hypothesis is derived:

H3: Perceived behavioural control can significantly influence Chinese college students' purchase intention for AoFei anime derivatives.

2.4. Research framework

Through a systematic review of the existing literature, the researcher proposed a specific direction to address the research problem based on the TPB theoretical model and in accordance with the hypotheses of this study, and the final research framework is shown in Figure 1.

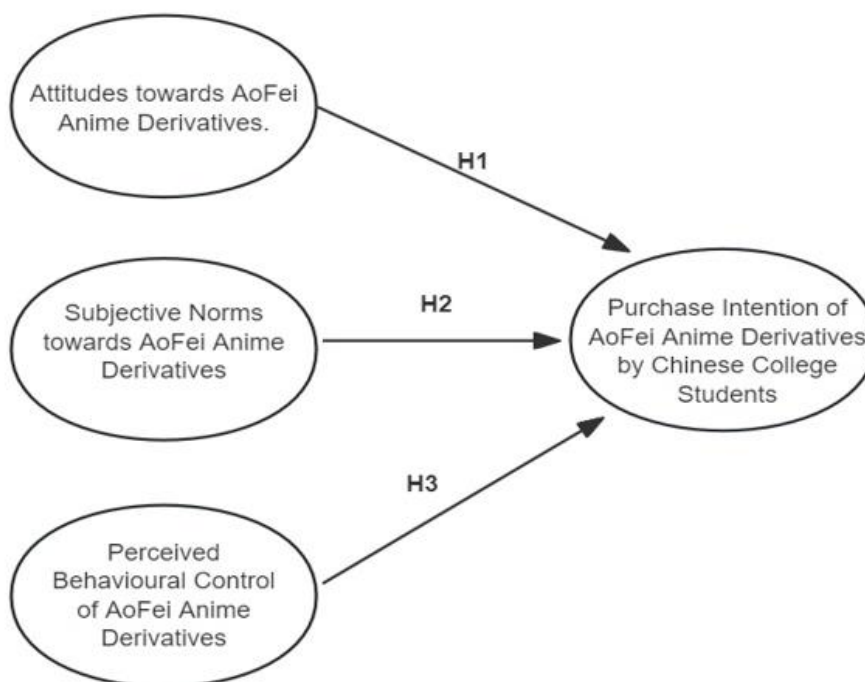


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. METHODOLOGY

The overall objective of this chapter is to present the methodological steps related to measuring the impact of specific factors in the TPB model on Chinese university students' purchase intention of anime derivatives in AoFei. Since the study is quantitative in nature, it involves statistics on the data collected to specifically reveal the relationship between the variables (Mohajan, 2020).

3.1. Sample and Data collection

As already mentioned in the above literature, the main group targeted in this study is Chinese college students, especially those among them who are interested in AoFei anime. The reason for choosing this particular group is that the Chinese university student population is highly representative, both in terms of its acceptance of secondary culture and the proportion of the audience that is interested in the dissemination of anime derivatives (Jin'e et al., 2024).

According to Wu et al. (2024), the advantage of stratified random sampling not only ensures the diversity of the sample, but also has a positive impact on the accuracy of the estimation. Therefore, students of different genders and school types were selected for this study. According to the list of universities published by the Ministry of Education of China in 2023, three universities including those in central, western and eastern China were included in the sample selection, which were art, science and technology and general universities.

The purpose of the stratified random sample was to cover different types of student populations and to categorise them according to males and females, and three different types of schools. The instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire with criteria for questionnaire design based on the research questions and theoretical framework (Aithal & Aithal, 2020).

A pilot test was conducted at the early stage of the research instrument design, thus ensuring that the instrument was clear. The questionnaires were collected in the social media commonly used in China and combined with academic forums in three universities. A detailed ethical statement accompanied the questionnaire distribution.

In addition, a lottery with a 65% win rate was included to ensure a 90% return rate and to increase participant motivation. The official distribution of the questionnaires lasted for a fortnight and respondents who did not complete the survey were reminded by email. Eventually, 501 questionnaires were distributed and 453 valid questionnaires were returned that could be used in the data analysis procedure, based on a 95% confidence interval and with an error spacing of 6%.

According to Serdar et al. (2021), the minimum sample size for confidence measures is 400, the same as the minimum sample size for multivariate regression analyses. The final sample size obtained in this study was as expected and each questionnaire was rigorously screened and those that did not meet the criteria were deleted after obtaining the consent of the respondents. Table 1 illustrates the categorisation of the sample characteristics for this study.

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample

Items	Characteristics
Genders	Male Female
School type	General University Science and Technology University Art University

3.2. Measurement Scale

Based on the research questions of this study, the measurement scales were sourced from existing research and were screened and adapted for comparison from previous research on the TPB model and purchase intentions.

Table 1 demonstrates the measurement scales for this project, and each item was measured in the construct using a Likert scale⁵ ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree (Joshi et al., 2015). Specifically, items on Attitude (ATT), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) were drawn from previous research, with four specific items selected for each (Paul et al., 2016; Maichum et al., 2016; Lancere de Kam & Diefenbach, 2020).

The number of items regarding the intention to purchase anime derivatives was three. The structure and results of this scale provide a clear picture of whether or not respondents agree with the specific themes presented in this study. Table 2 demonstrates the Measurement Scale.

Table 2: Specific descriptions of research instruments

Questionnaire construction
Attitudes towards AoFei Anime Derivatives
ATT1: I believe buying AoFei anime spinoffs is good for me
ATT2: I believe that buying AoFei anime derivatives is a good idea
ATT3: I believe that buying AoFei anime derivatives is a positive idea
ATT4: I think it is safe to buy Aoifei Anime derivatives
Subjective norms towards Aoifei Anime Derivatives
SN1: My family suggested I buy an AoFei anime spin-off.
SN2: My friend suggested me to buy AoFei anime derivatives.
SN3: I follow AoFei on social media.
SN4: Someone in my social circle shared an AoFei product.
Perceived Behavioural Control of AoFei Anime Derivatives
PBC1: I think I'll be buying AoFei anime spin-offs in the future.
PBC2: I think I may have a lot of opportunities to buy AoFei anime derivatives in the future.
PBC3: I think I have a lot of time to buy AoFei anime products.
PBC4: I think I will buy AoFei products to improve my satisfaction.
Purchase Intentions towards AoFei Anime Derivatives
PI1: I plan to buy AoFei anime derivatives because they can welcome anime images.
PI2: I plan to purchase AoFei anime derivatives instead of other products.
PI3: I will consider purchasing out of support for AoFei anime works.

3.3. Pilot test

Reliability testing of the questionnaire was conducted in a pilot test prior to the formal survey, which helped to determine whether the questions could be understood by the respondents and the questionnaire design was sound (Fitzgerald & Zavala-Rojas, 2020). The pretest sample required for the pilot test was also drawn from the same three universities mentioned in the study above, but unlike the formal survey, the pre-survey was smaller, with only 10 per cent of the overall sample, i.e. 46 students, being selected. The choice of measurement question items was the same as those in the formal questionnaire, and the reason for this was that problems with the questionnaire could be identified in advance and changes could be made (Aithal & Aithal, 2021). The results of the reliability tests in this study are shown in Table 3, regarding Cronbach's alpha as ATT (0.758), SN (0.846), PBC (0.839) and PI (0.772). According to the results of Cerri et al. (2023) study, when Cronbach's Alpha is higher than 0.7, it represents that the items in the questionnaire are reliable. At the end of the pre-survey, the items that were difficult to be understood have been reworded and simplified, which is very effective for the accuracy of the final test results.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Values

Reliability Statistics		
Item	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
ATT	0.758	4
SN	0.846	4
PBC	0.839	4
PI	0.772	3

4. FINDINGS

The data analysis procedure for this study was carried out in the SPSS 27.0 software package, which is divided into two parts. Firstly, descriptive statistics between the demographic factors and variables of the respondents. Then, linear regression analyses of the relationships between the variables were conducted for the responses to the test question items.

4.1 Descriptive analysis

From the results of the descriptive statistics demonstrated in Table 4, the valid questionnaires returned for this study were 453. 191 males or 42.2 percent. Females 262 or 57.8 %. Most of the respondents were from art universities with 47.2 %. On the contrary, the least number of respondents were from Science and Technology universities with 21.4 %.

Table 4: Demographics (n=453)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	191	42.2
	Female	262	57.8
School type	General University	142	31.3
	Science and Technology University	97	21.4
	Art University	214	47.2

Table 5 clearly shows the descriptive statistics of the study's questions and lists the mean and standard deviation of the relevant questions. The means are relatively more balanced for Attitude and relatively highest for Perceived Behavioural Control. On the other hand, the mean regarding subjective norms is the lowest, which proves that the popularity of AoFei anime derivatives is still low.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the question items

Variables	Items	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
Attitude (ATT)	ATT1	3.25	1.109
	ATT2	3.53	1.155
	ATT3	3.59	1.176
	ATT4	3.78	1.055
Subjective Norms (SN)	SN1	1.99	1.001
	SN2	2.10	1.002
	SN3	2.58	1.190
	SN4	2.57	1.164
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	PBC1	3.69	1.141
	PBC2	3.46	1.102
	PBC3	2.99	1.109
	PBC4	3.45	1.024
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	3.47	1.046
	PI2	3.30	1.099
	PI3	3.81	1.078

4.2 Regression analyses of variables

Through linear regression analysis, this study aims to reveal whether there is a significant effect of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control on the intention to purchase products related to Aoifei Animation among Chinese university students. According to Kyriazos and Poga (2023), if the variance inflation factor (VIF) of a variable is less than 10, it indicates that the problem of multicollinearity does not affect the stability of the model. From the data in Table 6, the VIF values of the sample fall in the range of 2.811 to 4.810, which indicates that they are within an allowable range. Furthermore, in this data, ATT ($\beta=0.629$, $p=0.000$), SN ($\beta=0.129$, $p=0.000$) and PBC ($\beta=0.237$, $p=0.000$). If the p-value is less than 0.05, then the regression coefficient is considered significant (Flynn, 2003). This shows that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control all have a significant positive effect on the purchase intention of AoF animation derivatives. And, attitude ($\beta=0.629$, $p=0.000$) has the greatest degree of influence.

Table 6: Linear regression analysis of variables

Independent variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.(p)	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)			Tolerance	VIF
ATT	0.774	0.040	0.629	19.217	0.000	0.208	4.810
SN	0.243	0.047	0.129	5.151	0.000	0.356	2.811
PBC	0.482	0.061	0.237	7.873	0.000	0.245	4.088

* $p<0.05$, VIF<10

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the effects of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on the purchase intentions of Chinese university students in the context of AoFei anime derivatives in the base TPB framework. The results showed that all three specific factors had a significant effect on purchase intention, a finding that supports hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 above. Specifically, attitude towards AoFei anime derivatives was the most important factor in this framework. This finding is consistent with the findings of Maichum et al. (2016). That is, if the Chinese college student population develops a positive attitude toward AoFei anime-related products, they will develop a stronger willingness to purchase. In addition, perceived behavioural control is another important predictor that influences the intention of AoFei's secondary users, which is reflected in the fact that this factor can provide guidance for individuals and make relevant decisions in the future. This finding validates Ogutu et al. (2014). Finally, subjective norms had the least influence on Chinese university students' consideration of AoFei anime derivatives. This is inconsistent with Noor et al. (2020). The possible reason for this is that there is still a gap in the current communication model of AoFei anime derivatives, which prevents users from generating higher purchase intentions for such products through recommendations from family and friends. On the contrary, Noor et al. (2020) focus on the purchase intentions that are nourished through the internet and social media, a mode that is much more widespread. Therefore, although AoFei anime derivatives have a certain degree of popularity in China, there is a need to accumulate a larger audience in future dissemination.

6. CONCLUSION

This study discusses the purchase intentions of Chinese university students towards AoFei anime derivatives based on the TPB framework. The highest degree of influence was found to be attitude, followed by perceived behavioural control, and the lowest was subjective norms. The insights of the study can provide valuable suggestions for the heads of related industries and policy makers. And it provides theoretical guidance for secondary users who enjoy anime derivatives. Also, this study contributes to the extension of the TPB model. In addition, the limitation of this study is demonstrated by the fact that it only considered AoFei anime and could not cover the dissemination model of other anime derivatives, thus limiting the generalisability of the results. Therefore, a suggestion for future research would be to consider other organisations related to anime derivatives and to cover a wider range of target populations in order to obtain more comprehensive information.

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