

A Study on Generation Z Users' Social Media Information Visibility Management Behaviour: Influencing Factors and Path Analysis Based on Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study investigates the motivations and influencing pathways of information visibility management behaviours on social media platforms among Generation Z users in a digital context. Recommendations are proposed from both user and platform perspectives to optimise the social media experience. **[Methodology]** Using university students as representative Z-generation participants, this study employs the Theory of Planned Behaviour framework augmented with perceived risk factors. Data collected via questionnaire analysis identifies characteristic information visibility management behaviours on WeChat Moments and other typical social media platforms. Structural equation modelling validates the influence pathways. **[Results/Conclusions]** Emotional satisfaction, self-disposal norms, and perceived risk exert positive effects on the intention to engage in information visibility management behaviour. Perceived control and the privacy information risk component of perceived risk positively influence such behaviour. The intention to self-dispose positively impacts information visibility management behaviour and mediates the path from privacy information risk and privacy social risk to self-disposal behaviour.

Keywords

University students, WeChat Moments, Information visibility management behaviour, Structural equation modelling.

1. Introduction

With the rapid advancement of internet technology and the widespread adoption of smart devices, social media has become an indispensable part of modern life. WeChat Moments, as one of China's most representative social media platforms, not only provides a space for sharing life experiences and emotional exchanges but also serves as a crucial window for personal image display and social relationship maintenance. The platform's growth trajectory (2012 to present) closely parallels Generation Z's (born 1995-2009) media socialisation process. As the first wave of Generation Z users entered university campuses, WeChat Moments emerged as their inaugural space for constructing digital citizenship. Through Moments, they share snippets of their studies and daily lives, project personal personas, and establish social connections with teachers and peers. Yet, while utilising WeChat Moments for social interaction, university students simultaneously navigate a "visibility game." They craft idealised personas through status updates, yet within the gaze network formed by likes, comments, and shares, they face multiple risks including media addiction, social fatigue, and privacy breaches. These challenges prompt Generation Z university students to frequently adopt various measures to protect their content within WeChat Moments. Current content management methods primarily rely on the platform's inherent functions: "Delete" and "Modify Visibility Settings". "Delete" permanently removes published content, eliminating its visibility as a remedial action

[1]. The "modify visibility scope" function, however, affords users greater flexibility by enabling them to select specific audience groups before or after posting, thereby achieving precise targeting of social information. Beyond these two post-publication management actions, users may also control the dissemination range of Moments content prior to posting by adjusting "friend permissions," thus effectively safeguarding personal information. Concurrently, the "Allow friends to view Moments within this scope" function incorporates a timeframe for content visibility, permitting users to self-set the duration their Moments content remains visible. This further enhances the convenience and flexibility of personal social information management.

This paper refers to the aforementioned self-management of social media content visibility as "information visibility management". While academic research has explored WeChat Moments actions like "deletion" and "modifying visibility scope", no unified conceptual framework exists. The underlying causes and operational pathways of information visibility management remain unclear. Addressing this gap, this paper focuses on university students to explore their information visibility management behaviours on WeChat. Selecting university students as subjects holds significance for several reasons: firstly, this cohort occupies a transitional phase before entering society, where WeChat Moments serves both as a social link between students and teachers and as a platform for self-presentation during job hunting and internships, lending greater strategic complexity to their visibility management; Secondly, university students constitute the primary user base of social media platforms like WeChat Moments. Not only do they represent a substantial proportion of users, but their usage intensity also ranks highest [2]. Studying this group effectively mitigates statistical biases arising from sample heterogeneity. Finally, Generation Z university students possess strong information literacy, proficiently mastering various information management functions on social platforms, rendering them a feasible research cohort. Through empirical investigation, this paper aims to deeply analyse university students' social media information visibility management behaviours. This research seeks to provide theoretical underpinnings for refining self-information removal features on social platforms and offer practical guidance for users to better manage their personal social information.

2. Literature Review

As social media increasingly permeates everyday life, users' need to control content generated on these platforms has become increasingly prominent, drawing scholarly attention to information visibility management. Current research on this behaviour primarily focuses on three aspects: conceptual definition, behavioural characteristics, and influencing factors.

Regarding "information visibility management behaviour", academia has yet to establish a clear, unified definition. Early research predominantly focused on "information removal"—a specific sub-behaviour involving the complete erasure of information traces. Within interpersonal contexts, information removal is understood as the act of withdrawing or deleting sent messages to protect privacy [1]. The rapid development of the internet, coupled with frequent cybersecurity incidents and privacy breaches, has heightened users' awareness of personal privacy [3]. To better safeguard their privacy, users adopt behavioural strategies such as visibility scope control and user permission settings to effectively mitigate potential risks from privacy leaks [4], thereby enriching the range of sub-behaviours within information visibility management. Information visibility management represents a balance between information sharing and privacy protection, partially reconciling the tension between privacy concerns and self-disclosure. Dienlin and Metzger posit that self-erasure constitutes the opposite concept to self-disclosure [5]. Some scholars contend that information deletion constitutes a form of reverse self-presentation, categorising both pre-presentation filtering and post-presentation

deletion as self-erasure ([6]). Conversely, Dong Chenyu and Duan Caiyi suggest this may not be the case, arguing that erasure, like disclosure, is a strategy employed to shape one's self-image and is essentially a form of selective self-disclosure [1].

Considering the research subjects, this paper defines users' information visibility management behaviour on WeChat Moments as: the proactive control and management of user-generated content information, undertaken for personal information management purposes, through establishing self-disclosure rules (such as setting user groups) or implementing remedial measures after information publication (such as deleting posted Moments content, modifying visibility settings, or utilising limited-time dynamic features).

Concerning research into the characteristics of information visibility management behaviour, WeChat Moments has become a crucial contemporary research context due to its extensive user base and social connectivity function within the Chinese cultural context. Yu Mengli et al. [7] argue that information deletion constitutes an individual user's information management behaviour. Drawing upon self-awareness theory and a "defence-acquisition" perspective on information management, they explore the motivations behind social media users' information deletion behaviours using WeChat Moments as a case study. Information retraction, to some extent, also falls under post-self-presentation deletion. Guo Huihui and Deng Xiaozhao ([8]) defined "information withdrawal behaviour" from a self-presentation perspective and analysed its characteristics using semi-structured interviews. However, unlike WeChat chat messages, Moments content cannot be recalled. Bauer et al. ([9]) found that while users delete historical posts due to privacy concerns, they retain some content for reminiscence. Thus, compared to complete deletion, the majority of netizens opt to conceal previously published social media content. Within Moments, this predominantly manifests as "time-limited status settings". Dong Xixia [10] termed users' adoption of the "three-day visibility" feature as "intermittent disengagement", and based on communication psychology, revealed the underlying social psychology behind users' use of this setting across six dimensions: subject, purpose, content, channel, audience, and effect. Jiang Mengdie [11] approaches this from a self-presentation perspective. Analysing the drawbacks of WeChat Moments (such as excessive spectacle in self-presentation, exhaustion from managing superficial 'like-based friendships', and lack of privacy), she outlines the advantages of the 'three-day visibility' feature. These include creating a more relaxed environment for self-presentation, maintaining an air of mystery, bidding farewell to the past, and achieving harmony between the 'true self' and the 'public persona'. Wang Changyi [12] analysed users' adoption of the "three-day visibility" feature from both dramaturgical and social context perspectives. From a dramaturgical standpoint, this setting allows users to conceal the embarrassment of "performance failure," reduce management difficulties arising from numerous and diverse friends, and maintain an air of mystery. From a social context perspective, the "three-day visibility" setting partially alleviates concerns arising from the fusion of private and public contexts within Moments, easing users' privacy anxieties. However, its use may simultaneously damage friendships. Li et al. [13] examined how privacy settings on social media platforms, using WeChat Moments as a case study, influence user behaviour and social interactions. They noted that employing limited-time status features can have negative repercussions, such as being perceived as difficult to engage with or hindering new like-minded friends from quickly understanding one's character.

Regarding influencing factors, existing research primarily examines drivers of information visibility management (particularly erasure behaviours) from macro-cultural and micro-individual perspectives. At the macro-cultural level, differing interpersonal interaction patterns across cultures position culture as one of five primary factors shaping individuals' privacy rules [14]. Research from a cultural values perspective suggests that in highly individualistic societies, individuals are more likely to adopt proactive self-erasure as a privacy protection

measure [15]. Uncertainty avoidance serves as a measure of a society's discomfort with ambiguity, with high levels correlating with anxiety, stress, and security concerns [16]. Consequently, the greater a society's uncertainty avoidance, the more likely individuals are to adopt proactive self-erasure behaviours [17]. At the micro-individual level, users' cost-benefit calculations significantly influence the choice of self-erasure [18]. Protection motivation theory posits that subjective, rather than objective, threat assessments drive behavioural decisions when confronting negative consequences. Consequently, when perceived privacy risks are insufficient to outweigh the perceived benefits of social media usage, individuals are likely to engage in information elimination [19]. Research from a role theory perspective has found that for past graduates, stronger perceived role conflict correlates with higher visibility in social circles, whereas role overload has no significant impact on social circle visibility [20].

In summary, although existing literature has provided preliminary definitions of information visibility management behaviour, no unified and comprehensive conceptual framework has yet emerged. This disparity in conceptual understanding and application across studies hinders effective comparison and integration. Consequently, this paper redefines information visibility management behaviour based on prior research. Research into the characteristics of information visibility management behaviour has primarily focused on the WeChat Moments application scenario. This is partly due to WeChat Moments' broad audience reach and partly because it offers relatively comprehensive information visibility management functions, indicating it provides users with greater choice in protecting their privacy. Regarding the influencing factors of information visibility management behaviour, most studies focus on either macro-cultural or micro-individual factors in isolation, with limited attention to their interaction or to considerations of user privacy. Consequently, this paper focuses on the determinants of information visibility management behaviour. Building upon the premise that "intention drives behaviour," it incorporates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and, grounded in protection motivation theory, introduces perceived risk as a key variable. Utilising an expanded TPB framework, the study explores the motivations and operational mechanisms underlying information visibility management behaviour in WeChat Moments among university students.

3. Theoretical Foundations and Research Hypotheses

In 1985, Ajzen proposed the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) upon the foundation of rational action theory, aiming to explain and predict human behaviour within specific contexts. TPB posits that behavioural intention serves as the optimal predictor of actual behaviour. Individuals develop a strong intention to engage in a specific behaviour when they anticipate favourable outcomes (attitude), perceive social pressure to act (subjective norm), and feel capable of performing the action (perceived behavioural control) [21]. Building upon this, the present study defines emotional satisfaction as behavioural attitude, information visibility management norms as subjective norms, and perceived control as perceived behavioural control. With the rapid advancement of internet technology, personal privacy protection has become a focal point of widespread public concern.

Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) posits that when individuals perceive a threat and believe countermeasures are effective, they develop a "protection motivation" that drives protective behaviours. Thus, users who perceive threats to their personal privacy may engage in privacy-protective behaviours to manage their personal information. Users' behavioural decisions on social media platforms are influenced not only by traditional TPB factors such as personal attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control, but are also significantly shaped by their perception of privacy leakage risks. Perceived privacy risk emerges as a crucial dimension in users' assessment of potential losses from personal information disclosure. Consequently,

incorporating perceived privacy risk into the TPB framework based on Protection Motivation Theory represents not only an effective extension of the theory but also deepens our understanding of users' digital behavioural motivations and decision-making processes. In summary, this paper employs the expanded Theory of Planned Behaviour as its research framework. It examines the influence of four dimensions—behavioural attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and perceived privacy risk—on intentions and actions regarding information visibility management.

3.1. Research Hypotheses Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour

(1) Behavioural Attitude: Emotional Satisfaction

Emotional satisfaction denotes the degree of contentment users experience regarding information visibility management actions, based on feedback received, evaluations made, and personal emotional experiences before and after posting social media content. It predicts individuals' positive or negative perceptions of behavioural outcomes and influences their future willingness to repeat such actions. It is generally held that higher emotional satisfaction with information visibility management behaviour correlates with stronger willingness to engage in such practices. Conversely, lower satisfaction with one's edited or published social media content increases the desire to manage that content, thereby heightening the likelihood of personal information management. Based on this, Hypothesis 1 is proposed.

Hypothesis 1: Affective satisfaction positively influences the intention to manage information visibility.

(2) Subjective Norm: Information Visibility Management Norm

Norm formation arises from social influences, with social norms categorised as group norms and individual perceived norms [22]. The former constitutes shared behavioural standards emerging from social interactions, while the latter reflects an individual's understanding and perception of group norms [23]. Information visibility management norms can be categorised into directive norms and descriptive norms. The former refers to users' perceptions of expectations and views regarding their information visibility management behaviour after posting content in their social circles, stemming from family, friends, and other close social circles, as well as sociocultural norms. The latter is based on typical practices or behavioural patterns observed in the majority (similar to conformity behaviour), collectively influencing individual behaviour. Based on this, Hypothesis 2 is proposed.

Hypothesis 2: Information visibility management norms positively influence the intention to manage information visibility.

(3) Perceived Behavioural Control: Perceived Control

Perceived control denotes users' perception of their ability to utilise personal information management features on social platforms to safeguard their data [24]. When users perceive higher control, they may choose to employ relevant settings (e.g., WeChat Moments' "Who Can View" function) to mitigate the impact of information disclosure on themselves, thereby gaining better management over associated uncertainties [25]. Accurate perceived behavioural control reflects actual control conditions and thus serves as a proxy measure for these conditions, directly predicting the likelihood of behaviour occurrence. Based on this, Hypotheses 3 and 4 are proposed.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived control positively influences the intention to manage information visibility.

Hypothesis 4: Perceived control positively influences information visibility management behaviour.

3.2. Research Hypotheses Focusing on Perceived Privacy Risk

Perceived privacy risk constitutes a primary barrier to personal information disclosure on social platforms, denoting users' perception of expected loss regarding personal information disclosure on such platforms[26]. Based on differences in expected loss, Min [27] categorises perceived privacy risk into privacy information risk and privacy social risk. Privacy information risk denotes users' perception of the risk that disclosed personal information may be infringed upon by speculative behaviour [28]. Numerous studies treat privacy information risk as a perceived risk factor for personal information disclosure. Given that user-generated content on WeChat Moments constitutes a significant form of dynamic personal information disclosure [29], this paper posits that perceived privacy information risk influences users' management of WeChat Moments content. Furthermore, stronger users' perception of privacy information risk correlates with heightened willingness to manage information visibility. Privacy-related social risks denote users' perception of the risk that personal information disclosure may diminish their social standing [30]. As a social behaviour, users' WeChat Moments activities—whether posting status updates, sharing photographs, or engaging in interactive comments—can generate ripple effects that permeate and influence their real lives. Users find it difficult to fully control how friends perceive the information they disclose. Occasionally, even well-intentioned or sincere expressions may be misinterpreted due to differing perceptions among recipients. Such misunderstandings may create a discrepancy between the image users wish to project and how it is actually perceived, potentially adversely affecting their social standing. Consequently, many users adopt a cautious approach when managing content generated in their Moments, opting to hide or even delete posts. Thus, the stronger a user's perception of privacy-related social risks, the greater their willingness to manage information visibility. Based on the above, Hypotheses 5 to 9 are proposed.

Hypothesis 5: Privacy information risk positively influences the desire to manage information visibility.

Hypothesis 6: Privacy information risk positively influences information visibility management behaviour.

Hypothesis 7: Privacy-related social risks positively influence the intention to manage information visibility.

Hypothesis 8: Privacy-related social risks positively influence information visibility management behaviour.

Hypothesis 9: The intention to manage information visibility positively influences information visibility management behaviour.

The theoretical model for this study is constructed as outlined above, as depicted in Figure 1.

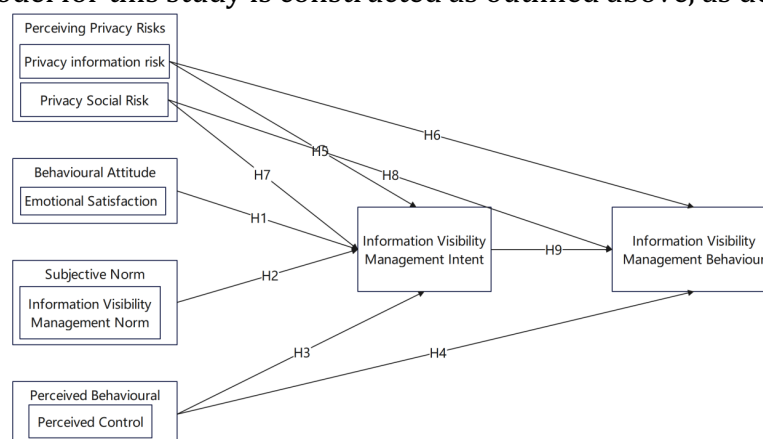


Figure 1 Theoretical Hypothesis Model

4. Data Acquisition and Data Analysis

4.1. Questionnaire Design

Data was collected via a questionnaire targeting university students who use WeChat Moments. The questionnaire comprised three sections: instructions, personal information, and measurement items for each research variable. Personal information included gender, year of study, WeChat Moments usage status, and frequency of use, with "Do you habitually use Moments?" serving as a screening criterion for participants. The scales employed in this study comprised seven research variables, involving 29 measurement items in total. Items were primarily sourced from classical literature and reviewed/revised by experts in information behaviour. Measurement items employed a seven-point Likert scale. Details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1:Variable Measurement Items and Sources

Variable	Measurement Item	Source
Emotional Satisfaction	When I manage my social circle (e.g., by deleting or modifying visibility settings), I feel satisfied with my actions	Wang Yalan[31], Tang Pei[6]
	Over time, I frequently reassess and alter my satisfaction with certain previously posted Moments content, which prompts thoughts of deleting or modifying their visibility	
	I am generally satisfied with the content I am about to post on my social media feed	
	I am generally satisfied with my already-posted Moments content	
Information Visibility Management Norm	Having observed others setting their Moments to "Visible only to xxx", I also choose to modify my Moments permissions	Gao Huiyue [32] , Ouyang Ruyi [33]
	If my posts are unsuitable for everyone, I feel it necessary to block specific friends before publishing	
	When my family (friends, superiors, etc.) deem my Moments content inappropriate, I tend to delete it or adjust its visibility	
	When my Moments content violates certain regulations (or infringes upon someone's rights), I tend to delete it or adjust its visibility	
Perceived Control	I believe deleting Moments content or restricting visibility for certain individuals fosters a sense of security	Zhang Yun et al. [25]
	I know how to use WeChat Moments' privacy settings to manage my content (deleting posts, adjusting visibility, setting limited-time updates, etc.)	
	I have complete mastery over utilising WeChat Moments' privacy settings to manage my content (deleting posts, adjusting visibility, setting limited-time updates, etc.)	
	My personal information in Moments may be misused	

Privacy Information Risks	Personal information in my Moments may be accessed by unknown individuals or businesses without my knowledge	Dine et al. [28], Deng Shengli [29], Gao Huiyue [32]
	My social circle may leak my photographs or sensitive personal information	
Privacy Social Risk	To protect my privacy, I would consider deleting (or blocking) certain content from my social circle	Zhang Yun et al. [25], Min [27], Gao Huiyue [32]
	I do not wish for unfamiliar individuals to pry into my past history	
Information Visibility Management Intent	Certain personal updates posted on Moments may damage my image in others' eyes	Self-written
	I do not wish others to view my updates and thereby speculate about my thoughts, leading to misunderstandings	
Information Visibility Management Behaviour	Certain personal updates shared on social media could lead to people looking down on me in real life	Self-written
	Personal updates posted on social media occasionally contradict the image I project	
Information Visibility Management Behaviour	Personal updates on social media contain information I wish specific individuals to know (or not to know)	Self-written
	Should any of the above unfavourable situations arise (e.g., a WeChat Moments post causing others to misunderstand me), I intend to delete that post.	
Information Visibility Management Behaviour	For certain reasons, I intend to block certain individuals before posting on Moments	Self-written
	For certain reasons, I wish to block certain individuals after posting a WeChat Moments update	
Information Visibility Management Behaviour	To prevent certain unfavourable situations described above (such as a WeChat Moments post causing others to misunderstand me), I intend to set up limited-time stories (e.g., "visible for three days only")	Self-written
	When I felt inclined to delete a particular WeChat Moment, I proceeded to remove it	
Information Visibility Management Behaviour	I typically block certain individuals via group settings before publishing personal Moments updates.	Self-written
	I typically modify visibility settings to block certain individuals after posting a personal moment	

4.2. Preliminary Research

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire reached an acceptable level, a pre-survey was conducted prior to the formal distribution of the questionnaire. Based on the pre-survey results, improvements were made to the structure and content of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was created using the Wenjuanxing platform and distributed via online social media platforms to university students with experience managing personal information on WeChat Moments. A total of 76 completed questionnaires were obtained.

(1) Reliability Testing

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α coefficient and CITC values. SPSS 26.0 analysis of the pre-survey data revealed an overall Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.948, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.8, indicating good reliability. The Cronbach's α coefficients for each sub-variable were 0.853, 0.796, 0.902, 0.829, 0.890, 0.834, and 0.758 respectively, all exceeding 0.7, indicating good reliability for each component. Furthermore, the CITC values for the items ranged from 0.419 to 0.816, all exceeding 0.4. Consequently, all measurement items were retained.

(2) Validity Testing

Exploratory factor analysis was employed to assess the validity of each variable. Using SPSS 26.0, the overall KMO value for the measurement variables was found to be 0.840, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.8. The KMO values for each sub-variable were 0.738, 0.714, 0.739, 0.800, 0.848, 0.770, and 0.748 respectively, all within the acceptable range. Bartlett's significance was 0.000, less than 0.001. The cumulative variance explained was 74.652%, exceeding the critical value, indicating good validity.

4.3. Data Collection

A total of 382 formal questionnaires were collected. After excluding invalid responses (those completed in under 60 seconds, non-target participants, uniform selections across all items, or logical inconsistencies), 281 valid questionnaires were obtained, yielding a response rate of 73.56%. Table 2 presents respondents' basic information.

Table 1 : Statistical Summary of Respondent Demographics

Descriptive Characteristics	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	141	50.18%
	Female	140	49.82%
Year	First Year	64	22.78%
	Second Year	81	28.83%
	Year 3	69	24.56%
	Final Year	40	14.23%
	Postgraduate	27	9.60%
Frequency of WeChat Moments usage (daily)	Once	58	20.64%
	2 - 5 times	98	34.88%
	6 - 10 times	73	25.98%
	10 times or more	52	18.50%

4.4. Data Analysis

(1) Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability testing of the scale was conducted using SPSS 26.0. The Cronbach's α coefficients for each variable, as shown in Table 3, were all above 0.8, indicating that the scale data possesses good reliability.

Table2

Variable	Cronbach's α
Emotional Satisfaction (ES)	0.859
Information Visibility Management Norms (SEN)	0.865
Perceived Control (PC)	0.909
Privacy Information Risk (PIR)	0.882
Privacy Social Risk (PSR)	0.917

Information Visibility Management Intent (SEI)	0.852
Information Visibility Management Behaviour (SEB)	0.848

Validity testing of the scales was conducted using AMOS 28 software, employing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine both convergent validity and discriminant validity, thereby establishing the accuracy and reliability of the measurement results.

Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) effectively characterise the scale's convergent validity. A higher CR value indicates greater internal consistency within the construct and stronger convergent validity. AVE represents the average explanatory power of latent variables over observed variables; a higher AVE signifies greater convergent validity. Generally, if the AVE exceeds 0.5 and the composite reliability CR exceeds 0.7, the scale's convergent validity is deemed satisfactory. The convergent validity test results are presented in Table 4, where all scales exhibit AVE values above 0.5 and composite reliability CR values above 0.7, indicating sound convergent validity.

Table 3

Path			Std. Estimate	CR	AVE
ES4	<---	ES	0.798		
ES3	<---	ES	0.832		
ES2	<---	ES	0.755	0.851	0.589
ES1	<---	ES	0.677		
SEN4	<---	SEN	0.755		
SEN3	<---	SEN	0.856		
SEN2	<---	SEN	0.791	0.867	0.620
SEN1	<---	SEN	0.744		
PC3	<---	PC	0.838		
PC2	<---	PC	0.922	0.911	0.773
PC1	<---	PC	0.875		
PIR4	<---	PIR	0.777		
PIR3	<---	PIR	0.897		
PIR2	<---	PIR	0.82	0.875	0.639
PIR1	<---	PIR	0.69		
PSR6	<---	PSR	0.81		
PSR5	<---	PSR	0.82		
PSR4	<---	PSR	0.826		
PSR3	<---	PSR	0.816	0.908	0.623
PSR2	<---	PSR	0.767		
PSR1	<---	PSR	0.688		
SEI1	<---	SEI	0.736		
SEI2	<---	SEI	0.78		
SEI3	<---	SEI	0.773	0.838	0.565
SEI4	<---	SEI	0.715		
SEB1	<---	SEB	0.724		
SEB2	<---	SEB	0.786	0.838	0.565
SEB3	<---	SEB	0.777		

SEB4 <--- SEB 0.716

Discriminant validity focuses on the differences between methods measuring distinct constructs. It is assessed by comparing the square root of a latent variable's AVE with the square of its correlation coefficients with other variables. If the square root of each latent variable's AVE exceeds the square of its correlation coefficients with other variables, this indicates a degree of discrimination among latent variables within the scale. The results of the discriminant validity test are presented in Table 5. The square root of the AVE for each latent variable is greater than the square of the correlation coefficient between that variable and other variables. Therefore, the latent variables within the scale exhibit a degree of discrimination, indicating good discriminant validity.

Table 5 : Correlation Coefficients and Square Roots of AVE

	AVE	PSR	PIR	PC	SEN	ES	SEI	SEB
PSR	0.623	0.789						
PIR	0.639	0.516	0.800					
PC	0.773	0.292	0.299	0.879				
SEN	0.620	0.562	0.398	0.000	0.788			
ES	0.589	0.486	0.472	0.174	0.544	0.768		
SEI	0.565	0.612	0.530	0.224	0.563	0.537	0.751	
SEB	0.565	0.364	0.330	0.416	0.250	0.293	0.515	0.751

Given the model's sound reliability and validity, structural validity was assessed through model fit indices, with values as shown in Table 6: CMI/DF = 2.362 (ideal range 1 - 3); RMSEA = 0.070 (<0.08); GFI=0.823 (>0.8); IFI=0.909, CFI=0.908 (>0.9); NFI=0.852 (>0.8). These values indicate that the model exhibits satisfactory fit.

Table 4

Variable	Value
CMIN/DF	2.349
RMSEA	0.069
IFI	0.909
CFI	0.908
NFI	0.852

(2) Hypothesis Testing for Models

The significance of the hypotheses was tested using the model's p-values to determine their validity, as shown in Table 7. As indicated in Table 7, except for Hypotheses 3 and 8, which had significance levels greater than 0.05, all other significance levels were less than 0.001 or less than 0.05. This indicates that all hypotheses except Hypotheses 3 and 8 are valid.

Firstly, Hypotheses 1, 2, 5, and 7 hold true, confirming that emotional satisfaction, information visibility management norms, and perceived privacy risks constitute the attribution factors for users' information visibility management intentions. Secondly, the rejection of Hypothesis 3 while Hypothesis 4 holds indicates differing effects of perceived control on the intention and behaviour of information visibility management. This is likely because individuals with strong perceived control—i.e., those who believe they possess greater mastery over their WeChat Moments—perceive greater ease in executing self-deletion actions. While this does not necessarily increase their intention to perform such actions, high perceived control may

facilitate actual implementation when they do decide to act. Thirdly, the validity of Hypothesis 7 while Hypothesis 8 is invalid indicates that privacy-related social risks exert a positive influence on the intention to manage information visibility, but not on the actual behaviour of managing information visibility. Finally, the validity of Hypothesis 9 demonstrates that users' intention to manage information visibility strongly predicts their actual behaviour in managing information visibility.

Table 5

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Content	Standardised Coefficient	S. E.	C. R.	P	Hypothesis Test Results
H1	Emotional satisfaction positively influences information visibility management willingness	0.147	0.066	2.232	0.026	Established
H2	Information Visibility Management Specifications Positively Influence Information Visibility Management Intentions	0.203	0.075	2.719	0.007	Established
H3	Perceived control positively influences information visibility management willingness	0.038	0.038	1.008	0.313	Not established
H4	Perceptual control positively influences information visibility management behaviour	0.148	0.042	3.537	***	Established
H5	Privacy Information Risk Positive Influence Information Visibility Management Intent	0.160	0.064	2.505	0.012	Established
H6	Privacy information risk positively influences information visibility management behaviour	0.193	0.07	2.778	0.005	Established
H7	Privacy and social risks positively influence willingness to manage information visibility	0.212	0.06	3.525	***	Established
H8	Privacy-related social risks exert a positive influence on information visibility management behaviour	0.031	0.062	0.493	0.622	Not established

H9	Information visibility					
	management intention					
	positively influences	0.300	0.088	3.392	***	Established
	information visibility					
	management behaviour					

Given the presence of three mediating pathways within the theoretical model, the mediating effects of these pathways were examined using AMOS's Bootstrapping method. The number of samples was adjusted to 5000, with 95% confidence intervals and 95% bias-corrected confidence levels calculated. If the confidence interval did not contain zero, the mediating effect was deemed significant, indicating that the mediating variable exerted a significant influence on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 8 indicates that at the 95% confidence level: Path ①'s direct effect exhibits a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval excluding zero, while its indirect effect's bias-corrected 95% confidence interval includes zero. This demonstrates that the mediating effect is non-significant, further confirming that perceived control exerts a direct influence on information visibility management behaviour. For Path ②, both the direct effect and indirect effect have bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals that do not contain zero, indicating a significant mediating effect and partial mediation. Path ③: The bias-corrected 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect excludes zero, indicating a significant mediating effect. The bias-corrected 95% confidence interval for the direct effect includes zero, indicating that the direct effect is insignificant. This mediation is complete mediation, meaning that the influence of privacy-related social risks on information visibility management behaviour is realised through self-cancellation intentions.

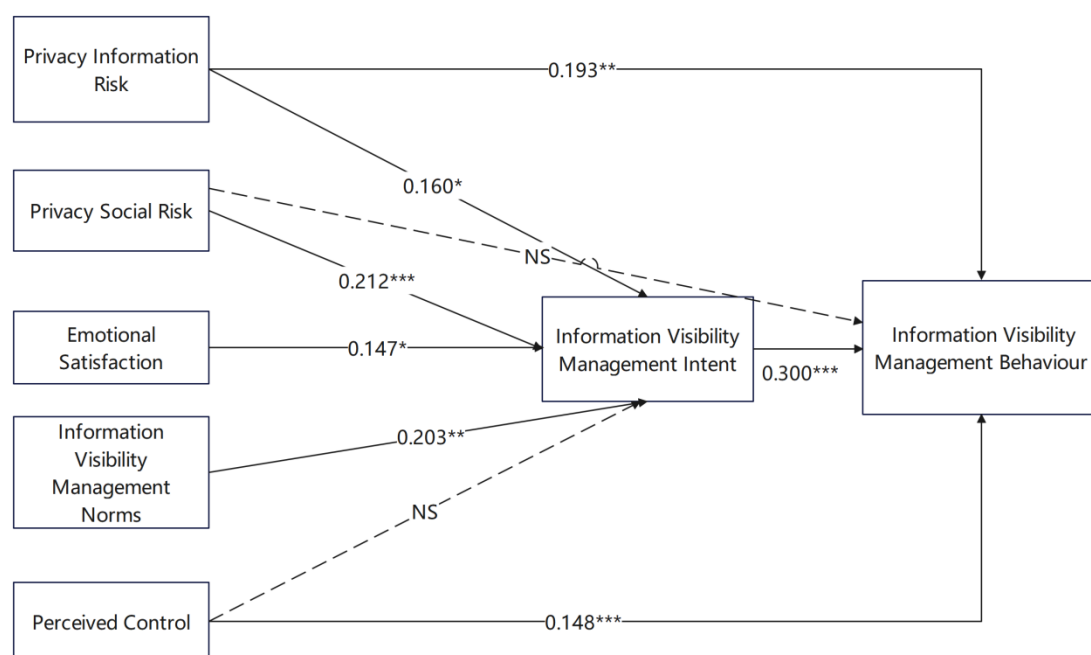
Table 6 : Mediating Effect Test Results

Mediation Path	Effect Type	Point Estimate	SE	Bias-corrected 95% CI		
				Lower	Upper	P
① Perceived control-- → Intention to manage information visibility-- → Information visibility management behaviour	Indirect effect	0.011	0.015	-0.011	0.055	0.263
	Direct effect	0.148	0.052	0.056	0.258	0.001
	Total effect	0.159	0.054	0.059	0.279	0.001
② Privacy Information Risk → Information Visibility Management Intent → Information Visibility Management Behaviour	Indirect effect	0.048	0.03	0.004	0.131	0.036
	Direct effect	0.193	0.083	0.046	0.365	0.009
	Total effect	0.241	0.081	0.092	0.405	0.002
③ Privacy-related social risks → intention to manage information visibility → information visibility management behaviour	Indirect effect	0.064	0.029	0.022	0.148	0.002
	Direct effect	0.031	0.063	-0.089	0.156	0.615
	Total effect	0.094	0.059	-0.018	0.215	0.096

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

Based on the hypothesis testing results in Table 7 and the mediation effect findings in Table 8, the path coefficient diagram of the research model is presented in Figure 2. Both emotional satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.147, p < 0.05$) and information visibility management norms ($\gamma = 0.203, p < 0.01$) exerted significant positive effects on the intention to manage information visibility. This finding aligns with the core tenets of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), wherein attitudes and subjective norms serve as pivotal antecedents to behavioural intention. Notably, the path coefficient for the information visibility management norm is relatively high (0.212), indicating that Generation Z university students are more susceptible to peer group pressure. For instance, when close friends or family members exhibit sensitivity towards certain content, users tend to proactively block or delete related posts to conform to group expectations. This phenomenon corroborates Dong Chenyu et al.'s "reverse self-presentation" theory: visibility management constitutes a strategic adjustment of social image [1]. From a deeper motivational perspective, university students undergoing identity transition (student \rightarrow professional) perceive their social circles as possessing dual attributes of private expression and public display. This duality drives them to mitigate social risks through normative compliance.



* denotes $P < 0.05$; ** denotes $P < 0.01$; *** denotes $P < 0.001$; NS denotes Non-significant

Figure3

Perceived control ($\gamma = 0.148, p < 0.001$) and intention to manage information visibility ($\gamma = 0.300, p < 0.001$) both significantly and positively influenced information visibility management behaviour. However, no significant correlation was found between perceived control ($\gamma = 0.038, p = 0.313$) and the intention to manage information visibility. This finding aligns with the behavioural conversion mechanism of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which posits that behavioural intention must satisfy dual conditions — intention stability and actual control conditions — to translate into actual behaviour. Moreover, when perceived behavioural control is highly accurate, it may directly predict behaviour. Specifically, while perceived control does not necessarily increase users'

willingness to engage in information visibility management (i.e., it does not directly influence intention), when users actually perform the behaviour, high perceived control may facilitate easier action. That is, when one's perceived control is sufficiently strong, the implementation of information visibility management behaviour often occurs before the individual becomes aware of their intention to manage information visibility. This also directly corroborates the perspective of Deng Shengli et al. [29]— users with high perceived control are more likely to utilise information visibility management features (such as privacy settings or limited-time dynamic settings) to mitigate or eliminate the negative impacts of information disclosure on themselves. Consequently, users with high perceived control are more inclined to engage in information visibility management behaviour.

Both privacy information risk ($\gamma = 0.160$, $p < 0.05$) and privacy social risk ($\gamma = 0.212$, $p < 0.001$) significantly and positively influenced the intention to manage information visibility. Concurrently, privacy information risk ($\gamma = 0.193$, $p < 0.05$) significantly and positively influenced the actual behaviour of managing information visibility. Privacy-social risk ($\gamma = 0.212$, $p < 0.001$) exhibits the highest path coefficient, indicating Gen Z university students' heightened sensitivity to their perceived status within social circles. This also corroborates the notion that Gen Z prioritises privacy-social risks over privacy information risks [29]. When Generation Z users perceive heightened privacy-related social risks on social media platforms, they adopt information visibility management behaviours including, but not limited to: utilising limited-time dynamic settings in social circles [32], reducing social circle visibility [20], and deleting social circle posts ([6-7]). Such behaviours reflect Generation Z university students' profound pursuit of harmonious unity between the 'true self' and the 'social self'. The 'true self' represents authentic emotional existence, while the 'social self' constitutes the individual's necessary socialised identity. The mutual integration of these two selves forms the authentic self [11].

5.2. Conclusion

This study focuses on Gen Z university students' information visibility management behaviour on WeChat Moments. Employing the Theory of Planned Behaviour as its foundational framework and incorporating perceived privacy risk as a factor, it constructs a structural equation model to validate the causal relationships between emotional satisfaction, information visibility management norms, perceived control, perceived privacy risk, and both the intention to manage information visibility and the actual behaviour of information visibility management. The research conclusions are as follows:

Firstly, the concept of "information visibility management behaviour" is defined. Unlike previous studies viewing actions such as "deletion," "withdrawal," and "setting visibility" solely through the lens of self-presentation, "information visibility management" adopts a personal information management perspective. It not only examines users' information disclosure behaviours on social media but also emphasises the analysis of users' remedial actions after information release. This goes beyond simple deletion or visibility adjustments, representing a complex behaviour rooted in personal information management, self-image shaping, and social relationship maintenance. University students proactively control and manage their information display within social circles by establishing self-disclosure rules and implementing remedial measures. This serves to protect personal privacy, cultivate a favourable image, and preserve social relationships. This conceptualisation provides a unified and explicit definition for the numerous disclosure and remedial behaviours exhibited by social media platform users, offering a fresh perspective for research into social media user conduct.

Secondly, this study delves into the attribution of "information visibility management behaviour" under the frameworks of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Protection Motivation Theory. Unlike most existing research grounded in grounded theory, this paper

employs the Theory of Planned Behaviour and privacy protection efficacy to propose and validate the attribution of intentions for information visibility management behaviour. These include emotional satisfaction, information visibility management norms, perceived control, privacy information risks, and privacy social risks. It further demonstrates the predictive role of information visibility management intentions on the actual engagement in such behaviour. While prior research identifies WeChat platform factors (privacy threats, contextual dissolution, alternative social solutions) as primary influences on users' information visibility management in Moments[32], this study confirms that information visibility management intentions only accelerate behavioural implementation when users perceive risks of diminished social standing due to personal information disclosure. Perceived control can regulate escape tendencies through behavioural control or manifest as fatigue behaviours like ignoring, lurking, or avoidance via decision control[34]. Research indicates perceived control influences the intention to manage information visibility differently from its impact on the actual behaviour of managing information visibility. Specifically, while perceived control does not necessarily increase users' willingness to engage in self-erasure behaviours (i.e., it does not directly influence intention), when users actually perform such actions, high perceived control may facilitate easier implementation. That is, when perceived control is sufficiently strong, information visibility management behaviours often occur before users consciously recognise their intention to manage information visibility. This may occur because users who perceive themselves as capable of controlling and managing their information are more inclined to take proactive steps to safeguard their privacy.

Furthermore, practical implications are provided from both user and platform perspectives. For users, enhancing digital literacy and privacy awareness is essential. While sharing high-quality, substantive content on social media platforms to express individuality and lifestyle, users should simultaneously heighten privacy consciousness, recognise the significance of personal information, and reasonably configure privacy settings according to their needs and circumstances. For social media platforms like WeChat, granting users greater perceived control is crucial to minimise perceived privacy risks. This includes designing intuitive interfaces, simplifying operational steps, and enabling effortless management of information sharing scopes. Continuous development and optimisation of privacy settings should provide finer-grained permission controls, allowing precise management of different information types and audiences. Introducing intelligent recommendation systems that automatically adjust privacy settings based on user behaviour and preferences can enhance user experience.

Finally, this study's findings possess certain limitations. Constrained by sample type and quantity, the research sample may not fully represent the population, potentially introducing bias. Consequently, conclusions require further validation. To refine research on information visibility management mechanisms, subsequent studies should employ mixed-methods approaches. This would involve extracting and refining measurement dimensions influencing information visibility management behaviours across diverse subjects, thereby constructing more comprehensive and in-depth research models.

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