



Understanding Audiobook Apps' Consumption Values and Their Implications for Promoting Audiobooks in Vietnam

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Abstract

Audiobooks have recently become more prevalent in the publishing industry. Vietnam is a potential market for audiobook companies, and audiobook apps are soaring in popularity in this country. This study examines how consumers perceive audiobook apps' consumption values, including functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value. Data were obtained from 1041 Vietnamese consumers using an online survey method. Results show that conditional value had the highest mean score, followed by epistemic value and emotional value. Notably, consumers hold negative perceptions of audiobook apps' functional value, especially regarding their reliability and consistency. The findings also suggest that consumers will use audiobook apps more if there are more discounts, promotional benefits, and books available in the apps. This study is the first to explain how consumers perceive the different consumption values of audiobook apps, which have important implications for audiobook companies, publishers and app developers to promote audiobooks.

Keywords Audiobook · Audiobook apps · Publishing · Listening · Digital technology

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Introduction and Background

Audiobooks have recently become more prevalent in the publishing industry [1]. In its broadest, an audiobook can be defined as a recording of a book or magazine read aloud on cassette tape, CD, or the internet. The audio recording is performed by narrators who could be book authors, professional actors, amateurs, or synthetic voices [2]. Despite the perception that listening is not as effective as reading, audiobooks have some competitive advantages over print books, including multi-tasking, accessibility, convenience, and novel experience provided by the narrators and apps. Several readers also believe audiobooks are more environmentally friendly because they don't use paper, inks, and chemicals and can be easily recycled [3].

The global audiobook market accounted for \$4.2 billion in 2021 and is predicted to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 26.45 during the 2022–2030 period [4]. Different factors have driven this growth. Consumers increasingly look for novel ways to fit more readings into their busy lifestyles. Besides, audiobook companies put much effort into providing consumers with different alternatives and appealing services. Also, technological development has expanded listening options, including personal computers, portable devices (e.g., MP3 players, smartphones, and tablets), and voice assistant speakers. Furthermore, the (temporary) shutdown of physical bookstores due to COVID-19 [5] and the rapid growth of audiobook apps have ebooks, including audiobooks, more ideal for readers at home or traveling.

Vietnam is a potential market for audiobook companies, with a population of over 98 million, of which 70.3% are internet users and 69.2 million smartphone users [6]. Vietnam's audiobook market is currently valued at \$300 million, and audiobook apps are soaring in popularity, with three officially licensed audiobook channels: Voiz FM, Fonos, and MyDio [7, 8]. They are relatively new startups, with Voiz FM established in late 2019, Fonos in 2020, and MyDio in early 2021. As the market leader, Voiz FM presently has more than 500,000 users with more than 20 million minutes of paid content. This company provides 2000 best-selling books in literature, art, education, and economics. On average, about 20,000 active users use the app daily.

Understanding how consumers perceive audiobook apps' values is essential to promoting the consumption of audiobooks. These insights can assist audiobook companies and app developers in improving their apps and enhancing consumer experiences. This study, therefore, seeks to explore Vietnamese consumers' perceived value of audiobook apps using the Theory of Consumption Values [9]. This theory identifies five primary values that can affect consumer choice: functional value (capacity for functional or physical performance), social value (association with social groups), emotional value (capacity to arouse feelings), epistemic value (capacity to provide novelty and arouse curiosity), and conditional value (perceived utility acquired in a specific situation).

The remainder of this paper follows the following structure. The next section describes the methodological decisions, including the online survey approach,

sampling, and data collection procedure. After that, data analysis and results are presented and discussed. The final section highlights the implications of the findings and offers concluding remarks and future research directions.

Methodology

This study employed an online survey method to assess how Vietnamese consumers perceive the consumption values of audiobook apps. Participants in this survey were Vietnamese citizens aged 18 and over who had used audiobook apps. The survey instrument comprises four sections: (1) Introduction and informed consent, (2) screening questions, (3) measures of audiobook apps' consumption values, and (4) sociodemographic questions.

Measures of consumption values were adapted from previous studies [10–13]. In total, 20 items were used to measure functional value (5 items), social value (4 items), emotional value (4 items), epistemic value (3 items), and conditional value (3 items). A pretest with five audiobook app users and four professors in marketing and information systems was conducted to ensure the clarity and validity of the items.

Snowball sampling was used to select the respondents [14]. The authors created the survey using Google Forms and then emailed the survey link to 20 respondents who were known to the authors. These respondents were then requested to send the link to others eligible for the survey. After 2 months, 1075 responses were returned. However, 34 responses were eliminated due to being outliers. Thus, the final effective sample was 1041. The sample characteristics are illustrated in Table 1.

Data Analysis and Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The collected data were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to examine the valid dimensionalities of audiobook apps' consumption values. Principal Axis Factoring extraction (PAF) and Varimax rotation were used. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value was 0.880 and significant ($p < 0.001$). Hence, the data collected in this study were considered suitable for factor analysis. The results are illustrated in Table 2.

As expected, five factors with Eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 were generated by the 20 items operationalizing audiobook app consumption values. The factor loadings of all the items were above the threshold of 0.4 recommended by Guadagnoli and Velicer [15]. The five extracted factors accounted for over 66% of the item variance.

Audiobook Apps' Consumption Values

Cronbach's Alpha (α) was applied to assess the reliability of each consumption value. As shown in Table 3, the α values ranged from a low of 0.796 (social

Table 1 Sample characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	544	52.3
Male	497	47.7
Age		
18–24	388	37.3
25–34	385	37.0
35–44	185	17.8
45–54	56	5.5
55+	25	2.4
Marital status		
Single/never married	546	52.4
Currently married	422	40.5
Others	73	7.1
Education		
High school or less	32	3.1
Professional degrees	98	9.4
Undergraduate	665	63.9
Postgraduate	246	23.6
Time using audiobook apps daily		
Under 1 h	168	16.1
1–under 2 h	703	67.5
2 h+	170	16.4

n = 1041

value) to a high of 0.927 (functional value), exceeding the recommended value of 0.7. These results ensured good internal consistency of reliability [16].

Table 3 also shows the means and standard deviations for all the items measuring audiobook apps' consumption values, including functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value. The items measuring each consumption value were averaged to generate the mean score for the value, which is illustrated in Fig. 1. Overall, 'conditional value' had the highest mean score ($M=3.99$), followed by 'epistemic value' ($M=3.39$), 'social value' ($M=3.27$), and 'emotional value' ($M=3.25$). Notably, 'functional value' received the lowest mean score ($M=2.94$), which is below the mid-point of 3.0, highlighting that Vietnamese consumers had unfavorable perceptions of audiobook apps' functional and utilitarian performance.

Looking at the individual items, consumers held extremely negative perceptions about audiobook apps' reliability ($M=2.45$) and consistency ($M=2.85$). The quality standard of audiobook apps was also perceived as average ($M=3.05$). However, consumers generally agreed that audiobook apps enable them to experiment with new ways of doing things, i.e., reading by listening ($M=3.63$). They

Table 2 Exploratory factor analysis results

Item labels	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
FUV1	0.842				
FUV2	0.783				
FUV3	0.794				
FUV4	0.863				
FUV5	0.849				
SOV1		0.657			
SOV2		0.707			
SOV3		0.619			
SOV4		0.499			
EMV1			0.623		
EMV2			0.809		
EMV3			0.770		
EMV4			0.803		
EMV5			0.694		
EPV1				0.615	
EPV2				0.619	
EPV3				0.681	
COV1					0.700
COV2					0.772
COV3					0.937

Items are detailed in Table 2

would also use audiobook apps more if there were more discounts ($M = 3.94$), promotional benefits ($M = 3.94$), and books available ($M = 4.07$).

Conclusion and Implications

Vietnam represents a colossal market opportunity for audiobook companies, given its young population, high internet penetration rate, and rapid increase in mobile device owners [6, 17, 18]. The market has three major players, including Voiz FM, Fonos, and MyDio, who are trying to increase audiobook consumption through audiobook apps that can be downloaded on Apple Store and Google Play. This study sought to provide fresh insights into how Vietnamese consumers evaluate the consumption values of audiobook apps, which are essential for promoting consumers’ experiences and audiobook usage. To the best of the authors’ knowledge, this study is the first attempt to understand the various dimensions of consumption values regarding audiobook apps.

This study finds that consumers hold negative perceptions about audiobook apps’ functional value, especially their reliability and consistency. Hence, audiobook companies need to collaborate with experienced app developers to enhance their apps’ usefulness and functional performance, mainly focusing on improving reliability and consistency. Furthermore, it is crucial to make the apps easy to use and constantly

Table 3 Consumption values of audiobook apps

Dimensions of audiobook apps' values	M	SD
Functional value ($\alpha=0.927$)		
FUV1. Audiobook apps have an acceptable standard of quality	3.05	1.111
FUV2. Audiobook apps are reliable	2.48	1.027
FUV3. Audiobook apps perform consistently	2.85	1.098
FUV4. Using audiobook apps is easy	3.11	1.068
FUV5. Using audiobook apps improves reading productivity	3.21	1.157
Social value ($\alpha=0.796$)		
SOV1. Using audiobook apps creates a favorable expression of myself with others	3.41	1.232
SOV2. Using audiobook apps helps improve my social image	3.37	1.217
SOV3. Audiobook apps are used by people who are important to me	3.16	1.303
SOV4. Using audiobook apps are used by experts	3.15	1.217
Emotional value ($\alpha=0.909$)		
EMV1. Using audiobook apps is interesting	3.37	1.076
EMV2. Using audiobook apps makes me feel good	3.32	1.165
EMV3. Using audiobook apps is enjoyable	3.25	1.203
EMV4. Using audiobook apps gives me pleasure	3.19	1.171
EMV5. Using audiobook apps makes me feel relaxed	3.13	1.037
Epistemic value ($\alpha=0.810$)		
EPV1. Audiobook apps enable me to test new technologies	3.22	0.960
EPV2. Audiobook apps make me experiment with new ways of doing things	3.63	1.340
EPV3. Audiobook apps arouse my curiosity	3.31	1.049
Conditional value ($\alpha=0.862$)		
COV1. I will use audiobook apps more if they provide more discounts	3.94	1.116
COV2. I will use audiobook apps more if they provide more promotional benefits	3.94	1.008
COV3. I will use audiobook apps more if there are more books available in the apps	4.07	1.004

α Cronbach's Alpha, *M* mean, *SD* standard deviation

improve their quality, which can also enhance consumer feelings towards the apps (i.e., emotional values). The findings regarding conditional value suggest that audiobook companies should partner with publishers to provide consumers with more discounts and promotional activities (e.g., special prices and loyalty programs) and greater ranges of audiobooks across different genres on their apps.

Since epistemic value has the second-highest mean score, audiobook companies and app developers should seek to update the apps with new and innovative features. Marketing communications, including advertising, should deliver clear and compelling messages that audiobook apps are innovative and that using them enables consumers to experience a new way of reading (by listening). Given the significance of social value, such communication campaigns should also convince consumers that audiobook apps are increasingly used by experts and other people in society.

Despite its contribution to the literature relating to audiobooks and audiobook apps, this study can be extended in several ways. Future studies should apply the

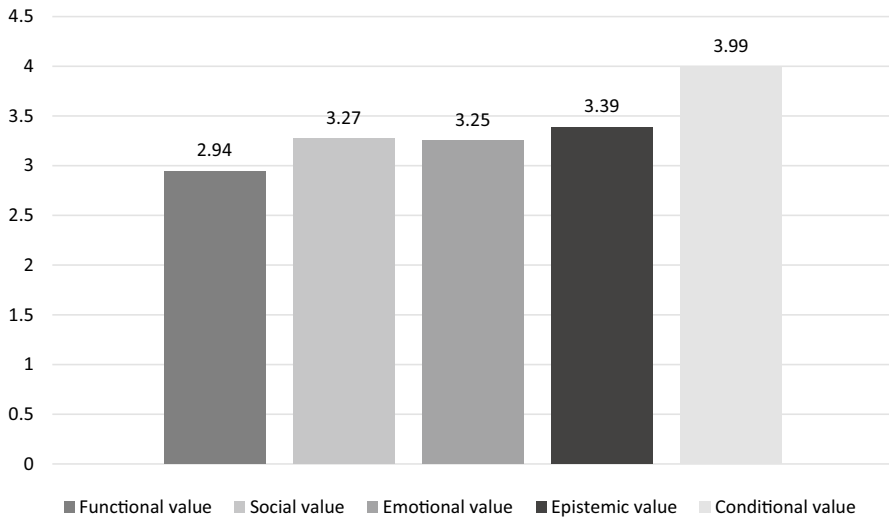


Fig. 1 Mean scores of consumption values

consumption value scales validated in this study in other geographic contexts. Moreover, future research can try to apply these scales to segment audiobook app users. Finally, future studies are encouraged to investigate how different consumption values affect consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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