

Buddhist Youth Preferences Factors on Humanistic Buddhism Learning Mobile Application

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ABSTRACT

Digital media and networks have become embedded in our everyday lives. It is a part of a broad-based changes to how we engage in knowledge production, communication, and creative expression. Therefore, Buddhist youth cannot afford to be passive, because the stable institutions and traditional communities that once provided for their welfare are in retreat, withdrawing lifetime guarantees and safety nets. This article discusses how Buddhist youths' shared their preferences factor on the Humanistic Buddhism Learning Mobile Application (HBLMA). The application examines the teachings of the Buddha and emphasises how Buddhist youth can integrate all aspects of these teachings into their daily lives. This study uses a qualitative approach by purposively interviewing 20 Buddhist youth who have used the application on their phone. The data was analysed by using a phenomenological approach and thematic analysis. Discussions of findings focuses on Buddhist youth preferences factors in the religious Mobile Applications and in what ways it can helps to attract more usage among Buddhist youth.

Keywords: Youth; Learning Application; Humanistic Buddhism; Digital Media; Technology

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the prominence of technology in the lives of youth has grown dramatically. The ubiquitous nature of the internet, along with the growth of ever-changing forms of social media, have created a rather dichotomous existence for many youths, one in which they live in the "real world," and yet another in which they live in the "online world". In many ways, a generational divide has developed, such that children and adolescents, who have grown up in a world where mastery of technological change is an absolute must, have a decided advantage over their parents when it comes to the ease of use of technology (Blair et.al 2015).

Digital media and networks have become embedded in our everyday lives, and are part of broad-based changes to how we engage in knowledge production, communication, and creative expression. Digital media are now commonplace and pervasive and have escaped the boundaries of diverse populations including the peer activities of youth. This generation is growing up in an era where digital media are part of the taken-for-granted social and cultural fabric of learning, play, and social communication (Ito et al. 2008).

Wei, Lo, Xu, Chen, and Zhang (2014) observed that reading behaviour on the cell phone is on the rise among Asian students who adopted a variety of news applications packaged for the cell phone. As for the motivation of the students, the study reported that the greater their belief that the cell phone helps in information-seeking, the more they read on the cell. Mihailidis (2014) examined how university students were using and perceiving the role of cell phones for their communication and information needs. Drawing on a sample from four countries, the study showed how the cell phone finally dictates youths' social and civic life.

In an effort to make Humanistic Buddhism something that is truly found across the curriculum for youth, the mobile application will be an eye-opener as to how Buddhism might be taught or might be learned. Therefore, this research will attempt to investigate what the youth preferences factors are in the Humanistic Buddhism Learning Mobile Application that looks into the teachings of the Buddha, as well as to emphasise how youth can integrate all aspects of the teachings into their daily lives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Humanistic Buddhism

In Buddhism, humanism refers to a mindset that places the highest value on human beings. It emphasises the crucial importance of fulfilling noble duties, such as showing benevolence to all, practicing compassion, rejoicing in the happiness of others, and maintaining indifference to the faults of others (Thapa, 2011). "Humanistic Buddhism," a highly practical interpretation of Buddhism, remains relevant in the modern world. It focuses on the practical application of wisdom realisation. Humanistic Buddhism is not a new form of Buddhism but rather a fresh interpretation of elements already embedded in Buddhist Sutras and other texts (Thapa, 2011).

The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order, established by Ven. Master Hsing Yun, is committed to promoting "Humanistic Buddhism." The order defines Humanistic Buddhism in the following terms:

'Humanistic Buddhism' is a basic philosophy of life that encourages us to integrate the Buddha's teachings of kindness, compassion, joyfulness, and equanimity into our daily lives for the benefit of ourselves as well as others. In addition, it teaches us the ways to cultivate the wisdom that clearly understands the true nature of all things (Venerable Master Hsing Yun, 2008).

Humanistic Buddhism encourages people to break free from indulgence in material pleasures, self-righteousness, desire, and religious mysticism. It promotes simple yet inherent virtues like selfless dedication and hard work in society, expressed through activities such as music, art, sports, charity, and other aspects that resonate with modern life (Shi, 2019).

Humanistic Buddhism emerged in China in the early 20th century and was further developed in Taiwan by prominent figures such as Venerable Taixu and Venerable Master Hsing Yun, the founder of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order. The movement has since expanded worldwide, shaping the practice and understanding of Buddhism in various regions, especially in Asia and the West. Venerable Master Hsing Yun (born in 1927) founded the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order in Taiwan in 1967, which has played a crucial role in advancing Humanistic Buddhism on a global scale.

This movement was significantly influenced by Venerable Taixu, who aimed to make Buddhism more relevant to the contemporary world by shifting its focus from monastic life to issues affecting society. His ideas laid the groundwork for what would later be known as Humanistic Buddhism. Venerable Master Hsing Yun, another key figure, played a crucial role in further developing and spreading Humanistic Buddhism. He founded the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order in Taiwan in 1967, with the mission of making Buddhism accessible and meaningful to people in their everyday lives. The order emphasises education, cultural activities, charity work, and other forms of social engagement as expressions of Buddhist practice.

Under Master Hsing Yun's leadership, Fo Guang Shan has grown into a global movement, helping to spread Humanistic Buddhism beyond Asia to the West. This has led to a broader understanding and practice of Buddhism, focusing not just on personal enlightenment but also on contributing positively to society. In essence, Humanistic Buddhism is a vibrant and socially active form of Buddhism that aims to apply the ancient teachings of the Buddha to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary life.

Mobile Application as a Learning Platform

Buddhism thrives in the digital era amidst globalisation, surrounded by diverse media and communication styles (Yamcharoen, 2015). The study of Buddhist communication styles for a new generation in present-day

Malaysia will be highly valuable. It will contribute to developing a communication style that is current and aligned with an era where media plays a significant role in shaping society. This approach leverages technological advancements to improve attitudes, enhance the image of Buddhism, and refine Buddhist communication for the new generation of Buddhists in Malaysia.

Technology is frequently regarded as transformative in social relationships and vast areas of public and private life. According to early studies by Topscott (1998), the “N-Geners” (Net generations) are hungry for expression, discovery, and their own self-development. Using new technology is as natural as breathing and is a means of empowerment, which will ultimately lead to a generational explosion. What is special about the changes digital media have brought about is the insight with the epithet of the “App Generation.” An app can be narrow or broad, simple or grand, and in either case is tightly controlled by the individual or organisation that designed it.

One role of technology is to create a distributed system of meaning-making that fosters collaborative knowledge building (Sharples et al. 2007). Kofman and Eckler (2005) suggested that Gen Y multitask with technology as it reflects their personality traits. GenY utilise various media platforms, including laptops, cellphones, instant messaging, and social networking, for communication. Schmitt (2008) observed that the success of Mobile applications depends on the relevance of the information that they offer to the users or how much utility value they provide to the end users.

According to Sharples et al. (2007), mobile learning is defined as learning that takes place when students are not in a fixed location or when they utilise the learning opportunities provided by mobile technology. Mobile applications encompass a range of software that can be installed on devices such as smartphones and tablets, offering new opportunities for learning and teaching. These apps provide access to diverse learning resources, interactive tools, and engaging learning experiences.

Mobile learning applications can not only facilitate knowledge acquisition and transfer (Hannon 2017) but also promote learning engagement (Noel et al. 2015). Modern mobile applications facilitate the integration of innovations into the learning process. The functionality of mobile phones has dramatically expanded: they are no longer only a means of communication but also an effective mechanism for learning, increasing the level of knowledge, practical skills, and professional competencies (Ahmad 2020). Mobile learning has evolved from the simple use of mobile devices in the learning process to a more comprehensive approach that focused on the active participation of youth in the process, which allows them to integrate the learning process into everyday life (Devterov et.al 2024).

In general, mobile applications are characterized by a high level of functionality that includes information search, navigation systems, communication, social networks, entertainment games, educational applications, videos and photographs, translation of texts, sales, and business capabilities (Tam et al. 2020). In comparison with other religion like Islam base mobile apps which are designed for Islamic learning often focus on enhancing religious knowledge by providing digital versions of the Qur'an, Hadith collections, Fiqh guides, and other Islamic resources. Many of these apps include features such as audio recitations, translations, and Tafsir (interpretations), which aid learners in comprehending Islamic texts (Hamzah & Idris 2021).

In Christianity, Bellar et.al (2015) explains that they are software that are purchased or downloaded to a device (mobile phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer) specifically for the purpose of engaging with materials geared towards Christian ideas and practices. These apps have materials such as Bible in different versions, bible readings, hymns, motivational speeches, sermons and bible teachings.

The same are also clear with Humanistic Buddhism where a number of mobile applications can be found to focus on meditation and mindfulness practices rooted in Humanistic Buddhist principles. These apps typically offer guided meditations, daily reminders, and tracking features to help users incorporate Buddhist practices into their daily lives. Some apps are specifically designed to teach the principles of Humanistic Buddhism, providing interactive tools to explore Buddhist philosophy, ethical living, and mindfulness. These apps often include features like quizzes, journaling tools, and discussion forums for a more engaging learning experience.

Goffman's Idea on Performativity in a Digital World

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective and his notion of performativity is particularly useful when we carry on this research when looking at the metaphor of acting (youth), and considering how the props and staging available to the user can shape interactions. Goffman's attention to the importance of environment, and his understanding of how differing social spaces can result in differing social actions and interactions (see Van den Berg, 2008) has led to him being called 'the quintessential sociologist of the "situation"' (Jensen, 2006, p. 151). This concept holds particular interest when we consider that each online site can contain potentially different methods and modes of interaction, and different stages and props for our identity performances, which may produce different performances, and potentially different identities.

Therefore, Buddhist youth cannot afford to be passive, because the stable institutions and traditional communities that once provided for their welfare are in retreat, withdrawing lifetime guarantees and safety nets. As they withdraw, individuals have to take on the responsibility of managing their own uncertain futures. The Humanistic Buddhism mobile application is a good platform to assist Buddhist youth in learning the teachings of Buddha and also emphasising on how it can be integrated into all aspects of their daily lives.

Objective

1. To identify youth preferences factors in developing the Humanistic Buddhism Learning (HBL) mobile application
2. To list down the desired and undesired features when using the HBL mobile application.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research uses qualitative approach and in-depth interview as tools to collect the data.

Sampling

The interview was conducted among 20 Buddhist youth. Simple purposive sampling will be used to identify the most credible respondents. The respondents chosen must be Buddhist, between 18-30 years old, male or female and aware about the Humanistic Buddhism learning mobile application. The respondents were identified through the snowballing technique. A few names were first identified among Buddhist youth who are parts of the Buddhist Youth Organization then later snowball sampling was used to identify more respondents. The questions are designed to obtain answers that align with the research objectives, focusing on the Humanistic Buddhism Syllabus and understanding what features Buddhist youth seek in a high-quality mobile application. The most important thing that participation in this study is completely voluntary. Semi-structured was used and the participant was given the right to stop the interview at any time he/she wants and given the right to refrain from answering any questions. Through these interviews, this research seeks to learn about participants' personal experiences and opinions on HBL mobile applications. The interview was recorded using a voice recorder to ensure that everything you say is remembered and correctly transcribed, and the recordings will be preserved securely.

Analysis

The data was analysed using a phenomenological approach and thematic analysis. After the interview data is collected, thematic analysis will be employed to identify factors influencing youth preferences for the Humanistic Buddhism mobile application, as well as their likes and dislikes regarding the app's accessibility. There are several methods for conducting thematic analysis, but this research will follow a six-step process: familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Background of Respondents

Table 1 shows the basic demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the interview, including age, sex, marital status and their handphone type and handphone brand. There were six males and fourteen females' respondents involved in the study. The number of female users is more compared to male users. The reason was due to the fact that there are more female members from the Buddhist Youth Organization where they were chosen. Respondents are within the age of 19-30 years old. All of them are still single except for one who is married. Six respondents use iPhones while the rest are using other smartphones.

Table 1: Demographic background

Respondent	Age	Sex	Marital Status	HP Type	HP Brand
R1	21	F	Single	Smartphone	Realme
R2	21	F	Single	Smartphone	Realme
R3	28	F	Single	Smartphone	Oppo
R4	22	M	Single	Smartphone	Oppo
R5	19	F	Single	Smartphone	Oppo
R6	22	F	Single	iPhone	Apple
R7	20	M	Single	iPhone	Apple
R8	21	M	Single	Smartphone	Oppo
R9	21	F	Single	Smartphone	Oppo
R10	22	F	Single	Smartphone	Oppo
R11	24	M	Single	iPhone	Apple
R12	21	F	Single	Smartphone	Samsung
R13	22	M	Single	Smartphone	Xiaomi
R14	21	F	Single	Smartphone	Xiaomi
R15	20	F	Single	iPhone	Apple
R16	20	F	Single	Smartphone	Oppo
R17	20	F	Single	iPhone	Apple
R18	20	F	Single	Smartphone	Samsung
R19	20	M	Single	iPhone	Apple
R20	30	F	Married	Smartphone	Samsung

Theme 1: Buddhist Youth Understanding of the idea of Cyberculture

The findings on Buddhist youth awareness and their understanding of the term "cyberculture" can be explained through several aspects that align with their responses. With regard to their awareness and exposure to the word cyberculture, many respondents indicated that they were hearing it for the first time while some answered that they had heard the word before but did not fully understand it. Only six respondents admitted that they were aware of the word.

"It is my first time I heard about this word." (R1)

"Actually, I have not heard the word before." (R11)

"I think I might see this word before but I don't know the concept and definition clearly or in-detailed." (R2)

This suggests that there is a gap in awareness among Buddhist youth about the concept of cyberculture. To further explore their understanding on cyberculture, the respondents were asked to share their understanding on cyberculture and the answers are narrowed down to four aspects: their associating it with internet or online trends, the idea of global influence, online communities and group formations.

"In my opinion, it is like a famous trend in cyberworld, we can spread the trends to another user through cyber. I think that the exposure of the trend become bigger under the influence of cyberculture because currently the society has been quite open to the world and also assimilated with the new form of culture." (R9)

"I think it is about the online things, maybe like the popular words that are trending online, and how online user used the trending words as part of the online culture." (R3)

“For me, it is like a group of people where they form a group and they have the same interest...and they can share and have some discussion among themselves. Sometimes maybe they can also do online commercial activities, buy and sell like that.” (R11)

From the interview, it is obvious that the Buddhist youths interpretations and understanding about cyberculture are often contrasting with traditional Buddhist values, as they try to reconcile the modern, global, and often secular aspects of cyberculture with their religious and cultural heritage. Although not explicitly stated, the discussion on cyberculture could be linked to how the Buddhist youth might use digital platforms for religious education, the dissemination of Buddhist teachings and reflecting the intersection of religion and cyberculture. There is a potential for integrating cyberculture into Buddhist teachings and practices, possibly through apps or online platforms that align with their cultural and spiritual values.

“I think cyberculture is very important. I think we need to know about the ways to identify the authenticity of an online post. Virtual platform has diverse information, it’s too much and sometimes we are not sure about the source of the information. We need to be aware that we shouldn’t be influenced by the cyberculture itself.” (R3)

“I think the internet is very convenient. Through the internet, I can obtain different materials...I think cyberculture for me is very important and it enable me to learn more things, get more materials and it is easy to access.” (R9)

“Actually, for what I understand, I am thinking that cyberculture is like a platform that promotes the culture for other religions or ethnics. So, for me, I just have a look on their culture, I just read, understand and I will not simply post any comment.” (R20)

These suggest that while Buddhist youth are somewhat aware of cyberculture, their understanding is often fragmented or surface-level, highlighting the importance of enhancing digital literacy and integrating modern cultural concepts within their religious frameworks. For the Buddhist youth, when they were asked about their thoughts on being part of the cyberculture community and their involvement, there were some who see themselves as active participants and others just as bystanders.

“I think I will be using cyberculture to spread information’s. Because sometimes when we organized an activity, we might face the problem in approaching our target groups. So, we will use the cyberculture, like the groups, chit-chatting to find the target audience and raise the attention from the public.” (R3)

“I think I am like a bystander in the cyberculture, I don’t post frequently. At most time, I will gain information from internet or like a receiver.” (R17)

“I think through these online platforms, I can engage with more people which have the common interest with me and we can get in touch in a quicker way...the friendship will enable us to discuss and exchange opinions.” (R15)

This reflects a conscious approach to the Buddhist youth digital participation, where they engage with parts of cyberculture that align with their values or interests. Generally, respondents pointed out that being part of the cyberculture is almost inevitable for their generation, especially for Gen Z. Compared to the older generations, they also agree that while their parents may be partially involved in the cyberworld, for younger people, they are more deeply embedded in cyberculture due to their upbringing in the digital age.

Theme 2: Mobile phone apps usage and role of HBL religious apps

The next findings look into Buddhist youth usage of mobile apps and their understanding of the role of the Humanistic Buddhism Learning app. Buddhist youth in this research admit to using various apps in their daily life and the most frequently mentioned are WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, WeChat and *Xiao Hong Shu* (Little red book). From the respondents’ answers, their preferences for these apps are driven by the need for easy and instant communication and their ability to provide constant stream of updates and information which helps them to feel connected and involved.

“Social media apps and etc... It is easier to access information rather than I use website. I think the app actually save more time for me and to access something that I want.” (R1)

“I think it is much easier or convenience to use mobile app. I just had to press on the phone and it will come out. I don’t need to log in or search. It will be easier for me to use an apps. (R2)

“...Xiao Hong Shu (Little red book), Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat. I also have some vocabulary apps, Taobao, a novel apps... to relieve boredom ... or maybe for convenient purpose.” (R5)

“I use apps. Instagram, Facebook, Xiao Hong Shu (little red book), WeChat and WhatsApp because I can see the feeds of different people and this is good.” (R7)

Besides that, Buddhist youth also reflected on the evolving role of mobile apps in everyday life, where convenience, accessibility, and multifunctionality are key factors driving their widespread usage. They are using mobile apps to learn things and to perform various daily tasks, leisure purposes, to help them stay organised and which also allow them to express creativity in their work, particularly among students.

“...Apps is more convenient; it also shortens the distance between people because the apps connect people in a faster way. Through the mobile apps, we are able to learn new things directly and we don’t need to learned from outside. We can also improve our skills maybe in editing, dancing or learning foreign language through these mobile apps.” (R9)

“For some apps, I will use them to record and hand in the assignment. When I am free, I will use Instagram and Tik Tok... Besides looking at the scenery... there is a lot of videos or pictures in the app, then I can also see how my friends doing. Then for Tik Tok, I can learn new knowledge while using it.” (R14)

“My phone apps include Touch n Go E-wallet, Canva, Zoom, Cam Scanner and Google apps because I think these apps are very convenient... basically I can gain a lot of info from it.” (R17)

To indicate the importance and the central role mobile apps play in Buddhist youth daily life, this is shown by a significant amount of time dedicated to their use. Buddhist youth appreciate the convenience and efficiency apps provide and are driven by the need to stay connected, informed, and productive, as well as the desire for entertainment and convenience in everyday tasks. This is shown by the amount of time spent on these apps, which ranges from 3 hours to 8 hours on average. A user even shared how she used up to 10 hours a day on these apps.

“I think if short maybe it took around 1 hour and if long maybe 3 hours, see whether if I am free or not.” (R2)

“At least around 5 to 6 mobile apps per day. I think around 2 to 3 hours.” (R3)

“Maybe around 5 to 6 apps per day, average time spend on these apps maybe about 3 hours.” (R13)

“Daily will be around 5. 5 hours.” (R8)

“With 10 apps, around 5 hours, or minimum is 5 hours. If nothing to do, then maybe can spend up to 10 hours max.” (R5)

By understanding the significant influence of mobile apps and the time Buddhist youth spend on their apps, they were asked about their opinions on the use and benefits of religious applications, particularly within the context of Humanistic Buddhism. Some of the insights revealed that religious apps are beneficial for learning more about their religion, understanding religious teachings, and accessing religious content conveniently. Some also feel that religious apps might provide more accurate information than what is found on the web, saving time on filtering through possibly misleading content.

This reflects a trust in the app as a reliable source of religious education. R4 specifically notes that the app could help them understand scriptures or Dharma, which they don’t fully grasp through traditional methods

like chanting. However, while the idea of a religious app is good, the content must be carefully vetted to ensure it aligns with orthodox teachings. R20 identifies a gap in the market, noting that existing Buddhist apps do not effectively simplify or explain the complex classic Buddhist scriptures for modern users. This highlights a need for religious apps to evolve to better serve their audience by making teachings more accessible and applicable to daily life.

“I can use the phone to learn more about the religious teaching. I am the Fo Guang Youth, then I may know more about the Three Acts of Goodness and Four Kinds of Giving. Without the apps, maybe before joining the youth group, I won’t get any clear image about these religious teaching. Before this, I knew these teachings through my friends and family sharing. With the app, then I can be exposed to these religious teaching earlier and more detailed.” (R2)

“In the religious app, maybe there will be higher possibilities that the information in the app is more accurate, it can save the time to filter the religious information.” (R3)

“I think we can have a lot of different things in this app. To be honest, when I go and join the chanting, I don’t really understand the meaning of the scriptures or Dharma. I think this app enables me to gain more understanding about it.” (R4)

“I haven’t seen any apps that is particularly for Buddhist, that is easy for us to use. For example, Buddhism has a lot of Sutra or Dharma that is written in classic language. If for us, we don’t really know what these words means for us... I mean it will cause people to wrongly interpret then bringing a lot of confused to the user. They don’t understand what does these scriptures means. Then for me, the Dharma or Sutra there are more in a physical form or book form, the explanations about these scriptures are relatively lesser...So, I think Buddhist really need an app, especially when the internet is well-developed, we can easily access things via phone and wi-fi and teach us how to apply in our daily life.” (R20)

Overall, the responses indicate a generally positive attitude toward HBL religious applications, especially for their educational potential and ease of access to religious content. However, the effectiveness and appeal of these apps are highly dependent on the content’s quality, accuracy, and relevance to Buddhist youth needs. There is a clear call for these apps to be more user-friendly, especially in conveying complex religious texts in a way that is understandable and applicable to modern life. The varying levels of interest also suggest that while religious apps have a strong potential user base, their appeal may be limited among those who do not actively engage in religious practices.

Theme 3: Anticipated features of religious apps in engaging Buddhist youth

In this section, a more comprehensive vision of what Buddhist youth would expect from a HBL religious app, - particularly to be more engaging - will be discussed. These ideas range from practical features like personalisation and ease of use to deeper aspects like community engagement and the need for modern adaptations of traditional teachings. What can be summarised from the answers includes the following:

i. Content variety – Buddhist youth from the interviews emphasised the importance of content diversity like comics, animation, books, audiobooks, videos, podcasts and news from Buddhist organisations. They feel that this broad variety of content will serve as education for their spiritual growth without having aggressive content. Offering this content diversity makes the app more appealing to them. Additionally, there were suggestions to have a browsing history feature, which allows them to revisit previously read materials. This feature will make it more user-friendly.

“Maybe animation like when we enter a game, it will really attract me. It makes me feel like more entertaining, more comfortable and I can add on the features that I like in the app.” (R1)

“I think a video part where we can like, share and comment. I think it is attractive for me.” (R2)

“I think in comic form will be attractive.” (R5)

“... will be the audio, like the audio book. So, when I am working on other task, this app will keep running and it will help to calm myself down and remain focus on the task.” (R9)

“I think the content should not be too aggressive, then it should be okay. For the design, maybe not too fancy. It can be more minimalist and more comfortable, so it will have good user experience and makes the relationship between people become closer...It help us to pull each other together.” (R6)

ii. Organisation and Interactivity – One of the key features that was pointed out by respondents is the need for the app to be well-organised. Many of the respondents believe that if an app with disorganised features can be frustrating especially for those new to Buddhism. This structured progression would make the app accessible to all levels of users, ensuring that everyone finds value in the content, regardless of their familiarity with Buddhist teachings. This step-by-step approach is also essential for keeping users engaged over time. Respondents also suggested having features that allow users to share their personal experiences, stories, and thoughts about Buddhism. This could be done via forums or community platforms embedded within the app, encouraging interaction among users. The interactivity concept here underlines the idea that modern religious apps are not just about individual study but also about connecting with others who share similar values.

“It must be tidy and very organized when I use it and the ‘trending’ features, like it will make me keep up with the trending topic. Next is the search button, that I can search for things and easier for me to use. The app needs to be always updated like very often. This will make the app sustained.” (R16)

“I think tidy and the beauties of the app... that is smooth to use. If I don’t need to take a long time to launch the app, then I will feel like this app is good for me.” (R4)

“Maybe can have the daily reminder like that... for Muslims they have daily reminders for their daily prayers. For Buddhism, maybe we can have the daily quotes taken from the scriptures. I think the content can be those very encouraging or to reflect myself. It can also be through a fun feature, then it can make your day.” (R17)

iii. Accessibility, Education and Ethics– The feedback from the respondents revealed that there is difficulty in understanding Buddhist teachings, especially classical scriptures. They hope that with the apps they can have access to simplified, translated, explanationsof Buddhist texts. They suggest using modern language, graphics, and even audio versions to make the content more accessible. For a beginner, it is hoped that the app will provide Buddhist youth a start to simpler teachings and move toward more complex ideas to ensure they do not feel overwhelmed by dense, ancient texts. For more advanced users, having translations and explanations would provide deeper insights, making the app a valuable educational resource. A respondent also proposed the inclusion of daily reminders or simplified extracts from Buddhist scriptures that they can reflect on throughout the day,making Buddhist teachings applicable to their everyday life.

“It has an informative part that provide the information for the religious. For example, it will have the explanation for Dharma and Sutra. It can also have the entertaining features like music’s and stories. It can also include the interactivity part like Q & A function, like if I face some problems, I can post in the app and someone will be able to answer my inquiries. It will be more like a two-way communication. It also can have the features for psychological counseling, the meditation features and the religious knowledge that close to our daily life. I think the interactive features in the app is more important.” (R3)

“I think the translation functions. It can make the Sutra more vernacular and easier to understand. Because everyone maybe lack understanding about the Sutra, with the translation, we can understand more about it. Maybe the app can act like a social media function. Everyone can use the platform to share their thoughts after they learned the Sutra, can have discussion with each other, then we can know more friends who had the same belief with us.” (R6)

“I think it will be better if we can have The Four Books and The Five Classics such as The Book of Rites, The Spring-Autumn Annals, The Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and etc... in the app. This is because these classic readings are more acceptable by the public no matter their age or sex. Then inside this book you can also see the protocol guidelines that practiced by the sage before. Actually, I think we can also put the

classic readings from different religion and put it in this app. So, the user range can be wider. User can have access to these classics easily.” (R9)

“I think we can have graphics, or explanation with subtitles. For example: the explanation can talk about what is the meaning behind the scriptures after we chant it. This enables people to realized that actually what does the scriptures means and it can boost the understanding and interest of seers and apply it in daily life. Then for graphics, maybe can differentiate between adults and children. For children, maybe we can have the cartoon icon, like The Cunning Monk (Buddhist Cartoon)... because it can simply apply the Buddhism teachings in daily life via the cartoon clip. For The Cunning Monk and Happy *Xiang He* cartoon, they mostly talk about the daily doubts that they face and their master will guide them. But for the scripture’s explanation, I think we still lack them.” (R20)

iv. Multimedia and Entertainment - Respondents suggested incorporating Buddhist songs, short films, and motivational content. According to them, these could be used for both spiritual enrichment and relaxation. Audio versions of scriptures or Dharma talks would also allow users to engage with religious content while on the go, increasing the app’s convenience and usability. Some also proposed having pre-recorded meditation sessions or chanting guides, which would allow users to participate in spiritual practices even if they don’t have access to a temple or community. This also reflects the need for the app to be flexible in catering to both individual and communal religious activities.

“We can have scriptures, with the words and also Chinese *Pinyin* for those who do not know about Chinese words. It also can have the chanting of scriptures and the wooden block accompaniment, then you can start chanting anywhere. Sometimes maybe we want to calm ourself, then we still need to go and search for these scriptures in YouTube. But when we open YouTube, maybe we already got attracted by other content and we are no longer focus on chanting. In current days, I noticed that the wooden block is famous among the society, a lot of people download the app to knock the wooden block. If the app is able to include this feature, it might be one of the specialties.” (R10)

“Maybe we can have quiz for users, then they can accumulate the points and exchange with gift. Or we can also have daily check in, then have reward for this check in. Definitely will be the one related to Buddhism, the most basic one, then maybe we can have different levels, from easy to advanced level. We can also have some small games that is simple and interesting.” (R14)

“I would recommend to include the recorded Buddhist songs or scriptures. Then maybe it can have an alarm or a reminder, for example, to remind myself to listen to Buddhist song or read the scriptures during Friday night. Ya, I think it will be great and will encourage me to do this constantly.” (R15)

The findings and discussions here have illustrated what Buddhist youth expect a religious app especially the HBL app to do, which is much more than provide passive content. They want it to offer an immersive, engaging, and interactive experience that blends education, community and multimedia. The app should cater to a wide range of users, from beginners to advanced practitioners, by making Buddhist teachings accessible, relevant, and applicable in the modern world. This can be done by incorporating diverse features—ranging from content, organisation and entertainment featuring a modern design. TheHBL app could serve as a powerful tool for spiritual growth for both younger and older generations.

Theme 4: The shift of religious practice in Buddhist youth life.

The final themes look into how Buddhist youth shared their idea on the complex relationship between modernity and tradition in their religious practice. They reflect on the need for an app that not only modernises Humanistic Buddhism religious teachings but also one that preserves the traditional teachings. Respondent 16 expressed a desire for religious discussions and teachings to be relevant to contemporary scientific and ethical dilemmas, such as the ethics on designer babies and DNA alteration. This expectation reflects the need for Buddhism teachings to evolve and offer perspectives on modern issues. Other things that were pointed out by the respondents included the importance of modernising old teachings to make them more applicable to current lifestyles.

This reflects a broader expectation that religion should evolve with the times, adapting its teachings to resonate with the challenges and realities of contemporary life. Buddhist youth in this research have basically highlighted their concern about how their religious practices could fade over time if there is no effort to explain their significance, especially to younger people. However, in this case, HBL could act as a tool for cultural preservation, ensuring that religious traditions are passed down with a clear understanding of their origins and importance and help to maintain relevance for younger generations who may otherwise lose interest if they view the practices as mere formalities.

"I hope it can be related to my daily life, like the information provided is related to me. Like I am studying genetics, maybe the discussion can be more modern about the religious so I can also have a look on other people opinion. For example, the designer babies. They wanted to alter the DNA of the babies and maybe from perspectives of a religion, they might not agree with this. So as a scientist, maybe I can know more about the people perspectives through this app and gather this info to see if there any ethics apply in this topic." (R16)

"Most important factor is that the app itself have interesting content. It will always have the continuously update for the content in the app. meaning the contents are always new, not like repeat and repeat from the beginning. I hope that the app can also meet the needs in modern living times like it can refurbish the old teachings and make it more reasonable or more suitable to apply to current lifestyle." (R9)

"For us, the youngsters maybe we just follow what our elders do, but neither parents nor us understand about this practice, so maybe the culture will be lost some days. other than this, the origin, we can also have like the statue (God and Goddess) we pray to, like the background and the reasons why we pray to this statue." (R13)

Therefore, from the discussion above, it shows that while Buddhist youth agreed that modernisation is important, there is also a desire to preserve and better understand traditional practices. They are proposing ways on how modern religious apps can help maintain the cultural heritage of Buddhist teachings and preventing them from fading over time. Relating back to the Buddhist youth position in the cyberworld, this digitalisation aspect means that traditional practices like chanting, scripture reading, and meditation no longer need to be confined to temples or physical spaces but Buddhists youth can engage themselves with these practices anytime, anywhere, using HBL mobile apps.

With these findings, some recommendations can be made towards the apps improvement in hoping that this could increase to make Humanistic Buddhism apps a valuable guide for both the Buddhist youth and practitioners in religious digital education.

- i. To develop content that suits Buddhist youth modern needs like mental health and well-being. Research shows that there is a positive association between spirituality and mental health outcomes (Lucchetti et.al 2021; Gonçalves et.al 2015). Therefore, the authenticity of the Humanistic Buddhism contents is crucial since the apps are related to religious content. Religious apps must present credible, accurate, and trustworthy information. It is critical to ensure that religious texts and teachings are represented faithfully to maintain user trust.
- ii. The apps can focus on the design and also accessibility which is important to attract the youth since young people are accustomed to high-quality, modern app designs.
- iii. To use other social media channels like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to introduce the Humanistic Buddhism apps. by engaging with influencers who are relevant to the target demographic.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while we can see how the digital world offers many opportunities for the spread and practice of Humanistic Buddhism, it also presents challenges to maintain the depth and authenticity of teachings in an increasingly fast-paced, digital environment. The shifts in religious practice among Buddhist youth also reflect a broader movement towards personalised, modernised, and digitally mediated forms of spirituality. While traditional rituals may decline in importance, younger Buddhists are finding new ways to integrate their faith into modern life, through digital platforms.

Buddhist youth seem to prefer engaging with Buddhist teachings through other multimedia formats such as games, videos, audiobooks and animation. They are more likely to listen to a Dharma talk on a podcast while commuting than attend a long sermon in a temple. This represents a move toward consumption of religious teachings through modern media, which can make Buddhism more accessible but might also change the depth and formality of engagement.

However, in looking at the overall impact of the Humanistic Buddhism app has been positive, allowing the movement to adapt to the modern world while staying true to its core principles of compassion, wisdom, and social engagement. The digital platforms must balance modernisation with the preservation of core Buddhist values and practices. Ultimately, the integration of technology, ethics, and social action into Buddhist practice in the HBL app has offered a path for young Buddhists to remain spiritually connected while engaging with their modern life.

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