

THE IMPACT OF THE YOUTUBE PLATFORM ON CONSUMER PURCHASING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS IN THE CONTEXT OF VIDEO MARKETING CONTENT

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Purpose: The study aimed to determine, inter alia, the extent to which the video marketing content posted on the YouTube platform influences consumers' awareness and perception of companies and their offers. An attempt was made to solve the research problem, including examining whether and how video content influences consumers' purchasing decisions, and what elements draw the most attention during viewing video marketing content on YouTube.

Design/methodology/approach: A diagnostic survey method was used in the study, with an online survey as the research technique and a survey questionnaire as the tool. The survey covered a sample of 100 persons, 50% of whom were females and 60% were males, with the largest group of respondents (54%) residing in cities of an over 150 000 population.

Findings: The survey showed that 94% of the respondents confirmed using YouTube, stressing the relevance of the platform as a key video marketing and communication tool. YouTube has become an integral part of corporate promotional strategies, and messages tailored to specific audiences have rendered video content essential in the building of brand awareness and the shaping of consumer perception of companies.

Originality/value: Owing to its unique features and global reach, the YouTube platform has become a cornerstone of modern marketing strategies, combining the power of image with emotional impact on consumers. Video marketing visibly affects the perception of companies, emphasizes its role in creating positive brand images among audiences. For this reason, YouTube serves as an invaluable tool companies should utilize for effective promotion and to build lasting relationships with consumers.

Keywords: YouTube platform, video marketing, marketing strategies.

Category of the paper: case study.

1. Introduction

The contemporary role of information as one of the key resources is the reason why social media has reached unprecedented prominence. Social media are communication platforms operating primarily via the Internet and on mobile devices enabling the free flow of information among users (Dąbrowska, 2019). They serve as communication, thought exchange and experience sharing platforms, but also as tools in the shaping of public opinion (Grębosz et al., 2016). In the era of digital content dominance, video marketing has become one of the most effective promotional tools, allowing brands to effectively reach their audiences. In this context, YouTube, as the world's largest video platform, plays a key role, offering companies unparalleled image-building and user engagement opportunities.

Within the rapidly changing media environment, it is the YouTube platform which holds a particular place as one of the key tools for video content sharing. Since its debut in 2005, the site has undergone a transformation from a simple portal for short video clip publishing to a global platform used by creators, brands and corporations to compete for the attention of billions of users around the world (Dutko, 2021).

The original version of YouTube, although full of potential, differed significantly from the current, elaborate media platform. The platform gained popularity as a site where amateurs could share their videos completely free of charge (Dąbrowska, 2019). One milestone in the service's evolution was the acquisition by Google in 2006, for a sum of \$1.65 billion (Frontczak, 2023). This provided YouTube with access to the advanced technologies and resources of one of the world's largest technology companies, further contributing to the platform's growth and global expansion. The emergence of YouTube has not only fueled the online video content market, but has also affected popular culture, education, politics and many other areas of life. Its simple interface enables even new users to easily navigate YouTube (Maciejak, 2018). With many universities and professionals publishing educational content, e.g.: Wrocław University of Technology [Politechnika Wrocławska] (PW, <https://www.youtube.com>, 2023), University of Warsaw [Uniwersytet Warszawski] (UW, <https://www.youtube.com>, 2023) or Jagiellonian University [Uniwersytet Jagielloński] (UJ, <https://www.youtube.com>, 2023), the platform has become a source of knowledge at both basic and advanced levels. Marketing communication strategies are shaped around educational content, indicating the platform's growing educational value. YouTube has also greatly influenced popular culture, becoming a key tool in the promotion of artists, musicians and filmmakers. It has become a major component of content marketing.

According to the official information provided by YouTube, the site operates as an online service allowing users to upload, share, comment on and watch videos. In short, it is a platform for video content sharing among users across the world.

Platforms such as YouTube have transformed from purely entertainment tools into sophisticated marketing mediums and substantial sources of income for numerous creators. Increasingly highlighted is the strategic importance of YouTube in companies' marketing efforts, with indications of its potential in image building, audience outreach and consumer engagement.

One key business model element, especially in the digital environment, is monetization, with services and content often offered to users for free, generating revenue via alternative means, such as advertisers.

Through an innovative approach, YouTube has transformed not only into a space for content creators, but more importantly into a platform providing businesses with unique opportunities for promotion and effective communication with consumers. Promotion is an element of communication involving messages conveyed by companies in order to increase awareness of their products, generate interest in those products and encourage the purchase thereof (Kotler, 2004). Contemporary marketing cannot function in isolation from technology, and platforms such as YouTube play a key role in the process.

Video marketing, essentially based on long-term use of videos for promotional or brand-building purposes, has been one of the most rapidly growing areas of marketing in recent years (Daniłoś, 2016).

Digitization, social media, artificial intelligence and YouTube as a video marketing tool are just some of the channels used by companies in their promotional strategies. In the era of globalization and widespread access to the Internet, marketing efforts must be precisely targeted, innovative and tailored to the specifics of the market and consumer expectations. YouTube has been one of the most powerful tools in achieving these objectives.

YouTube's advantage as a business communication tool lies primarily in its ability to reach wide audiences. Video content enables development of unique emotional ties with consumers, which fosters formation of lasting relationships and increases brand loyalty.

2. The role of social media in consumer trend formation

Social media, as a key tool of modern marketing, offer companies the opportunity to build lasting and authentic relationships with consumers. They enable engagement and activation of audiences, as well as provide valuable feedback to better tailor products and strategies to market needs. Consumer decisions, however, are not only shaped by the information available and interactions on social media, but also by individual beliefs, both explicit and implicit. Explicit beliefs, reflecting consumers' conscious views, and implicit beliefs, resulting from unconscious wants and needs, represent an important element affecting purchasing processes. Exploration of these beliefs, especially the of the implicit nature, poses a challenge for

marketers, which calls for comprehensive research. An effective marketing strategy must take both the dynamics of social media and the deeper psychological mechanisms of consumption into account (Rosa, Perenc, 2016). Existing research confirms that social media play an important role in life of the younger generation, becoming not only a space for communication, but also the most relevant source of information supporting decision making, including purchasing. As many as 98% of the respondents admit to using social networks, with 87% doing so at least once daily. More than 75% of the respondents indicated that negative reviews posted on these platforms drove them to abandon a planned purchase (Parzonko, 2015). For this reason, companies must work to avoid negative reviews both on their profiles as well as within the spheres they have no control of, such as groups or reviewer profiles. One of the key concepts of modern marketing is real-time marketing, involving dynamic marketing activities responsive to current media events or pop culture trends. This strategy is based on monitoring popular events, especially those of a viral nature, and responding to those events through the use of humorous elements, comments or creation of engaging content, such as memes, as exemplified by Ryanair airline's profile (Loh, 2024).

One phenomenon effectively addressing the aforementioned needs of companies and utilizing a real-time marketing strategy is the growing popularity of social media influencer marketing. According to estimates, 56% of social media users have been persuaded to purchase at least one product through influencer marketing (Geyser, 2023). Influencers are active on a variety of social media platforms, from traditional ones, such as Facebook and Instagram, to such video sites as YouTube and TikTok. The key goal companies pursue is to establish cooperation with an influencer. Influencers serve as a key indirect-marketing tool in the building of an impression of authenticity and trust among consumers. By specializing in their niches, and with knowledge of social media, they deliver credible, engaging messages, in the form of storytelling, for instance, which is far more persuasive than traditional advertising. They activate the audience by encouraging discussion in the comments, which serve as a valuable source of feedback for companies, aiding a better tailoring of products to customers' needs (Jaska, Werenowska, 2019). Research indicates that influencer marketing takes the methods known from marketing to the next level. Influencers discuss products with their audiences 22 times more often than regular consumers. Eighty-two percent of influencers' regular audiences are highly likely to give heed to the influencer's purchase recommendation (Berger, 2019). Social media offers companies a wide range of tools to build lasting relationships with consumers. Marketing strategies utilizing these platforms create an impression of authenticity, which promotes long-term customer engagement with brands. Moreover, they enable efficient implementation of further marketing instruments, strengthening loyalty and increasing the effectiveness of promotional activities.

3. Research Methodology

The subject of the study is the mechanism of the influence exerted by video marketing content distributed via the YouTube platform on, *inter alia*, consumers. The study aimed to determine, among other things, the extent to which the video marketing content posted on the YouTube platform influences consumers' awareness and perception of companies and their offers. The study attempted to address the research problem, including investigating whether and how video content influences consumers' purchasing decisions, as well as what elements draw the most attention when viewing video marketing content on YouTube. The research hypothesis assumed that the use of the YouTube platform as a tool for video marketing content publication significantly affects the recognizability and positive consumer perception of companies and their offers.

4. Survey results

A total of 100 respondents participated in the online survey questionnaire, 50% of whom were females and 60% were males, with the largest group of respondents (54%) residing in cities of an over 150 000 population. The majority of the respondents (56%) were aged between 18 and 25, whereas education-wise, the dominant groups were persons with secondary (48%) and higher education (47%). An overwhelming majority of the respondents (94%) confirmed using the YouTube website, indicating the platform's immense popularity regardless of gender, place of residence, age or education.

In analyzing the frequency of service use, it was found that 39% of the respondents use it very often, 36% often, and 20% moderately often, which attests to the high popularity of this service among the surveyed group. Only a small percentage of the surveyed (4%) use the platform rarely, and only 1% indicated a very rare use. The majority of the respondents perceive the form of advertising presented via the platform as highly persuasive, compared to other forms of advertising. The survey clearly shows that single-presenter YouTube content is perceived as an effective form of advertising, compared to other forms. While not all of the respondents find it highly persuasive, most do recognize its value in terms of product and service promotion. Thirty-three percent of the respondents rated this form of advertising highly, 17% found it highly persuasive, assigning the highest possible rating, and 31% rated it sufficient, indicating a neutral attitude toward this type of content presented in such form. Ultimately, a minority of the respondents rated this form of advertising as not very convincing, with 1% assigning the lowest and 16% a low rating.

Considering the type of videos the respondents watch on the YouTube platform, a variation in preferences can be noted. Of greatest interest are videos of an entertainment nature, attracting as much as 50% of the respondents, which highlights the widespread tendency to use YouTube for entertainment purposes. Second is educational content (45%). In this case, of particular note in the context of the young age group, from 18-25 years old, is that educational content ranked as significant. The survey also showed the variety of YouTube's usability, not only as an entertainment but also as an informational and educational tool. Travel received 43% of interest, and business content 37%. Considering the survey participants' level of education, educational and business content have been found to be more popular among persons with higher education, as evidenced by the high percentage of the respondents (47%). Moreover, given the young-age group of the respondents, categories such as fashion and beauty, sports and automotive received similar scores of 30%, 30% and 32%, respectively, which indicates a wide spectrum of interests among the younger population.

Sixty-seven percent of the surveyed confirmed they had discovered new brands through YouTube, which proves the platform's effectiveness as a tool to promote companies and increase the visibility thereof to potential customers. YouTube videos allow companies not only to reach wide audiences, but also to effectively build brand awareness and develop consumer trust. Through interactive features, such as comments and subscriptions, YouTube provides unique opportunities to engage audiences in a long-term relationship.

In considering the influence of product or service YouTube reviews on consumer purchasing decisions, it can be noted that 23.2% of the respondents answered 'Definitely yes,' which indicates a clear bearing of reviews on this group's purchasing decisions. Another 22.2% of the respondents indicated a 'Yes' answer, which likewise suggests a positive, though less intense, impact of reviews. A total of 24.2% of the surveyed selected the answer 'moderately,' which also can be interpreted as a neutral impact of reviews. The answer 'no' was indicated by 19.2% of the respondents, suggesting that reviews only marginally influence their purchasing decisions. Lastly, 11.1% of the respondents answered 'Definitely not,' which indicates that reviews have no bearing on their consumption choices.

The respondents' opinion on companies' investment in the production of YouTube video content is rather neutral, as 39.4% of the surveyed consider the issue neutral. A significant minority of 11.1% is against greater investment in such content, while a substantial number of the respondents, 25.3% and 24.2%, believe that companies should invest, or even 'definitely' invest, in video content production. Both women (39.4%) and men (60.6%) perceive a similar need for greater investment in YouTube video content, which may suggest the platform's universality as a marketing tool independent of gender.

YouTube channel recognizability varied among the respondents. Most popular channels proved to be the 'Sports Channel [Polish: Kanał Sportowy]' and 'Lidl's Kitchen [Polish: Kuchnia Lidla],' indicated by 72% and 63%, respectively. Less popular were such channels as 'Entrepreneur Adventures [Polish: Przygody Przedsiębiorców]' (58%) and 'x-kom' (59%).

In assessing the quality of expert videos on YouTube, the respondents rated the quality of available content. As many as 47% of the surveyed assessed most of the expert videos watched at a good level, indicating an overall high quality of these videos. Moreover, 12% of the respondents found the quality of these videos to be very high, assigning a rating of very good. By contrast, only 9% of the surveyees rated the quality of the videos at a low level, suggesting some dissatisfaction, though the trend is not dominant. Noteworthy is that none of the respondents rated the quality of expert videos as very low.

Analysis of the factors affecting viewers' attention while watching videos on the YouTube platform pinpoints several key aspects. The first and most salient element noted by 80% of the surveyed is the video presenter. Such a result suggests that the person presenting the content is instrumental in the reception of the material presented, while his/her charisma and manner of content presentation are significant factors in attracting viewers' attention. Another important aspect indicated by 68% of the respondents is the substantive content and message presented, which highlights the relevance of the content conveyed in the video, possibly outweighing other elements involved. The visual quality and duration of videos also affect the reception of content, as evidenced by 67% and 59% of indications, respectively. These results suggest that the technical aspects of a video exert significant influence on the viewers' experience. The sound design, color scheme and message story, although less important than the above-mentioned elements, are of appeal to 54%, 50% and 50% of the respondents, respectively, as evidenced by the relevance of these, albeit to a lesser extent.

The results in this area, therefore, indicate that the most relevant factors driving viewers' attention are the video presenter and the content, while technical aspects, such as image quality and sound design, are likewise important, although to a slightly lesser degree. Accordingly, in order to attract and maintain viewers' attention, crucial for the content creators on YouTube is attention to the presenters' competence and high quality of the messages.

Based on the survey responses, it can be concluded that video marketing significantly influences consumers' perception of companies. As many as 60% of the respondents confirmed that such videos influenced their perception of a given company. In contrast, 25% of the surveyed declared that video marketing had little impact on their opinions. Interestingly, 15% of the respondents are not sure whether such materials have influenced their perception of brands. Noteworthy is that the high percentage of positive responses indicates the growing role of video marketing as an effective tool in corporate image building and consumer opinion shaping.

Conclusion

With its unique features and global reach, the YouTube platform has become a cornerstone of modern marketing strategies, combining the power of image with emotional impact on consumers. The survey found that 94% of the respondents confirmed using YouTube, which highlights the platform's prominence as a key video marketing and communication tool. YouTube has become an integral part of companies' promotional strategies, with messages tailored to specific audiences rendering video content essential in the building of brand awareness and the shaping of consumer perception of companies. The vast majority of the respondents treat YouTube as a major source of information and a tool for discovering new brands and products (75%). Moreover, video marketing clearly impacts the perception of companies, which highlights its role in the creation of positive brand images among audiences. YouTube therefore serves as an invaluable tool that should be utilized by companies for effective promotion and to build lasting relationships with consumers.

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