
EFFECT OF YOUTUBE USAGE AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON BRAND PREFERENCE

Mubarak Kaldeen

*Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Management and Commerce
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka
kmmubarak@seu.ac.lk*

MIM. Hilal

*Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Management and Commerce
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka
mujahidh@seu.ac.lk*

Abstract

The universal usage and marketing communication based on the information and communication technology (ICT) avenues have impact of the lives of youth and in their buying behavior. The tenacious practice of ICT platforms such as social media, particularly digital video sharing conduits such as YouTube, amongst the youth associate has befitted an imperative marketing communication platform for marketers to influence this elusive focus segment. The widespread practice of YouTube has engendered billions in promotional interaction created income and impact on buying behavior of youth, but there is inadequate scholastic investigation in relations to the effect of digital video partaking in developing economies, predominantly concerning the impact of online usage and demographic factors among youth. This study investigates the effect of YouTube usage and marketing communication on attitudinal retorts and the influence on brand predilection, as well as the impact of usage and demographic elements on the attitudinal connection. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 300 respondents, and the hypothesized associations were estimated via structural equation modelling (SEM). The results of this study divulge a favorable association between affective responses of use factors and brand preference as a result of YouTube usage and marketing communication, making a notable contribution to the limited YouTube review on attitude-to-advertising theory in emerging nations. The research also contributes in the diminution of the theoretical-industry practitioner gap through identified online usage elements and its impact on brand preference. The study supporting the institutions in a healthier way to cognize youth in the process of strategizing most impressive and effective marketing communication campaigns on video sharing platforms.

Keywords: YouTube usage, marketing communication, brand association, attitude retorts

1. Introduction

The most popular form of social media for the group age of 18-34 year olds is digital video with an estimated number of global users of 4.5 billion and projected advertising expenditure of \$37 billion by 2022 for all platforms of video sharing. Approximately a quarter of that projected advertising expenditure is accounted to YouTube which clocks in more than 1 billion hours of video viewings per day. This makes YouTube one of the most prominent channels for communication with a high budget assigned for marketing communication purposes targeted at the aforementioned age group (Foye, 2018). Numerous organizations hence leverage on YouTube's marketing communication to gain better insights of future consumer behaviour tendencies taking into account the youths' rising spending power and the fact that more than 80% of them go on YouTube every month (Smith, 2018). Unfortunately, Araujo et al. (2017) pointed out that there is very little quantitative analysis on the youths' attitudinal response to YouTube's marketing communication advertising.

There is yet any consensus among researchers on how to properly assess the effectiveness of online advertising. Although social media metrics seem like the best method, its use of click-through rates is not the best way to ascertain the consumers' attitudinal response towards social media marketing communication; hence, a different method is needed for this purpose. Consumer desire is suggested as the primary driver of social media marketing communication; thus, what needs to be identified and measured in this case is the behavioral motivator or consumer attitudes that drive the exposure to marketing communication (Peters et. al, 2013).

Several researches have studied the aspects of consumer cognitive and behavioral responses and perceptions in relation to YouTube marketing communication. If the marketing communication's primary aim is to form positive attitude-to-advertising experience for the purpose of increasing purchase intent, a study on favorable affective response to marketing communication is hence pertinent. Dehghani et al. (2019) highlighted that very few had studied YouTube as an effective medium for marketing communication such as in the aspect of sustainability since businesses today are more focused on issues beyond traditional marketing leading to Corporate Social Responsibility coming to the forefront. Another aspect that is poorly studied is the correlation between YouTube user factors and affective responses to brand preference as well as the importance of bridging the gap between academicians and practitioners. Social media platforms in general and YouTube in particular are still developing hence further research is needed to identify the most effective channels to carry out YouTube advertising.

2. Literature survey and conceptual model

2.1. YouTube and Marketing Communication

Globally, YouTube is only second to Google as the most used search engine, is the third highest visited website, and the primary video substance partaking and creation website. It offers free membership, uploading and/or viewing contents leading to its massive popularity among social media users. About 1.5 billion people use YouTube every month whereby two-thirds are in the 18–44 age group; more than 400 hours of video are uploaded per minute, 1 billion hours of video content watched per day, and more than 50% of YouTube content are beheld on peripatetic devices (YouTube Analytics Basics, 2018).

YouTube offers an interactive ICT platform for businesses to share interesting content with their customers. Hailed as a “content community” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2012), YouTube is deemed as a significant precursor to the concept of shared economy or collaborative consumption with a major sustainability effect, achieved primarily via online social network engagements (Hamari et al., 2016). Its impact on collaborative behaviour is made possible via the uploaded videos which communicate the business' social or environmental initiatives (Manetti and Bellucci, 2016). A personalized YouTube channel containing all the brand's video contents available for viewing at any time contributes to the brand's strong online presence. For more widespread awareness and exposure, YouTube also offers paid promotions and video content sharing which are not only cost-effective, but also rapid in effect. There are many marketing communication tools offered by YouTube including display, overlay, in-search discovery, sponsored cards, video and bumper (Manetti and Bellucci, 2016). This current study focuses on several of these tools so as give a comprehensive outline of YouTube as a marketing communication platform.

Its efficacy as a marketing communication platform is assessable via the click-through view rates, completed video views and/or number of shares, and number of comments and likes (YouTube Analytics Basics, 2018). Other measures for assessment are advertisement recall, engagement as well as understanding and feedback via consumer reviews, which reveal the general sentiments toward a brand's marketing communication which in turn affects the

audience's future purchase behavior. Other than that, qualitative interviews, content analysis and/or attitudinal surveys can also be used to assess marketing communication effectiveness as adopted in this study which employed a cross-sectional approach to examine the affective responses towards YouTube's marketing communication.

2.2. Marketing Communication and Generational Groups

Every generation demonstrates values, attitudes, interests, opinions, needs, behaviours and consumption patterns that are distinct as a result of the events, technological innovations and experiences that occurred during their respective eras (Moore, 2012). As such, the cohort theory has a huge significance for businesses as it reveals the most suitable marketing communication strategies for each generation/cohort that fits their characteristics, requirements and desires. The generation born in the modern digital era is more accustomed to computers, the Internet, downloadable music, movies, and videos, mobile communication, instant messaging and social media via the use of advanced mobile devices including iPods, tablets, and smartphones. Hence, such ever-present environment has become the precursor to online purchasing and the widespread use of social media. This generation is projected to make up 35% of global consumers by 2030 (Prensky, 2011). Based on this and the fact that more than 80% of the youths today are avid YouTube users, businesses need to turn their attention to the digital video sharing platform to gain the interest of this highly profitable group. Considering the lack of studies on the effect of online video advertising on the attitudinal responses among youths (Araujo et al., 2017), there is hence a gap to be filled in order to gain valuable insight on the matter.

2.3. Brand Preference

Consumers' response entails their inclination, whether positive or negative, towards a certain brand after being exposed to the brand's marketing communication advertisement (Lutz, 1985). The creation of such response begins with the awareness of the stimulus, the formation of knowledge, interest and positive sentiments, and finally the making of a purchase. These stages are hence often deemed as objectives and measures by businesses in assessing the effectiveness of their marketing communication initiative. Affective responses and brand preference are the focus of the hierarchy-of-effects model.

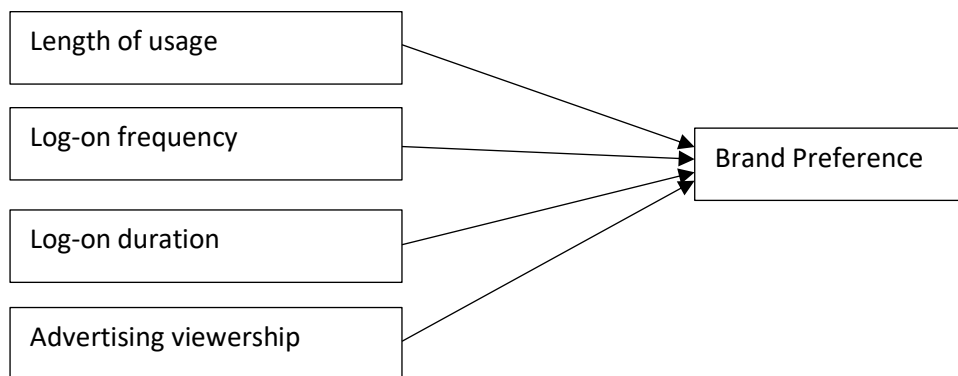
2.4. Impact of YouTube attitudinal response on brand preference

Advertisements that are entertaining can generate positive attitudes towards a brand (Shavitt et al., 1998). YouTube's entertaining and informational platform had attracted many viewers which serve as leverage for businesses advertising on the platform. Zhang and Mao (2016) indicated that consumers' favorable or unfavorable responses towards social media advertising can affect their attitude towards the brand, and that the attitude can be changed via behavioral changes prompted by social media. Araujo et al. (2017) discovered that YouTube videos incorporated with advertising generate higher 'likes', but further research is still needed to quantitatively analyse the correlation. Hence, this current study intends to fill that gap.

2.5. YouTube Usage Factors

Past studies have indicated that the factors leading to YouTube usage comprise access devices, online videos viewing frequency, length of viewership time, subscription number, and video sharing (Roy, 2014). This current study takes into account several YouTube usage factors as suggested by Duffett (2015) i.e. length of usage, log-on frequency, log-on duration and advertising viewership in building the literature, which in turn becomes the basis for the development of the conceptual model.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



2.6. Relationship between YouTube usage factors and Brand Preferences

The length of YouTube usage in years was used to study whether brand preference is affected by the user's years of experience using YouTube. Hypothesis H1 is therefore proposed:

H1: The effect of brand preference differs based on the number of years of using YouTube.

YouTube log-on frequency was used to study whether brand preference is affected by the frequency of using YouTube. Hypothesis H2 is therefore proposed:

H2: The effect of brand preference differs based on the frequency of using YouTube.

YouTube log-on duration was used to examine whether brand preference is affected by the amount of time spent on YouTube. Hypothesis H3 is therefore proposed:

H3: The effect of brand preference differs based on the amount of time spent using YouTube.

The factor of advertising viewership is developed based on the factors of log-on frequency and log-on duration, to examine whether brand preference is affected by the number of advertisements viewed on YouTube. Hypothesis H4 is therefore proposed:

H4: The effect of brand preference differs based on the viewership of advertisements on YouTube.

3. Research Methods

Duffett's (2015) research instrument was used and adapted in this current study leading to the development of a self-administered questionnaire. The four YouTube usage factors were studied namely the length of YouTube usage in years, log-on frequency, log-on duration and advertisement viewership for each log-on. The attitudinal measures consist of a five-item construct for brand preference. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the attitudinal response scaling from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

The study population consists of YouTube users aged 18–32 living in Sri Lanka who had been exposed to YouTube marketing communication. The sample of 300 youths was selected using the sequential/multistage sampling method. The survey participation was on a voluntary basis. The questionnaires were distributed online as well as in self-administered hardcopy form using snowball sampling.

The data analysis entailed confirmatory factor analysis using the SPSS to determine the reliability as well as convergent and divergent validity. The structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to test all the hypotheses previously laid out.

4. Results

The study used SPSS 20.0 for data analysis. In order to determine the relationships among study variables, the correlation coefficient was interpreted in terms of its statistical significance to p-values (probabilities of relationships). Regression analysis was used to test the study hypotheses. The mean, standard deviation, Mann–Whitney, and Kruskal–Wallis tests were also used in this study.

4.1 Reliability and validity analysis

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to examine the reliability. Cronbach's alpha values for the individual constructs were higher than 0.7. Reliabilities were Length of Usage, $\alpha = 0.81$; Log on Frequency, $\alpha = 0.76$; Log-on Duration, $\alpha = 0.79$; Advertising Viewership, $\alpha = 0.83$; and Brand Preference, $\alpha = 0.87$, thereby indicating high internal construct consistency and reliability. To achieve validity, pre-testing the questionnaire was done formally with academic experts in the faculty to evaluate whether individual items appear to be appropriate measures of their respective constructs as suggested.

Table 1. Reliability analysis

Factor	No of items	Cronbach's alpha
Length of usage (LoU)	08	0.81
Log-on frequency (LoF)	07	0.76
Log-on duration (LoD)	09	0.79
Advertising viewership (Adv Viw)	06	0.83
Brand Preference (BP)	08	0.87

4.2 YouTube marketing communication and brand preference

Table 2 clarifies the mean, standard deviation, and correlation analysis of study variables. It is noted that Length of usage with a mean score 4.63. Moreover, Advertising viewership is reasonable with a mean score 3.72. Besides, Log-on duration has a positive strong impact on brand preference (0.835). It appeared that Log-on frequency has also a positive strong impact on brand preference (0.821) than other YouTube usage and communication construct. On the other hand, it appeared that Length of usage and Advertising viewership has the strongest and positive correlation with brand preference (0.671) and (0.727) respectively.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Independent and dependent variables

Variables	Mean	Std Deviation	r value (Brand Preference)
Length of Usage	4.63	0.38	0.671
Log-on Frequency	4.21	0.32	0.821
Log-on Duration	4.34	0.39	0.835
Advertising Viewership	3.72	0.43	0.727

4.3 Test of hypotheses

As the main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between YouTube marketing communication and brand preferences, the study hypotheses are tested using mean and regression analysis. As shown in Table 2, mean score of all the variables are above 3, this indicate highly significant. The hypothesized relationships are tested using a partial least-square regression analysis. Table 3 summarizes the regression results.

Table 3: Regression Results

Model	R	R ²	β	t	Sig	DurbinWatson
LoU and BP (H ₁)	0.63	0.56	0.60	6.61	0.00	2.26
LoF and BP (H ₂)	0.75	0.51	0.56	14.4	0.00	2.14
LoD and BP (H ₃)	0.82	0.67	0.73	11.3	0.02	2.73
Adv Viw and BP (H ₄)	0.77	0.61	0.63	9.36	0.01	2.81

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 examined the effect of LoU, LoF, LoD and Adv Viw on BP correspondingly. The study results show that LoU has a significant positive influence on HP ($r = 0.63$, t value = 6.61, $p < 0.00$) and LoF has a significant positive influence on HP ($r = 0.75$, t -value = 14.4, $p < 0.00$). Moreover, LoD also has a significant positive influence on HP ($r = 0.82$, t -value = 11.3, $p < 0.00$). Further, the results show that Adv Viw has a significant positive influence on HP ($r = 0.77$, t -value = 9.36, $p < 0.00$). Therefore, hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 are supported.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Key Findings

All of the YouTube usage factors were found to have a significant positive effect on brand preference as a result of YouTube marketing communication. Entertainment positively affected consumer attitudes due to the YouTube marketing communication initiatives. These findings are consistent with that of Duffett et al. (2018) who found a positive correlation between brand preference and YouTube marketing communication.

PC and mobile devices were found to significantly and positively affect consumer attitude to YouTube marketing communication. There is a more significant positive effect on the attitudinal association with YouTube users than with more experienced respondents. Users who had used YouTube longer have become accustomed to marketing communication as compared to new users who are more vulnerable to commercial content. Frequent use of YouTube results in more significant positive attitudinal responses to YouTube marketing communication in line with the findings of Duffett (2018). Similarly, longer durations spent on YouTube lead to a more significant positive effect on attitudinal association consistent with the findings of Duffett (2018) who highlighted that longer durations of exposure to YouTube advertisements enhance brand visibility and the effectiveness of the message that comes with it. Finally, higher YouTube advertisement viewership leads to better attitudinal responses as this indicates a favorable inclination to the brands featured.

5.2. Implications

A number of advertising models were employed to assess the hierarchical stages that track the progress of consumers in the purchase decision-making process. Due to the massive growth of social media and other online ICT platforms in the past decade, the effectiveness of conventional advertising models in the context of social media marketing communication has been studied by scholars and practitioners alike. This current study has demonstrated that the factors of usage length, log-on duration, log-on frequency, and advertisement viewership significantly affect brand preference. The findings significantly contribute to the theoretical principles of attitudinal inquiry in the context of YouTube marketing communication.

Several YouTube contents use celebrities to promote certain brands targeted at specific groups. Such celebrities engage closely with viewers as brand ambassadors. Due to their sense of familiarity with such celebrities, the study respondents deem them to be credible and trustworthy. Based on the findings above, businesses could hence consider using YouTube celebrities to promote their brands.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The existing limitations in this study open up opportunities for future studies to focus on. For example, future studies can examine other YouTube or brand marketing communication types that were not examined in this study. Future studies could also employ qualitative and longitudinal methods as opposed to the technique used in this study. Other demographic factors can also be used as independent factors including education, income and occupation. Meanwhile, the use of the probability sampling technique would ensure the generalizability of the findings in future studies. Finally, analogous attitudinal correlations among the younger generation can be examined in future research using other social media platforms.

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