

Consumers' Perceptions of YouTubers: The Case of Turkey

Niyazi Gümüş, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Kastamonu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, Kastamonu-TÜRKİYE
ngumus@kastamonu.edu.tr, Orcid: 0000-0001-8737-3114

ABSTRACT *With advances in information and communication technologies, social media has not only been an integral part of our lives but also paved the way for the emergence of new applications in marketing activities, one of which is conducted by YouTubers, who have captured the attention of brands due to the massive influence they have on millions of their followers. In line with this purpose, face-to-face surveys were conducted in November-December 2017 with 257 students from Kastamonu University in Turkey. Results reveal four factors of participants' perceptions: YouTuber Video Perception, Content Sharing, Perceived Benefit and Impact on Purchase Decision.*

Keywords: *YouTuber, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Communications, Social Media*

Tüketicilerin Youtuber'lara Yönelik Algılarının İncelenmesi: Türkiye Örneği

ÖZ *Bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerinde meydana gelen gelişmeler sonucunda hayatımıza giren sosyal medya, pazarlama çalışmalarında da yeni bir takım uygulamalara neden olmaktadır. Bunlardan biri de gittikçe daha fazla karşımıza çıkan YouTuber'lardır. Milyonlara varan takipçi sayıları ile YouTuber'lar takipçileri üzerindeki etkileri nedeniyle markaların dikkatlerini çekmeyi başarmışlardır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda 2017 Kasım- Aralık ayları içinde Türkiye'de Kastamonu Üniversitesi öğrencisi olan 257 öğrenciye yüz yüze anket yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda katılımcıların algıları YouTuber video algısı, içerik paylaşımı, algılanan fayda ve satın alım kararına etki olmak üzere dört boyut olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.*

Anahtar Sözcükler: *YouTuber, ekleyici pazarlama, tüketici davranışları, pazarlama iletişimi, sosyal medya.*

INTRODUCTION

With advances in Internet technology, social media is becoming ever more integrated into our lives and also hosting new initiatives. One of the latest of these is influencer marketing strategies, which can be, briefly, defined as marketing of goods and services through mostly YouTube and Instagram celebrities, who have managed to attract the attention of brands and companies. Social media celebrities with millions of followers promote and endorse various products and services. Followers find social media celebrities more genuine and likeable than traditional celebrities, and therefore, pay more attention to the views of the former than to those of the latter. Thanks to the enormous influence social media celebrities have on their

audience, they are able to directly convey their views and thoughts on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter etc. channels about products and services ranging from technology to hobby, from automotive to food and drink, and from cosmetics to digital gaming. For consumers seeking objective information sources, opinions of someone using and experiencing a product on social media can be more reliable than advertising messages of brands and traditional celebrities.

Brands and companies that have understood the current paradigm shift in marketing are choosing to establish partnerships with social media celebrities such as YouTubers who have large and engaged followings online to advertise their products and services on social media. For marketing specialists who are aware of the power of social media celebrities, influencer marketing strategies have already been an integral part of branding and marketing communication activities.

In this context, the primary objective of this study is to develop a scale that will allow for the measurement of consumer perceptions of YouTubers. The secondary objective of this study is to determine undergraduate consumers' perceptions of YouTubers. We believe that this study will contribute to the related literature and be useful for brands and companies that wish to integrate YouTubers into their marketing strategies.

INFLUENCER MARKETING

In recent years, social media has become an important advertising and communication platform for marketers who want to reach consumers online (Evans et al., 2017). The latest marketing trend attracting the attention of brands and companies is influencer marketing, which is defined as a strategy involving establishing partnerships with influential people (influencers) that can increase the visibility of products and services on social media (Enge, 2012). Influencer marketing is defined by Veirman et al (2017) as identifying social influencers and encouraging them to promote or endorse a brand or product on social media platforms. It is possible to consider influencer marketing to be a part of advertising, digital advertising and content marketing strategies and of marketing communication efforts (Pophal, 2016). Lastly, influencer marketing is defined as a process in which a brand identifies and activates people with significant influence over the brand's target audience in order to promote its sales and reach its target market (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). In today's competitive environment, influencer marketing offers an important alternative for brands and companies that would like to reach potential buyers and to stand out among their rivals that offer similar products or services. Influencer marketing is done through an influencer, who is defined as a person with a potential to influence others. YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Blogs, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter abound in such influencers (Womma, 2017).

Influencer marketing includes four main activities: (1) Identifying influencers and rating them according to their importance, (2) Raising brand awareness of influencers' followers (3) Raising market awareness of target markets through influencers and (4) Turning influencers into brand advocates (Ranga and Sharma, 2014). Brown and Hayes (2008) propose three stages for influencer marketing: (1) Marketing first to influencers to raise brand awareness of their followers, (2) Using influencers to raise brand awareness of target consumers, that is, marketing

through influencers and (3) Marketing through "influential" people by transforming influencers into brand advocates.

Influencer marketing achieved a significant growth and 86% of marketers implemented it as part of their marketing strategies in 2016. Of those who engaged in influencer marketing in 2016, 94% found it effective. 89% implemented influencer marketing to develop original content about their brands, 77% to stimulate customer brand engagement and 56% to direct users to websites or home pages (Linqia, 2016). Most of the marketers spent \$ 25.000 - \$ 50.000 on influencer marketing in 2016, which is expected to double in 2017. 48% of marketers stated that they plan to increase their influencer marketing budgets by 2017. Marketers work with an average of 10-25 influencers (Linqia, 2016). These results indicate that influencer marketing will play a more and more important role in marketing mix for brands, retailers and agencies of all sizes in the future (Genvideo, 2016).

YOUTUBE AS AN INFLUENCER MARKETING PLATFORM

YouTube is one of the social media platforms that attracts the attention of not only a large number of users but also brands and companies. Initiated by three PayPal employees in 2005 and backed by Sequoia Capital with a \$11.5 million investment, YouTube is the largest media sharing and most visited site today (Zarella, 2010). YouTube has now come to a point where hundreds of millions of hours of video are viewed per day with more than one billion users in 76 different languages serving local versions in 88 countries around the world (www.youtube.com, 2017). Allowing users to upload videos in a very short time, YouTube contains hundreds of millions of videos ranging from fashion to entertainment, from baby-care to cooking etc. More than 1 billion YouTube users constitute nearly one third of all people on the internet. 80 percent of YouTube's views are from outside the United States and YouTube videos are watched 4 billion times a day. More than half of YouTube views take place on mobile devices. The average number of mobile YouTube video views per day increased by 100 percent compared to the previous year. The average mobile viewing session is 40 minutes. U.S. users spend an average of five hours per month on YouTube (Walters, 2016). Users all around the world upload millions of fun and interesting videos on YouTube every day, which keeps this platform viable. Brands also have the opportunity to upload promotional videos related to their products and services in order to reach millions of consumers at minimum cost. Today, a large number of brands and companies have stepped forward for branded content endorsements on YouTube through YouTubers with millions of followers.

YouTube is the most influential social media platform for influencer marketing. Genvideo (2016) estimated that 50% of brands will increase and no brand will reduce their influencer marketing investments in 2017. Reaching \$ 5.6 billion in advertising revenues, YouTube has surpassed Instagram, Facebook and Twitter in 2017, indicating that YouTube will continue to attract more and more attention of brands and companies (Şen, 2017).

YOUTUBERS AND EWOM

Consumers have always valued the opinions of others. The opinions of consumers who have previously purchased and tried products are particularly important for those constantly bombarded by advertising to make purchase decisions. Word-of-Mouth communication (WOM) is defined as a process in which consumers share information with no intermediary to

direct buyers towards specific products, brands and services (Gruen et al., 2006). WOM is also defined as the communication between consumers about their personal views of and experiences with a product or a company (Richins, 1983). This type of communication has a major impact on consumers' purchasing behavior, especially in the case of experiential products (Zhang et al., 2010). The Internet has provided consumers with the opportunity to access other consumers' comments and to share their own consumption recommendations, i.e. electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) (Park and Kim, 2008; Park and Lee, 2009). The expansion of the Internet has also resulted in social media gaining popularity and becoming an integral part of our lives, which has accelerated and facilitated the process in which consumers share their views and experiences with their peers (Veirman et al., 2017; Roelens et al., 2016). Electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) is defined as positive or negative comments made by potential, actual or former online customers about a product or service (Stauss, 2010). Consumers can freely share their experiences with and suggestions about a brand through social media platforms, primarily Instagram and Facebook. Therefore, social media is now becoming an ideal tool for eWOM (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Kiss and Bichler, 2008; Hwang ve diğ., 2014).

eWOM is one of the most important factors influencing consumers' purchase decision and YouTube platform is very convenient to use it (Forbes, 2016). eWOM provides brands and businesses with many opportunities such as product sales, customer value, customer loyalty and product promotion (Zhang et al., 2010). Effective and influential people on various social media platforms can significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions through eWOM (Liu et al., 2015). YouTubers are also useful for brands to expand their target groups and to increase consumer loyalty (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). However, eWOM depends on the efficient dissemination of content (Cheong and Morrison, 2008). While YouTube is widely used by brands for eWOM, YouTubers create their own personal brands online so much so that most YouTubers have more followers than famous brands.

YouTubers as Influencers

Creators of social media content, such as YouTubers, form a community to interact with their followers (Gardner and Lehnert, 2016). YouTubers play an important role in connecting brands to customers because YouTubers' views and comments are more convincing to their followers than traditional brand messages. Therefore, marketers and communications specialists are seeking ways to make use of YouTubers to develop brand consumer dialogue on digital platforms (Forbes, 2016). Influencers are often those who have the knowledge to influence the behavior and attitudes of others (Liu et al., 2015). To be more precise, influencers are Instagrammers, YouTubers and Bloggers who have an influence on certain community members with common interests (Uzunoglu and Kip, 2014). Social influencers share their daily lives, experiences and personal opinions through blogging, vlogging or through short forms of content (e.g. Instagram, SnapChat etc.) (Veirman et al., 2017).

A brand or product recommendation provided by a YouTuber is more effective than TV commercials of the very same product or brand. According to DEFY Media (2015), more than 61% of respondents in all age groups are more likely to try brands or products endorsed by YouTubers than by traditional media celebrities. The results of the study conducted by Sudha

and Sheena (2017) are also in agreement with those of DEFY Media. Another study conducted with participants between the ages of 13 and 24 in the United States yielded similar results. 70% of respondents stated that YouTubers have changed and shaped popular culture while 60% stated that they would make purchase decisions based on recommendations from their favorite YouTube star rather than those from a TV or movie star (Arnold, 2017). Especially teenagers imitate the behavior of YouTubers such as way of talking, and (wish to) wear the same clothes as they do (Westenberg, 2016).

As stated before, YouTubers enjoy recommending products to their viewers, who are, in return, more likely to develop a positive perception of a product if the YouTuber gives a positive review or uses a positive language during the advertisement (Forbes, 2016). Nowadays people, especially young people, view YouTubers' videos not only for fun but also as an alternative source of information (Tolson, 2010). Therefore, YouTubers are particularly influencing young consumers' purchase behavior and decisions. Young consumers consider YouTubers to be honest about their product reviews, and want to buy products endorsed by them (Westenberg, 2016). Brands that are aware of the power of influencers over their followers try hard to get their products to be tested and endorsed by influencers through events and special occasions. In this way, they aim to strengthen the image of their products or brands among influencers' followers (Abidin, 2016; Brown and Fiorella, 2013, Westenberg, 2016). For example, social influencers such as YouTubers constitute an important pillar of Maybelline's communications strategy (Forbes, 2016). In addition to a number of beauty brands (Lieber, 2014), 57% of cosmetics and fashion companies use influencers as part of their marketing strategy (Womma, 2017) because the cosmetics and fashion industry is a natural fit for influencers. It is also known that influencers in the cosmetics and fashion sector have a great effect on young women (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). In addition to IBM, Cisco and Adobe, Ford India used influencer marketing to promote its new model, Ford Fiesta Powershift (Ranga and Sharma, 2014; Dinesh, 2017).

Product reviews include personal experience-based information. Based on those experiences, YouTubers are able to encourage or discourage viewers to buy certain products. YouTubers receive free products and services, and make money in exchange for product review. While YouTubers receive free products or monetary compensation in exchange for their reviews, followers or viewers find their reviews reliable and objective (Westenberg, 2016). Some world-famous YouTubers collect millions of dollars in revenue. Below are the 10 highest-paid YouTubers of 2017 (<http://tr.euronews.com>):

1. Daniel Middleton (DanTDM) – \$16.5 million
2. Evan Fong (VanossGaming) – \$15.5 million
3. Dude Perfect – \$14 million
4. Logan Paul – \$12.5 million (tie)
5. Mark Fischbach (Markiplier) – \$12.5 million (tie)
6. Felix Kjellberg (PewDiePie) – \$12 million
7. Jake Paul – \$11.5 million
8. Smosh – \$11 million (tie)
9. Ryan ToysReview – \$11 million (tie)
10. Lilly Singh – \$10.5 million

It is reported that YouTubers are 4 times more effective than traditional celebrities at driving brand familiarity and as effective as them at affecting consumer purchase intention. Especially highly committed followers find YouTubers reliable and expect them to review brands and products. Makeup and cosmetics brands are among the first to bring YouTubers and viewers together. For example, about 86% of the top 200 beauty videos on YouTube were shot by YouTubers rather than by professionals or brands. However, YouTubers are not only influential in the cosmetics sector (Nazerali, 2017). With the popularization of social media, those who do not have enough information about a product or service often pay more attention to the views of previous customers. Consumers' decision-making processes are, therefore, much more likely to be affected by the opinions and reviews of reliable people than by recommendations of manufacturers. Therefore, those with significant influence over society or a certain community are believed to be natural reinforcements that can be advantageously utilized by all brands and firms, especially by E-commerce firms (Kim and Srivastava, 2007).

The use of social influencers in marketing has some differences from traditional advertising. Social influencers have direct contact with their followers and review a product after actually using it. By virtue of their authenticity and objective reviews, social influencers have credibility in the eyes of their followers. Social influencers are not constrained by formalities and bureaucracy, and therefore, can say or write whatever they want to. What only matters to them is their followers. No one can force them to endorse a product they have not used or do not use.

Lastly, advertisements with social influencers provide significant cost advantages over other advertising methods (Vieria, 2015; Evans et al., 2017). In addition, marketing with influencers is an indirect marketing effort that a brand or firm can perform at a lower cost than other marketing strategies. Another advantage of this type of marketing is that influencers ensure consumer confidence in products, which is very important in today's competitive market (Farooq and Jan, 2012).

Selection of YouTubers and Features of Effective YouTubers

One of the biggest challenges that brands face in influencer marketing is identifying influencers with a strong impact on the target audience (Veirman et al., 2017). The most important factors in the selection of influencers are the purpose of the brand or company, and product and service features. Features of YouTubers also play an important role in disseminating content. The features that influencers should have are authenticity, reliability, competence, expertise, legitimacy and honesty. Products and services of companies that work with influencers with these features have better sales and a longer market life (Lisichkova and Othman, 2017). Consumers tend to rely more on user-generated content than producer-generated content (Cheong & Morrison, 2013). Therefore, YouTubers who always post positive reviews of products lose, after a while, their credibility in the eyes of their followers. Consumers think that YouTubers are free from commercial concerns. The fact that YouTubers provide insight into their personal lives and interact with their followers and talk about the inaccessible aspects of products make them reliable and sincere. In addition, since YouTubers

are, unlike traditional celebrities, very accessible, they are able to make a personal connection with their followers (Abidin, 2016). Most social influencers are considered more genuine than celebrities or actors because they put their lives first, which makes them more relatable to everyday consumers following their content (Forbes, 2016). Some YouTubers use profanity or slang when communicating with their followers, which also makes them sound more genuine and real because using profanity or slang in interpersonal interaction can sometimes help build rapport and reinforce interpersonal bonds (Fägersten, 2017). Moreover, YouTubers boost their credibility in the eyes of their followers, when they disparage some brands. In fact, this might even be for those brands' benefit. When a YouTuber ridicules a product or brand that she does not particularly like, her followers feel assured that a product or brand endorsed by her must be really good. Humor also helps YouTubers sound more genuine and sincere than traditional celebrities (Nazerali, 2017). Thus, brands and firms using different social media channels prefer to team up with social media celebrities rather than with TV or movie stars (Biaudet, 2017). Another important factor that needs to be considered in the selection of the right YouTuber for the brand is if he/she is compatible with the brand image. Choosing a YouTuber that is incompatible with the brand's principles can do more damage than good to the brand's image.

METHOD

This study was conducted in order to examine the perceptions of Turkish consumers towards Youtubers. Face to face interviews were carried out with 257 students from Kastamonu University in November-December 2017. The participants were selected using a convenience sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods. The statements in the questionnaire were adopted and reformulated from the studies conducted by Westenberg (2016), Fägersten, (2017).

RESULTS

This section contains the results of the analysis on the participants' perceptions of YouTubers. First, demographic features of the participants are addressed. Then, the results are presented.

Table 1. Demographic Features of Participants

Age	F	%	Average Monthly Income	F	%
≤18	18	7.0	≤ 250 TL	11	4.3
18-20	132	51.4	251-500 TL	93	36.2
21-23	97	37.7	501-750 TL	65	25.3
24-26	8	3.1	751-1000 TL	47	18.3
≥27	2	.8	≥1001 TL	41	16.0
Sex	F	%	Grade	F	%
Female	161	62.6	1 st	62	24.1
Male	96	37.4	2 nd	44	17.1
			3 rd	81	31.5
			4 th	70	27.2
Total	257	100	Total	257	100

Table 1 demonstrates the demographic features of the participants. A total of 257 students participated in the study. The majority of participants were female and between the ages of 18 and 20 years with a monthly income ranging from 251 to 500 TL.

Table 2. Participants' Habits of Following YouTubers

Duration of following YouTubers	F	%	Subscribed social media channels	F	%
0- 6 Months	45	17.5	Facebook	165	21.7
7-12 Months	34	13.2	Twitter	92	12.1
1-2 Years	64	24.9	Instagram	224	29.4
2-4 Years	61	23.7	LinkedIn	9	
≥5 Years	53	20.6	Pinterest	11	1.1
Daily time spent watching YouTuber channels	F	%	Vine	20	2.6
<30 minutes	91	35.4	YouTube	166	21.8
1 hour	62	24.1	Google Plus	73	9.6
2-3 hours	57	22.2	Total	760	100
4-5 hours	31	12.1	YouTuber Channels	F	%
≥5 hours	16	6.2	Technology	95	18.6
Means of following YouTubers	F	%	Health-sports	68	13.3
Desktop computer	9	3.5	Food-drink	51	10
Laptop	37	14.4	Automobile	32	6.2
Tablet	6	2.3	Cosmetics	93	18.2
Smartphone	205	79.8	Travel	43	8.4
Have you purchased a product recommended by a YouTuber?	F	%	Book-Magazine	37	7.2
Yes	65	25.3	Fashion and Clothing	90	17.6
No	160	62.3	Total	509	100
I have I purchased many products	32	12.5			
Total	257	100			
Do products or brands that your friends see on YouTuber videos and share affect your purchase decision?			Absolutely yes	24	9.3
			Yes	96	37.4
			Undecided	62	24.1
			No	51	19.8
			Absolutely no	24	9.3

Table 2 contains information on the participants' habits of following YouTubers, showing that the majority of participants have been following YouTubers for 1 to 2 years and spend at least half an hour watching YouTuber videos every day. The vast majority of participants follow YouTubers on their smartphones. About 25% of participants have purchased an item endorsed by a YouTuber. About 10% of participants have purchased a large number of items endorsed by YouTubers. Out of 700 social media subscriptions, Instagram has the most subscriptions (224), followed by YouTube (166) and Facebook (165). Out of 509 YouTuber channels, the participants mostly follow technology channels (95), followed by cosmetics (93) and fashion and clothing (90).

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is one of the most widely used multivariate statistical techniques that make a large number of interrelated variables into small, meaningful and independent factors (Kalayci, 2009). The factor analysis results are given in Table 3. The results of KMO and Bartlett's test conducted to verify sampling adequacy show that KMO value was 0.864, indicating that the sample size is suitable for factor analysis. The chi-square value of the Bartlett's test of Sphericity was 1769.930 and the p value was <0.005, indicating that there is a strong correlation between the scale items, and that factor analysis can be applied.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.864
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1769.930
	df	120
	Sig.	.000

The exploratory factor analysis carried out to determine participants' perceptions of YouTubers reveal 4 factors: 1) YouTuber Video Perception, 2) Content Sharing, 3) Perceived Benefit and 4) Impact on Purchase Decision, explaining 64% of the perceptions of the participants regarding YouTubers. The first factor "YouTuber Video Perception" explains 20.5% of the total variance explained. The reliability value of the scale used in the study is .884 (Cronbach's Alpha), indicating that the scale is reliable. Table 4 shows Cronbach's Alpha values of each factor.

Table 4. Participants' Perceptions of YouTubers

Factor Statements	Factor Loads			
	1	2	3	4
<i>YouTuber Video Perception</i>				
YouTuber videos provide up-to-date information.	.774			
YouTuber videos are fun.	.750			
YouTuber videos are informative.	.739			
YouTuber videos offer natural communication.	.688			
YouTuber videos are the latest trend.	.662			
YouTuber videos are genuine ve sincere.	.488			
<i>Content Sharing</i>				
I share YouTuber videos with people around me.		.867		
I send YouTuber videos to my friends.		.830		
I recommend YouTubers to my friends.		.743		
<i>Perceived Benefit</i>				
YouTubers provide information about brands' promotions and discou			.776	
YouTubers make comparisons between products.			.732	
YouTubers give information about new products.			.711	
YouTubers demonstrate products.			.497	
<i>Impact on Purchase Decision</i>				
I purchase brands and products recommended by YouTubers.				.872
YouTubers affect my decision to purchase brands and products.				.813
YouTubers affect my purchase decision more than TV, radio and newspaper advertisements.				.400
Explained Variance	20.524	16.218	15.082	11.798
Total Explained Variance	63.623			
Cronbach's Alpha	.838	.846	.729	.680
Total Cronbach's Alpha	.884			

Analyses of variance (One-Way ANOVA)

One-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in demographic characteristics, duration of following YouTubers and time spent watching YouTuber channels between participants.

Table 5. Anova test between content sharing and time spent on YouTube per day

ANOVA					
Communication and Sharing Advantage Factor	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	21.397	4	5.349	5.135	.001
Within Groups	262.492	252	1.042		
Total	283.889	256			

A One-way ANOVA was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in time spent on YouTube per day between participants. Here, p value (sig.) < 0.05 indicates statistically significant difference between groups. A Tukey test was carried out to determine between which groups the difference existed in terms of *Content Sharing factor*. The Tukey test results indicate that participants spending 1 hour, 2-3 hours and 5 hours on YouTube videos agree more with *Content Sharing factor* than those spending less than 30 minutes.

Table 6. Anova test between content sharing and duration of following YouTubers

ANOVA					
Content Sharing Factor	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.638	4	2.659	2.453	.047
Within Groups	273.252	252	1.084		
Total	283.889	256			

One-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in duration of following YouTubers between participants. Here, p value (sig.) < 0.05 indicates statistically significant difference between groups. Tukey test was used to determine between which groups the difference existed. The Tukey test results indicate that participants who have been following YouTubers for 6-12 months agree more with *Content Sharing factor* than those who have been following YouTubers for 0-6 months.

T test results

A t-test was conducted to determine whether the two sexes differed regarding their perceptions of YouTubers. The test result indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in *YouTube Video Perception*, *Content Sharing* and *Perceived Benefit* factors between the two sexes.

Table 7. Participants' Sex and YouTube Video Perception Factor T-Test

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Woman	161	3.5147	.73366	2.356	255	.015
Man	96	3.2656	.86706			

There is a statistically significant difference in *YouTube Video Perception* between the two sexes (p < 0.05), indicating that female participants' YouTube video perception is higher than that of males.

Table 8. Participants' Sex and Content Sharing Factor T-Test

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Woman	161	3.5238	1.00879	3.415	255	.001
Man	96	2.0694	1.06942			

There is a statistically significant difference in *Content Sharing* between the two sexes ($p < 0.05$), indicating that female participants agree more with *Content Sharing* factor than males.

Table 9. Participants' Sex and Perceived Benefit Factor T-Test

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Woman	161	3.6211	.80060	3.167	255	.002
Man	96	3.2847	.86109			

There is a statistically significant difference in *Perceived Benefit* between the two sexes ($p < 0.05$), indicating that female participants agree more with *Perceived Benefit* factor than males.

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

In an increasingly intense competitive environment, brands are seeking ways to stand out among their rivals and to better interact with their target groups. In this respect, YouTubers, also referred to as social media celebrities, are regarded as potential candidates to meet the needs of brands. Many brands are turning to YouTubers to reach or expand their customer base. There are, however, no scales developed to measure consumers' perceptions of this new marketing strategy. The main aim of this study was to use the developed scale to determine undergraduate consumers' perceptions of YouTubers. Four factors related to consumers' perceptions of YouTubers were determined. These factors were *YouTuber Video Perception*, *Content Sharing*, *Perceived Benefit* and *Impact on Purchase Decision*, explaining 64% of the total perception. The reliability of the scale was .884. Though the concept of YouTuber can be traced back to 10 years ago, the majority of participants have been following YouTubers for 1-2 years. Again, the majority of participants spend at least 30 minutes watching YouTuber videos on their smartphones every day. About 25% of participants stated that they have purchased an item endorsed by a YouTuber while 10% stated that they have purchased a large number of items endorsed by YouTubers. Instagram and YouTube have the highest number of subscribers among participants. Participants mostly follow technology, cosmetics, and fashion and clothing channels. The ANOVA analysis shows that participants watching YouTuber videos for more than 1 hour every day are more likely to share them than those watching for less than 1 hour. Participant following YouTubers for a long time are more likely to share YouTuber videos than those following YouTubers for a short time. The t test results show that female participants score higher than males in terms of *YouTuber Video Perception*, *Content Sharing* and *Perceived Benefit* factors. This result is in agreement with those of Sudha and Sheena (2017).

Overall, the results indicate that participants have positive perceptions of YouTubers and consider them an important source of information in the midst of hundreds of options they have to choose from. More importantly, YouTubers have a great impact on consumers' purchase decision. Consumers also engage in eWOM by sharing YouTuber videos. In

conclusion, this study shows that YouTubers can be used as an integral part of brands' integrated marketing communications mix.

It is worth noting that these results are limited to the participants recruited for this study. It is recommended that further studies test the factors that emerged in the exploratory factor analysis in this study. As a final note, the purpose of this study was not to provide definitive research results but rather to offer an approach for researchers to better understand consumers' perceptions, and help them construct a basis for further research.

REFERENCES

- Arnold A. (2017). Why YouTube Stars Influence Millennials More Than Traditional Celebrities. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/under30network/2017/06/20/why-youtube-stars-influence-millennials-more-than-traditional-celebrities/#14855fdd48c6> (Erişim tarihi: 18.12.2017).
- Abidin C. (2016). Visibility labour: Engaging with influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia*. 161, no. 1: 86–100. doi:10.1177/1329878X16665177
- Biaudet S. (2017). Influencer Marketing as a Marketing Tool. *Yrkeshögskolan Arcada*. https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/134139/Biaudet_Sofie.pdf?sequence=1 (Erişim tarihi: 13.12.2017).
- Boyd DM and Ellison NB. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* vol 13, no. 1: 210–30. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x
- Brown D and Fiorella S. (2013). *Influence Marketing How to Create, Manage, and Measure Brand Influencers in Social Media Marketing*. Que Publishing: Indianapolis, USA .
- Brown D and Hayes N, (2008). *Influencer Marketing: Who Really Influences Your Customers* Elsevier/Butterworth-Heinemann,
- Cheong HJ. And Morrison MA. (2008) Consumers' reliance on product information and recommendations found in UGC. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*. 8(2), 38-49.
- DEFY Media. (2015). ACUMEN report: Constant content. Retrieved November 12, 2017, from <http://cdn.defymedia.com/> <http://defymedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Acumen-Handout-150212-12.pdf>
- Dinesh D, (2017). Why Micro-Influencers Are a Social Media Marketing Imperative for 2017. industry insights. <http://www.econtentmag.com/Articles/Editorial/Industry-Insights/Why-Micro-Influencers-are-a-Social-Media-Marketing-Imperative-for-2017-115835.htm> (Erişim tarihi: 13.12.2017).
- Enge E, (2012). Influencer Marketing - What it is, and Why YOU Need to be Doing it. <https://moz.com/blog/influencer-marketing-what-it-is-and-why-you-need-to-be-doing-it> (Erişim tarihi: 13.12.2017).
- Evans NJ, Joe P, Jay L and Hyoyeun J. (2017) Disclosing Instagram Influencer Advertising: The Effects of Disclosure Language on Advertising Recognition, Attitudes, and Behavioral Intent, *Journal of Interactive Advertising*. DOI: 10.1080/15252019.2017.1366885
- Fägersten KB. (2017) The role of swearing in creating an online persona: The case of YouTuber PewDiePie. *Discourse, Context & Media* 2017. 18 1–10
- Farooq F, And Ja Z. The Impact of Social Networking to Influence Marketing through Product Reviews. *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Research* Volume 2 No. 8, August 2012
- Forbes K. (2016) Examining the Beauty Industry's Use of Social Influencers. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications* Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall

- Gardner J and Lehnert K. (2016) What's new about new media? How multi-channel networks work with content Creators. *Business Horizons* 59, 293–302. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2016.01.009>
- Gen.video (2016) <http://gen.video/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/01/INFLUENCER-MARKETING-TRENDS-AND-BEST-PRACTICES-FOR-2017.pdf> (Erişim tarihi:14.12.2017).
- Gruen TW, Osmonbekov T and Czaplewski, AJ. (2006) eWOM: The impact of customer-to-customer online know-how exchange on customer value and loyalty. *Journal of Business Research* 59 449 – 456
- Hwang J, Lee B and Kim K. (2014) Information asymmetry, social networking site word of mouth, and mobility effects on social commerce in Korea. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social networkin.* 17(2), 117-124. doi. 10.1089/cyber.2012.0566
- Kalaycı Ş. (2009) *SPSS Uygulamalı Çok Değişkenli İstatistik Teknikleri*. (4. Baskı) Asil Yayınları: Ankara.
- Kiss C and Bichler M.(2008) Identification of influencers – Measuring influence in customer networks. *Decision Support Systems* 46 233–253
- Kim YA and Srivastava J. (2007) Impact of Social Influence in E-Commerce Decision making <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.330.302&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (Erişim tarihi:14.12.2017).
- Lieber C. (2014). Clicks, Likes, Cash: How YouTube Beauty Stars Threw the Industry for a Loop. <https://www.racked.com/2014/5/22/7597285/youtube-beauty-stars>. (Erişim tarihi: 13.12.2017).
- Linqia (2016) The State of Influencer Marketing 2017. http://www.linqia.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The-State-of-Influencer-Marketing-2017_Final-Report.pdf (Erişim tarihi:14.12.2017).
- Lisichkova N and Othman Z. (2017)The Impact of Influencers on Online Purchase Intent. School of Business, Society & Engineering Course: Master Thesis in Business Administration Course code: EFO 704 15 cr. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1109584/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (Erişim tarihi: 13.12.2017).
- Liu S, Jiang C, Lin Z, Ding Y, Duan R, and Xu Z. (2015) Identifying effective influencers based on trust for electronic word-of-mouth marketing: A domain-aware approach. *Information Sciences* 306 34–52.
- Nazerali S. (2017) How YouTube influencers are rewriting the marketing rulebook. <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/advertising-channels/video/youtube-influencer-marketing-rulebook/> (Erişim tarihi: 13.12.2017).
- Park C and Lee TM. (2009) Information direction, website reputation and eWOM effect: A moderating role of product type. *Journal of Business Research* 62 (2009) 61–67
- Pophal L. (2016). Influencer Marketing: Turning Taste Makers Into Your Best Salespeople. <http://www.econtentmag.com/Articles/Editorial/Feature/Influencer-Marketing-Turning-Taste-Makers-Into-Your-Best-Salespeople-113151.htm> (Erişim tarihi:14.12.2017)
- Ranga M and Sharma D. (2014) Influencer Marketing- A Marketing Tool In The Age Of Social Media. *Abhinav International Monthly Refereed Journal of Research In Management & Technology*. VOL. 3, ISSUE 8 August
- Richins ML. (1983) Negative word-of-mouth by dissatisfied consumers: a pilot study. *Journal of Marketing* 47 (1), 68–78.
- Roelens IP and Benoit DF. (2016) Identifying influencers in a social network: The value of real referral data. *Decision Support Systems* 91 25–36
- Stauss B. (2010) *Using new media for customer interaction: a challenge for relationship marketing*. T. Henning-Thurau, U. Hansen (Eds.), *Relationship Marketing*, Springer, Berlin, 2000.
- Sudha M and Sheena K. (2017) Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: the Fashion Industry. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, July - September

- Şen F. (2017) Youtube, sosyal medya devlerini geride bıraktı. <https://www.dunya.com/ekonomi/youtube-sosyal-medya-devlerini-geride-birakti-haberi-393046> (Erişim tarihi:25.12.2017)
- Tolson A. (2010) A new authenticity ? Communicative practices on YouTube, *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7:4, 277-289, DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2010.511834.
- Uzunoğlu E, and Kip SM. (2014) Brand communication through digital influencers: Leveraging bloggerengagement. *International Journal of Information Management* 34 592–602
- Veirman MD, Veroline C, Liselot H. (2017) Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude, *International Journal of Advertising*, 36:5, 798-828, DOI: 10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035
- Vieria C,(2015) 7 Reasons To Work With Online Influencers. <http://www.chiefmarketer.com/7-reasons-work-online-influencers/> (Erişim tarihi: 13.12.2017).
- Walters K, (2016) 125+ Essential Social Media Statistics Every Marketer Should Know <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-statistics-for-social-media-managers/> (Erişim tarihi: 21.12.2017).
- Womma (2017) The Womma Guide To Influencer Marketing. <https://womma.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-WOMMA-Guide-to-Influencer-Marketing-2017.compressed.pdf> (Erişim tarihi:14.12.2017).
- www.tr.euronews.com (2017) Altı yaşındaki 'Youtuber'ın yıllık kazancı 11 milyon dolar. <http://tr.euronews.com/2017/12/13/alti-yasindaki-youtuber-in-yillik-kazanci-11-milyon-dolar> (Erişim tarihi: 21.12.2017).
- www.youtube.com (2017) YouTube by the numbers <https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/press/>. (Erişim tarihi:14.12.2017).
- Westenberg W. (2016) The influence of YouTubers on teenagers. University of Twente | P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede | The Netherlands. http://essay.utwente.nl/71094/1/Westenberg_MA_BMS.pdf (Erişim tarihi:14.12.2017).
- Zarella D. (2010) *The Social Media Marketing Book*. 1005 Gravenstein Highway North, Sebastopol : Published by O'Reilly Media, Inc.,
- Zhang JQ, Georgiana C, and Dongwoo S. (2010) When does electronic word-of-mouth matter? A study of consumer product reviews. *Journal of Business Research*. 63 1336–1341

