



Is YouTube a Search Engine or a Social Network? Analyzing Evaluative Inconsistencies

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Abstract: As broadband internet speed increases worldwide, video consumption habits gain momentum. YouTube is by far the most dominant video platform on the Internet. Apart from its social networking site characteristics, YouTube is also known as the second most visited search engine in the world. This paper studies YouTube from marketing perspective. By looking from the categorization theory, evaluative inconsistencies associated with the YouTube platform are investigated. YouTube platform is unique in that it has hybrid product characteristics encompassing both search engine and social networking site features. In the light of the previous literature on category knowledge, devaluation effect, integrated evaluation and bivariate evaluation space (BES) theories, structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was used to examine the evaluative inconsistencies between the two categories of YouTube. Findings showed positive correlation between the two categories, so basically users tend to eliminate the inconsistencies by formulating a general attitude towards both categories. This article makes important contributions to the existing literature by testing such a hybrid model in categorization research. Moreover, the paper has significant managerial implications for the marketers who want to understand the underlying characteristics of different users using a dominant platform like YouTube.

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1. Introduction

With more than 1.9 billion users in 2019 (WeAreSocial, 2019), 2 billion users in 2020 (WeAreSocial, 2020) and 2.29 (WeAreSocial, 2021) billion users in 2021, YouTube has become the second most commonly used social media platform in the world. As of 2021, with over 2 billion users logged in monthly. Consumers watch more than a billion hours of video on YouTube every day (YouTube, 2021). YouTube platform is the second largest search engine and second most visited site in the world following Google (Hootsuite, 2021). The platform is also known as the 2nd most popular social media platform. YouTube viewership is more prevalent among the youth segment. As compared to elder groups, YouTube penetration among 15 to 25-year-old users is the most (81%) in the United States (Statista, 2021). The recent popularity of the platform for search engines is partly due to the fact that consumers, especially teenagers, tend to resort to YouTube-like video-based solutions to educate themselves. A recent study revealed that 59% of Generation Z users cite YouTube as the preferred learning platform (Smith, 2020). Besides revealing generation Z consumers' YouTube usage habits, the time people spend watching YouTube on TV has more than doubled in a single year.

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In recent years, as broadband Internet speed and smartphone penetration have increased globally, video consumption gained momentum (Anderson, 2015). Compared to the other forms of content, video content is preferred as more information can be obtained in a much shorter period of time preserving consumers' valuable time. YouTube is the go-to resource for video content on a global basis. The viewership patterns showed such a sharp increase that brands felt the need to show presence on YouTube, not only for promotion but also for customer feedback (Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Some brands even create advertorials specially designed for YouTube. These facts justify the significance of the study in the managerial context.

According to Burgess and Green (2009), YouTube is "a high-volume website, a broadcast network, a media archive, and a social network" all at the same time. YouTube is also a social networking site (SNS) with its own communities. As a social networking site, registered users can rate (like or dislike), comment or share videos they choose. However, it is a somewhat different type of social media in that intimacies between strangers take place (Rosen, 2012) through vlogs in which content creators narrativize their lives with their subscribers (Zapetero, 2013).

The importance of resolving the related problems of using social media sites is due to the creative nature of these technologies (Pedersen, 2014; Knoll, 2016). Besides, the current state of research in this field has progressed beyond the preliminary or exploratory level, necessitating increased interest and understanding. Moreover, considering the large number of studies that have looked at social media and its uses in various fields of interest, it is argued that there is still a need to propose a theoretical model that covers the most significant dimensions that could have either a positive or negative effect (Filo et al., 2015).

YouTube platform has diverse features encompassing both social networking and search engine functions. On the one hand, YouTube is classified as the second top rated search engine worldwide, just after Google search engine (Hootsuite, 2021). On the other side, YouTube is also classified as a social networking site. The platform's management team invests heavily in social networking features to be competitive in the social networking site (SNS) landscape. The recent addition of YouTube Communities feature is an example to these efforts (Bowler, 2019). Although YouTube managed to embody both functions, search engine and social networking are two distinctly different services. Despite the fact that the platform-provider aims to be everything for everyone in such platforms, specific segments of customers use the platform for specific needs. Hence, YouTube is also used by different segments of customers for their different needs.

Accordingly, this paper tries to classify and analyze YouTube consumers according to their main motivation. Afterwards, devaluation effect is investigated to come up with a hybrid model and test it on existing YouTube users.

By conducting a survey, researchers have tried to clarify, on YouTube, how different features play out on users' perception level. More specifically, three different views on the phenomenon are discussed. Firstly, the devaluation effect, that is, the argument that categorizes YouTube as a search engine devalues its perception of being a social networking site and vice versa is tested. The second view is based on the argument that the two categories are completely in separate spaces and do not influence each other. The third alternative is based on the view that users form a general attitude by considering the accompanying features in an integrated fashion.

The structure of the remainder of the paper is as follows. In the second section, the literature review about search engines and social networking sites are examined first. Subsequently, the extant literature on categorization theory about the subject is discussed. Afterwards, research model and research method, structured equation modeling, is introduced in part 3. The paper concludes with analysis results, discussion of the findings with regard to the existing literature and finally implications for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. YouTube as a Search Engine

A search engine is a software that can be used to find web sites, documents or images, videos or other forms of content on the Internet (Maier, 2007). Search engine can also be defined as a software tool

that helps the user perform keyword searches and locate specific information available on the Internet. Search engines are responsible for organizing the information resources found on the Internet (Kamalipour, 2019). Search engines allow searching over many Internet based resources. Regarding the huge amount of information available, search has become an indispensable part of consumers' daily Internet usage (Xiang et al., 2008). Search engines have evolved into a powerful interface that serves as an access point to all types of information, as well as an important marketing channel through which businesses can reach out to and convince potential customers (Xiang et al., 2008). As of 2021, there are nearly 4.72 billion Internet users worldwide (Kemp, 2021). Around 93% of global web traffic happens through search engines and YouTube is the second most visited search engine after Google (Hootsuite, 2021). Apart from being a powerful search engine, YouTube can also be classified as a typical social networking site.

2.2. YouTube as a Social Networking Site and Social Media

Before defining social networking sites, social media phenomenon should be defined first. Social media can be described as new media technologies that allow for the production and sharing of user-generated content among different users through interactivity and co-creation (Filo et al., 2015). Social media is defined as web-based services that allow individuals to: construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Social media can also be defined as websites that represent various types of user-generated content (UGC) such as social networks, blogs, wikis etc. (Gretzel, 2006). User generated content refers to consumer-created media impressions (Blackshaw, 2006) which can be seen as the media created and made publicly available by consumers themselves (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). User generated content (UGC) typically has three basic characteristics which can be put as follows: first it needs to be publicly available via WWW. Secondly, it needs some sort of creative effort. Lastly, it should be created outside professional routines (OECD, 2007).

As social media and user-generated content grew, websites focused on media sharing started to implement SNS features and become SNSs themselves. Previously, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) categorized six main types of social networking as collaborative projects like Wikipedia, Blogs and Microblogs like Twitter, Content communities like Napster, Social Networking sites like Facebook, Virtual Game worlds like the world of war craft, and virtual social worlds like second life application. Related examples include Flickr (photo sharing) and YouTube (video sharing) in which start to be part of the social networking sites then become themselves a social networking one.

Bennett (2013) reported that about 93% of businesses have adopted and engaged such innovative platforms and tools in their process to communicate and serve their customers. For instance, social platforms such like YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram are especially popular among ages between 18 to 24 (Smith, 2020). Moreover, Smith (2020) provide more specific details about video sharing platforms as he stated that Facebook got 8 billion average daily video views from 500 million users, same number in average with Snapchat. However, YouTube can be considered as number one with views around 10 billion views in average daily. Furthermore, YouTube can be regarded as more of a content community in which there is less self-disclosure than traditional social networking sites like Facebook (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, in recent years, YouTube platform has introduced various new feature like YouTube Community, which allows video producers to better engage with their audiences via images, text etc. (Hebergementwebs, 2020). These resemble more of a social networking site feature than a search engine feature.

2.3. Product Evaluation

Product evaluations can take place in various forms. When consumers engage in effortful mental processing, they assess the available information one by one, on an individual basis to make a final decision (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Shocker & Srinivasan, 1979). This type of processing is also known as piecemeal evaluation (Anderson, 1974; Fiske, 1986; Fiske, 2013;) as each product attribute is evaluated separately. An alternative, more effortless, form of product evaluation is the categorization approach which builds upon the

notion that human beings tend to categorize everything they encounter into one of the previously formed categories.

Categorization theory is a well-known and widely used phenomenon for understanding the consumer evaluation process. Previous literature demonstrates that one of the most accepted models in consumer evaluation process is the categorization approach (Mervis & Rosch, 1981; Smith & Medin, 1981; Sujan, 1985; Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986; Loken & Ward, 1990; Viswanathan & Childers, 1999). Categorization can be defined as consumers' use of representations to assign a phenomenon (i.e., product, brand, attribute set) to a particular category (Loken et al., 2008). When a new stimulus is categorized as an exemplar to a category, then, the effect associated with that category can quickly be retrieved and applied in an effortless manner (Cohen, 1982). In consumer psychology research, categorization is studied in various aspects like product categories (Sujan, 1985; Loken & Ward, 1990; Viswanathan & Childers, 1999), brand categories (Koenig et al., 1987; Wanke et al., 1998; Barone & Miniard, 2002, cultural categories (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Briley & Wyer, 2002) and brand extension categories (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Boush & Loken, 1991).

Product categorization, also known as "schema-driven effect", plays a critical role in evaluation of a product by consumers (Fiske, 1986; Fiske, 2013). The previous research has demonstrated that when possible, consumers try to make category-based evaluations of the products to avoid having to evaluate based on all attributes like in the piecemeal approach (Sujan, 1985; Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986).

3. Conceptual Model

It would be noteworthy to understand that the two categories of YouTube lead to evaluative inconsistencies in user's attitude among the real way of using YouTube. Thus, to deal with that, some models related to the topic should be taken into consideration. To start with, Cantril and Allport (1935), provides the traditional point of view regarding the evaluative inconsistencies by introducing the double polarity in the direction of attitudes as a positive and negative factor relating to the evaluation process. In line with this view, Bogardus (1931) defines consumer attitude as "a tendency to act toward or against some environmental factor which thereby becomes a positive or negative value". Furthermore, Allport (1935) stated that these two categories of the evaluation process are correlated to each other, thus increasing in one will lead to decreasing in the other. Based on this model, it can be noted that categorizing YouTube as a search engine is not separate from categorizing it as a social network and vice versa.

Brendl et al. (2003) provide the same results under the name of devaluation effect, and in their model, consumers perceive objects that will satisfy their needs and will devalue the effects of other objects that are neither perceived as instrumental nor as dis-instrumental to the focal one. Thus, activating a need for one sub-category in YouTube will devalue the effect of the other one. In other words, the more consumers categorize YouTube as a search engine, the more they will devalue its category as a social network and vice versa. Based on those previous two models, YouTube can be introduced as a platform where both search engine and social network categories are linked to each other; and perceiving one of them will devalue the effect of the other one.

In contrast to that, based on Cacioppo and Berntson (1994), it can be stated that sometimes the devaluation effect among different categories do not happen, which leads to an introduction of a new integrated goal, as they provide another model known as (BES) or bivariate evaluative space. Based on Tulving's (1985) statement as "the relation between two dependent variables in a situation in which one variable does and the other one does not vary as a function of an independent variable", Cacioppo and Berntson (1994) stated in their model that there is a possibility that positive and negative evaluative processes can be influenced differently by some antecedent condition. In addition, the evaluative responses either positive or negative toward a single object normally occupy separate dimensions in a bivariate space.

It is very important at this level to point out that the positive and negative components in those models are what researchers mention as the two categories of YouTube, which are (search engine and social network). Although positive and negative evaluations usually occupy separate dimensions in a bivariate space, Cacioppo et al. (1997) highlighted that examining fundamental beliefs can create a connection

between those dimensions, restoring the unidimensional structure of the attitude. Remarkably similar to that, Sengupta and Johar (2002) explained that inconsistent evaluations should be influenced by the way inconsistencies are processed. Therefore, instead of seeking to hold disagreeing evaluations, people are generally motivated to create an integrated evaluation. Therefore, instead of being treated separately, the two categories of YouTube will be considered in relation to each other, and this articulation should decrease the inconsistency of the final attitude.

Therefore, based on the four previous models, researchers were able to form the research model covering all the possibilities of the evaluation process.

3.1. Model Development

Based on the models of both Allport (1935), and Brendl et al. (2003), it can be stated that both categories of YouTube are linked together and perceiving one category will devalue the other one. In other words, categorizing YouTube as a search engine will devalue its category as a social network and vice versa.

Moreover, starting from the previous models, in the case that evaluates YouTube as one category will not devalue the other one, another model can be used, which is (BES) bivariate evaluative space for Cacioppo and Berntson (1994), in which they assume that the two categories of YouTube can be held separately from each other and perceiving one category will not affect the other one. However, Sengupta and Johar (2002) provide a more profound explanation as they stated that consumers in general tend to form a general attitude to decrease the inconsistencies level. In other words, users of YouTube will form a general attitude that will gather both two categories of search engine and social network together. Accordingly, researchers provided the research model which reflects the direct relations between YouTube's sub-categories search engine and social network as can be indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Research Model



3.2. Data Collection Techniques

Quantitative research method was conducted in the article by separating questionnaire using a simple random sample method. Both primary and secondary research methods were used in the article. While secondary research methods indicate the collection of literature from previous studies such like books and articles. Primary research method can be defined as the research method that were used particularly for this article. Moreover, collecting data were done through a questionnaire that were delivered to 492 respondents. Furthermore, as the main aim of the research is to analyze how users evaluate YouTube, the questionnaire was separated randomly to YouTube users residing in Istanbul City. The data was collected through an electronic questionnaire.

3.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

When researchers want to test the influence of total number of factors on some variables, and to determine which variables can be categorized in the same factor they usually use Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The main thesis of this (EFA) is that normally there are possibilities to discover common factors in the dataset, with a main goal can be identified in finding the smallest number of those common factors in which can be suitable for the correlation. Another way to look at factor analysis is to call the dependent variables 'surface attributes' and the underlying structures (factors) 'internal attributes' (Tucker & MacCallum, 1997).

Common factors are those that affect more than one of the surface attributes, and specific factors are the ones which only affect a particular variable (Yong & Pearce, 2013).

3.4. Structural Equation Modeling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) offers a means of developing and evaluating ideas about complex (multivariate) relationships. It is this property that makes SEM of interest to the practitioners of science (Grace & Grace, 2006). SEM represents the hybrid of two separate statistics. The first tradition is factor analysis developed in the disciplines of psychology and psychometrics. The second tradition is simultaneous equation modeling developed mainly in econometrics, but has an early history in the field of genetics (Kirmızı, 2008). SEM techniques provide many excellent tools for conducting preliminary evaluation of the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments among a comprehensive selection of population groups (Raines-Eudy, 2000).

4. Findings

Table 1 presents the information about respondents' demographic profile. It can be indicated that the percentage between male and female respondents are close with 53% and 47%, respectively. Moreover, it can be noticed from Table 1 that the majority of the respondents fall in the age between 20-29 with around 51%. In contrast, the age category of 50-59 is the minority with only 10 respondents and a total percentage of 2%.

Table 1. Demographic Descriptions

		n	%
Gender	Female	260	52.9
	Male	232	47.1
Age	19 and under	77	15.7
	20-29	251	51.0
	30-39	116	23.5
	40-49	38	7.8
	50-59	10	2.0

Table 1 presents the information about respondents' demographic profile. Researchers allowed respondents to indicate their specific ages then they categorized it in 10 years' categories as it can be shown in table 1. It can be indicated that the percentage between male and female respondents are close with 53% and 47%, respectively. Moreover, it can be noticed from Table 1 that the majority of the respondents fall in the age between 20-29 with around 51%. In contrast, the age category of 50-59 is the minority with only 10 respondents and a total percentage of 2%.

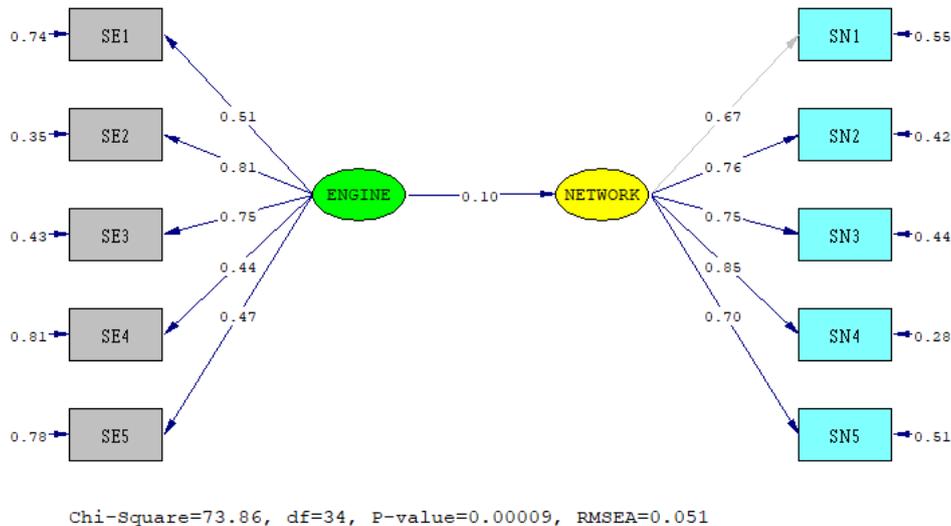
As it can be observed from Table 2, according to the findings of Explanatory Factor Analysis, the items of the scale formed in two factors which we renamed as Social Network and Search Engine. The eigenvalues, variance explanation ratios of factors and the factor loadings of each item are also given in Table 2. The total variance explanation ratio of these two factors is calculated as 57.17. All Cronbach alpha item loadings are between 0.7 to 0.9 which demonstrates that internal consistency of our result is good (acceptable) (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Within the Social Network, the item: "I use YouTube site or application for sharing videos." has the greatest loading as 0.865. For the Search Engine of "I can find results that I am seeking with only few related tasks." has been found to be the most effective item with the loading of 0.829.

Table 2. EFA Scores and Cronbach’s Alpha Values of the Factors Social Network and Search Engine

Factors/Items	Factor Loading.	Eigen value.	Explained Variance.	Cronbach’s Alpha.
Social Network				
I use YouTube site or application to become more sociable.	0.750			
I use YouTube site or application to create my social identity.	0.814			
I use YouTube site or application to get relief from stress.	0.805	3.357	33.569	0.860
I use YouTube site or application for sharing videos.	0.865			
I use YouTube site or application to look at funny sharing videos.	0.772			
Search Engine				
I use YouTube site or application to search for information.	0.609			
I can find results that I am seeking with only few related tasks.	0.829			
Long query can substantially improve the quality of the information retrieved.	0.825	2.361	23.607	0.715
When I search on YouTube, I can find the desired information.	0.546			
The language that I am using in searching on YouTube refers to the materials I am looking for.	0.619			

Figure 2. SEM Results for the Social Network and Search Engine



3. Goodness of fit statistics and the limits for the structural model can be shown in Figure 1 and Table

Table 3. Limits and The Results of The Structural Model

Fitness Criterion.	Perfect Fitness.	Acceptable Fitness.	Model.
RMSEA.	$0 \leq \text{RMSEA} \leq 0.05$	$0.05 < \text{RMSEA} \leq 0.10$	0.051
NFI.	$0.95 \leq \text{NFI} \leq 1$	$0.90 < \text{NFI} < 0.95$	0.97
NNFI.	$0.97 \leq \text{NNFI} \leq 1$	$0.95 \leq \text{NNFI} < 0.97$	0.98
CFI.	$0.97 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 1$	$0.95 \leq \text{CFI} < 0.97$	0.98
SRMR.	$0 \leq \text{SRMR} < 0.05$	$0.05 \leq \text{SRMR} < 0.10$	0.054
GFI.	$0.95 \leq \text{GFI} \leq 1$	$0.90 \leq \text{GFI} < 0.95$	0.97
AGFI.	$0.90 \leq \text{AGFI} \leq 1$	$0.85 \leq \text{AGFI} < 0.90$	0.95

It can be indicated from Table 3 that the model outputs are located between acceptable and perfect fit. In addition, based on Fitness Criterion, if the value of $\{\chi^2 / df\}$ is less than 3, it implies that there is an acceptable fit (Schermelleh-Engel & Moosbrugger, 2003). For the model in this study, χ^2 / df is held as $73.86/34 = 2.17$ which means that the model is statistically significant.

When we examine the most important variable on Search Engine, the item; "I can find results that I am seeking with only a few related tasks." is found to be the most effective one with a coefficient of 0.81. The results also indicated that on the Social Network, the most important variables are "I use YouTube site or application for sharing videos." with a coefficient of 0.85.

It can also be seen from Figure 2 that the search engine has a positive effect on their social network with a coefficient of 0.10. Moreover, the same model was applied as a vice versa, by evaluating the relation between two categories when using social network category as an independent variable, findings yielded the same results.

5. Discussion

The main purpose of this article is to specify the relation between the two categories of YouTube in order to solve the evaluative inconsistencies that might be related to this hyper website. YouTube can be used as a search engine, at the same time, it can be used as a social network, and accordingly, three different models specified three main options for the relation between these two categories. While Cacioppo and Berntson (1994) with their BES model stated that the two categories have no relation together, so evaluating one will not devalue the role of the other. In contrast, both Cantril and Allport (1935) and Brendl et al. (2003), proved that in such an evaluation process, users tend to devalue the role of one category when they evaluate the other one. Moreover, Sengupta and Johar (2002) stated that basically users do not need to devalue one category among the other. Conversely, they tend to formulate a general attitude toward both categories.

Research findings support the claims put forth by Sengupta and Johar (2002) as there is a positive correlation between the two categories, so users tend to formulate a general attitude towards YouTube and eliminate the evaluative inconsistencies.

6. Contribution

This article has been developed with the main objective to determine YouTube's two sub-categories, providing a new model that can be used to understand the way that users categorize this hybrid product. Moreover, from a managerial perspective, this model can be important when YouTube is using as a part of marketing activities, as it allows a full understanding of how users categorize YouTube. Hence, it can give an understanding of how marketing strategies and goals can be set up based on this particular categorization.

Besides the managerial perspective, this article emphasizes on an important topic in academia especially in consumer behavior studies in general and consumer attitudes and evaluation process in particular. For instance, an important question about processing strategies can be stated, which is whether

product attributes are reviewed, evaluated, combined to yield an overall evaluation, or some simpler process mediates final judgments and choices. More specifically, the study reveals that users engage in piecemeal processes or simple category-based affective processes in order to reach their final judgments.

In addition, according to Sujan and Bettman (1989), perceptions of how distinctive a brand is in the product category influence perceptions of the brand's position within the category. More specifically, how similar or different a company is perceived in comparison to other brands in the product category is an important aspect of its position in the product category. Therefore, a future study about brand position for YouTube's two subcategories can be conducted to understand each category position related to other brands which belong to the same category. For example, YouTube as a social network brand and its position compared with other social networks and important sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. YouTube as a search engine brand and its position compared with other search engine brands such like Google, and Yahoo. Moreover, determining in which category YouTube has a stronger position can be significant, particularly in the practical field.

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