

Influencer Marketing on YouTube: A Qualitative Analysis With MAXQDA

YouTube'da Etkileyici Pazarlaması: MAXQDA ile Nitel Bir Analiz

Abstract

Influencer marketing is an effective strategy that brands use to stand out in an intensely competitive market. Companies strive to collaborate with influencers who can create content fittings with marketing goals and brand values and influence the target audience. This study aims to explore consumers' perceptions of sponsored content created by a female influencer promoting a robot vacuum cleaner through affiliated links on YouTube. A qualitative research method involving content analysis was used. The data were collected from comments under the influencer's video and analyzed using MAXQDA visual tools through coding and categorizing techniques. The study utilizes a four-dimensional conceptualization approach covering influencer attributes, account attributes, unfavorable opinions, and purchase intentions.

The findings reveal that viewers emphasize the influencer's physical attractiveness, such as beauty, elevating and idolizing her and expressing positive emotions. Viewers place high importance on an influencer's credibility. They frequently express that they find the influencer trustworthy by using words such as honest and sincere. The findings display comments revealing a relationship between content quality, informativeness, and purchase intention. Additionally, results suggested that comments containing expressions of trust correlate with positive purchase intentions. Overall, the study highlights the importance of considering crucial factors when formulating collaboration strategies in influencer marketing. The findings can guide brands and influencers in developing practical and meaningful partnerships.

JEL Codes: M31, M37

Keywords: Consumer behavior, content analysis, influencer marketing, sponsored content, YouTube marketing

Öz

Etkileyici pazarlaması, yoğun rekabet piyasasında öne çıkmak isteyen markalar tarafından kullanılan etkili bir stratejidir. Şirketler, pazarlama amaçlarına ve marka değerlerine uygun içerik oluşturabilecek ve hedef kitlelerini etkileyebilecek etkileyicilerle iş birliği yapmaya çalışır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, tüketicilerin YouTube etkileyicilerinin sponsorlu içeriklerine ilişkin görüşlerini tespit etmektir. Bu kapsamda, ortaklık bağlantısı (affiliated link) paylaşarak, bir elektrikli robot süpürgeyi tanıttığını yapan kadın etkileyicinin yayınladığı video içeriği altında yer alan izleyici yorumları analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma dört boyutlu bir kavramsallaştırmayı benimsemiştir: influencer özellikleri, hesap özellikleri, olumsuz görüşler ve satın alma niyeti. Çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan içerik analizi çerçevesinde yürütülmüştür. Veriler, bir kodlama-kategorize etme tekniği kullanılarak MAXQDA programıyla toplanmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, izleyicilerin etkileyicinin fiziksel çekiciliğini vurguladığını, olumlu duygularını ifade ederek onu yücelttiğini ortaya koymaktadır. İzleyiciler, etkileyicinin güvenilirliğine büyük önem vermekte; dürüst ve samimi gibi sözcükleri kullanarak etkileyiciyi güvenilir bulduklarını ifade etmektedir. Ek olarak, yorumlar, içerik kalitesi ile bilgilendirme ve satın alma niyeti arasında bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuçlar, güven ifadeleri içeren yorumların olumlu satın alma niyetleri ile ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Genel olarak çalışma, etkileyici pazarlamada iş birliği stratejilerini belirlerken hangi

Özlem Karaman 

Department of Marketing and Advertising,
İstanbul University-Cerrahpaşa School of
Social Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye

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Corresponding author: Özlem Karaman
E-mail: okaraman@iuc.edu.tr

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önemli faktörlerin göz önünde bulundurulması gerektiğine dikkat çekmektedir. Bulgular, markalara ve etkileyicilere etkili ortaklıklar geliştirmede öneriler sunmaktadır.

JEL Kodları: M31, M37

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etkileyici Pazarlaması, İçerik Analizi, Tüketici Davranışları, YouTube Pazarlaması, Sponsorlu İçerik.

Introduction

Social media platforms have become effective areas for interpersonal communication. Due to the attention-grabbing nature of their posts, some individuals garner more interest than others in these environments. These individuals, who share their daily lives and experiences, have the power to influence social media users through their created content. With the widespread recognition and adoption of the culture of noticing and following such posts, social media sharing has gained a commercial perspective and is used by companies to establish brand image (Wu, 2016: p. 12).

While companies traditionally used celebrities such as athletes, singers, models, and TV and film actors in their marketing efforts, it is now evident that individuals known as “influencers” have also become integral to marketing strategies, and companies are benefiting from their sphere of influence. Companies try to find influencers who can create content aligning with their goals and brand values, and they continue allocating an increasing marketing budget to influencer marketing (influencermarketinghub.com).

YouTube is a social media platform that provides creative options for brand-influencer collaborations. YouTubers introduce products and services to consumers through their video content, showcasing their functional and technical features. Social media content can be presented in two ways from the same independent source; sponsored and self-produced content. Consumers respond positively or negatively to promotional videos shared by content creators. Followers comment under the video and express their opinions about YouTuber, content, or product. Analyzing these comments is essential to determine user perceptions about these individuals acting as brand representatives.

Specifically, the present study endeavors to understand the effects of sponsored videos on consumer attitudes on a social media platform, considering various dimensions of sponsored videos created by influencers. Some factors can be categorized as “influencer attributes” and “account attributes.” Additionally, it examines unfavorable opinions concerning influencers and the purchase intentions of viewers.

Unlike previous studies, this research adopts a qualitative research design that examines follower perceptions of sponsored content presented by an influencer. The research findings are anticipated to yield managerial implications for both brands and influencers. The study aims to draw attention to

essential factors that require consideration when formulating collaboration strategies in influencer marketing. The limited literature on the subject based on YouTube user comments again reveals this study's importance.

Literature Overview

Social Media and The Role of Digital Influencers in Brand Communication

It is not enough for a brand to claim its product is good. Consumers need independent evidence and personal experience to make their purchasing decision. Even global brands that reach their consumers through web pages, traditional media advertising, or social media are harnessing the power of word of mouth. Transmitting messages to consumers through social media is an essential and effective method. Social media can be defined as software-based digital technologies that provide users to send and receive digital content or information. It is usually presented as apps and websites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. It is also a digital marketing channel that marketers can use to communicate with consumers and a form of online word of mouth (Appel et al., 2020).

Influencers play a pivotal role as the most prominent stakeholders in social media. Influencer marketing is an effective way to enter followers' hearts by joining forces with a social media influencer for product/brand/company promotion. A social media influencer is, first and foremost, a content generator which has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers interested in the topics they address (Chen & Shupe, 2019) “The storyteller,” “message mediator,” and “brand advocate” are the most mentioned roles of digital influencers by professionals in influencer marketing (Santiago & Castelo, 2020). In order to enhance their commercial success, social media influencers try to increase their followers' engagement by posting frequently and encouraging their followers to participate on their social media pages (Farivar et al., 2023: p. 2). Followers are continuously making decisions about the influencer by simple click-based behaviors (follow or unfollow an influencer, imitate him/her, recommend him/her or not) (Belanche et al., 2021). Fans have the potential to snap up all available stocks of products influencers have recommended based on personal preference or product agreements (Monge-Benito et al., 2020).

Santiago and Castelo (2020) suggested that through the content they create, the digital influencers transmit to their audience the products' features, functionality and characteristics. Although the number of followers is a mainstay in the definition of a digital influencer, the type and quality of shared

content are much more significant. Many brands join the influencer marketing mainstream because of their extremely high success rates.

YouTube and YouTubers as a Marketing Tool

Being bidirectional and interactive, each social media platform shares a common characteristic and, at the same time, possesses a unique quality with various distinctive features. One of these platforms is YouTube, a video-sharing website owned by Google. The most recent data indicate that YouTube ranks second worldwide when social media platforms are ranked by the number of monthly active users (Figure 1). It is also the number one video platform, the second most visited site, and the second most used search engine after Google, with 5.85 billion unique "visitors" per month (Semrush). Most viewed YouTube content types are funny animals, video game walkthroughs, how-to-do, product reviews, comedy, shopping sprees, unboxing videos, and educational videos (influencermarketinghub.com).

YouTube has become a prominent social media platform for marketers. Content creators, commonly known as YouTubers, have become integral to brands' digital marketing strategies. Notably, the average YouTube user dedicates a substantial amount of time, approximately 23.9 hours per month, to utilizing YouTube's mobile app, and a considerable 68% of YouTube users employ the platform to aid in their purchase decisions (thinkwithgoogle.com). The interactive nature of YouTube actively involves viewers and listeners in the content creation process, fostering an environment of engagement and participation. Furthermore, consumers typically do not perceive YouTube videos solely as advertisement sources, making marketing through YouTube content remarkably more effective than traditional marketing. This is attributed to consumers' tendency to view such content without harboring suspicions or guarded skepticism (Wu, 2016: p. 3). This increases the collaboration with YouTube content creators for marketing purposes.

A YouTuber collaborating with a brand produces and shares tailored content for a product or service. Such type of posts is generally referred to as sponsored content. According to Wu (2016), YouTube-sponsored videos can be classified into three forms: (1) explicit sponsorship, wherein the sponsoring

company compensates the YouTuber with a fixed fee or a specified amount per video view; (2) affiliated links, where purchases made through the link or coupon code provided by the YouTuber allow the YouTuber to earn a commission on the sale; and (3) free product sampling, where companies send products to YouTubers with the anticipation that they will create product reviews and advertorials.

Conceptual Framework

The growing literature containing numerous qualitative and quantitative methods on influencer marketing focuses on various research topics. This study utilizes the model proposed by Munnukka et al. (2016) to understand how consumers perceive influencers and their content. This approach comprises four factors: (i) expertise, (ii) trustworthiness, (iii) attractiveness, and (iv) similarity. Additionally, it focuses on YouTube account attributes and conducts an analysis based on the three main themes (content quality, content informativeness, and content uniqueness). This section will explain these in detail.

Influencer Attributes

Trustworthiness

Munnukka et al. (2016) describe trustworthiness as the genuineness, sincerity, and veracity of the source, or in simpler terms, and it is the receiver's assessment of the likelihood that an endorser conveys the claims he/she deems to be most truthful. It is the level of credibility and acceptance directed towards individuals expressing positive statements about any product (Ohanian, 1990: 41). According to another definition, reliability encompasses the honesty, integrity, and credibility perceived by consumers in a famous individual (Friedman et al., 1978).

Expertness

Expertness refers to the perceived competence of a source in making claims, such as an endorser's knowledge, experience, or skills (Munnukka et al., 2016: p. 184). Expertise demonstrates a person's knowledge about a subject, the accuracy of their claims, and the assumption of being knowledgeable by consumers (Zang, 2014: p. 14). Individuals perceived as accurate sources of experience, knowledge, and skills are labeled as experts.

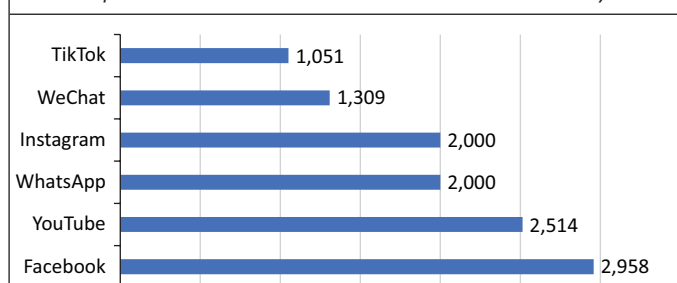
Attractiveness

Patzer (1983) describes attractiveness as "the extent to which the facial features of a stimulus person are pleasing to observe." Attractiveness is primarily associated with physical appearance; thus, an individual perceived as beautiful, elegant, and stylish is regarded as attractive (Amos et al., 2008; Ohanian, 1990). According to Erdoğan (1999), attractiveness encompasses not only physical aspects but also personality traits and athletic abilities. Attractiveness directly impacts the effectiveness of a message, particularly in the communication process.

Similarity

The similarity is the perceived resemblance between the source and the recipient (e.g., similarity in demographic or

Figure 1.
Most Popular Social Networks Worldwide As of January 2023



Source: statista.com

ideological aspects). As a result, advertising effectiveness can be enhanced by employing endorsers who are perceived to share similarities with consumers regarding characteristics, such as cultural background, values, or demographics, thereby explaining their appearance (Munnukka et al., 2016).

Account Attributes

Content attributes consist of three dimensions: (1) followers' perception regarding the quality of an influencer's posts (Casaló et al., 2020), (2) the extent to which followers perceive an influencer's posts as informative (Ki et al., 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019), and (3) the extent to which followers perceive an influencer's posts as unique and different from others (Casaló et al., 2020).

Material and Methods

This study's thematic content analysis was conducted on qualitative data obtained from a sponsored video created by a YouTube influencer. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies aim to deeply examine a specific situation rather than generalizing the findings to the entire population. Qualitative data are usually collected through interviews, focus groups, or observations. It may also involve photographs, videos, or other types of recordings. Qualitative research seeks to uncover the perspectives of the subjects of interest as addressed by the research question. In this type of design, each outcome is an interpretation and subjective; it is influenced by the lens through which the researcher interprets the data (Haven & Grootel, 2019). Furthermore, content analysis is one of the most common methodologies used in qualitative research to investigate a phenomenon. The purpose of content analysis is to explore the underlying meaning of a text, whether it is oral or written, by quantifying the meanings.

Objectives and Research Question

This article aims to ascertain consumers' perceptions of social media influencers and the content they generate. The research questions of the study are as follows:

- What are the viewers' opinions regarding the influencer who creates sponsored content? What are the viewers' opinions regarding the sponsored content created by the influencer?
- What are the viewers' negative opinions regarding the sponsored content created by the influencer?
- How do the viewers' tendencies toward purchasing the product promoted by the content creator vary?

Research Design, Data Collection, and Analysis Procedures

The study employed purposive nonprobability sampling, known as subjective or judgment sampling technique. This process provides to select samples based on researcher's subjective judgment (Saunders et al., 2009). Social media user comments were utilized as the primary raw data for analysis. The study focuses on analyzing an experiential video featuring the Xiaomi robot cleaner. The video that included an affiliate link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEzKMGvLu7A>) was posted by

Merve Özkaynak, a YouTuber known for fashion, shopping, and makeup content. She was chosen as she best represents the main audience of the research with 2.17 million subscribers, 433,351,644 YouTube views, and high engagement in the form of video comments. Data collection and analysis occurred from June 3 to June 17, 2023. (As the data were obtained from a social media platform, which is accessible to all Internet users, an ethical committee approval was not presented for this study.)

In light of influencer marketing practice, this study adopts a four-dimensional conceptualization based on Munnukka et al. (2016), which includes *trustworthiness*, *expertise*, *similarity*, and *attractiveness*. The researcher added themes related to *account attributes*, *negative comments*, and *purchase intention*. The data were collected and analyzed with the resource of MAXQDA software, using a coding-categorizing technique. The coding process includes a hierarchical structure that organizes codes and subcodes related to the main theme. This structured approach helps you categorize and analyze comments in a systematic manner, facilitating a deeper understanding of the data.

Initial data coding was performed by the researcher who designed the study and an independent researcher for minimizing any potential bias and errors that may arise from a single coder's perspective. A cross-coding process is used coding to categorize the data. Cross-coding, where both coders independently code the same data, serves as a quality control measure to identify discrepancies and ensure consistency. In order to increase the reliability among the coders, the content and meaning of the coding categories were explained to the coders. This step helps coders develop a clear understanding of the criteria for each category, reducing subjectivity and promoting consistent coding. Next, the coders encoded 100 comments for an unsampled YouTube video with an affiliate link. In this way, the coding form was pretested. Necessary corrections were made in the coding form according to the pretest results for ensuring that the coding form accurately captures the intended data.

The data collection and analysis process was conducted as follows:

1. YouTube link of the video copied to clipboard on MAXQDA.
2. The system automatically inserted copied link together with video information (title of the video, comments, and transcripts/closed captions).
3. Two thousand four-hundred eighty-two imported comments were individually examined. Comments that did not align with the research objectives, and lacked meaningful content were excluded.
4. The selected comments were coded according to the main and subthemes (Table 1).
5. As a result, four categories and 30 subcategories were identified, yielding 443 comments. While the upper codes describe a general theme, the lower codes show the subtheme.

Table 1. Code Scheme		
Codes	Subcode	
Influencer attributes	Expertness	Knows a lot about the product
		Experienced about the product
		Expert on the product
	Trustworthiness	Trustworthy
		Honest
		Earnest
		Genuine
	Attractiveness	Pretty
		Stylish
		Elegant
		Sexy
		Beautiful
	Similarity	Identify with the influencer
		Have a lot in common
		A lot alike
Account attributes	Content quality	
	Content informativeness	
	Content uniqueness	
Negative comments	Criticism	
	Disdain	
	Targeting	
	Hate	
	Insult	
Purchase decision	Undecided	
	Will buy	
	Will not buy	

- The study presented findings obtained through five distinct qualitative data analysis methods: frequency analysis, word cloud, code matrix browser, hierarchical code-subcode model, and code relations browser. The word cloud and code frequency methods allow to determine the frequency of words and codes in comments. The code subcode model identifies the subthemes belonging to the determined themes. The code co-occurrence model allows determining how often coded themes co-occur.

Results

Code Statistics

The findings (Table 2) reveal that the most prominent type of comments is related to the influencer's attributes indicating viewers' engagement with aspects like attractiveness, beauty and other personal traits. Comments about purchase decisions come next, reflecting viewers' engagement with the decision-making process related to the promoted product. Comments expressing negative opinions follow, showcasing instances where viewers express concerns or criticisms about the content or influencer. Lastly, comments related to account features are noted, suggesting that viewers engage with various aspects of the content.

Table 2. Code Frequency		
	Segments	Percentage
Influencer attributes	149	33.63
Account attributes	76	17.16
Negative comments	98	22.12
Purchase decision	120	27.09
Total	443	100.00

Word Cloud

The word cloud allows us to determine the word frequency within the comments. In the formation of the word cloud, the most repeated words are positioned at the center of the cloud. The words displayed in the word cloud are sized based on their frequencies. This analysis is important for understanding the key topics and sentiments surrounding the discussed content.

The words "beautiful," "robot," and "cleaner" stand out with the highest frequency percentages. It is also observed that viewers frequently use words such as "cat," "mother," "dust," "brand," and "money"(Figure 2). The frequent usage of these words in the comments indicates that discussions about the brand and the product's price are significant factors for the audience. The use of the word "cat" in comments suggests that viewers are discussing the effectiveness of the cleaning robot in removing cat hair. This context provides specific insight into the product's functionality and how viewers are perceiving its performance.

The Code-Subcode Model

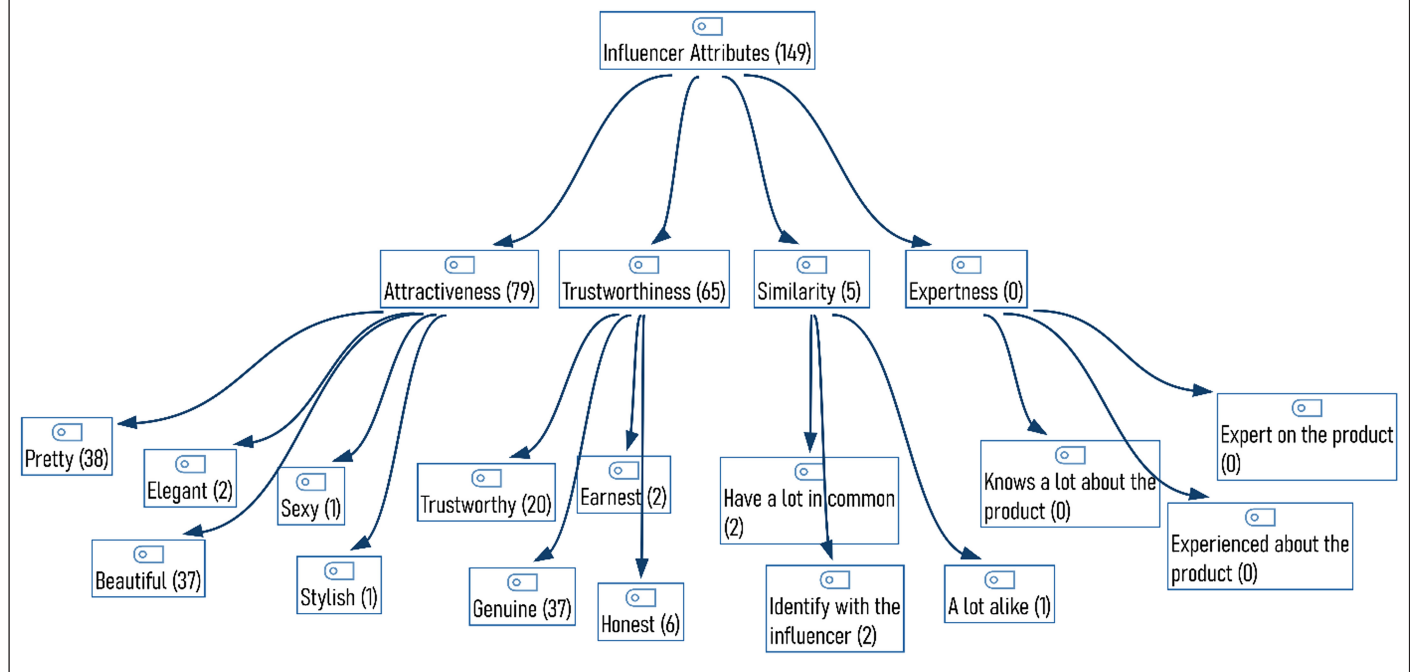
The code-subcode model is useful for illustrating the hierarchical structure of a code and its subcodes with the code frequencies. It helps organize and illustrate the relationships within data.

One hundred forty-nine follower comments were analyzed under the code category developed to explain the research question, "What are the viewers' opinions regarding the

Figure 2.
Word Cloud of All Comments.



Figure 3.
Hierarchical Code-Subcode Model of Comments About Influencer Attributes.



influencer who creates sponsored content?" Figure 3 represents the code-subcode model related to this main theme. The largest portion of comments (79) relates to the subtheme of attractiveness, suggesting that viewers frequently discuss the influencer's physical appearance. Within the subthemes, viewers often mention the influencer's prettiness (38) and beauty (37), emphasizing the influencer's physical attractiveness. Following attractiveness, trustworthiness (65) is a prominent subtheme. Viewers' perceptions of the influencer's credibility and trustworthiness are noteworthy. A smaller number of comments (5) fall under the similarity subtheme, suggesting that some viewers feel a sense of relatability with the influencer. It was found that there were no comments regarding the influencer's expertise. Some examples of comments are presented here:

"The beauty of her soul is reflected in her face and actions."

"I looked at you more than the robot; you are very beautiful."

"I watched you for the first time and loved your sincerity."

"You are the only vlogger I follow. Thanks for your trust."

"I trust your comments on this kind of product because, as you said, you handle your experiences with the curve and the truth."

Seventy-six follower comments were examined under the code category developed to explain the research question, "What are the viewers' opinions regarding the sponsored content

created by the influencer?" Figure 4 represents the hierarchical code-subcode model related to this main theme. The largest number of comments (38) relates to the informativeness of the content. This suggests that viewers often evaluate the content's ability to provide useful information. After informativeness, content quality (35) is the second prominent subtheme. Viewers' perceptions of the content's overall excellence are notable. A smaller number of comments (3) fall within the uniqueness subtheme, indicating that some viewers consider how distinctive the content is. Some examples of comments are presented here:

Figure 4.
Hierarchical Code-Subcode Model of Comments About Account Attributes.

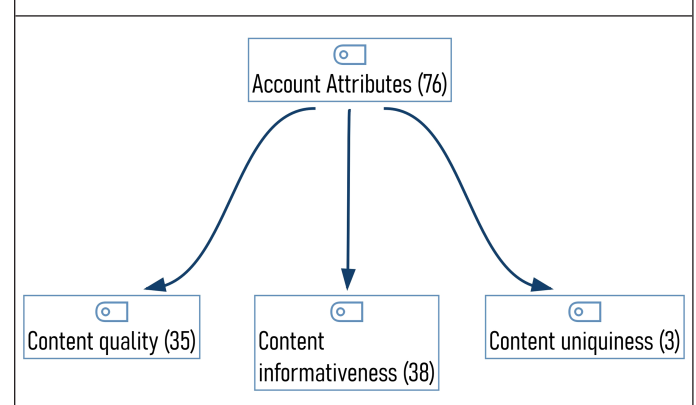
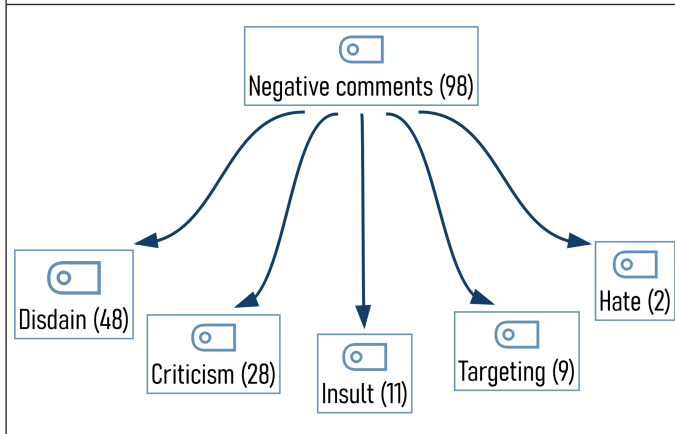


Figure 5.
Hierarchical Code–Subcode Model of Comments About Negative Comments.



"Finally, someone made some real content about these robots; thanks."

"A very nice and useful video. Super explanation."

"This video was handy to me and our family because we would get it too; thank you very much."

"It was a very nice video Merve; you are very sincere in the video; I have always wondered about this cleaner."

Ninety-eight follower comments were examined under the code category developed to explain the research question, "What are the viewers' negative opinions regarding the sponsored content created by the influencer?" Figure 5 represents the hierarchical code–subcode model related to this main theme. The findings show that most comments are intended to disdain the influencer. These are followed sequentially by negative criticism, insults, targeting, and hate-filled comments. This result indicates a strong expression of contempt or dislike towards the influencer. Some examples of comments are presented here:

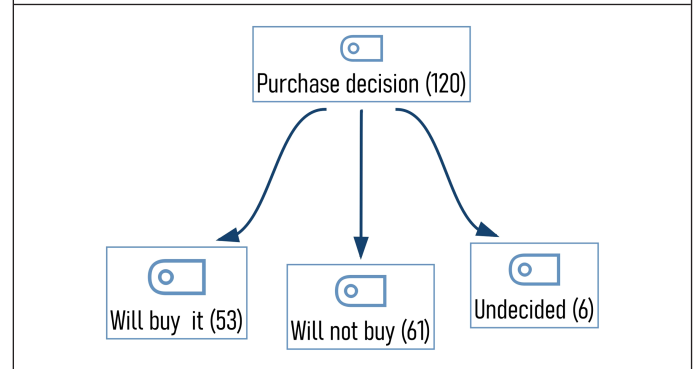
"If you pay attention, the good sides of the products are always mentioned, but the bad sides are never given information."

"I had more information than Merve before I bought it."

"I would like to watch it when you learn to speak Turkish."

One hundred twenty follower comments were examined under the code category developed to explain the research question, "How do the viewers' tendencies towards purchasing the product promoted by the content creator vary?" Figure 6 represents the hierarchical code–subcode model related to this main theme. The findings show the majority of the comments (61) indicated negative purchase decisions. This information highlights that a significant portion of the audience did not find

Figure 6.
Hierarchical Code–Subcode Model of Comments About Purchase Decision.



the content convincing enough to lead to a purchase intent. 53 comments expressed an intent to purchase the promoted product. This shows that the content creator's efforts had an impact on a sizable portion of the audience who were motivated to consider buying. Additionally, 6 comments exhibited indecisiveness, indicating that some viewers were on the fence about whether to make a purchase or not. Some examples of comments are presented here:

"I was thinking of buying it; after this video of yours, I will buy it."

"I will definitely buy it for my mom, thank you."

"This video was handy to me and our family because we were going to get it too; thank you very much."

Co-Occurrences of Categories

The code co-occurrence model allows for determining the frequency with which coded themes co-occur. This process allows for exploring connections and patterns within the dataset.

When examining the relationship between viewers' opinions (Figure 7) about the influencer and the content, and their comments on purchase decisions, the most salient finding is that those who perceive the content as informative also tend to make comments indicating their intention to purchase the product. This implies that informative content has a positive influence on viewers' purchase decisions. Furthermore, the findings reveal that viewers who emphasize the influencer's trustworthiness and honesty are more likely to report positive purchase decisions. This highlights the significant role of the influencer's credibility in shaping consumers' purchase intentions. Some examples of comments are presented here:

"I can buy everything that Merve offers; I trust so much."

"After watching you, I started to think about buying this, thanks"

"You explained it very well, I decided not to buy it"

Figure 7.
Code Relations Model.

Code System	Purchase decision	Undecided	Will not buy	Will buy it
▼ Influencer Attributes				
▼ Expertness				
Knows a lot about the product				
Experienced about the product				
Expert on the product				
▼ Trustworthiness				
Genuine				
Earnest				
Trustworthy				●
Honest				●
▼ Attractiveness				
Pretty				
Stylish				
Elegant				
Sexy				
Beautiful/Handsome				
▼ Similarity				
Identify with the influencer				
Have a lot in common				
A lot alike				
▼ Account Attributes				
Content quality				
Content informativeness			●	●
Content uniqueness				

Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this research was to determine consumers' perceptions the opinions of YouTube users regarding influencers' content produced through collaborations with brands, their perceptions of the influencer, and their purchase decisions. In this context, viewers' comments under a video posted by a female influencer who promotes a robot vacuum cleaner and shares her user experience through affiliated links were analyzed.

The word cloud analysis revealed that the most frequently mentioned words in the comments are "robot," "love," and "beautiful." Viewers frequently express their affection for the influencer and admiration for her physical appearance. They are emphasizing the influencer's physical attractiveness, such as beauty, elevating and idolizing her expressing positive emotions. This signifies a strong level of attachment and connection with the influencer. Other studies have also demonstrated that attractive individuals are more liked by their followers compared to less attractive individuals (Ohanian, 1990; Wongweeranonchai, 2016).

The findings also showed that participants seem to place a high importance on the influencer's credibility traits. They frequently express that they find the influencer trustworthy by using words such as honest and sincere. Thus, these results are consistent with the research which provide evidence that

social media users are more likely to interact and have higher purchase intentions with content from influencers they trust rather than directly from the brand (Amos et al., 2008; Chapple & Cownie, 2017; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Petty et al., 1983). According to Belanche et al. (2021), followers' perceptions of paid influencers for advertising compromise their credibility; however, establishing credibility is essential for fostering positive attitudes towards the influencer.

Moreover, followers did not comment on the influencer's expertise. This can be attributed to the influencer's content category, which is primarily focused on fashion and beauty. Followers may not perceive the influencer as an expert or an authority on the robot vacuum cleaner, a technological tool unrelated to the content she usually creates. On the other hand, it is also supported by some studies that an influencer who is considered to have high expertise for consumers is more persuasive than a phenomenon with low expertise (Biswas et al., 2006; Erdoğan, 1999; Ibok, 2013; Ohanian, 1991).

The findings revealed that viewers reflect their positive or negative purchase decisions in the comments. This demonstrates that viewer opinions are directly reflected in their engagement with the content. While no significant difference is observed between positive and negative purchase decisions, some users who express they will not make a purchase often find the content lacking in informativeness. Comments about the content reveal a relationship between content

quality and informativeness with purchase intention. Many studies demonstrate that informative content consumer's influences purchase intentions (Dao et al., 2014; Farivar et al., 2023). Additionally, comments containing expressions of trust are noteworthy, as they are associated with positive purchase intentions. Moreover, previous research has shown endorsers' trustworthiness affect positively consumers' purchase intentions (Chen & Shupe, 2019; Lafferty et al., 2002; Lee & Koo, 2015).

This research findings are valuable for both academics and practitioners in the field of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing offers significant advantages over traditional advertising practices, providing brands with unique opportunities to connect with their target audiences through trusted and relatable individuals. However, influencer collaboration involves a substantial investment and, as such, requires effective performance measurement. A critical mistake is placing excessive emphasis on the number of followers an influencer has. While high follower counts might initially seem appealing, they do not necessarily guarantee meaningful engagement with the audience. Engagement, represented by interactions like comments, is a more valuable metric than follower count. They serve as indicators of marketing performance, reflecting followers' emotions and sentiments, which helps brands stay attuned to their target audience's preferences. Brands can use this information to refine their strategies and tailor their content to better resonate with the audience.

Influencers who are perceived as honest and trustworthy by consumers are ideal choices for promoting a brand's message and enhance the authenticity of the marketing campaign. While influencers play a crucial role, marketers should not solely rely on their responsibility. Marketers should provide guidance to ensure the content's quality and uniqueness, aligning it with the brand's goals and messaging. In addition to trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity to the audience and expertise of the source are vital dimensions of influencer interactions. Consumer perceptions can evolve over time. It is important to recognize that the effectiveness of influencer collaborations may vary based on factors like the influencer's current reputation, the target audience's preferences, and the authenticity of the partnership.

For influencer, organic audience growth results from a strong alignment with the brand. The influencer should genuinely believe in and use the product or service, creating an authentic connection with their audience. When the influencer's endorsement is sincere and genuine, it enhances the credibility of both the influencer and the brand. An effective influencer acts as a trusted brand representative and focuses on creating sustainable content that aligns with the brand's goals and values. Influencers should possess sufficient knowledge of the product they are promoting, enabling them to provide valuable insights to their audience. Additionally, the ability to tell a compelling story helps engage the audience on a deeper level. This approach fosters growth that goes beyond numbers, focusing on genuine engagement and trust.

Although this study contributes to a better understanding consumers' perception of influencer-based marketing, it has limitations. Considering that digital platforms are dynamic and constantly evolving environments, it is essential to consider the possibility of comments under the examined video being subject to changes over time. Additionally, the lack of real control over data quality is a disadvantage for studies using secondary data. This limitation should be considered when interpreting and drawing conclusions from the data. Moreover, while purposive sampling offers benefits such as researcher judgment and tailored exploration, it can introduce potential bias (Saunders et al., 2009). This makes it challenging to generalize findings due to the subjective selection of cases.

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