Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management

Bachelor Thesis

The Role of YouTube in Consumer Decision Making Process

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Wahaj Muhammad

Economics Policy and Administration
Business Administration

Thesis title

The Role of Youtube in the Consumer Decision Making Process

Objectives of thesis

The objective of the thesis is to identify the main consumer behavioural characteristics of YouTube viewers in the chosen segment.

Methodology

The thesis will consist of two parts. The first part should deal with the elementary theoretical overview. It should deal with the theory of consumer behaviour including principles, models and its evaluation. The theoretical part of the thesis will be based on the critical review of the information gained from the study and the comparison of relevant resources. The fundamental empirical part will be focused on specific YouTube videos from a selected segment. Data for the empirical part will be gained using appropriate data collection techniques. Based on the research, the relevant conclusions of the thesis must be drawn.

Recommended structure of the thesis:

1. Introduction – an explanation of the topic importance.

2. Thesis objectives and methodology – the main objective of the thesis will be divided into partial objectives based on the knowledge gained from the study of consumer behaviour theory. Appropriate methods of data collection and content analysis will be explained in the methodology of the thesis.

3. Literature review – a critical review of current knowledge in the field of consumer behaviour, its models and tools.

4. Specification of the selected industry – profile of the given segment

5. Practical part – analysis of data gained from own research according to the methodology.

6. Results and recommendations – formulation of the own proposal of improvements.

7. Conclusion – review of main results and evaluation of the contribution of the theses.

8. References

9. Appendices

The proposed extent of the thesis

30-40 pages

Keywords

YouTube, decision making,

Recommended information sources

CLOSE, Angeline, 2012. Online consumer behavior: theory and research in social media, advertising, and e-tail. New York: Routledge. 401 s. ISBN 9781848729698.

Journal of Consumer Behaviour, ISSN:1479-1838

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PETERSEN, J.A., KUMAR, V., POLO, Y. and SESE, F.J., 2018. Unlocking the Power of Marketing: Understanding the Links between Customer Mindset Metrics, Behavior, and Profitability. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 09, vol. 46, no. 5, pp. 813-836 ProQuest Central. ISSN 00920703. DOI http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.techlib.cz/10.1007/s11747-017-0554-5.

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SMITH, Andrew, 2019. Consumer Behaviour and Analytics: Data Driven Decision Making, New York: Routledge. 217 s. ISBN 9780429953361.

Expected date of thesis defence

2020/21 SS – FEM

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Electronic approval: 1. 3. 2021

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Prague on 15. 03. 2021

Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled "The Role of YouTube in Consumer Decision Making Process" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break copyrights of any other person.

In Prague on 15. 03. 2021. _____

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Ing. Lenka Platilová Vorlíčková for her support and guidance throughout the whole process, and my family and friends for all of their advice and support during my work on this thesis.

The Role of Youtube in Consumer Decision Making Process

Abstract

The thesis focuses on exploring what is YouTube's role in the consumer decision making process. The theoretical part reviews decision making process, rise and impact of social media and its' influence on consumer behaviour. The objective of the study is to determine if YouTube has an impact on the consumer decision making process. This will be determined by assessing the role of YouTube in the individual parts of the consumer decision making process. The target audience of the study are students 18-30 years old living in Prague. A quantitative method of self-administered online questionnaires was chosen for the study. The study data suggests that YouTube does have a positive impact on the information search, evaluation of alternatives, and product choice parts of the consumer decision making process but does not have a positive impact on the problem recognition and post-purchase evaluation parts of the process. In the research framework, it was proposed that if YouTube shows to be significant in at least 3 of the 5 parts of the model, it can be implied that YouTube does have an overall positive impact on the whole process. Given the results we can imply that YouTube does have a positive impact on the consumer decision making process.

Keywords: YouTube, YouTuber, Social Media, Consumer Behaviour, Decision making process

Role YouTube v rozhodovacím procesu spotřebitelů

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zaměřuje na prozkoumání role YouTube v procesu rozhodování spotřebitele. Teoretická část zkoumá rozhodovací proces, vzestup a dopad sociálních médií a jejich vliv na naše spotřebitelské chování. Cílem studie je zjistit, zda má YouTube vliv na rozhodovací proces spotřebitele. To bude určeno na základě posouzení role YouTube v jednotlivých částech rozhodovacího procesu spotřebitele. Cílovou skupinou studie jsou studenti ve věku 18-30 let žijící v Praze. Pro studii byla zvolena kvantitativní metoda samostatně spravovaných online dotazníků. Data ze studie naznačují, že YouTube má pozitivní vliv na vyhledávání informací, hodnocení alternativ a výběru produktu v rámci procesu rozhodování spotřebitele, ale nemá pozitivní vliv na části procesu rozpoznávání problémů a hodnocení po nákupu. V našem výzkumném rámci bylo navrženo, že pokud se YouTube ukáže jako významný alespoň v 3 z 5 částí modelu, lze předpokládat, že YouTube má celkově pozitivní vliv na celý proces. Vzhledem k výsledkům můžeme naznačit, že YouTube má pozitivní vliv na rozhodovací proces spotřebitele.

Klíčová slova: YouTube, YouTuber, sociální média, chování spotřebitelů, rozhodovací proces

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List of abbreviations

UGC – User-generated content
OECD – The organisation for economic do=operation and development
WOM – Word of mouth
PR – Problem recognition
IS – Information search
EoA – Evaluation of alternatives
PC – Product choice
PPE – Post-purchase evaluation
DMP – Decision making process

1 Introduction

Sources suggest that human beings make about 35000 decisions each day (Hoomans, 2015). The importance and effort required to make these decisions vastly vary. Whenever people are going to decide anything, they are going through a cognitive process which is influenced by their biases, reasons, emotions, and memories (Psychology Today, 2020).

The rise of the internet and social media has surely changed how people are living their lives. According to the data collected by the Český statistický úřad (Czech statistical office) for 2020, about 66% people older than 16 uses social media and this number being as high as 96.7% for students (Odbor statistik rozvoje společnosti, 2020). These number have been increasing over the years and suggest that social media is here to stay.

This thesis will be focusing on how people make decisions, how the internet and social media have impacted people's consumer behaviour and what the role of YouTube is in the consumer decision making process.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

Decision making process can be defined as a cognitive process with the purpose of selecting among numerous different alternatives (Simon H. A., 1960). There are studies that show that this process may be influenced by social media. An example of such study focused on the healthcare, travel, retail, and financial industries. Results suggested that 40% of respondents from the travel industry identified social media as being influential. This influence was identified as lower in financial services with 25%, retail with 22%, and healthcare with 21% (DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2017).

For this study, the social media of choice is YouTube. Other similar studies have been conducted; however, they tend to focus on how YouTube influences purchase intentions rather than on what role it plays in the decision making process (Rosara & Luthfia, 2020) (Lee & Watkins, 2016). The objective of this thesis is to look at the decision making process from the perspective of consumer behaviour theory and determine if YouTube has an impact on the consumer decision making process.

2.2 Methodology

As 96.7% of students in the Czech Republic are social media users, this study will be focusing on students living in Prague in the age range of 18 – 30 years old (Odbor statistik rozvoje společnosti, 2020).

To establish the role of YouTube in the decision making process the significance of YouTube in the individual parts of the process needs to be determined. A model of decision making process from the perspective of a consumer behaviour theorist can be found in the book *"Consumer Behaviour: buying, having, and being"* by M. R. Solomon. The proposed model is divided into 5 stages (Solomon, 2018):

1. Problem recognition
2. Information search
3. Evaluation of alternatives
4. Product Choice
5. Post-purchase evaluation

This model will be used to determine the role of YouTube. The following research framework is proposed:

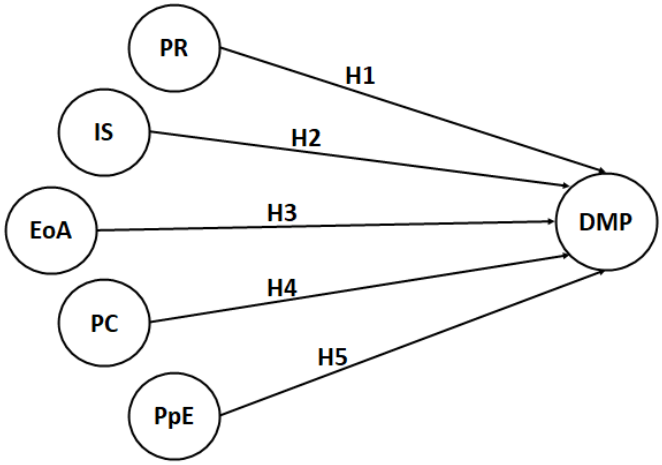

Figure 1. Proposed research framework

Given the proposed research framework, to identify if YouTube plays a role in the consumer decision making process, YouTube's role in the individual parts of the decision making process needs to be determined. If it can be identified that YouTube positively impacts at least 3 of the 5 parts of the model, it can be suggested that based on the data YouTube does play a significant role in the consumer decision making process. The following hypothesis are proposed and will be further specified later in the study:

H1: YouTube plays a significant part in the "problem recognition" part of the consumer decision making process.

H2: YouTube plays a significant part in the "information search" part of the consumer decision making process.

H3: YouTube plays a significant part in the "evaluation of alternatives" part of the consumer decision making process.

H4: YouTube plays a significant part in the "product choice" part of the consumer decision making process.

H5: YouTube plays a significant part in the "post-purchase evaluation" part of the consumer decision making process.

Further, correlations between the social demographic variables and the overall role of YouTube in the consumer decision making process will be explored. Given the data which

suggests that younger people and the students in general are more active on social media, it can be hypothesised that age does have a relationship with the consumer decision making process. Similar hypothesis for other social demographic variables will be proposed:

H6: Age has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

H7: Sex has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

H8: Employment status has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

H9: Monthly discretionary income has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

Furthermore, the questionnaire will collect information about how often the respondents watch the YouTube videos. It will be theorized that age and watching frequency will have a relationship and that the watching frequency will also influence the role of YouTube in the consumer decision making process.

H10: Age has a negative correlation with watching frequency.

H11: Watching frequency has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

3 Literature review

The theoretical part of this thesis will be focusing on four different topics. First part will be focusing on the decision making process. The second part will focus on the consumer behaviour theory behind decision making process. The third part will be focusing on the emergence of social media and its impact. The fourth part will be about YouTube and its influence.

3.1 Decision making process

Every day human beings are constantly put into position where they need to make decisions. Some of these can be defined as automatic/almost automatic: activities like brushing your teeth, operating your mobile phone, greeting the people you meet, etc. Some decisions can be defined as semi-automatic, as they do require some cognitive effort from decision maker's side: choosing what to eat, what to wear, etc. Then there are decisions that require deliberate time and effort, and a defined strategy is mostly utilized to make them: buying a new car, choosing a gift for a loved one, etc (Willman-livarinen, 2017).

Whenever there is a decision needed to be made, people tend to go through a cognitive process which is influenced by their biases, reasons, emotions, and memories (Psychology Today, 2020). Throughout the history of consumer behaviour studies, the process of making decisions has been a focus of many scholars and with the everchanging marketplace and the world, it is likely to continue being the focus (Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998).

3.1.1 How a decision is made

Decision making theorist seem to agree on the general steps of how a decision is made. Firstly, the decision maker needs to feel a need for something that initiates a motive. Based on the motive a set of alternatives called opportunity set is established. The opportunity set is shortlisted into a consideration set. After an evaluation of benefits and costs of the alternatives among the consideration set, the decision maker makes their choice (Willman-livarinen, 2017).

First of the approaches of understanding the decision-making process assume a rational consumer. Such rationality can be expected to make more situations consistent and coherent (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). This type of rational consumer is the same as an "economic man" defined by traditional economic theorists. Such type of consumer is

assumed to be knowledgeable about his relevant environment. They can be assumed to have well-defined preferences that are independent of the options or of the specific methods used to draw out these preferences. Every available option can be assigned a subjective value, and it is assumed that the consumer can calculate which of the options will maximize their utility and then make their choice accordingly (Simon H. A., 1955). This approach is called rational theory choice and has assisted in understanding of consumer behaviour (Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998).

However, even if the simplified model of the rational consumer can be considered effective and a fine starting point, it overall ignores a lot of human factors. An opposing approach, a more information-processing approach, argues that the rational choice theory is inaccurate and does not reflect the reality. (Bettman, 1979). This approach favours bounded rationality, which is the idea that decision makers are limited in terms of their information processing capabilities. Such limitations include limited working memory and limited computational capabilities (Simon H. A., 1955). Simon was openly resistant to the idea of rational behaviour, doubting the usefulness of economic and statistical theories used to explain the characteristics and behaviour of humans based on this idea. He argues that psychological ideas should be applied to economic theorizing (Simon H. A., 1956).

Framing of a situation has shown to lead to significant changes in an individual's preferences. In their paper, Tversky and Kahneman suggest that there is a common pattern that decisions that involve gains (monetary or else) have the tendency to be mostly risk averse and decisions involve losses (also monetary or else) are more prone to risk taking, even when the only significant difference between two set of problems is that fact how the original statement is framed. For instance, if one phrases the outcome of a situation in terms of how many lives a decision will save, and alternatively the other phrasing of the outcome is in terms of how many deaths the decision will result in, this will influence how the decision maker is perceiving the problem and will affect his decision, even though both statements are essentially saying the same thing. These results can be used to argue against the theory of rational choice (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

3.1.2 **Decision making strategies**

There are multiple different strategies that could be used for deciding what to do in a certain situation. Decision making goals are of high importance as they have been shown to be partly responsible of what strategies are chosen (Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998).

Different strategies require different time, energy, and attention. Research suggests that the same individual will utilize a different strategy in decision making based on what the task demands of the individual (Payne, 1982). Based on such contingent decision behaviour, theorists have explored the question of what exactly motivates the individual to prefer one strategy over another. The generally accepted approach to answer this question is that the individual decides upon what strategy to use based on the accuracy the strategy provides and the effort it requires (Creyer, Bettman, & Payne, 1990).

In his paper *"The Cost of Thinking",* Shugan proposes a model where the costs are identified as the effort and the number of mistakes which were made during the decision making process. Results of the model indicate that reducing effort used in thinking leads to increasing number of mistakes. This overall results in a reduction in benefits for the decision maker (Shugan, 1980).

The role of effort and accuracy feedback was explored to further validate this assumption by Creyer, Bettman, and Payne. Their paper suggested that the role of accuracy plays the biggest part when the decision problems were more difficult. There is a requirement of higher cognitive effort to process more information, make comparisons, and evaluations. Less accurate decisions are justifiable depending on the decision making goals of the individuals. Even though the authors of the paper recognize that the condition with which the tested individuals were presented does not reflect everyday decision, the general effort/accuracy framework is consistent with the overall findings (Creyer, Bettman, & Payne, 1990).

In their paper, Yadav and Klein argue that decision makers are prone to overestimate their own accuracy. In the same paper, the research shows that context matters when it comes to decision making. The decision maker tends to simplify the choice if it proves to be too difficult. Prior expectations or elementary observations are considered initially, and a more deliberate context assessment is used for the evaluation of the reduced choice set (Klein & Yadav, 1989). Reasoning behind decisions is further explored, and it is suggested that there are situations in which a person views their decisions as better if based on a positive rationale like universal truth or clichés, rather than decisions made through analytical techniques (Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 1976).

Time is another factor needs to be considered when a strategy needs to be determined. The amount of time available influences parts like information search and processing of this information. For instance, research suggests that if presented with less time, people have the

tendency to be more selective and concentrate on important information as they are forced to be quicker. The results presented suggests that the decision maker should be generating multiple options to evaluate and focus on the range of the evaluation, thus evaluating the different alternatives on important attributes, rather than focusing on a single alternative thoroughly (Payne, Bettman, & Luce, 1996).

Due to the limitations of rationality, the intention to lower decision-making costs, and save time people tend to use some heuristics. Heuristics are methods in which the person simplifies the decision making process by consciously/or unconsciously ignoring or eliminating some information and paying attention to only certain pieces of information (Shane, 2002). If the task on hand is perceived to be too difficult, people tend to ease their decision making process by using heuristic (Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998). There are multiple different types of heuristics, some examples include:

- **Satisficing heuristic**: This is a heuristic introduced by Simon. It is a strategy in which the decision maker will go through the alternatives available to them until they reach an alternative which passes the acceptable threshold of their preferences. This strategy explains situations in which an optimal solution cannot be found (Simon H. A., 1956). People are likely to finalize their choice by satisficing (sufficing and satisfying) rather than trying to find an optimal alternative (BehavioralEconomics.com, 2021).
- **Take-the-best heuristic**: For this strategy, first the decision maker needs to choose which attribute is most important to them and then ranks the alternatives according to the attribute and chooses the best out of the alternatives. It there is no significant difference, then the decision maker can proceed to the second most important attribute and repeat the process (Gigerenzer, Czerlinski, & Martignon, 2002). In contrast with the satisficing heuristic, other attributes outside of the one the decision maker considers the most important are ignored.
- **Fluency heuristic**: This mental heuristic explains that one alternative is processed faster than the other option and thus is associated with higher value. The better understood alternative is perceived more valuable regardless of if it so objectively (Jacoby & Brooks, 1984).
- **Affect heuristic**: In this heuristic, the emotion of the decision maker plays the lead role. Decision maker's decision is made because of their current emotional state which allows them to make decisions and solve problems quickly as

during these stages thorough strategies and evaluations are ignored. Typically, the affects typically occur as a response to a stimulus and this heuristic mostly is used when assessing the risks and benefit of something (Finucane, Slovic, Peters, & MacGregor, 2007).

- **Availability heuristic**: This heuristic relies on immediate examples that comes to the mind of the decision maker when they are trying to evaluate a specific decision. The basis of this heuristic is the notion that what the decision maker recalls is perceived as important to them than the other alternatives which are not recalled right away (Kahneman & Frederick, 2002).
- **Effort heuristic**: This heuristic implies that decision maker determines the quality, worth, or value of decision based on the perceived effort of the decision maker has put in the matter. Generally, the more effort one decision requires, the more it is valued (Kruger, Wirtz, Boven, & Altermatt, 2004).

A type of decision making which embraces the heuristic nature of human decision making and acknowledges cognitive approach as well is intuitive decision making. Intuition can be defined as *"a non-sequential information processing mode, which comprises both cognitive and affective elements and results in direct knowing without any use of conscious reasoning"* (Sinclair, 2005). As suggested, affective elements seem to play a noticeable part in decision making. Several studies have suggested an idea that people in certain moods tend to gravitate towards certain type of decision making. While in a sad mood, people lean towards using a more thorough decision strategy, on the other hand while in a happy mood they tend to be open to a strategy of more intuitive nature. However, the study further suggests that if given the option, individuals who decide on their strategy, regardless of their mood, tend to be more satisfied with their outcomes in comparison if they acted on their impulse (de Vrues, Holland, & Witterman, 2008).

Decision making is a complex process which cannot be easily explained by one model or theory. There is enough research to assume that the rational approach to a decision maker is not the most accurate as it is ignoring other external factors. Heuristics are psychological factors like emotions play a big part when it comes to decision making. Time has shown to be a factor.

3.2 Consumer behaviour

According to consumer behaviour theory, the decision-making of a consumer can be divided into three types: cognitive, habitual, and affective. Cognitive decision-making is deliberate and rational process, which is a result of a process in which the consumer choses one product over the alternatives available to him. Habitual decision-making is unconscious and highly automated, largely a result of habit. Affective decision-making is emotional and instantaneous. Usually other alternatives are not considered and the decision is mostly a result of an event which made us emotional is the first place (Solomon, 2018).

An example of more in-depth representation of the decision making process from the eyes of a consumer behaviour theorist can be found in the book *"Consumer Behaviour: buying, having, and being"* by M. R. Solomon. The process mentioned in this book is divided into 5 stages (Solomon, 2018):

1. Problem recognition
2. Information search
3. Evaluation of alternatives
4. Product Choice
5. Post-purchase evaluation

During the first stage, problem recognition, the consumer comes to the realisation that an action must be taken. For example, they identify a problem with their current possessions, or just realizes that they want something new. Once a significant problem is recognised, the consumer moves to seek more information about how to solve their problem. Nowadays, the internet is heavily involved. People utilize tools like search engines, comparative search sites, or review sites to gather sufficient information. During the evaluation of alternatives, the consumer usually creates an "evoked set" of alternative that interests them. Most of the products end in this evoked set. Finalizing the alternatives leads into the creation a "consideration set", which includes alternatives that are seriously being considered. Finally, the consumer decides from the consideration set based on their own personal criteria and preference. A post-purchase evaluation follows and closes this cognitive decision-making loop. This evaluation can further aid the consumer or others in their decision-making process (Solomon, 2018).

3.2.1 **What influences consumer behaviour?**

As mentioned in the previous part about the decision making process, the common basis for multiple consumer behaviour theories assumes a concept of a rational consumer (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). These concepts do not consider psychological drivers people's consumption is influenced by. Consumption can be argued to be an extension of a person as it can serve as social currency, a tool for self-branding, signal for values, means to regulate a person's mood, and a way to express their identity (Willman-livarinen, 2017).

To fully comprehend the scope of psychology drivers of consumer behaviour, it is vital to understand consumer's relation to their possessions. It can be argued that people consider their possessions as an extension of themselves. These could include even ordinary day-to-day products that are used without great consideration. Consumption can serve as a method of communication to external showcase of personality and values (Belk, 1988).

Consumers are noted to buy products that represent their own self-identity. Perception of brands and how their product are perceived by others have shown to play a part in why certain products are given preference over others. This paper by Levy suggests that good represents symbols and their meaning and implications play an important role when it comes to consumer's preference (Levy, 1959) .

It is also showed that possessions can be used as symbols to showcase one's ties to a certain social group. Such consumers tend to create brand communities, further incentivizing such consumers to buy products or services of this or related brand. These communities may be formed naturally given the nature of the brand or be formed by brands themselves and managed by them. Word of mouth has shown to play an important part in these communities and is an asset to these brands (Muniz & O'Guinn, 20011). In a study conducted with university students, the results suggested that students are prone to create a self-brand connection when there is a strong usage association between a reference group and the brand there is a strong connection between the reference group and the consumer's self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Importance of social groups has also been explored them in their paper in 2005 which showcased similar results. People reported higher self-brand connection with brands which stood for similar things like their social ingroup did. It also found that consumers are more negative towards social meanings of brands that are not from their ingroup brand usage (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

3.3 Social media and its influence

To define social media, it is necessary to talk about two terms: Web 2.0 and User-generated content (UGC).

The internet in the beginning could be viewed as a unilateral source of information. As the Web evolved it started to become more of a two-way street with people providing their own content via blogs or customer reviews (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012). This change was called the Web 2.0. It was not necessarily a technical update to the whole Web, but a gradual change in attitude towards it. Web 2.0. was the ideological and technological foundation in the how software developers and end-users began to interact with the Web (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The content the users were providing to these new sites is what can be defined as UGC. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that there are three criteria the UGC needs to fulfil to be recognized as such. Firstly, it needs to be published on a publicly accessible website or on a page on a social networking site only accessible to select few people; furthermore, it needs to hold a certain level of creative effort; lastly, it needs to be created outside of professional routines and practices (OECD, 2007).

Social media sites can be further defined as social networking sites that enable its users to create a public/semi-public profile within their system, have a list of users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their own list of connections, or of the other users, in the given system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). In conclusion, they are web-based and mobile technologies that provide their users with a highly interactive platform via which they can share, co-create, discuss, and modify UGC. (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

Social media has grown to become an important part of consumer's lives. According to the Czech statistical office, 66.1% of people older than 16 years old are using social media in the Czech Republic. The percentage is as high as 94% for ages between 16-35 years (Odbor statistik rozvoje společnosti, 2020).

Two of the most used social media sites, Facebook, and YouTube (Clement, 2020), are among the most visited websites on the internet (Alexa, 2020). Their sheer number of users are a testament to their influence.

3.3.1 Decline of traditional advertisement

With the rise of the internet, consumers have been changed in how they approach purchasing. Internet is used not only to find out more about the product and aid their decision-making process, but also to communicate with the companies and other consumers.

This has also changed the landscape of traditional advertising. Most people are cynical towards advertising. Increasingly it has started to be perceived as not only irritating, but also ineffective (Razorfish, 2015). More influential and more modern methods include word of mouth (WOM), online reviews from other consumers and industry experts, or recommendations from family and friends.

3.3.2 Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is a form of marketing where products are recommended by one individual to another. Usually this is done between friends and family instead of marketing campaigns. It can be defined as the oral communication between two 2 or more people concerning a brand, product, or service on a non-commercial basis (Woodside & Delozier, 1976).

A report by the marketing agency Razorfish in 2015 stated that word of mouth is the biggest purchase decision influence in the US, UK, China, and Brazil (Razorfish, 2015). According to the results in China, 79% consumers described word of mouth as an important source of information, while only 20% considered traditional advertising as such. A recommendation from some you know come with more credibility than an advertisement (Marketing-schools.org, 2012). According to Nielsen, 92% of consumers will trust recommendations from friends and family over any other form of advertising (Whitler, 2014).

Given the bidirectional nature of the internet, a new form of word of mouth called electronic word of mouth has emerged. It is word of mouth that takes place online (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009). It can be argued that electronic word of mouth is more effective and has several advantages over traditional word of mouth. Electronic word of mouth is more modern and is evolving with the current technology, utilizing, and taking advantage of the current advances, thus it is more accessible than traditional word of mouth (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009).

There is research that suggests electronic word of mouth on social media can influence consumer purchase intentions. Attributes like quality, usability, credibility, information

adoption, information need, and attitude towards information are the main one that influence these intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Further studies suggest that perceived credibility is important if a review or recommendation is to be received as genuine or real. This plays a vital part in a consumer's decision-making process when it comes to any sort of word of mouth. The higher the credibility of word of mouth, the higher influence on the purchase intention of the consumer (Awad & Ragowsky, 2008).

Emergence of the internet has given room for online feedback mechanisms, or reputation systems, to emerge. An example of such reputation system can be eBay or Google. Such networks enable consumers to share opinions and experiences online on anything the consumer might want to (Dellarocas, 2003).

3.3.3 Influencer marketing

Influence marketing is a form of social media marketing involving endorsements and product placement from influencers (user with big following and influence) (Brown & Hayes, 2017). Companies partner up with influencers and try to form a relationship with them. This is one of the main differences between word of mouth and influencer marketing. Where word of mouth is organic and essentially free, influencers are paid to promote a product, and in most countries must be disclosed as an advertisement (Schaefer, 2018). In comparison, word of mouth is natural expression of someone's journey, influencer marketing is usually in exchange of something valuable – an experience, status, access to products, or payment (Schaefer, 2018).

There is research that indicates that influencer marketing is effective in terms of influencing a consumer's decision making process. A joint study issued by Twitter and analytics firm Annalect showed that 56% of people surveyed stated that they rely on word of mouth from friends and family, while 49% further relied on influencers (Swant, 2016). Note that this survey focused on Twitter users, which already are active internet users.

In a infographic compiled by invespcro.com, which used multiple different surveys are their sources, it was stated that about 40% of people say that they have purchased a product online based on it being used by an influencer on social media, around 40% of consumers rely on product recommendations by influencers for their purchases, consumers trust influencers 94% more than friends or family when making shopping decisions, and 92% of shoppers trust influencer reviews over traditional advertisements and endorsements (Saleh, 2020).

When companies want to cooperate with an influencer, it is done through an influencer agency. These agencies strategize and manage marketing and advertising campaigns with social media influencers (mediakix.com, 2021). These agencies tend to have relationships with traditional advertising agencies to work with companies and further incentivize them to work with the influencers (Woods, 2016).

In general, there are five marketing strategies that can be utilized with influencers (mediakix.com, 2021):

- **Product placements:** This strategy involves deliberately placing a company's product, service, or logo into the content of the influencer. This could include content like photos, videos, blog posts, or any other type (Williams, Petrosky, Hernandez, & Page, Jr., 2011). This strategy works the best if the consumer remembers the product but does not identify the integration as an ad (Stringer, 2006).
- **Contests, giveaways, & sweepstakes:** This strategy strives for user engagement through a contest or giveaways. The prizes of these would include the product or services being promoted (mediakix.com, 2021).
- **Theme/hashtag campaigns**: This strategy revolves around usage of a certain hashtag or a central theme. Influencers ask their followers to engage through the usage of the selected hashtag (mediakix.com, 2021).
- **Creative influencer campaigns**: This strategy is like the theme one, however this grants the influencer the freedom to come up with a campaign if it reflects the advertiser's message or theme (mediakix.com, 2021).
- **Campaigns to build social followers**: The goal of this strategy is to increase the number of followers of the advertiser's social media channel (mediakix.com, 2021).

3.4 YouTube

YouTube is an American online video platform founded in 2005 by the early PayPal employees; Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim (Leskin, 2020). It started as a video-dating website, where users were expected to upload video dating profiles. Even though, the traffic was initially low at the beginning, users started uploading all different kinds of videos. The founders saw the potential in this a relaunched YouTube as a video-sharing platform. The videos uploaded to YouTube mostly fulfil the criteria of user generated content as listed

in the previous part. The USG aspect of the platform was what attracted Google, and ultimately led to the acquisition of the platform by them for $1.65 billion in 2006 (Leskin, 2020).

As of November 2020, YouTube has about 2 billion active users, making it the second biggest social networks worldwide (Clement, 2020). It is the second most popular website on the website, coming second only to its parent, Google (Alexa, 2020). As of May 2019, an average of 500 hours of fresh video per minute was being uploaded to the site. This is an increase from the average of 400 hours per minute in 2015 (Hale, 2019).

According to a study conducted in 2017 by Defy Media (Defy Media, 2017) which focused on 13-24 years old living in North America, 85% of youth is using YouTube. They consume about 12.1 hours per week of "free" digital video (free online video platforms like YouTube, Vine, Twitch), and about 67% cannot imagine living without YouTube.

YouTube has been shown to be important for the success of many different industries. For example, the beauty video space itself had over 169 billion views just in the year 2018 (Pixability, 2018). This sector alone has seen 60% year over year growth in terms of view only. People doing make-up, challenges, showing tip and tricks were the main type of content in this space, and big cosmetic brand like Christian Dior, or CHANNEL are already utilizing YouTube as a tool for promotion of their products (Pixability, 2018).

3.4.1 **YouTubers**

YouTubers can be defined as the users of the site that are regularly uploading videos on to their YouTube channels (Jerslev A. , 2016). The types of YouTubers vary and can range from content creators which create video blogs (vlogs), tutorials, to "let's play" videos (people showing and commenting their gameplay), product reviews, comedic skits, etc (Anderson, 2020). These content-creators usually start their channels just as a hobby. It can eventually grow into something that holds a significant influence that is comparable to traditional celebrities, thus are frequently described as microcelebrities (Jerslev A. , 2016).

According to a survey among teenagers between 13-18, YouTube stars are more popular than mainstream celebrities in the US (Ault, 2014)`. One explanation of this could be that the youth perceive YouTubers as more relatable and attainable (Defy Media, 2017).

There are multiple different avenues to how a YouTuber can monetize their videos. First method is to use Google AdSense. If a video is successful in gaining a lot of views, companies advertise their products, services, or business by placing ads on these videos.

Once a YouTuber gains a significant following and their videos are regularly gaining views, they can become a Google Partner. Once this is achieved, they start generating revenue for their views. YouTubers can cooperate with brands and companies to advertise their products and services for them (Martín, 2020). The biggest YouTuber, PewDiePie, has more than 100 million people subscribed to him and he allegedly made $13 million in the year 2019 from YouTube (Leskin, 2020). As YouTubers can be considered influencers, they are able to use the influencer marketing strategies mentioned in the previous part.

4 Practical Part

Given the nature of the thesis qualitative approach was considered, however, because of the current global COVID-19 pandemic and the strict social distancing measure in place in Prague, Czech Republic, this approach was concluded to not be suitable.

For the purposes of this thesis a quantitative approach by using online questionnaires was ended being chosen to explore what role does YouTube play in the individual parts of the decision making process. Quantitative approach seems more suitable for this type of study as it enables a broader study with a higher number of subjects and enables generalization of the final conclusions. Overall, it allows summaries of data that support more general statements about the topic of research (USC Libraries, 2021).

The questionnaire was conducted through the Google form platform and the forms were distributed exclusively online. It was executed self-administered. The questionnaire was structured into 7 sub-parts with first part collecting general social demographic information, the next five sub-parts focusing on the five different parts of the decision making model, and the last part focuses on the role of YouTube in the consumer decision making process.

The social demographic that the questionnaire collected was age, sex, either they are employed or unemployed, their monthly discretionary income. This part also collected how frequently the respondents were watching YouTube.

The answers from the respondents were measured on a five point Likert scale (Likert, 1932). This technique of measurement was chosen as it allows for measurement of different variations such as frequency, quality, importance, etc. This method allows for anonymity which aids in reducing the social desirability bias (McLeod, Likert scale, 2019).

5 Results and Discussion

The questionnaire was answered by 187 respondents, out of which only 173 will be considered for the hypothesis testing, as these respondents answered "never" in the YouTube viewing frequency question. This suggests that they do not use YouTube at all.

Sex of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	100	53.5	53.5	53.5
	Male	87	46.5	46.5	100.0
	Total	187	100.0	100.0	

Figure 2 Sex of the respondents

53% of the respondents were female, and 47% of them are male.

Age of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18	12	6.4	6.4	6.4
	19	19	10.2	10.2	16.6
	20	21	11.2	11.2	27.8
	21	20	10.7	10.7	38.5
	22	27	14.4	14.4	52.9
	23	22	11.8	11.8	64.7
	24	9	4.8	4.8	69.5
	25	19	10.2	10.2	79.7
	26	16	8.6	8.6	88.2
	27	10	5.3	5.3	93.6
	28	5	2.7	2.7	96.3
	29	4	2.1	2.1	98.4
	30	3	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	187	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3 Age of respondents

Regarding age, 58% of the respondents fall into the age group of 19-23. Most frequent age of the respondents was 22 years old, and the least frequent age of the respondents was 30 years old.

Employment status of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed Student	83	44.4	44.4	44.4
	Employed Student	104	55.6	55.6	100.0
	Total	187	100.0	100.0	

Figure 5 Employment status of the respondents

About 56% of the respondents answered that they were employed, and about 44% were unemployed students. This specific statistic may be influenced by the current global COVID-19 pandemic, as the lower entry jobs like waiters, cashiers, salesperson, etc are limited in their offer due to social distancing measure closing most of the shops, restaurants, and other businesses.

Monthly discretionary income of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5000 Kč	87	46.5	46.5	100.0
	5001-10000 Kč	65	34.8	34.8	53.5
	10001-15000 Kč	29	15.5	15.5	18.7
	20000+ Kč	6	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Total	187	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4 Monthly discretionary income of the respondents

Discretionary income is defined as the income after all payments for necessities and taxes are paid out. This is amount is left for spending, investing, or saving of the person (Kagan, 2020). Most of the respondents, fell into the monthly discretionary income range of 0-10000 Kč. It is notable that none of the respondents answered 15001-20000 Kč. This data also may be affected by the global pandemic.

YouTube viewing frequency of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	102	54.5	54.5	100.0
	Weekly	65	34.8	34.8	45.5
	Monthly	5	2.7	2.7	10.7
	Rarely	1	.5	.5	8.0
	Never	14	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Total	187	100.0	100.0	

Figure 6 YouTube viewing frequency of the respondents

More than half of the respondents, 54.5%, answered that they watch YouTube daily. 34.8% of the respondents answered that they watch YouTube weekly, which amounts for 89.3% of the respondents watching YouTube quite frequently. 7.5% of the respondents never watch YouTube.

5.1 Data Analysis

Likert scale data is ordinal data as it is not fully possible to know the distance between the data items. Numbers in a Likert scale are not actually numbers as such, but they represent a rank on the scale. Descriptive statistic like mean cannot be used to analyse the data (Stephanie, n.d.). It is considered more appropriate to use median to find the "average" of the responses. In general, one a 5 point scale (where 1 represents "strongly disagree", and 5 represents "strongly agree") a median greater or equal to 3 indicates that most respondents agree with the statements presented to them (Decker, 2018).

IBM SPSS was used for all statistical analysis.

5.1.1 Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the measured data was measured with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's alpha is used to assess how reliable and internally consistent a data set is. This is used to determine if Likert scale surveys can be considered reliable. If the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is higher than 0.7, it can be considered acceptable for inter-item reliability (Stephanie, n.d.).

Questionnaire Sub-part	Cronbach's alpha	N of items
Problem recognition	0.711	4
Information search	0.641	3
Evaluation of Alternatives	0.816	4
Product Choice	0.708	3
Post-purchase Evaluation	0.645	4
Decision making process	0.754	6

Figure 7 Reliability statistics

A Cronbach's analysis was conducted on the "problem recognition" sub-part of the questionnaire. This part included 4 questions. It was found that the subscale's alpha level was 0.711, which indicates that this part has an acceptable level of inter-item reliability.

A Cronbach's analysis was conducted on the "Information search" sub-part of the questionnaire. This part included 3 questions. It was found that the subscale's alpha level

was 0.641, which indicates that this part does not have an acceptable level of inter-item reliability.

A Cronbach's analysis was conducted on the "evaluation of alternatives" sub-part of the questionnaire. This part included 4 questions. It was found that the subscale's alpha level was 0.816, which indicates that this part has an acceptable level of inter-item reliability.

A Cronbach's analysis was conducted on the "product choice" sub-part of the questionnaire. This part included 3 questions. It was found that the subscale's alpha level was 0.708, which indicates that this part has an acceptable level of inter-item reliability.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PPE1	5.56	4.806	.202	.709
PPE2	6.90	2.229	.687	.340
PPE3	7.72	2.946	.688	.354
PPE4	8.46	5.599	.298	.674

Figure 8 Item-Total statistics of the post--purchase evaluation sub-part

A Cronbach's analysis was conducted on the "post-purchase evaluation" sub-part of the questionnaire. This part included 4 questions. It was found that the subscale's alpha level was 0.645, which indicates that this part does not have an acceptable level of inter-item reliability. However, it was found that if the first question were to be deleted from the sub-part of the questionnaire, the alpha level would increase to 0.709. Thus, the first question would be deleted in favour of increasing the alpha level to an acceptable level.

A Cronbach's analysis was conducted on the "decision making process" sub-part of the questionnaire. This part included 6 questions. It was found that the subscale's alpha level was 0.754, which indicates that this part does not have an acceptable level of inter-item reliability.

5.2 Cross-tabulation

Cross-tabulation (crosstab), also known as contingency table, show the relationship between two categorical variables. It provides the option to summarize the data and determine if there is any relation present in the data set between the variables (University of Southampton, 2021).

For this study, crosstabs with between the social demographic data and the youtube viewing frequency variable will be explored. The goal is to determine if there is any association between these variables.

Crosstabulation of Age and YouTube viewing frequency

			YouTube viewing fequency (Ytfreq)					
			Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Total
Age	18	Count	0	0	0	7	5	12
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.8%	4.9%	6.4%
	19	Count	0	0	0	8	11	19
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.3%	10.8%	10.2%
	20	Count	0	0	0	8	13	21
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.3%	12.7%	11.2%
	21	Count	0	1	0	5	14	20
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	7.7%	13.7%	10.7%
	22	Count	0	0	5	6	16	27
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	9.2%	15.7%	14.4%
	23	Count	0	0	0	12	10	22
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.5%	9.8%	11.8%
	24	Count	0	0	0	3	6	9
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	5.9%	4.8%
	25	Count	3	0	0	4	12	19
		% within Ytfreq	21.4%	0.0%	0.0%	6.2%	11.8%	10.2%
	26	Count	5	0	0	5	6	16
		% within Ytfreq	35.7%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	5.9%	8.6%
	27	Count	2	0	0	2	6	10
		% within Ytfreq	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	5.9%	5.3%
	28	Count	2	0	0	3	0	5
		% within Ytfreq	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	0.0%	2.7%
	29	Count	0	0	0	1	3	4
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	2.9%	2.1%
	30	Count	2	0	0	1	0	3
		% within Ytfreq	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	1.6%
Total		Count	14	1	5	65	102	187
		% within Ytfreq	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 9 Crosstabulation of Age and YouTube viewing frequency

In the crosstabulation of Age and YouTube viewing frequency, it is visible that all the responses of "never" were in the age range of 25-30 years old. The only response of "rarely" was 21 year old. The only "monthly" responses were by 22 years old. "Weekly" and "daily" responses were found throughout the whole age range, with most of the responses being in

the age range of 18-23 years old. 67.6% of the "daily" responses fall into this age range, while 70.8% of the "weekly" responses fall into this age range. This goes in order with H10, which will be tested later.

Crosstabulation of Sex and YouTube viewing frequency

			YouTube viewing frequency (Ytfreq)					
			Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Total
Sex	Female	Count	6	1	5	40	48	100
		% within Ytfreq	42.9%	100.0%	100.0%	61.5%	47.1%	53.5%
	Male	Count	8	0	0	25	54	87
		% within Ytfreq	57.1%	0.0%	0.0%	38.5%	52.9%	46.5%
Total		Count	14	1	5	65	102	187
		% within Ytfreq	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 10 Crosstabulation of Sex and YouTube viewing frequency

In the crosstabulation of sex and YouTube viewing frequency, most noticeable is that both "rarely" and "monthly" was only answered by female respondents. "Never" and "daily" was mostly answered by male respondents, whereas most of the daily viewers of YouTube were female respondents.

Crosstabulation of Employment status and YouTube viewing frequency

			YouTube viewing frequency (Ytfreq)					
			Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Total
Edu	Unemployed Student	Count	4	1	3	28	47	83
		% within Ytfreq	28.6%	100.0%	60.0%	43.1%	46.1%	44.4%
	Employed Student	Count	10	0	2	37	55	104
		% within Ytfreq	71.4%	0.0%	40.0%	56.9%	53.9%	55.6%
Total		Count	14	1	5	65	102	187
		% within Ytfreq	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 11 Crosstabulation of Employment status and YouTube viewing frequency

In the crosstabulation of employment status and YouTube viewing frequency, it is noticeable that 71.4% of respondents that answered "never" were employed students. This is in order with the assumption that employed students are less likely to watch YouTube because of having less free time. However, the opposite is suggested by the responses of "weekly" and "daily", where employed students are more frequent in the responses. This suggests that employment status is not a strong factor in the viewing habit.

Crosstabulation of discretionary income and YouTube viewing frequency

			YouTube viewing frequency (Ytfreq)					
			Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Total
Dis.Inc.	0-5000 Kč	Count	3	0	3	34	47	87
		% within Ytfreq	21.4%	0.0%	60.0%	52.3%	46.1%	46.5%
	5001-10000 Kč	Count	2	0	2	24	37	65
		% within Ytfreq	14.3%	0.0%	40.0%	36.9%	36.3%	34.8%
	10001-15000 Kč	Count	9	1	0	7	12	29
		% within Ytfreq	64.3%	100.0%	0.0%	10.8%	11.8%	15.5%
	20000+ Kč	Count	0	0	0	0	6	6
		% within Ytfreq	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	3.2%
Total		Count	14	1	5	65	102	187
		% within Ytfreq	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 12 Crosstabulation of discretionary income and YouTube viewing frequency

In the crosstabulation of discretionary income and YouTube viewing frequency, most of the respondents, 81.3%, answered that they are in the monthly discretionary income range of 0-10000 Kč. This is most probably a result of the lower average age of the respondents. Most of the "weekly" and "daily" respondents are in this monthly discretionary income range as well. This correspondts with the most frequent age range of the respondents.

5.3 Hypothesis testing

Before testing the hypothesis, it is necessary to find out the aggregate medians for every individual sub-part of the questionnaire. Directional hypothesis will be constructed deriving for the first 5 hypothesis. Such hypothesis specifies the direction for testing. For example, it can be hypothesized mean is greater than a certain number (Stephanie, 2019).

For the purposes of this study, the hypothesis would be stating that if the mean of the medians of the sub-parts are greater than 3, it can be suggested that YouTube plays a significant part in that individual part. One-sample t tests will be used to test the hypothesis and the hypothesis were tested against the test value of 3 (Kent State University Libraries, 2021).

One-Sample Test

Test Value = 3

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Problem recogniton	.607	172	.544	.05780	-.1300	.2456
Information search	19.046	172	<.001	.97110	.8705	1.0717
Evaluation of alternatives	9.376	172	<.001	.68786	.5431	.8327
Product choice	6.136	172	<.001	.46243	.3137	.6112
Post-purchase evaluation	-15.911	172	<.001	-1.17919	-1.3255	-1.0329

Figure 13 One-sample t test results

H1: YouTube plays a significant part in the "problem recognition" part of the consumer decision making process.

Since p = 0.544 is for the problem recognition sub-part, the null hypothesis that the sample mean is equal to the hypothesized population mean can be accepted and it is concluded that the mean median score of the sample is like the average median score of the overall surveyed student population. Furthermore, the mean difference of 0.05780 also suggest this. Thus, it can be suggested that YouTube does not positively impact the problem recognition part.

H2: YouTube plays a significant part in the "information search" part of the consumer decision making process.

Since p < 0.001 is for the information search sub-part, the null hypothesis that the sample mean is equal to the hypothesized population mean is rejected and it is concluded that the mean median score of the sample is significantly different than the average median score of the overall surveyed student population. Furthermore, the mean difference of 0.97110 also suggest this. Thus, it can be suggested that YouTube does positively impact the information search part.

H3: YouTube plays a significant part in the "evaluation of alternatives" part of the consumer decision making process.

Since p < 0.001 is for the evaluation of alternatives sub-part, the null hypothesis that the sample mean is equal to the hypothesized population mean is rejected and it is concluded that the mean median score of the sample is significantly different than the average median score of the overall surveyed student population. Furthermore, the mean difference of

0.68786 also suggest this. Thus, it can be suggested that YouTube does positively impact the evaluation of alternatives part.

H4: YouTube plays a significant part in the "product choice" part of the consumer decision making process.

Since $p < 0.001$ is for the product choice sub-part, the null hypothesis that the sample mean is equal to the hypothesized population mean is rejected and it is concluded that the mean median score of the sample is significantly different than the average median score of the overall surveyed student population. Furthermore, the mean difference of 0.46243 also suggest this. Thus, it can be suggested that YouTube does positively impact the product choice part.

H5: YouTube plays a significant part in the "post-purchase evaluation" part of the consumer decision making process.

Since $p < 0.001$ is for the post-purchase evaluation sub-part, the null hypothesis that the sample mean is equal to the hypothesized population mean is rejected and it is concluded that the mean median score of the sample is significantly different than the average median score of the overall surveyed student population. Furthermore, the mean difference of -1.17919 also suggest this. However, as the mean difference is negative, it implies that YouTube does not positively impact the post purchase evaluation part.

Given that the hypothesis testing suggests that YouTube does positively impact at least in 3 individual parts of the consumer decision making process, it can be implied that YouTube does positively impact the whole consumer decision making process.

5.4 Correlation testing

Correlation can be defined as a bivariate analysis that measures the extend of association between two individual variables and determines the direction of the relationship among the variables. The value of the correlation coefficient varies fall between <1;1>, where ± 1 indicates a perfect degree of association between the two individual variables. For the purposes of the study the Pearson's correlation are used (McLeod, 2018).

The data will now be evaluated in accordance with the expectations:

Correlations

		Age	Sex	Empl. Stat.	Dis.Inc.	YouTube.	DMP
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.091	.466**	-.347**	-.318**	.133
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.217	<.001	<.001	<.001	.081
	N	187	187	187	187	187	173
Sex	Pearson Correlation	.091	1	-.051	-.088	.053	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.217		.484	.232	.475	.254
	N	187	187	187	187	187	173
Employment status	Pearson Correlation	.466**	-.051	1	-.211**	-.064	.115
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.484		.004	.384	.131
	N	187	187	187	187	187	173
Discretionary Income	Pearson Correlation	-.347**	-.088	-.211**	1	.120	-.169*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.232	.004		.103	.027
	N	187	187	187	187	187	173
YouTube viewing frequency	Pearson Correlation	-.318**	.053	-.064	.120	1	.205**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.475	.384	.103		.007
	N	187	187	187	187	187	173
Decision making process	Pearson Correlation	.133	.087	.115	-.169*	.205**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.081	.254	.131	.027	.007	
	N	173	173	173	173	173	173

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 14 Bivariate analysis results

H6: Age has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

It can be identified that the correlation value for age and decision making process is 0.133. This suggests that there is a positive correlation, which meets the set expectations. However, it is notable that the positive correlation is very weak.

H7: Sex has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

It can be identified that the correlation value for sex and decision making process is 0.087. This suggests that there is a positive correlation, which meets the set expectations. However, it is notable that the positive correlation is very weak.

H8: Employment status has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

It can be identified that the correlation value for employment status and decision making process is 0.115. This suggests that there is a positive correlation, which meets the set expectations. However, it is notable that the positive correlation is very weak.

H9: Monthly discretionary income has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

It can be identified that the correlation value for discretionary income and decision making process is -0.169. This suggests that there is a very weak negative correlation, which does not meet the set expectations.

H10: Age has a negative correlation with watching frequency.

It can be identified that the correlation value for age and YouTube viewing frequency is -0.318. This suggests that there is a negative correlation, which meets the set expectations. However, it is notable that the negative correlation is weak.

H11: Watching frequency has a positive correlation with consumer decision making process.

It can be identified that the correlation value for YouTube viewing frequency and decision making process is 0.205. This suggests that there is a positive correlation, which meets the set expectations. However, it is notable that the positive correlation is weak.

5.5 Limitations and future research possibilities

As with most studies, the design of the current study and its analysis may be subject to limitations. The presence of selection bias may exist as the respondents were either directly asked by the researcher to answer the survey or were approached to answer the survey in specific students' groups online of which the researcher was also a part of.

A sample size of 173 usable responses could be consider a limitation. Even though the Cronbach's alpha coefficient were mostly sufficient for testing, they were towards the lower scale of acceptable level. However, this level was not met in the case of "information search" sub-part of the questionnaire, suggesting that his part to be well defined. This limitation

could be addressed in future research by collecting a higher number of responses and being more diligent in selecting the respondents in a more random manner.

The current global COVID-19 also may have influenced the study, as it may have impacted the employment status, monthly discretionary incomes, and YouTube viewing habits of the respondents, effecting their consumer decision making behaviour and/or the role of YouTube in their consumer decision making process. The results of this research could vary in a world with no pandemic.

Given the structure of the questionnaire, limitations of Likert scale can be considered. The validity of the attitude measurement of such questionnaire can be compromised by respondents looking to be more desirable (McLeod, 2019). The questionnaire being anonymous was a strategy chosen to reduce such limitations.

Future studies can focus on specific consumer segments of the YouTube markets. Rather than focusing on the role of YouTube in the whole consumer decision making process, future research can focus on specific consumer segments like beauty product, or entertainment. The possibility of focusing the on different target audiences and/or age groups could be considered. Similar studies can be conducted for different social media site like Facebook, Instagram, or Tok-tok. Website like Facebook is even more popular and visited than YouTube (Alexa, 2020).

6 Conclusion

YouTube is significant platform given it is one of the most visited websites in the world (Alexa, 2020). There are many decisions that are needed to made daily and there are multiple factors that influence the decision making process (Willman-livarinen, 2017). User-generated content is the backbone for Web 2.0 and has enabled the internet to evolve and social media to exist (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With how rise of the internet and social media has impacted the world, the traditional advertisement methods are on a decline (Razorfish, 2015). This has given space for more modern methods like electronic word of mouth and influencer marketing to emerge, which has increased the value of social media platforms like YouTube because they are based around user-generated content (Woods, 2016) (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009).

The study data suggests that YouTube does have a positive impact on the information search, evaluation of alternatives, and product choice of the consumer decision making process. However, the data imply that is does not have a positive impact on the problem recognition and post-purchase evaluation parts of the process, thus implying based on the proposed research framework that it has an overall positive impact on the whole process itself.

When studying the correlation, it is found that there are positive correlations between the role of YouTube in the consumer decision making process and social demographic variables like age, sex, employment status and YouTube viewing frequency. There are negative correlations between the role of YouTube in the consumer decision making process and discretionary income; and between age and YouTube viewing frequency. Even though most of the set expectations are met, the correlations themselves are mostly very weak

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8 Appendix

8.1 Questionnaire form

- **Part one: Basic questions**
  - Age:
    - 18/19/20/21/22/23/24/25/26/27/28/29/30
  - Sex:
    - Male/Female
  - Status:
    - Employed student/Unemployed student
  - Monthly discretionary income (income after all payments for necessities and taxes)
    - 0-5000/5000-10000/10000-15000/15000-20000/20000+
  - How often do you watch YouTube videos?
    - Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Rarely/Never
- **PR: Problem Recognition**
  - PR1: I have wanted to buy a product advertised on YouTube through targeted ads
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - PR2: I have wanted to buy a product recommended by a YouTube Video
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - PR3: I have wanted to buy a product recommended by a YouTuber
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
- **IS: Information search**
  - IS1: I do research about a product before making a purchase
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - IS2: I use YouTube to collect information about a product before a purchase
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - IS3: I perceive some YouTube videos as a reliable source of information
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - IS4: I perceive some YouTubers as a reliable source of information
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
- **EoA: Evaluation of alternatives**
  - EoA1: I will rather make a choice by trying to analyse and evaluate the alternatives rather than by feeling
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
  - EoA2: I consider product alternatives before making a purchase
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
  - EoA3: I research product comparisons on social before purchase making a purchase
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never

- EoA4: I watch product comparisons on YouTube before purchase making a purchase
  - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never

- **PC: Product Choice**
  - PC1: I research product reviews before making a purchase
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
  - PC2: I research product reviews on social media before making a purchase
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
  - PC3: I watch product reviews on YouTube before purchase making a purchase
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never

- **PPE: Post-Purchase Evaluation**
  - PPE1: I tell people around me about a product if I have a satisfactory experience
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
  - PPE2: I post product reviews after using a product
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
  - PPE3: I post video product reviews on social media
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
  - PPE4: I post video product reviews on YouTube
    - Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
- **DMP: Decision-Making Process**
  - DCM1: I have bought to buy a product recommended by a YouTuber
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - DMP2: I have bought to buy a product recommended by a YouTube video
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - DMP3: I have used YouTube to search for information about a product
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - DMP4: I have used YouTube to make product evaluations
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - DMP5: I have used YouTube to watch product reviews
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
  - DMP6: I have used YouTube to post product reviews
    - Strongly Agree/Agree/Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree