

Audience usage patterns of YouTube and the impact of its promotional content on them/ A field study at the University of Baghdad

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Abstract

This study examines the audience's usage patterns of YouTube and the impact of its promotional content. It aims to determine the extent of audience use of YouTube and its impact on their behavior. A questionnaire was used to measure the audience, consisting of (150) individuals. The study reached several results, the most important of which are the daily use of YouTube by the sample, and the high average daily viewing hours, most of which occur in the evening. The audience uses YouTube for various motives, the first of which is entertainment, followed in order by the motive of obtaining information, sharing video clips with others, publishing content, or promoting a product the user wants to advertise. There is also an impact of promotional content on the audience through the use of YouTube for promotion.

Keywords: audience, YouTube, promotion, influence, patterns.

Introduction

Modern technology has led to the development of communication methods, one of the most important components of human life. This has witnessed significant development throughout human history, leading to the use of modern technologies and means of communication and communicating information to others. Social media is one of the most important stages of development in our contemporary lives. The Internet is no longer just a means of viewing, but rather a means of interaction and communication between parties. Many social media platforms have emerged, the most important of which is YouTube, which includes various video clips, including social, political, sports, cultural, series, and films. Individuals can now present their own content and share it through YouTube channels. YouTube has become an important tool for the media, through which they publish their various programs through their own channels, and many video clips can be easily viewed through modern technological means and internet applications. YouTube has thus become one of the important tools we use daily to obtain the information we want, interact with it, and share it with others at the time of our choosing. Here, the audience's patterns and methods of using YouTube vary, choosing the time and channel they want to watch. Social media has become an important tool for self-expression and disseminating specific content. Companies also use it to promote content, promote products, and find different methods to influence their content. In this research, we seek to study the audience's patterns of YouTube usage and the impact of its promotional content on them through a field study of a random sample of university students, as they are the most frequent users of internet applications and YouTube. This study can yield results that we can rely on in the research. We relied on a questionnaire to obtain information, the results of which we analyzed statistically. This research can be used in future studies on YouTube use among various segments of society.

Research Methodology:

Research Problem: The research problem is defined as answering the question: What are the audience's patterns of YouTube usage and the impact of its promotional content on them?

Significance of the Research:

- YouTube is one of the most important and widely used modern applications among the public, providing channels and videos, enabling communication between users, and offering various promotional programs.
- Social networking has become a part of people's daily lives.
- The study addressed students, one of the most important groups using YouTube and social media.
- A new study adds to the media library in the field of modern communication applications.

Research Objectives:

1. Identify the patterns of the public's use of the YouTube application and the impact of its promotional content on them.
2. The public's use of the YouTube application and their needs met.
3. The public's exposure to the content of promotional programs on YouTube.
4. The impact of promotional content on YouTube on audience behavior.

Hypotheses:

- 1- There is a statistically significant correlation between YouTube usage times and usage patterns.
- 2- There is a statistically significant correlation between demographic data and YouTube usage patterns.

Research Limits:

Time Limits: The time limit extended from January 1, 2024, to December 30, 2025.

Spatial Limits: The study included the spatial limits of the University of Baghdad within the colleges of the Al-Jadriya Complex, for a sample of University of Baghdad students.

Research Tools: A questionnaire was used to collect data and information, which included questions to achieve the research objectives. Statistical data was transcribed using the SPSS statistical program, with frequencies and percentages calculated, and the results extracted into statistical tables, which were then interpreted and analyzed.

Previous Studies:

Sami's study (2023) was conducted on a sample of (400) adolescents. The study concluded that adolescents' motivations for using YouTube are entertainment and recreation, that individuals' tendency to create content on YouTube is to achieve financial gain, that females are more exposed to profitable content than males, and that there is a direct relationship between the formation of attitudes and exposure to YouTube.

The Orphan Study (2012) aimed to identify Saudi youth's use of YouTube and the gratifications they achieve from it. A sample of 600 youth was recruited using a sample survey. The study found that males use YouTube more than females, and that their primary motivation for using the app is self-realization. Their favorite programs include songs, movies, entertainment, and religious content. Ahmed's study (2014) demonstrated that YouTube contributes to interactivity and communication among individuals, offering a variety of video clips covering media, scientific, entertainment, and technological news, and is characterized by online sharing among users.

Theoretical Framework

The uses and gratifications theory was employed as a model for the influence of media on audiences, their responses to communication messages, communication motives, and the satisfaction of audience needs. It is assumed that this occurs as a result of the audience's voluntary exposure to media (Amin, 2017).

The uses and gratifications theory includes the audience's active use of media and the gratifications they achieve from use. The first study of this theory appeared in the 1940s, followed by studies that developed the concept of the theory and the purpose of use (Mashaqa, 2013).

This theory provided a new approach and understanding of the media audience through selective and voluntary exposure to it. The audience is no longer a passive recipient as it was previously, but has become an active participant in its interaction with media. It is the audience who chooses the media and content to which it is exposed and which satisfy its needs, not the media itself (Al-Tayeb, 2014).

The theoretical approach assumes that media audiences and users choose the medium they are exposed to and are actively engaged in receiving its programs and materials to satisfy their desires through their usage patterns (Bakhit, 2014).

They also have various motivations, including utilitarian motivations to acquire information and knowledge, and ritualistic motivations to spend time relaxing, entertaining, and escaping reality. Here, the theory relies on a reciprocal relationship of an active, engaged audience that chooses the media content it desires (Ibrahim, 2012, p. 112).

This theory assumes: (Makawi & Al-Sayed, 2006)

- The audience's positive exposure to media to achieve specific goals.
- The audience takes the initiative to choose the media material they want to consume, which achieves their goals and satisfies their needs.
- The media's competitiveness in satisfying and attracting their audiences.

The uses and gratifications theory can be utilized in the study of electronic communication media, including YouTube, as its users have become content producers and contributors to its dissemination in the communication environment. It is possible to provide a framework for online study (Danli, 2005). In digital communication via the Internet, the theory assumes the interactivity of the media that roams through social networking sites and searches for the gratifications that it wants to achieve through virtual reality via the World Wide Web. Thus, the audience is active and interactive in the communication process in the digital space with full awareness and will and aware of the gratifications that it seeks on the Internet (Abdul Hamid, 2007). Developments in social media have brought about a major shift in YouTube, a video-sharing application that is subject to censorship. It allows users to express their opinions for objective censorship reasons, such as deleting inappropriate and offensive clips. YouTube also allows followers to communicate, exchange opinions, and interact (Yassin, 2017). YouTube is an electronic application that allows users to publish, download, and upload video clips, music, movies, series, and various programs for free, and allows users to share, exchange, and comment on them (Al-Maqdadi, 2011). Social networks, including YouTube, are characterized by sharing, flexibility, and ubiquity, transcending time and space, and interacting through the exchange of ideas, content, and videos (Mustafa, 2020, p. 49). They include communication between individuals and the interaction that occurs through the sharing of clips and images. These networks are also used as a means of obtaining information (Shaban, 2022). YouTube is the most widely used application on the Internet for disseminating various video clips in various fields, as videos are viewed more than once daily. YouTube has a large number of users, and it is constantly increasing (Renjie, 2016). Due to its great popularity, YouTube has become one of the most important platforms used by the media to disseminate their programs and is considered the most important platform for promotional advertisements (Sadiq, 2008). Media organizations use YouTube to display clips of short programs, including entertainment, political, social, sports, and music videos (Alawneh, 2014).

Because of the ease of use of YouTube, it is used by companies for promotion, as clips from pages are shared among people (Shaban, 2025).

The Orphan Study (2012) aimed to identify Saudi youth's use of YouTube and the gratifications they achieve from it. A sample of 600 youth was recruited using a sample survey. The study found that males use YouTube more than females, and that their primary motivation for using the app is self-realization. Their favorite programs include songs, movies, entertainment, and religious content.

Ahmed's study (2014) demonstrated that YouTube contributes to interactivity and communication among individuals, offering a variety of video clips covering media, scientific, entertainment, and technological news, and is characterized by online sharing among users.

Practical Aspect

Field Study Results: First: Sample Demographic Data

Table 1 shows the sample's demographic characteristics.

main categories	categories flee	number	%
gender	Male	69	46.0
	Female	81	54.0
Age	25-19	73	48.7
	33-26	40	26.7
	40-34	26	17.3
	41 more	11	7.3
Academic achievement	First	20	13.4
	Second	37	24.6
	Third	30	20
	Fourth	25	16.7
	Postgraduate Studies	38	25.3
standard of living	Good	38	25.3
	Average	94	62.7
	Weak	18	12.0

The results of the table show that the percentage of females (54.0) is higher than that of males (46.0). As for age groups, the highest percentage (48.7) is for the 19-25 age group, followed by the 33-26 age group with (26.7), and then the 34-40 age group with (17.3). The table includes the various educational levels of students, with the second stage receiving the highest percentage (25.3), followed by postgraduate studies with (24.6), and the third stage with (20). As for the standard of living, the highest percentage (62.7) is for the average standard of living, followed by the good standard of living with (25.3).

YouTube Use

1- Extent of YouTube Use

Table 2 shows the extent of YouTube use.

Watching TV commercials	Duplicates	%
Always	97	64.7
Sometimes	27	18.0
Scarcely	26	17.3
Total	150	100

The table shows that a large percentage of the audience (64.7%) always use YouTube, while those who answered "sometimes" use it represent (18.0%).

Table 3 shows the arithmetic mean for the extent of YouTube use.

How much does the audience use YouTube?	arithmetic mean value	Standard deviation value
	2.0067	.59637

The table shows the mean value of YouTube usage, which is 2.0067, and the standard deviation, which is 0.59637.

2- YouTube usage patterns

Table 4 shows the daily YouTube usage patterns.

Daily YouTube Usage Patterns	Duplicates	%
Less than an hour	25	16.7
One to two hours	84	56.0
Three hours or more	41	27.3
Total	150	100

The table results show that the highest percentage (56.0) of YouTube usage patterns among the audience was for one to two hours per day, while the percentage (27.3) was for three hours or more of YouTube usage, and the percentage (16.7) was for usage for less than an hour.

Arithmetic Mean of YouTube Usage Patterns

Table 5 shows the arithmetic mean of YouTube usage patterns.

Audience usage patterns for YouTube	arithmetic mean value	Standard deviation value
	1.8933	.65689

The table shows that the mean value for YouTube usage patterns is (1.8933) and the standard deviation is (0.65689).

3- Preferred times to use YouTube

Table 6 shows the times the audience prefers to use YouTube.

Best times to use YouTube:	Duplicates	%
Morning	29	19.3
Noon	46	30
Evening	75	50.7
Total	150	100

The table shows that the most popular time to use YouTube is in the evening, with a percentage of (75.0%), followed by the afternoon, with a percentage of (30%), and the morning, with a percentage of (19.3%).

4- Favorite Channel to Follow on YouTube

Table 7 shows the most popular channel to follow on YouTube.

Favorite YouTube Channel	Duplicates	%
Social	59	39.3
Variety	41	27.3
Cultural	36	24.0
Political	14	9.4
Total	150	100

The table shows that social media channels are the most preferred channel by the public, with a percentage of (39.3%), followed by the variety channel with a percentage of (27.3%), the cultural channel with a percentage of (24.0%), and the political channel with a percentage of (9.4%).

5- Motives for Using YouTube

Table 8 shows the motives for using YouTube.

Motives for Using YouTube	Duplicates	%
Entertainment and Diversion	40	26.7
Getting Information	31	20.7
Publishing Content on the YouTube App	11	7.3
Share Videos with Others	13	8.6
Self-Expression	6	4
Getting Access to Videos and Programs Not Available on Other Media	17	11.4
Communicating with Others and Meeting New People	11	7.3
Marketing Products and Services and Engaging in Business Activities	9	6
Escape from Life's Problems	12	8
Total	150	100

The table shows the motives behind the audience's use of YouTube. The highest percentage (26.7%) is for entertainment, followed by obtaining information (20.7%). The motive for obtaining clips and programs not available on other media came in at (11.4%). Sharing video clips with others also received (8.6%), while escaping life's problems came in at (8%). The motive for publishing content on YouTube, communicating with others, and meeting new people also received (7.3%). Marketing products and services and engaging in commercial activities came in at (6%), while self-expression came in at (4%).

6- The Relationship Between YouTube Usage Times and Usage Patterns

Table 9 shows the relationship between YouTube usage times and usage patterns.

Pearson's correlation coefficient value	Significance value	Moral value	Relationship
.087	.287	0.05	Not significant

The table shows the correlation between YouTube usage times and usage patterns. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.087, and the significance value is 0.287, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistical significance in the relationship between YouTube usage times and usage patterns.

7- The Relationship Between Demographic Data and YouTube Usage Patterns

Table 10 shows the relationship between demographic data and YouTube usage patterns.

Variable	Pearson's correlation coefficient value	Significance value	Moral value	Relationship
Gender	-.110	.287	0.05	Not significant
Age	-.031	.706	0.05	Not significant
Academic Attainment	-.018	.182	0.05	Not significant

The table shows no correlation between demographic data and YouTube usage patterns. The Pearson correlation coefficient for gender was -.110, the Pearson correlation coefficient for age was -.031, and the Pearson correlation coefficient for academic achievement was -.018.

Conclusions:

1. The percentage of females is higher than that of males. As for age groups, the highest percentage is in the 19-25 age group, followed by the 2nd grade. This includes students' various educational levels, with the second grade having the highest percentage. The majority of the sample has an average standard of living.
2. A large percentage of the audience uses YouTube because it contains a variety of media content, and users usually find what they are looking for in the content they want to watch.
3. The audience's YouTube usage patterns vary from one to two hours per day to three hours or more.
4. YouTube is most frequently used in the evening, as this is when users have free time to relax after long working hours during the day.
5. Social media channels are the most preferred channel by the public, as are variety channels, as they contain a variety of content.
6. The public uses YouTube for various reasons, primarily entertainment and amusement, followed by information gathering, sharing videos with others, publishing content, or promoting a product the user wants to advertise.
7. There is no correlation between demographic data and YouTube usage patterns.
8. There is no statistical significance in the relationship between YouTube usage times and usage patterns.

